

THE BARNABAS PAPERS

Table of Contents

Associational
Missionary.....1

Evangelism.....2,3

Pastoral
Ministry.....4

Discipleship/Sunday
School5

Worship6

Youth Ministry.....7-9

Technology10

Revitalization.....11

The Worship
Service.....12

Children/Family
Ministry.....13,14

Missions.....15,16

A new year brings with it a new calendar of meetings to attend, a new set of goals to achieve, new people to acquaint, new projects to assign, and for the GCBA newsletter a new approach. Over the last two years we have struggled to publish a periodical on a consistent basis. We, the contributors to this monthly, are for the most part not professional writers. Some are, and I really appreciate that because they make up for my ramblings. The Barnabas Papers are meant to be a source of encouragement and instruction for the local church, but at times in the past, it became a burden for those who put it together. So we have retooled the papers a bit in order to help our writers.

I, along with you, am expecting the same great content being written from many different areas of the church each month. Instead of each writer struggling to find something to write without much direction, we now have a focus this year. Each section in the newsletter will be written on a main theme for that month. For example, if the topic was to be, lets say “cookies”; each person would base their article on the theme of cookies that month. The person writing from the view of Youth Ministry might focus on how you can never have enough cookies for students and with that you can never have enough volunteers for student ministry. Not everyone can bake cookies and not everyone can do youth ministry, so you want to find the best and keep them. Or for another example, the worship section might have an article on how cookies and Christmas carols go together for a great event for the whole church. The Technology page might instruct the church on what a cookie is for Internet browsing and how it can help your church or hurt your church. Are you getting the picture now?

Now the above scenario is purely fictional but it would make for some great articles, don't you think? In all seriousness, The Barnabas Papers are meant to come along each church and help them right were they are at. In some cases it can serve as a staff meeting or a church council topic. My desire is that each church uses them in a way that advances the Kingdom of God in their specific setting. My hope is that each month's publication does not simply go into File 13 on our computer or the fireplace. Please provided me with some feedback and let me know if these topics are helping you and your church. The themes are already set for 2018, but your suggestions will help us shape the newsletter as we go.

Without further a due, I give you the January 2018 edition of the GCBA newsletter on the theme of Worship.

God Bless,
Preston

Evangelism

The Evangelistic Power of Worship

How can a service be both a worship service and seeker friendly?

By Rick Warren, published by Christianity Today

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2007/july-online-only/030527.html>

The question often comes up:

How can a service be both a worship service and seeker friendly?

At Saddleback we believe you can have both without compromising either.

When we speak of worship, we are talking about something only believers can do. Worship is from believers to God. We magnify God's name in worship by expressing our love and commitment to him. Unbelievers simply cannot do this.

Here is the simple definition of worship that we operate on at Saddleback:

"Worship is expressing our love to God for who he is, what he's said, and what he's doing."

"A clear message coupled with genuine worship will not only attract unbelievers, it will open their hearts to the power of the gospel."

We believe there are many appropriate ways to express our love to God: by praying, singing, obeying, trusting, giving, testifying, listening and responding to his Word, thanking, and many other expressions.

God—not man—is the focus and center of our worship.

God is the consumer of worship

Although unbelievers cannot truly worship, they can watch believers worship. They can observe the joy that we feel. They can see how we value God's Word and how we respond to it. They can hear how the Bible answers the problems and questions of life. They can notice how worship encourages, strengthens and changes us. They can sense when God is supernaturally moving in a service, although they won't be able to explain it.

When unbelievers watch genuine worship, it becomes a powerful witness. In Acts 2—on the day of Pentecost—God's presence was so evident in the disciples' worship service that it attracted the attention of unbelievers throughout the entire city!

Acts 2:6 says, "... a crowd came together." We know it was a big crowd because 3,000 people were saved that day. Why were those 3,000 people converted? **Because they felt God's presence and they understood the message.** I believe both of these elements are essential for worship to be a witness.

God's presence must be sensed in the service. More people are won to Christ by feeling God's presence than by all of our apologetic arguments combined.

Few people, if any, are converted to Christ on purely intellectual grounds. It is the sense of God's presence that melts hearts and explodes mental barriers. Worship without this yields few evangelistic results.

I believe there is an intimate connection between worship and evangelism.

In the first place, the goal of evangelism is to produce worshipers of God. The Bible tells us that "the Father seeks worshipers" (John 4:23). When we recruit worshipers, that's called evangelism.

On the other hand, worship provides the motivation for evangelism. It produces a desire in us to tell others about Christ. The result of Isaiah's powerful worship experience (Isaiah 6:1-8) was Isaiah saying, "Here am I, send me!" True worship causes us to witness.

In genuine worship God's presence is felt, God's pardon is offered, God's purposes are revealed, and God's power is displayed. That sounds to me like an ideal context for evangelism! I've noticed that when unbelievers watch believers relate to God in an intelligent, sincere manner it creates a desire to know God, too.

Continued on page 3

Evangelism (Continued)

Worship with sensitivity

Because genuine worship can have such a profound impact on unbelievers, we need to be very sensitive to their fears, hang-ups and needs when they are present in our worship services.

This is the principle Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 14:23: Paul commanded that tongues be limited in public worship. His reasoning? Speaking in tongues seems like foolishness to unbelievers. Paul didn't say tongues were foolish but only that they appear foolish to unbelievers.

"So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?" (1 Cor. 14:23)

I believe there is a larger principle behind this advice to the Corinthian church. The point Paul is making is that **we must be willing to adjust our worship practices when unbelievers are present**. God tells us to be sensitive to the hang-ups of unbelievers in our services! Being seeker-sensitive in our worship is a biblical command. I didn't think up this concept; Paul did!

Making worship understandable

Making a service "comfortable" for the unchurched doesn't mean changing your theology; it means changing the environment of the service—such as changing the way you greet visitors, the style of music you use, the Bible translation you preach from, and the kind of announcements you make in the service.

The message is not always comfortable. In fact, sometimes God's truth is very uncomfortable! Still we must teach "the whole counsel of God." Being seeker-sensitive does not limit what you say but it will affect how you say it.

We must make both the worship and the message understandable.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit miraculously translated the message into words each person understood. The crowd of unbelievers said, "We hear them telling in our own languages about the great things God has done!" Acts 2:11 (NCV)

This caused them to be converted. Even though God's presence was evident in the service, they wouldn't have known what to do if they hadn't been able to understand the message.

The unchurched are not asking for a watered-down message. The unchurched expect to hear the Bible when they come to church. They just want to hear how it relates to their lives. They can handle a clear, biblical message when it is delivered in terms they understand and in a tone that shows you respect and care about them. They are looking for solutions, not a scolding.

A clear message coupled with genuine worship will not only attract unbelievers, it will open their hearts to the power of the gospel. As they feel God's presence and understand the message they will walk away changed.

Worship, then, becomes much more than seeker-friendly. It becomes a source of joy to our God.

Rick Warren is pastor of [Saddleback Church](#) in Lake Forest, California.

Pastoral Ministry

I have two younger sisters. I'd love to tell you that we've always gotten along, put each other's needs and wants and preferences ahead of our own, but that was not the case, as any of you with brothers or sisters knows. Like many brothers and sisters growing up we fought constantly about all kinds of stuff, and it usually had to do with getting our own way no matter what, immediately and without compromise. Looking back, most of the things we would fight over were pretty dumb, and I'm really not sure how my parents retained their sanity.

Thankfully my sisters and I can reminisce and laugh about those kinds of things now, because we've grown out of that kind of childish behavior. But the selfish attitude behind that kind of behavior, the putting of our own wants, desires, and preferences first, and not regarding others, is unfortunately not something that we just grow out of, we just learn to express it in different ways. The expectation that I should be the one to get my way, that my preferences are the ones that should be met, and that if I don't like something it ought to change and it ought to change right now is an epidemic in our culture. You can see it in how businesses are run and how products are marketed: we want to sell you whatever you want however you want, after all, the customer is always right. You can see it in our politics on both sides: no compromise, no tolerance of different views, and no working together.

Christians are supposed to be different, but too often this me-first attitude is just as much of an epidemic inside of our churches as it is outside of our churches. Even Jesus' disciples fought with each other like four-year-old children. There is an instance in Jesus' ministry on this earth when Jesus is walking to Capernaum with his disciples. Jesus has just recently been teaching them about humility, suffering, death, surrender, and the cost of discipleship – but on the way to Capernaum they start arguing about which one of them was the greatest. The closest followers of Jesus were having a me-first fight. The Bible describes how Jesus calls all twelve of his disciples together and says this to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35). Can you imagine the expressions on the disciples' face after hearing this? How embarrassed and ashamed they must have been? But Jesus wasn't just talking to them, he was talking straight to us.

Our churches are supposed to reflect who we are in Christ through the power of his Spirit. This means that our worship together, including our worship services, is supposed to reflect this. We are supposed to serve one another and put others first even when we worship, because our worship has to do with God. How we worship as a church matters to God. It is not just something we can play at; it is not something that we are to do according to our preferences, or only in the way we're most comfortable with. Too many of us only feel comfortable worshipping if it is the same way we have always worshipped, regardless of what anyone else might think or feel. Too many of us are me-first when it comes to worship.

We need to remember and remind others that one of the primary reasons God puts us in a church is so we will learn what it means to be a servant of all, to put the needs of God and others ahead of ourselves, to submit our preferences to one another. God knows that we will never willingly do this on our own, so he created this magnificent multicultural, multigenerational, multiracial, diverse group of believers called the church to help us live together in Christ as a preview of the kingdom to come. This must be reflected in our worship. Pastor, what are you doing to lead your church toward this reality?

Gary L. Shultz Jr.
Senior Pastor
First Baptist Church, Fulton, MO

Discipleship / Sunday School Ministry

What has worship to do with Sunday School? Some of a certain age and experience are thinking of a time, where in the Sunday School opening we sang, recognized birthdays and anniversaries, and all met together before moving to our classes. Some will remember that Worship is one of the 5 purposes of Rick Warren's series of books on life and the church. As such, it is nominally included in the purpose of each class. Some teachers are now thinking, "How do I fit that into our schedule!?! We don't have enough time for a proper lesson as it is!" In fact none of these are the full picture and don't fret, dear teacher, the answer is better than you might think.

"worship is our response to the revelation of God's glory."

My favorite definition of worship came to me from a worship leader named Matt Papa. He says that worship is our response to the revelation of God's glory. In other words, when we see God's glory we naturally worship. We can't help it. Think of the scenes in the throne room in

Revelation. None of the characters are told what to do. We see their natural responses to being in the presence of God and seeing Him as He is. What does that mean for our Sunday School classes and discipleship groups?

Your group can help teach and model a fuller picture of worship. If worship means singing, then we are probably identifying worship with an emotional experience. Worship is emotional to be sure but until we join Him in Heaven (like we see in Revelation) the worship experiences in the Bible lead to action. Think of Isaiah 6, Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 9, and Acts 16:16 and following. When we see His glory we are convinced, or re-convinced, that God is holy, loving, and omnipotent. If those things are true, then obedience and joining Him on His mission are necessary responses. In discipleship, we show people how to put feet to the things they feel when God reveals His glory.

This also means that one thing we should aim at in our lessons is to reveal God's glory. We frequently come to the Bible to gain information. It would be even better to approach God's word trying to get to know a Person. As a teacher or an experienced student of God's word, we need to help others see this new goal along with encouraging their obedience to the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth day by day.

"This also means that one thing we should aim at in our lessons is to reveal God's glory."

Bro. LP Cook III
Associate Pastor
Union Hill Baptist Church

Worship Ministry

A CALL TO WORSHIP

Music Matters: An article by The Getty Team APRIL 25, 2016

<https://www.gettymusic.com/articlesandinterviews/2016/4/25/a-call-to-worship>

At the onset of a worship gathering, it is vital that both the worship team and the congregation understand that we come as an act of God's grace by invitation of God Himself.

Worship is not something that we conjure up ourselves and invite God to attend, but rather, worship only happens by God's invitation, which He issued in the blood of His Son. When we gather together, there is a very real sense in which we are joining the mighty chorus of angels, those who have gone before us, and indeed those that will come behind to lift up the name of Jesus and respond to the redemptive acts of God in Christ. It is not we, then, who call upon God to join our gathering, but instead it is God who calls us to join in a chorus of worship that has been going on since before creation and will continue into eternity, to which we have been granted perfect access because of the priestly work of Christ (Hebrews 10:19-25).

...it is God who calls us to join in a chorus of worship that has been going on since before creation and will continue into eternity...

An additional critical component when considering the first elements of the gathering time is helping people to see the transcendence, or the grandeur, of God. While it is absolutely true that God is near to all who call upon His name (Psalm 145:18), it is important to first understand the Holiness and manifold perfections of God as we experience the incredible immanence he provides, and the depth of His Gospel story. This is the framework of Romans 11:33-36, which then leads to the statement in chapter 12, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

As those who lead our people each week, let us endeavor to help our congregations see the greatness of God as we enter into corporate worship.

This article was provided by Bro. Brad Kerr, Associate Pastor at FBC Fulton. If your church has any questions on worship services, equipment, set up, etc., Brad is the guy to call.

Youth Ministry

Practical Solutions for the Problems of Youth Worship

written by Jason Carson October 19, 2015

<https://youthministry.com/the-decline-and-fall-of-youth-worship/>

The other day a youth pastor friend asked me a question that pinpoints a major shift that's changing his ministry landscape: "How do I get my kids to care about worship? Nothing seems to be working."

My friend isn't alone. The "worship problem" is quickly spreading, and deepening, in youth ministry. The worship culture that formed the foundation for so many things we do now seems to be crumbling. As a longtime worship leader, working with teenagers to craft environments that invite their friends into a greater intimacy with Jesus, I've noticed three underlying problems that are fueling this shift. And I also see three solutions that address those problems.

Problem #1: A Fickle Fan-Base and an Over-Saturated Culture

Ten years ago, the landscape for worship music was radically different. Most of our worship menu was served-up by Hillsong, Chris Tomlin, Matt Redman, and Tim Hughes. Everyone knew these artists, owned their CD's (remember those?), and felt connected to the exciting modern-worship era of the new Millennium. Students used to be way more connected to worship artists and songs than they are now. They actually paid for their music (so there was a personal investment), and they would listen to whole albums in one sitting, from first song to last. They would even read the CD booklet for background on the artist—they wanted to know the people who were creating the music.

Today, if a group of teenagers is sitting around listening to music, they might not make it through one full song—they're "over it" quickly. And forget about listening to two songs by the same artist, on the same album. The insanity! It's common to see kids on their phones and iPods switching to something new with nervous-tick frequency. There are exceptions to this norm, but most kids are looking to move on to something new before they've enjoyed the moment that they are in.

Solution: Stay relevant, and focus on familiarity.

This hurdle is tough to clear. There's an over-saturation of worship artists and new songs coming out all the time—we've gone from a half-dozen "big players" to hundreds of niche artists producing tens of thousands of songs. The fire-hose of new music makes it very difficult to balance "keeping up" while planting a worship culture that's familiar to everyone.

So, if you're not your group's passionate "expert" on worship music, find the students in your group who are. Ask what they're into, then get suggestions for new and relevant worship music. When you do this, you just got major buy-in kids in your group, and that usually spreads to others! If no one is into worship music in your group, ask youth workers at other churches about which songs work best for the kids in their groups. If all else fails, just Google "top modern worship songs."

Just like any other aspect of your ministry, you choose what kind of culture you'd like to create. I'd start with a foundation of three-to-five artists, and pick a maximum of 20 songs for the whole year. If you're teaching kids new songs every week by dozens of different artists, they're going to have trouble connecting. Remember, they're not really invested anymore—give them a reason to be!

Continued on page 8

Youth Ministry (continued)

Problem #2: It's a Bored and Passive Generation

Our culture's attempts to make life simple and easier have resulted in the busiest generation in history—even so, it's also the most bored and passive generation in history? The new normal for raising kids is teaching them that everything is a choice—before they can even talk! Do you want the red cup or the blue cup? Do you want chicken or pizza? Do you want milk or juice? So, of course, the first time these babies don't get a say in the matter, they have a meltdown! They've been trained to insist on their way in every situation.

A decade or so later, we have a stream of young teenagers entering our ministries that believe they are captains of their own ships and queens of their own castles. If they don't like something, then they're over it. If they don't feel like doing something, they find something else to do. If they get a text they don't like, they avoid it. If it's hard work, well, there had better be a good incentive. Most teenagers...

- struggle to engage in deep relationships,
- have a hard time with conflict resolution,
- are weak face-to-face communicators,
- lack discipline, and
- are unable to slow down in life.

Solution #2: Teach them depth, and focus on relationships.

If you think you can keep your teenagers entertained better than the rest of their culture, forget it! Your students have more than enough content to fill a lifetime. But what none of these distractions can give them, you can—real relationships. Nothing substitutes for the love and care of a real human being. Jesus reminded us that nothing is greater than love. He created us for community and formed us for friendship. There's not a student on the planet who doesn't need to be loved, seen, welcomed, encouraged, challenged, built up, and prayed-for.

No matter how bored or passive your students seem to be, your hands-on commitment to them is never wasted. In a hands-off world, everything matters—all the phone calls, texts, trips to games or activities, outings, prayers, lunch runs, crisis interventions, and hang-out times. Believe it or not, your students will remember these human interventions into their stories their whole lives. Most have never been taught patience or perseverance, so they're used to people quitting if they don't get immediate gratification. Your perseverance with them will shock their soul and open them to Jesus. Model faithfulness and commitment. Sink your roots into their lives, and show your students that you'll be there for them, because Jesus is there for you.

And as you're building intentional relationships with your students disciple them in worship. When you're driving with them, play worship music. Talk about what you're listening to—give them the back-story of the artist, and ask questions about the lyrics. Describe why you love certain songs. Point to worship songs as a profound source of encouragement in your everyday life. To cement your advocacy, take a few students to a worship concert. Nothing compares with a live worship experience. And, of course, ask them to help lead the group into a deeper experience of worship.

Continued on page 9

Youth Ministry (continued)

Problem #3: We've Focused On the Wrong Thing

Youth ministry is wild, fun, crazy, and chaotic. It's also more unpredictable and experimental than any other ministry in the church. We're experts on pizza parties, fun activities, big events, lock-ins, movie nights, game nights, root-beer floats, nachos, wacky videos, wacky leadership, and wacky lifestyles. We can watch Jimmy Fallon or a performer on Saturday Night Live do something, and skillfully copy it the next day.

But we can't copy Hillsong United or Rend Collective, no matter how hard we try. Sure, we can pour a lot of energy and creativity into a cool youth room, our stage may look hip and relevant, and even our worship team can look the part. Our screen technology might be cutting-edge, our lighting system calibrated just right, and our setting Pinterest-perfect. But we simply can't match the professional recording standards of recording artists. We don't have Phil Wickham as a worship leader, and it's not possible to match a professionally mixed recording. So don't kill yourself over all that stuff. Yes, strive for excellence. But never make it the point.

Solution #3: Teach them worship, and focus on the point.

Jesus said a time is coming when the true worshippers will worship him "in Spirit and in truth." Worship is a lifestyle. Our students are on a journey, so don't give up on them! There was a time when worship didn't mean a lot to you—look where God has you now.

The word worship literally means "worth-ship." Show your group what Jesus is worth. Introduce them to his beauty. Teach a four-week series on why we worship. For those who don't want to sing, and them to look at the words on the screen and make the words their prayer. Challenge them to lay down their choices for a few minutes to focus on their connection to God. As they warm up to it, teach them about generosity in praise. Model the importance of being still, of a "broken and contrite heart." Invite them to do what all people have done for all time—use their bodies to express their "spiritual act of worship." Connect them back to their foundational purpose in life—to know Jesus and worship him with all their heart.

And don't forget—Jesus is the point of it all. So put down that pizza, we've got a God to worship!

Jason is a founding member of the seminal Christian ska band The OC Supertones, and he's a longtime youth pastor and worship leader in Southern California.

Technology in Ministry

Disposable Worship: a caution about using too much technology in worship

Tech Talk: An article by David Fitch April 2006

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2006/april-online-only/disposable-worship-caution-about-using-too-much-technology.html>

Last month I attended a "worship experience" that included smoke machines, lasers, digital graphic projections, and more flat panel screens than I could count. Technology is changing the way we worship, but what are we losing as a result? David Fitch, pastor of Life on the Vine Christian Community in Long Grove, Illinois, and author of The Great Giveaway (Baker, 2006), encourages us to use greater discernment when employing technology in worship.

I read a nice story recently about football player Jerome Bettis (aka "the Bus") returning home to Detroit for the Super Bowl. They described his whole journey and how he bought a house for his parents on a golf course in suburban Detroit. But he didn't stop there. Johnnie Bettis, the running back's mother, recalls: "When Jerome found out we were going to the laundromat, he said that wasn't acceptable and told us to go get a new washer and dryer. But I kind of liked the laundromat because you get to meet so many interesting people."

Mrs. Bettis' comments reminded me how technology can change the inherent "good" of the basic practices of our lives. Technology, in this case a washer and dryer, means no longer needing to go to the laundromat. As a result, we lose the "good" of meeting and engaging interesting people in our lives. We must therefore discern whether more technology (buying a washer and a dryer, a cell phone, or Tivo) is a good idea by considering more than just the capitalist reasons: "it's more efficient," "it saves time," or "it just looks and feels so good."

The same of course is true of worship. Not every technologically enhanced "improvement" necessarily improves our worship. The flashing of the Lord's Prayer on the screen with a powerful graphic may disable us from bowing as a community and saying it from our soul's memory - in submission together as a Body of Christ.

The brilliant Albert Borgmann in his book *Power Failure*, narrates for us how technology can change something that was once a "commanding reality" with deep personal and corporate value, and turn it into a "disposable reality" devoid of meaning and power. For example, the music symphony that took so much time, effort, tuning up of instruments, the staging of a concert hall . . . is now reduced to a handy CD that we can play at our convenience and command. He believes this shift to a disposable reality changes us and how we view our world.

Borgmann says technology can make certain wonderful "goods" in our lives disappear without us even knowing it. Example: the central fireplace is replaced by the invisible central air furnace. In the process the family that once gathered around the fireplace to get warm before heading off to bed no longer engages in the community-building routine. The family no longer talks about the day, tells stories, or prays together. Through technology we lose what Borgman calls a "focal practice." We lose a concrete, formative, and simple activity, and our lives are changed without ever noticing.

The question is obvious. Have we lost worship as a focal practice? By turning it into an "experience" saturated with convenient technology, have we made worship a disposable reality when in it is supposed to be a commanding reality?

Last night at a worship meeting we talked at length about the use of technology and graphic arts in our worship service this past Sunday. We want to retain the concrete nature and the formative practice of art in our church, but any art that shocks or produces a disposable experience we try to avoid. Art is really important in our church, but we must not produce disposable experiences. We must retain the focal practice of worship.

Focal practices and commanding realities are things we lose when we purchase a washer and dryer. These are things we lose when we turn worship into a theater show for the masses. And so we must be careful with the application of technology in worship. I am not saying don't use it! I am saying let us be discerning. I believe we need the candles, the wonder, and the mystery of the concrete embodiment of Christ's work at the Lord's Table. We need to kneel (if our knees will hold out) before God with all our brokenness. And we need to use the marvelous technologies of our day in worship in ways that resist making God, community, and worship disposable.

Revitalization

Remember to Worship during Revitalization

When you have come to the realization that your church needs to be revitalized, worship can seem difficult. Each week seeing more and more pews empty can put us in a negative mindset. This could bring us to place of giving up on the church and losing faith that God can revitalize His church. Today, I would like to give you 4 things to remember when you meet for worship during church revitalization.

1. Stop Counting Heads

Too many times I have caught myself counting the number of people in service. When I don't see a good number, I become disappointed and discourage, and then have to get up in front of the congregation and preach from the Word of God. From experience, your disappointment will come out in your message. Your congregation will see this and their moods will follow.

When we look at the number of people in church each Sunday, we forget why we are there. We go to church each Sunday to praise and Worship God.

When we stop counting heads and remember why we are there, our worship will be true. God will bless our worship and when we revitalize our church, people will come.

2. Stop believing the best days are in the past

Have you ever heard something like, "back in the day, we had 100 kids at VBS." Yes, I have heard that too. Many times we live in the past. We remember how great things were and believe that if we could only go back to that day then our worship each Sunday would be the best.

Here is the truth; we only want to remember the good times. There were also hard times in the good old days as well. We trick ourselves into thinking things were better because we have gotten through them. And yes, although your church had more people in worship back then, it doesn't mean it was a better time.

The mindset while in church revitalization should be that the best times are still to come. You should strive to see the best of the church in the coming years and each Sunday you come to worship, it should mean that it is the best Sunday that your church has had. The best group, the best worship, and then the next Sunday will be better than the last.

3. Remember your core

If your church has bonded together and has come to the difficult but much-needed knowledge that your church needs revitalization, then this core group is in the best spot for worship to begin. The idea is that you all have come through a very hard time and now are seeking God's will for the church. Coming to reality and confessing that your church needs help, may make you feel vulnerable and discouraged. However, you should now look at the core group of believers, the ones that do not want to see the church close its doors, and see them as the key people to worship with.

Each Sunday when you meet you should look at each other as family. A family that wants to serve and worship together. The core of the church is the thing that can be with the church forever. And if you worship together then you can do anything together.

4. Keep your focus on Christ

Simply, each week, come to church and focus on what Jesus can do. Don't let anything get in your way of praising our one true King. Once you walk into the church, leave everything negative in the parking lot and be happy that you have a savior that loves you.

This is one of the biggest keys to church revitalization and worship. Jesus is the reason for worship, the reason for the church, and the joy that gives us hope. No matter how bad things look, Jesus will get us through.

This article was written by Bro. Wil Hoffmann, Pastor of Rising Sun Baptist Church.

The Worship Service

Understanding the Breakthrough Power of Worship

By Tommy Walker

<https://billygraham.org/story/understanding-the-breakthrough-power-of-worship/>

I can't remember how many times I have felt like God was a million miles away and then, in an instant, I recognized that He was closer than the air I breathe. The Bible says in Psalm 22:3 that He actually lives and dwells in our praises. This is the mystery and the miracle of the breakthrough power and presence of God when we worship! When we worship, we affirm the truth of God's Word, and it is being rooted deep in our hearts.

When I was 11 years old, the Jesus Movement was taking hold in my hometown of El Paso, Texas. The church I attended began to be filled with long-haired, barefoot hippies. We sang acapella songs like "Hallelujah" over and over again. It really was an authentic, powerful move of God, but I was very young, so most of the time I was bored and distracted. However, I do remember watching the Holy Spirit move on people's lives in a special way. I remember seeing high school kids worshipping and weeping at the mention of God's love. There was such an amazing sense of grace and unity among everyone.

One Friday night as a Christian band was playing "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know," it happened—for the first time, while observing everyone worshipping God, I began to sense God's presence. I've heard it said that worship is a picture of the Gospel in motion, and it certainly was for me that night. I saw people displaying a kind of personal, intimate relationship with God that I wanted and needed. A relationship that I knew was made possible only by the blood of Jesus.

One of my earliest memories is of my parents gathering us around my mom's baby grand piano and having us sing the old hymns of the church for what felt like hours. At 5, I would end up lying under the piano and eventually falling asleep. I didn't think much about Jesus and the Gospel then, but on that Friday night as the Christian band performed, the God we had sung about became my own personal God. I sensed Him saying to me for the first time "Tommy, I love you and I have called you to do great things for Me." I wept at the thought that the God of heaven wanted to save and use a young boy like me. I surrendered my life to Jesus that night. One of my life verses has been Psalm 40:3, "He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord" (NIV).

Every person is created to be a worshiper. God dwells and, I believe, manifests Himself in the praises of His people. It has always been my prayer when I write songs and lead worship that the breakthrough power of God would bring the lost to Him—just like it happened for me. After graduating from high school, I went to Bible college, and one of the areas I learned about was spiritual warfare. At first I resisted the training because I met people who spent so much time rebuking the devil. I thought they were giving the devil too much attention. To this day, I don't agree with everything I saw there, but over time I have recognized that we are in a battle and there truly is an enemy that is out to destroy us.

Several years ago when I was doing a worship event in a poor neighborhood in Zambia, I sensed a darkness all around us—poverty, violence, abuse, hopelessness, hunger. We worshiped the Lord every night for more than an hour before we felt we could even begin to present the Gospel. Only then did we sense a real breakthrough in the spirit, and we saw hundreds come to Christ.

Through that event and others like it, I came to realize that worship is how we allow God to fight our battles for us. You may be familiar with the story of Jehoshaphat. Second Chronicles 20:22 says, "As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated" (NIV). What a strange battle plan—but the result was that the Lord won the battle for them! There is something inherent in the act of worship that enables us to encounter the power of God like nothing else. It is not effective to simply tell someone to stop worrying; stop being proud; stop being self-consumed, distracted, insecure, bound and materialistic. But it is effective to tell them to start worshipping. When we make that decision to fix our eyes on Jesus, we quickly realize that God has already begun to release the grip these tendencies can have on our lives.

Worship is a declaration of our weakness and God's strength. I challenge you in your next point of need to make that hard choice to be a worshiper and let the breakthrough God fight your battle for you. When we worship, the invisible God is at work doing invisible and powerful things. We get realigned, refreshed and refueled; we find unspeakable joy and indescribable peace. We discover the breakthrough strength of God, which enables us to walk in the truth, live in His presence and see Him fight our battles for us. It is how we can put the beauty of the Gospel on display, receive His many blessings and at the same time be a blessing to the world.

Children / Family Ministry

Worship Interrupted: Sunday Morning with Little Ones

Kids Matter: An article by Kristin Tabb, November 27, 2016

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/worship-interrupted>

Attending worship with small children in tow can feel like trying to sleep with a helicopter hovering over your bed. What you want is refreshment and inspiration; what you get is low-level tension, discomfort, and distraction as you brace yourself for what might happen next.

Those who have attended worship with small children for a period of years, as I have, might begin to feel that the effort expended in the fight for focus isn't worth the seemingly small return received during the service. Amid sibling squabbles, trips to the bathroom, feet on the back of the pew in front of you, and misplaced comments — "Mama. Mama! Mama! What kind of dog is your favorite?" — it is easy to surrender to weariness and give up, going through the motions instead of reaching for fresh grace.

In those moments of wondering if there is any real purpose to our being present in worship, we may benefit from reminding ourselves of God's sufficiency, the nature of worship, and our calling to minister to our children.

Come, Everyone Who Thirsts

Left to my own resources, I lack the patience, perseverance, and perspective required to make it through Sunday after Sunday, and year after year, of distracted worship. I have my limits and I reach them quickly — particularly if I sense we may be distracting others around us as well.

God, however, has no limits, and he is not daunted at the thought of giving out grace yet again as I navigate minute 28 of another service with my littles. Scripture describes God as a living fountain, eager to sustain his creation (Psalm 36:9). Or, as one of my graduate school professors put it, "God is the all-sufficient supplier of all things." Fountains are for people who are thirsty; our weakness commends us to him. "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters!" (Isaiah 55:1).

God Parents Even Parents

So, let the distractions come — God has sovereignly ordained them, and they are invitations to depend on him for whatever is needed for this moment and the unexpected one five minutes away.

We know that God hears our pleas from the pews. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." (Luke 11:9). God loves to give us the gift of himself, through his Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). So, when he hears, "Father, help me to hear from you this morning" or, "Father, help me to be patient," he answers. In that moment, God is parenting me. And because my heavenly Father parents me, I have what I need to reflect his loving care to my children in the pews next to me.

"And because my heavenly Father parents me, I have what I need to reflect his loving care to my children in the pews next to me."

Continued on page 14

Children / Family Ministry

The Wonder of Worship Together

My husband and I sometimes joke that we attend the 9:10 service (our church's first Sunday service begins at 9am.) It doesn't seem to matter how early we begin to get everyone ready; by the time Bibles are found, shoes and coats are donned (and hats, mittens, and boots during Minnesota winters), and the bathroom has been visited by all, we will be ten minutes late to church.

While sometimes discouraged about our seemingly perpetual tardiness, for years we overlooked an important evidence of grace: our family was in church, together. We were late, but we were there. All of us. That fact alone declares something about God. He is worth a great deal to our family. He is worth the hassle, the effort, and the work it takes to get there. He is worth the embarrassment of showing up late. He is so worthy of all of it, and of so much more. That is what worship is: declaring God to be worthy, with our words and our actions.

Worship Through Parenting

But our continued presence in worship as a family is not the only declaration of God's worth that occurs when we attend service together. In the pews, as I interact with my children, my actions declare something about God, too. They may declare that he is patient and kind, and wants to draw them into his presence; or, they may declare that God is annoyed, impatient, and eager to discipline. While there is a place for setting and enforcing boundaries for the good of our family and others, how we go about it declares something about God to those around us — especially to our children.

Most preliterate children will remember little, if any, of the sermon they hear on Sunday. The preacher's advanced vocabulary and abstract ideas are difficult for young children to follow. They may not be able to read all the words to the songs.

But they will remember questions patiently answered, instructions given in kindness, and boundaries explained through the lens of God's great worth. They will recall Mom's arm around their shoulder or Dad's lifting them up so they can see during the singing. They will remember joyful faces singing and worn Bibles opened during the sermon. These are the legacy of parental worship, regardless of how many times it was interrupted.

So, when someone asks me whether or not we were able to worship while sitting with our littles, I hope I can say (regardless of how much of the sermon we caught, or how many songs we were able to sing beginning to end), "Yes! God was there, and he met us."

Missions

The Goal of Missions May Not Be What You Think

MAY 25, 2016 | [Chase Bowers](#) • [Scott Zeller](#)

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-goal-of-missions-may-not-be-what-you-think/>

What happened on January 2, 1998, altered the course of my (Chase's) life.

Along with thousands of other college students, I attended the second [Passion conference](#), which was then a new series of gatherings seeking to raise a banner for God's glory. I heard John Piper preach for the first time, and what he communicated about God's heart for the nations—specifically the idea that he was gathering for his fame a people from among all peoples—was paradigm-shifting for me.

Afterward I began digging into Piper's now-classic book on missions, *Let the Nations Be Glad* (Baker). It opens with groundshaking words:

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more.

This paragraph profoundly changed what I viewed as the goal of missions. Previously I'd assumed the goal of missions is the practice of missions: evangelism, church planting, and so on. But Piper pointed me to something bigger: the goal of missions is nothing less than the worship of God.

ENGINE OF WORSHIP

That worship is the fuel and goal of missions not only informs our theology, but also our practice. If worship is the goal, the local church is the primary instrument. Or, to use a car analogy, if worship is both the destination and the fuel of missions, the local church is the engine. Why? Because the local church is designed to be God's gathered worshipers on earth—a corporate display of his glory among the nations.

Throughout the apostle Paul's ministry, he was passionate about establishing the local church as the engine of missions. He submitted himself to local church authority in Jerusalem. He was sent out by a local church in Antioch. He instructed Titus to solidify the fledgling churches in Crete by establishing elders. He had a deep concern for local churches.

There were many exciting things about Paul's pioneering ministry. He proclaimed the gospel to the masses in Athens, Ephesus, and beyond. He proclaimed Christ to everyone from coworkers to ruling authorities. But what mattered most to Paul was what Christ himself had promised to build: a gospel church.

When the gospel goes out, we should expect new churches to form. The end game is not one believer, or even a few believers with a vague idea that they somehow share Christ. No, the goal of worshiping Jesus is accomplished by local churches—gathered bodies of believers, under the authority of elders, who are discipling others, holding fast to sound doctrine, practicing the Lord's Supper and baptism, and seeking to obey God.

Continued on page 16

Missions

QUIT CUTTING CORNERS

Some missions leaders and organizations dispute this point. It's unreasonable to expect healthy, mature, self-sustaining churches to be formed, they say—that's a "Western" notion. What matters more is reproducing informal small groups that we'll call "churches" for the sake of our numbers. This practice is tragic. When we become satisfied with less than the biblical ideal for missions, we manifest a sub-biblical understanding of how God desires to be praised. Of course, there are certain contexts where the forms will look different, but the biblical vision of the local church remains.

When Paul mentioned the church that met in Priscilla and Aquilla's home ([1 Cor. 16:19](#)), he wasn't confused in his use of "church." The aim was no different from the one Paul spoke of in Ephesians 4. It was the building of the body of Christ. Our aim must be nothing less today.

When building healthy local churches is ignored, pragmatism and impatience take hold. The Lord is not glorified by 10,000 "churches" planted in a compressed amount of time only to fall prey to prosperity theology, syncretism, or other eternally fatal errors.

SIGNPOSTS TO THE KINGDOM

God expresses his manifold wisdom when local churches meet together across the globe. So as we long for the day when redeemed rebels gather from every tribe, tongue, and nation to worship the Lamb slain, the local church is a microcosm of that great day.

Local churches are signposts pointing the way to Christ's kingdom—embassies of heaven on earthly soil. As we gather for worship, teaching, and table, and scatter for global witness, let's remember the goal of missions is the worship of God. And worship necessarily drives us to establish faithful churches of disciple-making disciples among all peoples.

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