

“Elements of a Solid Worship Assembly!”

Acts 20:7-12 (1 Corinthians 14:40)

Intro. – Gary Trudeau, creator of the Doonesbury comic strip (husband of Jane Pauley) can be so far left of the TRUTH you want to scream. But then, there are rare times (very rare) he can be so on target. An example of when he’s right on target was a week long run of Doonesbury that ran from May 17th – 21st, 1993. In this run, a guy by the name of Mike goes back for a reunion “at the scene of his youthful debauchery” called Walden. When he goes back he finds “Walden” this building which has been turned into a church. One of his buddies, Scott is the “Rev.” Read this panels with me on the screen...

Here is my point – if we wanted to, we could turn this church and this assembly time into a *dog and pony show*... We could pack this building out... But is such the purpose of our Lord’s Church? Is this the essence of worship, true worship to God? Would God be honored, would He be pleased?

Someone said, “Methods are many, principles are few; methods often change, principles never do.” This certainly is the case with true worship. To worship God in *spirit and truth* (John 4) means, THE MESSAGE DOES NOT CHANGE... Methods is another matter. Our Lord gives us liberty in this are of worship because He knew there would be a need for this. Yet, in many situations the basic format of METHODS in worship have not changed for twenty-five to fifty years. As a result, many worship assemblies are lifeless, mechanical, insincere and dull.

Purpose: to look at ten elements that help lead to a solid worship assembly

Some of these elements may strike you as insignificant and /or of no use. Bear with us as we show how our texts support these points making our worship times have the delicate balance of dignity with life!

I Start on TIME

A. Like It or Not

- we live in time conscious society – e.g. watches that beep, alarms that awaken, computers remind..
- Illus. – want to “turn back the clock” move to Ethiopia where they use the Julian Calendar which runs seven to eight years behind the Gregorian Calendar which we use...

B. TV Major Contributor

- making us aware of half hour and full hour segments where all important events/programs etc. go by the exact minute...
- many worship times begin 5 or more minute late – few notice this because it is the start time, but everyone notices whether or not finish on time.
- five minutes at the beginning of a worship time are just as important as five minutes at end!

II Come to GIVE Not to GET

A. Primary Reason to Gather

- to GIVE to God – note: worship in Scripture is ALWAYS GIVING TO GOD!...
- very word *worship* means “the giving of one’s full worth”

B. Fellowship Natural Result

- genuine/true Biblical worship will bring about encouragement/fellowship... recharging of our spiritual batteries...
- important to note this is NOT the reason for our coming together....
- we worship to honor/praise God, not to get goose bumps – must not enter as if we were entering an arena or concert hall with our arms folded, waiting to be entertained and pumped up.
- worship is anything but a spectator’s event... I urge us all to enter worship fully engaged to give!

III Come PREPARED

A. As Worshipers Come Prepared

- reduce Saturday evening activities: one reason little happens for us on Sunday morning is too much went on Saturday night!
 - Illus. – remember Saturday night was bath night, polish the shoes and watch Gunsmoke – point being, it communicated to all in the family that something special coming = Sunday!
- come Sunday morning play Christian music and forget the paper and the TV...
- learn to be pleasant
 - button = “If you have the love of Jesus in your heart, notify your face!”
 - Wm James (psychologist) “If you act the way you wish you felt, eventually you will feel the way you act.”
- once at the building PARTICIPATE – sing... pray... remember (X at His Table)... say “amen!” do this and more with INTENSITY!

B. As Worship Leaders Come Prepared

- if involved with helping upfront come prepared up and prayed up... more later
- if we’re coming to be with the King of kings, we should prepare accordingly!

IV Provide for the YOUNG PEOPLE

A. Never Underestimate a GOOD NURSERY

- Illus. – cartoon of mother and one man in a pew...
- unsung heroes are those who volunteer and work in the nursery... wouldn’t mind passing around...

B. Never Underestimate a GOOD YOUTH PROGRAM

- kids need to have lessons and times of singing etc. put specifically to their level – note: note saying baby the youth... saying need to teach the youth...
- in providing a good youth program the kids and the parents learn more and give more... families leave with a positive spirit rather than “man, let’s get out of here!”

V Avoid LAG TIME

A. Dead Air is Just That

- ten seconds of blank space during tv or radio time is a cardinal sin – you know there is a problem... tv/radio producers know the significance of every second...
- average worship assembly has several “lag times” leaving the impression we’re unprepared and what we’re doing isn’t all that important...

B. Practical Applications

- we can easily make “more time” for worship by doing away with “lag time”
- walk thru’s are already being utilized... = time to plan for more worship time with less lag time...

VI Utilize NEW MUSIC

A. Old Hymns Have Staying Power

- should come as no surprise = based on Scripture: “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”; “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”; “O Victory in Jesus”... I want my kids and all young people to learn and love these... and us to keep singing them...

B. Some Great New Songs

- some of these songs are just as Biblical as hymns urging involvement and participation specially for younger people...
- let’s utilize these great new songs and not make this an area of contention...

VII Change Worship Order PERIODICALLY

A. Worship Times Need a Basic Structure

room of a person who is disoriented...

- B. Lack of Change an Issue
 - if nothing is ever changed, worship times can become mundane and mechanical...
 - heaven is going to be a change – if totally against change = problem with heaven...
 - slight changes (in the areas that can be changed...) will keep worship genuine avoiding mundane...
 - not advocating change for the sake of change... am advocating change in changeable areas for the sake of enhancing our worship to Christ!

VIII Preach to the SAINTS

- A. Worship is for Christians
 - fully persuaded Sunday Worship Times are times for Christians
 - modern church growth advocates making Sunday Worship a “seeker oriented” i.e. worship into an evangelistic time...
 - church paper talking of its agenda being set by “the unchurched”...
 - if Christ is the Head of the Church (and He IS!) how about letting the Head set the agenda!?!
- B. Non-Christians Can Also Benefit
 - if they see majority of people present are Christians and they are actively participating... the non-Christian can and will benefit greatly...
 - messages pointed toward Christians will positively affect non-Christians as well... but this is a secondary affect and not the primary!

IX Emphasize INVITATION/DECISION Time

- A. Making Godly Decisions Necessary
 - this time is for Christians in that they are called upon to make decisions affecting the application of God’s Word that has just been preached.
 - to prolong decision time unduly degrades the Gospel and leaves the impression to non-Christians that if they respond they are doing us a favor...
- B. Accepting the Gift of Grace is Significant
 - people need to know decision to accept God’s gift of grace is vital, and that the time is short, and that the decision is all theirs!...
 - flip side to this = Christians need to see people becoming Christians...

X Dismiss ON TIME

- dragging folk through emotional marathons is not Biblical worship! Enough said!

Conclusion: Now how does all of this fit in with the texts? 1 Corinthians 14 speaks of worship that is “orderly” which means worship that is planned, prepared and participated...

The Acts text has a young man, Eutychus who fell asleep... I believe with the ten elements covered this morning such will lead to true, Biblical worship where there will be no falling asleep!