
GOD'S PATTERN FOR WORSHIP

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This section is a primer to help you and your church to understand what is essential in worship. This is not about music or style or performance, rather learning the history and the heart to know and love our Lord through praise and reverence.

Have you ever wondered why do we do Church the way we do? One of the topics for which we receive requests for information is why we do church worship services the way we do. *Why can't I just do what I feel is best, or find out what my people and neighborhood would want and do that? Is there a reason behind our traditions? Or, is it just meaningless rhetoric we repeat over and over, year after year, century after century.*

Well, there is a reason we *do church* the way most practice it today. There are essential patterns, rooted in the Old Testament, that God requires so we can respond to and give honor to Him. These patterns, practiced by the early church, have evolved into what we have today.

Then we will discover what God has to say to us on how we run our worship services, what are the essentials, and what must be avoided.

What is Worship?

Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 50; Psalm 65:13; 79:13; 95:6-7; 100; 150; Matthew 4:10; 2:2,11; 14:33; John 4:23; 9:35-38; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 4

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations (Psalm 100).

Worship is a covenant and call from our Lord to come before Him and meet with Him with reverence, gladness, and joy. It is a call to know Him intimately and express appreciation to Him with praise and thanksgiving, doing so with passion, sincerity, conviction, and in reverent fear and trembling. Worship is the aptitude, attitude, and practice of expressing the desire to know our Lord and Savior further, and being grateful for Who He Is and what He has done for us. Worship is the giving of our best to Him. And, we do this because we are His;

we give Him our heart that is already His. He has given His best to us already; in addition, we are enveloped into His eternal love and care for pure and useful purposes.

Psalm 100 gives us a general overview of what worship is. First, this Psalm calls us to worship, summoning us to appear before and meet with God. In so doing, we recognize who He is, as He is the Audience, Object, and Focus of our worship. The Psalm then tells us that we are to be passionate about Him. This is not an emotional response, although it can be; it is more of a commitment to follow Him with all of our heart, soul, and mind. Our response is our duty from a heart He made in us. It is also a responsibility and a delight; we do it even when we do not feel like it because we do it to please Him and we find joy in that. Worship is giving our respect to Christ and expressing our joy for Who He is. We are the people whom He has made and redeemed so that as individuals, we can worship and honor Him in our hearts and attitudes, then come together collectively to praise and honor Him as Lord of our lives.

The next thing this Psalm tells us is to realize that worship has a real, effectual purpose to discover and glorify God as LORD over all, including our daily lives, even when we do not see it. He is the center and reason for our worship; He is the principle center of attention, the focal point, the centrality, and the Supreme One we reference, acknowledge, and glorify. Worship is our opportunity to commune with Him, to be in union with Him who is the Lord and Creator of all, to come into His presence at His throne room and allow our hearts to be broken so we can give Him our best, our primary attention, and our foremost adoration. And, we do this with exuberance; that is, we bring Him our excitement along with our reverence. It is about His greatness, holiness, and sovereignty and our realization, with trembling and telling Him so, of His awesome nature. We must see His holiness in contrast to our sin, His love for us, and our unworthiness to receive it, so our fear and joy can be shown to Him.

Oh, the incredible assurance, the inconceivable hope, His offering to us (who are unworthy yet we receive it anyway) of His incomprehensible love and His incalculable faithfulness! We can know for certain, regardless of what we have seen or experienced, that our God is good. He is compassionate, and He loves us. He is kind, He cares, He does not condemn us when we deserve it, and He is Worthy beyond measure to receive our praise. Then, we can convey our earnest gratitude to Him, all in deep, real, authentic joy. Worship is joy because we are in Him and for Him, and here our joy is exuberance (Psalm 24; Hab. 2:20; Matt. 4:10; 6:6; Rom. 8).

Do You Know What Worship Is?

When the average Christian thinks about worship, he tends to think about music or how a service is planned out. Perhaps a favorite hymn comes to mind or a praise song that captivated him or her in some moving response. This is sad so

to speak, for music, as wonderful and impacting as it can be, is not worship. It is an expression of worship, but it is not worship. Worship is the attitude of our hearts in gratefulness for who our Lord Jesus Christ is and what He has done for you and me, and our commitment to express it with an attitude of gratitude in our daily lives. And, of course, we can use music to do this; however, true worship is meeting with Him, our heart pouring out to His. In application, worship is also the entirety of the church worship service; the reciting of creeds, liturgy, and the administration of the sacraments such as the Lord's Supper, the message, and prayer.

The problem many of us face in understanding and doing worship is we miss the main point. We get so caught up in the mechanics and formal preparations that we miss the reason for our coming together for worship. We, as pastors and leaders, seek to please our congregation with the latest movements in music worship and PowerPoint selections, so we center our worship on pleasing people, captivated by minor things and forgetting whom the main audience is. We place ourselves as the center reason for worship in our wants and desires, and forget its purpose.

Others think that worship is boring, or dread it, and thus neglect it. Do you think worship is boring? Do you dread dragging the kids to church with all the hassles that go with it? "For what?" you say. Perhaps, we become hard or disappointed with God and no longer feel like worshipping Him. Conceivably, we may only be interested in emotional reactions—how we feel and what we get—so there is no real, active, heartfelt participation on our part. Perhaps, the song selection and the melodic, correct, and favored instruments and harmony are not the problem; rather, it is our attitude and limited knowledge of what we are to do and be in worship.

There is no place in Scripture where someone encounters God and says it is not relevant or he or she is bored. If we become bored in our church, possibly it is our reverence and attitude that is wrong; perhaps our passion has disappeared. Worship becomes boring or a hassle because we want to be pleased, or because we yearn for whatever the latest happenings are and we are not receiving them. But, we have to realize that boredom comes from a heart that is detached from the focus and object of the worship, which is Christ. We are not paying attention to the One we should. Our boredom is a personal and spiritual problem of a lost focus, or of carelessness or laziness. It is like an addiction to the latest fad and what moves us rather than what we are to bring. We must reengage our hearts and minds, be renewed to Christ, and be satisfied by what He has done in us. When we worship, we are to respond to Him and only to Him. It comes down to our surrendering our will over to His, so He is more and we are submitted to Him (Isaiah 59:16; Psalm 34:8; 63:1-4; John 3:30; Rom. 12).

Yes, we can and should strive to make our worship services more engaging, more excellent, and be our best for His highest. But, it is not about

how we do it; it is about *why* we do it. Good worship is not about the “right things” as we see it; it is about being right in Christ and expressing our gratitude to Him. Our hearts need to be engaged in bringing our joy and gladness to and for Him as the object of our worship. Our desire needs to be satisfied by being in His presence, not by the melodies, the tunes, or the forms and procedures. We come into the Lord's presence with joy and exuberance from a heart of gratitude—not because of the pleasing sounds of the worship band or organ, or getting what we want from it. Never let worship be just an emotional response to the music, how the service is structured, or what we are used to; if this is so, you and your church have missed the point by a very large degree!

The bottom line of effectual, true worship of our Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord comes down to being God—centered and not self—centered, as in only interested in meeting the needs of those who come and not Who we are to proclaim. Worship is more a matter of substance than of form; authentic worship will spill out to all parts of our lives. It helps us focus on Christ and then embrace what we are called to do in life. Worship is not just what we do in the church; rather, it is what we do in our Christian lives. We then allow that attitude to climax in our worship services as we seek Him with our gratitude, delight, and affection.

Real worship is about Jesus as the Giver and the Receiver, knowing and practicing Him, not us. We are not to be selfish or self-centered in how we approach God. We are not to focus on what concerns or satisfies us; rather, our focus should be on how we come to Him and meet with Him—all to please Him. It has been said so well by St. Francis: *it is in giving that we receive*. Church and worship are not about what is offered to us or what we can get out of it; they are about how we offer ourselves to God. If we understand this, we please and honor our Lord and build a healthy, vibrant, Christ—centered church. If we do not get this, we play into the consumer mentality of current church trends and thinking that disrespects God and greatly miss the point of who and why we are Christians.

Worship Means We Are to Glorify Our Lord

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matthew 7:7-8)

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. (1 John 5:13-15)

Our chief purpose in life is to give Christ glory; this is what these passages

are all about. This is proclaimed in Scripture (Psalm 73:25-28; 1 Cor. 10:31; Rom. 11:36), in our confessions of faith, and must be so in the practice of our faith. Again, it is not about us, it is about Him! To worship Christ is to identify us in His purpose and will, not in ours. The key component, which is overlooked by some for dramatic effect and selfish inclinations, is who the focal point is. It must not be very convenient for some I guess, and when the church does not yield to this strong premise, we will fall to our own schemes and thus fail with His call. We may take pleasure in false emotional and sociological phenomena, but to deny the Glory to Christ is a very dangerous move that will turn and bite us hard later.

It is interesting to note that many false teachers use these verses out of their context to proclaim that God is a divine bellhop who delivers to us our whims and desires—that we seek Him to please ourselves and get what we want. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no guarantee that God will give us anything, and we certainly do not deserve anything. Out of His grace will come splendors and treasures for us in His time, perhaps in this life, but certainly in the life to come. It is this same perverted thinking that twists what worship is, falsifies who Christ is, and misrepresents how we are to approach Him.

What we need to ask ourselves is if the glory of God is in our mindset when we sit in our churches and begin to worship? If not, why not? To begin our worship, our minds need to be focused on Him, with the will and desire to glorify Christ. Perhaps we should ask ourselves, *what enchants me? What is my pleasure? Where is my treasure? Where is my gain?* These questions will show our character and where we receive our drive and thinking. These are the guidelines that motivate our designs and decisions, and how we treat our Lord and one another. This is also how collectively, we as a body of believers will treat our neighbors and one another. Having a mindset of glorifying Christ will affect all we do in life. It will enhance our relationships, center our church, and cause us to be more fruitful in what He has for us.

Remember that the essential element in worship is that all who proclaim God as Lord must also be devoted to Him. That is, we must love Him, we respect Him, and we fear (as in awe) and reverence Him. We are to worship Him and only Him in glory, and what He has done in deeds. We can take comfort and assurance that the worship we have toward the Father does not fall on deaf ears. We are meeting with our Father and not a tyrant. We are to seek His presence, apply it to ourselves, and then to others. Then, the blessings will abound and we can be the church we should be—a heartfelt, God-exalting church that really worships (Ex. 3:14-15; 15:11; Isa. 6:3; 41:4; John 20:28; Rev. 1:4-6).

Worship Means We Are to Fear our Lord

We are to “*Fear God.*” This means we are to reverence God as our Lord, not as an afterthought, when it is convenient or to regard as just as a “pal.” This

is a principle aspect of worship we must take seriously and heed. We are to come before God in this way, along with humbleness (1 Pet. 5:6). We bring Him our endearment and respect with more meaning, power, and intensity. This is the reverence and awe of God before His holiness that He seeks (Job 28:28; Prov. 1:7; 3:5; 8:13; 9:10; 16:6; 31:30; Psalm 2:11; 34:11; 111:10; Isa. 12:6; Eccl. 12:13; Mal. 1:14; Matt. 10: 27-33; Rom. 2:11; James 2:1). It does not mean we are afraid of Him; rather, we are fearful of His wrath and in awe of His presence (Matt. 11:28; Rom. 3).

The book of Proverbs states that the fear of God is the foundation of learning and growing, as Jesus confirmed in Matthew 10:27—33, making this precept clear. Fear helps us focus on Him, realizing His awesome holiness and our unworthiness. It enables us to grow away from our personal doubts and distractions into the embrace of His wonder. Then, we can bring Him a respectful attitude, one of wonder and admiration, and there is nothing that can hold us back from proclaiming His praise. Fear, in the context of the Matthew passage, helps us see how He loves us too. When we understand that we are precious in His sight, and that His deep love for us is true and real, we will have no need to drag along our anchors of dread and apprehension. We can let go and allow Him to reign and be Lord over us as our loving Father. We have to learn how much He indeed cares for us so we can trust Him even more to take us beyond what holds us back in life. In this way we can go deeper with Him, be able to use the gifts He brings, and take advantage of the opportunities that come. This fear of God will so infuse us with love that we will passionately desire to proclaim Him from the roof and mountaintops, as in *Praise God!*

Fear is how we are to come before God. Our word for “respect” is a frail comparison to its Hebrew and Greek equivalent. Thus, “fear” is used instead of “respect” or “reverence” in most English translations. In Proverbs and other Jewish wisdom literature, *the fear of God* is a foundational theme that we in the evangelical world have either forgotten or replaced with platitudes and ideas that fail in comparison. Too many of us have forsaken this necessity for true worship. However, realizing that the *fear of the LORD* is also the loving reverence for God that contains our love for Him may help us understand. This helps us embrace our submission to His Lordship of our lives, and causes us to keep His precepts and Word (Eccl. 12: 13).

Fear also means that God is God. He is our *King* (Mal. 1:14); therefore, we can and should see Him also as our *friend* (John 14). We should see Who He is in total character, not only as a friend, but also His position and power in the universe so we will stand in awe of Him and worship Him (Psalm 2:11; Isa. 12:6). *Fearing* God will also cause us to be fulfilled and content by being in Him (Job 28:28)!

What happens when we do not have a fear of God? It means we do not respect Him and continue to place ourselves first. Proverbs tells us that this is the

attitude of a *fool!* These are also the *reprobates* in Romans, chapter one, who trust in themselves and not God, who hate knowledge and correction. They seek distortion and destruction of themselves and others. They stir others to strife and contention, totally opposite of what we are to do on this earth (Prov. 1:22; 1:31-23; 5:12; 12:1; 14:1; 11; 20:3; 28:26; 29:11)!

This fear and reverence we must have for our Lord Jesus Christ must emerge in the workings of our life and in the uttering that we proclaim in lifestyles, convictions, and proclamations. We are to learn, grow, and pass on to others what we have learned. Whether we are a pastor or a pew-sitter, we all have the responsibility to proclaim Christ by whatever means, opportunities, or manner in which we have been called and gifted. We are to add to God's holiness, and point to His dignity as we proclaim His glory.

The goal of the Christian life is our wondrous fear/friendship with Christ and our worship of Him! We start with Him, and we end well with Him. We are to know and pursue Him and receive His election. He is the One we are to follow and praise, not the world and its ways that lead to distraction and destruction. This is the wonder of simplicity that is to fulfill and sustain us. Our value and worth are real and depend on who we are in Christ. We are wonderfully made, and made to proclaim Him. We are to embrace His love and let it flow to others from our "rooftop." This is whom we are, our identity that will keep us firm in Him and will fuel our passion and distinction. God will not be merely for our convenience; rather He will be our Lord. (He already is; it is our view of Him that changes.) That, in turn, changes our lives for the better. We can truly walk with Him faithfully and not be pretenders who only flatter Christ with their lips on Sundays and walk with the world and the devil on Monday (Isa 29:13; Gal. 5: 16-21). Passion that is grown from our faith and Fruit will encourage our devotion that will feed our walk in Him.

Worship is to be Real

Real, sincere, God—exalting adoration must be the focus of worship in our daily walk with Him. It is also an imperative and covenantal call to have genuine, heartfelt, God—exalting reverence in the worship service. It must never lift up the leaders or be a performance to entertain either Christians or the public. The point I am seeking to make for you is that it is God who is the audience, and we are the people who are to praise and glorify Him!

Worship is real when we fully realize that it has only one true agenda, and that is...you should get this now...*God!* As He is our reason and purpose for life and all that we do, so our worship, as Scripture proclaims, must be also. It is not to be how we benefit from it, but how we promote God and His Kingdom. It is our response to His Word that affects our character, maturity, and growth in Him. We need to know Him before we can truly honor Him more deeply. As we get to know His holiness, character, and percepts, we seek to know, learn, and apply

them to our life. This encourages and promotes our ability, and supports our drive to worship. In a church, the essence of the service must propagate to the attendees to worship, as in the reading of the Word, the preaching of the Word, the liturgies, confessions, music, and so forth. All of these instruct us about His nature so we can know and worship Him more. God speaks to us, and then we speak back in our adorations, and in our behaviors toward one another (Psalm 105:3; 1 Cor. 6:20).

We are still to make our services friendly and innovative; there is nothing wrong with plays and contemporary themes as long as the service glorifies Christ and does not become merely a medium to entertain the people. God really does not care what instruments we use or how we structure the service as long as it is biblical, relevant to Him, and glorifying to Him. He seeks our heart, not our talents and abilities; our heart yearning after Him is the praise He seeks! Remember, the congregation is the performer; the worship team is the leader; and God is the audience! Don't mix these up! Seek to be your best and also bring your best. This is where all of the church growth and spiritual growth principles we do at *Into Thy Word* come to their focal point—the reason for our discipleship and maturity. All that we do in the church—from faith, fellowship, and outreach to the physical place where we meet—comes to this point and reason: TO WORSHIP CHRIST! (Psalm 138:1-4)!

We need to be aware that it is human nature to listen to our desires rather than to God. We live in a culture that tells us to be “me—centered,” yet God wants us to draw close to Him. Therefore, we have to get ourselves lined up with His Way and not ours. It is about our yielding to Him, not seeking to turn our church into a club; if we do this, we end up “lording it” over Him with our trends and faulty ideas! We are to worship in the way God has revealed to us; what He commands, not the way we prefer to see it. Worship is not about popularity, what a survey has revealed, or the latest inclinations, but it is our adoration and gratitude to Christ—and to Him alone! Worship is about aligning ourselves to Christ according to His precepts, not our preferences. If we do not, we are drawing near to idols and self-expressions, sweeping ourselves into idolatry. This is what the second commandment is all about (Ex. 20:4-6; 1 John 5:20-21).

Why is focusing on people's desires and needs for worship idolatry? Because, they become the centrality of the worship rather than God. Idolatry is wrong, because it is substituting the One True God for what is feeble—what we want! In the book of Exodus, right after God and Moses gave them this commandment, the Israelites blasphemed God and immediately broke the first two commandments by worshiping God as they saw fit, forgetting how God wanted them to do it. We have to see the sober nature of how we are called to come before Him. Again, the bottom line is that we are to be focused on God. As leaders in worship, we are not to be centered on or even concerned with the worshiper. (Ex. 20:18; 32:15; John 4:23-24)!

Worship is to Praise God

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. (Hebrews 13:15-16)

Our offerings today are not about dragging our livestock or pets to be sacrificed. Jesus was our sacrifice. So then, what do we bring? We bring ourselves! We bring a heart that desires Him, a will that is surrendered to Him, and a life that is dedicated to Him. Our sacrifice today is what flows from our heart, our love and adoration of our Lord. We are to be so full of love for our Lord that it flows to those around us. Our praise, as drawn from this text, is a peace offering of thanksgiving. This means our Lord wants us to be devoted to Him with our whole being, all the time and in all that we do.

There should be no circumstance we could ever face where praise does not flow from our lips. Our praise is to acknowledge Christ alone, by faith alone, and by His grace alone. There should be nothing from us but that faith. What we have to sacrifice is our person, ability, and availability to His purpose. When we first give ourselves, everything else will be easy because pride and hoarding will be eliminated as well as materialism. We can sacrifice our wallets and purses to His service. Time, talents, and treasures should flow willingly from us to Him in service with joy and gladness. This involves our intellect in knowing Him as well as our emotions in praising Him.

The biggest praise is what flows from our lips. The thanksgiving for His saving grace should flow with passion and conviction. The primary testimony that we are effectively praising God is the result our praise has on our friends, family, and neighbors. When we are in a healthy relationship of praise, the church reaps benefits of health and vitality. This beckons to the world who our Lord is and what He does. This is the sacrifice of praise because it distracts from our ego and self and points toward His presence. True praise places our focus on our Lord and helps remove us from our sin and selfish nature.

What Worship is Not

What worship is *not* is just a routine or rhetoric we do to fill air time on Sundays between 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., or something we do by compulsion or by habit. Worship is not about the set up, the instruments, or the traditions. It is not liturgies or confessions, although these are means to worship Him. Worship is not to be mundane or ordinary, although we can worship Him in the mundane and ordinary aspects of life. Our God is not ordinary or mundane; He is Magnificent and Omnipresent. Thus, we need to make sure our worship does not become monotonous or it will become meaningless. We must see ourselves in His presence whether we are in a splendid cathedral, on a beach, or in a basement, hiding from those who would persecute us.

Worship is not for unbelievers, although they are, of course, welcomed. Worship is not evangelism nor is it to be a platform from which to invite people to know Him. Worship is primarily for Believers who have been paid for by Christ, to come together to express praise for Him. It is about Christians proclaiming Christ as Lord. Thus, it must be taken seriously and passionately and never compromised or watered down. We must realize that the gospel and our Lord offend, and people who are not in Him will not understand it (John 6:61-67). That does not mean we patronize to their ways and do silly things like remove our cross or neuter our message or take the essence away, afraid we will hurt somebody's feelings. Yes, we will offend! Praise God in that! We are to evangelize with our attitudes and activities, but never water down or subjugate our worship of Him to please those who do not know or understand Him. When we do this, we miss the point and do our church a disservice, our community a disservice (because they are not getting an accurate picture of worship; they need to see sincerity, not pretentiousness) and most of all, we are not glorifying our Lord (Lev. 10:1-7; 1 Sam. 15:22; Psalm 1; 131; 2:11; Matt. 15:8-9)!

We tend to think that when we come to church, we should feel emotionally moved or be seeking what we can get out of it. Worship does not depend upon where we are or if we are pleased or moved. Yes, worship should be pleasing and we should be moved, but not in the way a lot of us Christians today think. We tend to think we are the ones to be pleased and moved, but this is the opposite of true worship. He is to be pleased and we should be moved when we are pleasing Him. It is not about feeling good or being caught up in the experience or being affirmed or feeling good about self. It is purely giving Christ the glory. It is about bringing self into His presence with awe and reverence, joy and exuberance! Do you see the difference? The exuberance, energy, and excitement we are to feel is not what we receive, it is what we give...what we give to Him...and then we should feel good about that too (Psalm 111:1; Isaiah 29:13; Matt. 15:6; 1 Cor. 11:20; Col. 2:23).

How do we get our worship right? Basically, we need to understand what worship is, and then we can go before our Lord in prayer, repent of our misguided ways of doing worship, and seek His ways. Then, we can start to do worship with sincerity, joy, and eagerness. Worship involves our whole being. We must engage our intellect so we can know Him and His precepts, then we are to "feel" Him and partake in His presence. These are exercises that we do not just get up and do; we slowly learn over the entirety of our earthly lives. We partake, and in the struggle and practice, we get to know Him and experience Him more. He will transform us; we have to receive His transforming power and grow it as we do with Faith and Fruit. As this takes place, we become more of His and less in us. We become mature in the Spirit and in the Truth, and our lives will touch others more profoundly and deeper. This also takes a commitment to continually practice walking in His presence. You can do it; the only one stopping you is you. Take the step and walk in His ways. Be a Christian who really and truly has a will

that has been transferred to Him and a mind that is renewed in Him, and then tell Him so with gladness and joy. This is a process that will last a lifetime, so be in prayer and seek Christ, for He first sought you!

This is the first part in a series of articles on worship that we will present to you over the coming months. We will also be introducing a new channel on “worship” soon, filled with resources to help you and your church on this journey.

Impacting Worship

What is Worship? (Part II)

"I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; before the gods I will sing your praise. I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word. When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted. May all the kings of the earth praise you, O LORD, when they hear the words of your mouth." Psalm 138:1-4

The word "impact" classically means something that has been "fixed or packed in," and colloquially as "a power of making a strong, immediate impression." For us, His impact means He has "fixed" us and "packed" Himself in us. He has not just left His impression or influence, rather His impact is wedged in us so He is more and we are less; thus, we are solely influenced and impressed by His power and work.

Impacting worship simply means that God is impacting you and you are letting Him know so, so He can continue to impact you and others around you. We are an offering to Him, an acknowledgment of His sovereignty and Lordship over our personal lives and over us as a church. It is experiencing His greatness come upon us and our response of praise that enables us to see Him for who He is and what He has done. In so doing, we can come to a place in our faith journey where we can increase our faith by the increase of our understanding of Him and the exercise of our ability and diligence to glorify Him.

Impacting worship is a relationship with God, a covenant with Him that stresses what and who He is and our response to Him. This is to have a most significant bearing upon every aspect of our lives, in that we are impressed by His work as He leads our church and us in synergy as we impact one another. The key to this is ever so simple, yet so hard for us to do. We must let God be God and His presence be connecting and influencing us so we are changed and renewed. This means we acknowledge His Lordship over our lives personally by the surrender of our will, and collectively as a church by focusing on His preeminence and sufficiency. This comes down to realizing He chose us; so, why should we not choose to know Him more and serve Him and His children (Psalm 24:4; John 3:30; Rom. 12; Gal. 2:20-21; Phil 3; Col. 3:17)?

Being Impacted by Christ

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be

transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2

We are called to be a *living sacrifice*, which means we are to be living in Christ, growing, and performing as agents of His. In worship, we are being impacted by what Christ has done for us and then letting Him know about it. The ancient Jews praised God as a continual lifestyle of worship. As this practice continues, it also refers to the fact that we belong solely to God, not to ourselves or anyone or anything else (Rom. 3:25; 6:12-17; 8:13; John 15:13-15; 37-38; 1 John 3:16), because His shed blood paid for us! We make our commitment to His election and truly dedicate our right to ourselves over to Christ. The bottom line is that we give Him our all. We live for Him. Consider that it is easy to die for a cause, but are we willing to live for one, to live for Him? It would mean living for Him as a tool, a life that is in perfect obedience we are poured out to Him and Him alone. So, is your strength gone over to Him? Do you trust and rely on Him? Do we acknowledge His holiness by our reverence and obedience (Psalm 96:9; 103)?

Overwhelmed? Do not fret; we are not alone in this essential matter. As Christians, the Spirit transforms us completely, including all we are, all that we are to be and do, our will, our plans and our opportunities are all His ~~and~~ He even gives us the ability to do this (2 Cor. 3:18). However, we cannot do it unless we give up our selfish will to His (John 3:30; Gal. 2:20-21; Phil. 3:1-14)! The incentive for our surrender to Christ is that His Way is better than ours. His plans are better than ours. He gave us a gift we cannot fathom, the gift of grace and eternal life, so why would we not seek to please our Living, Loving Lord by offering our worship to Him (Isaiah 1:12-13; 29:13; Jer. 6:19-20; Amos 5:21-23)?

Impacting worship is about how and how much we are offering up to God, giving back to Him what He has so graciously given us. This is the essence of how we are to manage our lives as Christians. This is how we must live. His Gospel is the transforming and converting power of His work in us. He transforms our fallen sinful nature into being acceptable and pleasing to God. This has outcomes and effects on all of us; it is the sum total of all of our attitudes, mindsets, and even personalities. His impact upon us will “affect” (influence) us to have “effects” (results); His work will achieve noticeable, positive results upon our social relationships by virtue of the dynamics of His love upon us, overflowing to those around us. His love is the fulfillment of the law in us, and working out all of our being. The Gospel is the transformation of our entirety, including our relationships, first with Him, then with ourselves, and then with others. Our Worship reflects this. It is our Christianity becoming an offering in love and service to others, in gratitude for what Christ has done in us. This impact is leading us to create the response in why we worship Him. No Christian, no matter what the education and/or job title is, can grow, mature, and lead purpose driven lives if we do not have a correct and reverent view of God (Eph. 1:3-14; Heb. 11:6; 1 John 1:7).

Impacting worship comes from the application of our faith in Christ. From our willingness to take His Gospel to a humble heart and a seeking mind, so we make and take our spiritual formation seriously. *Impacting worship is how I decide how I shall live in my faith, from doctrine to duty.* We are never to separate theology from practice because who our Lord is and what He has done is theology! Theology is the “who” and “why” that translates into the “do” and “be” of life. The question is, will we be dedicated to our Lord, or to ourselves? Remember that the Bible never separates the doctrine from our duty, or faith from our practice of life. When we are *living sacrifices*, we are being affected to be effective. *Impacting worship* is real and a practical aspect of the Gospel being used and displayed in us. We have been saved, not because of any effort or reason on our part except the faith that points to God’s glory. So, what do we do with it now? How do we tell Him so? How we live to others and ourselves enables us to take it to our church and to the streets of our lives (1 Cor. 10:31).

The problem is that most Christians respond to His impact with a “rear end” firmly planted in a pew that goes nowhere in service or glory to Christ. They hold on to a will that will not allow conviction or change to their routine or life. Their doctrines do not translate to duty or to life. Thus, church is just a club for comfort and not a “huddle” to strategize and put forward how to play the game of the Christian life after receiving orders from our *Coach*. Worship, then, is not “real,” or, it is all about what we expect and want, unwilling to give what God wants. *Impacting worship* will see a change from the emphasis of “anthropocentric,” which is serving ourselves by how we worship God, to the emphasis of “Christocentric” worship, which is really worshiping God by placing Him first and foremost. This will help us go from our personal quest for prominence and position to seeking His glory and preeminence (Psalm 115:1; Isa. 42:8). Thus, *impacting worship* also sees the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as our Lord. There will be an application that creates change as we go from being prideful, hardened, and judgmental to being poured out to Him and exercising the Fruits to others (1 Cor. 13; Gal. 5:19-22; 2 Pet 1: 5-11).

We need to know that Christ calls us to change our minds like we change the oil in the car. This is what Romans 12 is about—to be a “devotee” to Christ. In other words, we are to be changed persons so we can be authentic, impacting worshipers so we can be change agents to others. Being a living sacrifice is a key aspect of our growth and maturity in the faith. The purpose of knowing God’s principles and the study of His Word is not just the knowledge we gain (which is very important), but our supreme goal is what we do with that knowledge. His work in us is to be applied, not just studied—or ignored. Our devotion to Christ must be rooted in our minds, then allow the doctrine to translate it to our feet and the rest of our bodies in between. Our *impacting worship* will influence the body, both our individual human body as well as a body of believers in relation to all those around us. It is our duty.

We have to realize that pleasing ourselves (as so many of us pursue) is not the goal of the Christian life either. Rather, we are to follow Christ and be imitators of His character, letting it transform our character. We are to do this through love and the acceptance of others as Christ did with us, even though we did not deserve it.

God, of course, does not need our permission or will to impact us; He does this by His election. But, our continued commitment and worship of Him requires our extended efforts that He rarely overwrites. Being a living sacrifice is something we do; it is our share in our covenant with Him. He help us, but we must put in effort, and not just wait for Him or His overwrite. He overwrites our will for our conversion, then He seeds us with faith and opportunities; it is up to us to grow in and with it. So, we need to take His impact and grow it further so we are worshiping Him.

The problem with many of my associates in ministry is that they think *Christ impacting* is just emotional or something we do not need to work on. They see *impacting worship* as how piercing the music is and measure the quality of our services by technical standards. Worship becomes the procedural of the staff so it is pleasing to the congregation, and thus we ignore its prime purpose. Worship becomes about how it feels, how it is bearing to our members emotions and outlooks, not about how we are impacted by Christ so we are changing and thus praising Christ for what He has done in us. Real *impacting worship* will help us connect to God, then to one another, and then to the community. When we are not impacted, we are not worshiping rightly, and thus our connections with God and others will be skewed and messed up.

The Key to Worship is not Preference or Style

The key to worship is not how or where we do it, as long as we come as humble, contrite people poured out before His Majesty. *Impacting worship* is our aptitude and attitude from what He gives that seeks His glory as the reason for our worship. It is not about methodologies or liturgies or ritual or the substances of worship. It is honoring The Substance, Christ as our Lord, personally, collectively, and passionately in truth. Worship is to be lived out in our lives, attitudes, and relationships. For our worship to be impacting, Christ must be impacting us. The key is, He already is impacting you if you are a real, authentic Christian, one whose faith is in Christ. Thus, we must bend our will to allow His impact to reach us more deeply and more fervently, especially as we “run” our churches. He is to be our top priority, not how the choir is arranged or what song or hymn is our favorite. Christ can be glorified and worshiped in a dusty basement or in a magnificent cathedral, and He can be blasphemed in these same places. It is our capacity for and attitude toward worship that shows our true worship, and that also points others to Him.

Remember that the essential element in worship is that all who proclaim

God as Lord must also be devoted to Him. Worship is the attitude of our hearts in fellowship with Him, and is the result of our gratefulness for who our Lord Jesus Christ is, what He has done for you and me, and our commitment to express these essential qualities with an attitude of gratitude in both our daily lives and our church services. True worship is allowing His Spirit to penetrate us so we are meeting with Him, our heart pouring out to His (Gen. 12:8; Rom. 8:24-27; Phil. 2:5).

The key to *impacting worship* is not about style or preference. It is not to be rushed or coerced. It is not reciting empty platitudes, nor is it manipulating or a chore. What I mean by *impacting* is not style; it is our involvement in and with The Substance behind it. It is the passion and power from the Spirit that moves people from the desire to please themselves toward a desire to please God and praise Him. It is living a holy lifestyle to and for Him. It is giving God the best of what we have because He has given us the best that He has. It is the moving of our preferences of seeking what we want and what is exciting to us to being excited for who Christ is. What does this mean in a church service? You can fully engage in the pipe organ, have a full 100-piece orchestra, have a guitar and keyboard, or have no music at all. The style and instruments are not the key; it is the heart, approach, and passion behind it. The people, you and me, worshipping Christ must see it as a glorious duty by gratitude. The worship leaders must be there for our Lord and for no other reason. *Impacting worship* is not about preference or pretence; rather, it is seeking His presence. People must be willing and able to be play to the Lord, not to please an audience. Worship that impacts is an offering by praising Christ collectively for what He has done in us all.

There are, of course, many different styles of worship in music and arrangement. There are as many ways to engage in church-centered worship as one can count. Each denomination has its own distinctions and each church its own variations. There are also new contemporary ways that keep coming out. Some of the ways are more popular than others. For example, more and more people are becoming attracted to a contemporary praise band, replacing the organ. But that does not mean the organ is bad, or that we should stop using it. Nor does it mean that doing whatever the current trends are is the right thing to do. What it does mean is that we need to look at starting and providing a service that is primarily focused on pleasing and worshipping God, and secondary to be focused on attracting people.

The main focus is to be our love and passion for Christ as our Lord, and what He has done for us fervently being made known. We are to pour out our hearts and minds with gratitude and adoration. The object of the worship experience is our Lord. And, I cannot make this point any clearer: the object is not arrangements, talent, or personalities. The object is not the style or the people who are singing and playing the instruments. We are not putting on a performance just to entertain others; we are performing for our Lord. The worship experience must never be just a show. Yes, we are to perform our best for His

glory, but not by the sacrifice of the main thing!

Worship is not just music. It is a tool that we use to express our love and devotion to Him. Worship also consists of reading Scripture, prayer, preaching and even the sacraments. If you leave out prayer, you are leaving out a vital component. If you are not using Scripture and only sing songs, you are not worshipping God with the best that He has given you. It would be like making a sandwich with cheese and mayonnaise and leaving out the bread and meat. Music is one component and tool that we can use to express our love for Him. Music is very important as it has the power to move us emotionally that the other components may not do. We are created as emotional beings. Expressing our emotions in worship is important, as long as we do it with order and out of gratitude (1 Cor. 14). Worship is about what God has done for us; it is not about putting on a show.

Remember, it is not about style. I'm always running into young people who like various things such as the gothic and liturgical style as well as the contemporary. At first a desire for what is traditional amazed me, as I did not like that stuff when I was young. So you need to find your church's personality and distinction and express yourself accordingly. Find out what your people want. What are their needs? What style are you able to do? And, also make sure you educate them on the principle reasons of why we worship. Most Christians just do not know and that is why we have so many aberrant ways of doing it. You may need to have two distinct services to appeal to more people as long as the primary focus is maintained.

Traditionally there are five main "styles" into which most of today's and yesterday's worship formats fit.

There is the "Traditional" that incorporates more classical music such as hymns, choir or Psalter (signing of Psalms), and a formal order in which each service follows. There are certain prayers, liturgies, and parts of the service that are repetitious each week. These services have an organ and piano and rarely would have any more modern instruments. They are rooted in Scripture, tradition, and usually follow denominational and theological guidelines.

The 'Liturgical' style is seemingly even more rigid. It incorporates formal hymns and readings from a prayer book or missal. Robes, incense, and perhaps "alter boys" all contribute to the service. These first two styles have a distinction of a sense of majesty and honor to God, a sense of holiness that provides the worshipping congregation with the impression that they are in the presence of God, as worship is meant to do. One of the reasons some people do not like this form is that it also creates a sense of over-separation between God and the people. They feel they are not a part of it; the distance is too vast for them to comprehend and worship with a cheerful heart. This is the perspective from various people's feelings and experiences. However, the traditional service can

be just as impacting as a contemporary—orientated one if the heart and passion are there—perhaps even more so.

The *Praise and Worship* style has less formality and more of a free flowing, upbeat atmosphere. Newer forms of music, arrangements, and instruments provide the tone. They may incorporate some of the same aspects as a traditional service but be more personal. A sense of closeness is given to the congregation. Thus, people tend to think this form of worship is more pleasing to God because they feel better in it. In actuality however, this form, though it has great merit to it, may miss many key, essential elements of what God requires (to be discussed in Part Three, coming in the Fall). Multi-media may be used, such as PowerPoint instead of hymnals. The congregation does most of the singing instead of a choir; there may be a few praise/song leaders.

One of the newer formats is called the *Seeker-Sensitive* service. Its distinction is even more of a casual atmosphere than the praise style. Some churches may have only a few songs with the addition of drama. The choice of songs tends to be secular to create familiarity with the new churchgoer, and then gradually flows into more Christian music. It is viewed as a cushion that prepares people who are far, far from Him to worship God. These people may never have even set foot in a church, and the *seeker service* is more conducive in getting them ready so they are not culturally shocked away from the church. However, the ongoing research we have been doing at Into Thy Word Ministries has not found any credible credence to this theory; rather, people are attracted to a church, not by its style or song choice, but by the people who are there. It is about being hospitable, treating others with respect in love, being authentic, and quality, and uncompromising Bible teaching. When the Bible is watered down, more people may be attracted, but disciples are not made, nor is authentic faith built that Christ called us to. Even with the best teaching and worship, if you ignore people, treat them as second class citizens, or are judgmental, you will soon be in a pew all by yourself (Matt. 28:18-20).

Sometimes in the *Seeker-Sensitive* service, the congregation does not sing at all, and a performance style or “concert” feel takes that place as if they were at a play or in a theater. This is also done to attract the un-churched who might feel more comfortable in a less formal setting. When this style is properly designed (by not compromising the Word), it gradually generates trust with new people and then filters them into small groups or other services or adult classes with more “meat.” One of the drawbacks to this style is seemingly a loss of holiness and awe that the more traditional forms yield.

The last category is a “Blended” style that incorporates two or more of the previous styles. This form is becoming more popular as smaller churches are sometimes unable to have more than one service, so they create a combination service to accommodate more needs in their congregation. These services tend to be more spontaneous, with a hymn and then a praise chorus accompanied by

an organ and a guitar. This can be a phenomenally great way to worship God (as my church does a great job at doing), or it can be a mess.

A lot of these styles will overlap and vary between denominations and churches. I'm not saying one is better than another. Some styles are better suited to a particular congregation at a particular time. Some people feel closer to God in a liturgical setting, and others prefer the closeness they receive from a contemporary service. You are dealing with feelings and perceptions based on experiences and what people feel comfortable with in their views and understandings together with what they think worship is about (again, this is why it is very important that you and your congregation know what God seeks in worship.) Ultimately, people will come, grow, and worship when the main purpose of pouring self out to God is the central theme and not just accommodating a style or putting on a performance.

Find your niche, do it with love and passion, and be uncompromising in His precepts. I once did a church plant with a top Church Growth "guru." We had the finest musicians, a band from a famous music group. Yet, the church down the street with amateur keyboards and a guitar attracted more people because their hearts were in the right place; ours was not. We were putting on a performance; they were praising God. What is your church doing? Are you praising the Holy God of the universe? Are you expressing your love to Christ? This is what *impacting worship* is all about.

Impacting Worship is a Responsibility

As church leaders, we are called to inspire people to worship Christ as Lord. We are to show our people that God is real in our lives, and that He has a tangible effect upon us so they will have a model and an inspiration to follow. This is what it means to lead, to show the way—His Way—by living it and venturing there first. We must have encountered God first and foremost before we can ask others to do the same. The impact of Christ in our lives cannot be pretended or manipulated, nor can it be an obligation or a show. *Impacting worship* must be in and from us first. It must be real, and we must first be surrendered to Christ as "Lord" and not "lord" before we expect it to come upon those we lead. We are to show and demonstrate to those who think this is too hard or scary that this impact is a real joy; it is a pleasure to grow in Christ. We are to show we are not limited; we are liberated in Him, and He is our joyfulness and our Lord. Our success as a church is not who or how many come; it is determined by what we do with those who do come. Leading others to encounter Christ and experience His presence in a deeper, more impacting way is paramount. Motivating them into His Way and being living sacrifices is what a church and its worship are designed for (Rom. 11:33-36; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; Rev. 5:12).

The result for us is that our worship must not be childish mutterings. We must realize the supremacy and nature of our Lord and direct our worship to the

One we honor. So, the individual Christian and the church should be in committed prayer and practicing authentic *impacting worship*. Our call is to have our personal and collective worship go way beyond blind repetitions and trivial offerings or faulty desires, so we are led by the Spirit into the mysteries and prevalence of our Lord, which will grow the church closer and tighter to Christ and it will be more open and caring to those around us. This we do with boldness and confidence, and without any selfish ambitions. Coming before our Lord this way was a privilege to the ancient Jewish high priest. It was done by one person, once a year only, and now is available to any believer who walks the way of our Lord (Psalm 50:21; 1 Cor. 2:13-16).

Impacting worship helps us to manifest forgiveness to each other, which translates into our accountability to God and our mutual accountability to one another. Therefore, we acknowledge and hold each other to our promises and to our relationships. We need not go to a Priest, but to God directly, Whom we can trust with our authentic confession; our profession and repentance is our claim of our righteousness, who we are in Christ.

The person who engages in *impacting worship* is the Christian who is surrendered to the Lordship of Christ and has a full understanding of prayer. This person practices prayer so that it affects them and then impacts the lives of others because of his or her worship, devotion, and prayer. These specific acts of worship and prayer are crucial for the church to be its best for God's glory. We are to be our best to carry out the true purpose of the church rather than warming the pews with our rears and then ignoring our neighborhoods and call! Christ needs us to be on fire with passion and conviction that flows from our personal growth and the Spirit using our worship, learning, prayer, and study life. Then, our churches will be filled with Christ's children worshipping and caring for one another, the community, and the world. Christ does not need gossipmongers and hypocrites who feel their self-righteousness is exempt from His call. Christ wants you and me to be in Him; so, let's go out and prepare ourselves to be better servants for His people!

Getting our Church to "Get It!"

First of all, the purpose of these articles is to show you from God's percepts what worship is, so you can know and then teach your people to know too. You can also start to educate your church about true worship by stopping for a couple of weeks what you normally do and just meet with God in simplicity. Stop the PowerPoint, stop the organ, stop the praise band, stop the symphony and just come together simply in prayer, then sing some hymns or praise songs without compliment of instruments or just with a guitar or piano. After the first song, stop for a short explanation of what worship is, and experience His presence, practice His presence, and savor His presence and His goodness. Then pray, and resume the service. Do this a few times a year as a reminder that worship is not about the services and song, it is about our hearts pouring out to

His! Then, come together with your leadership and pray! Commit to structure your worship for God, to please and glorify Him rather than doing what you or others want (Psalm 22:22-23; 138:2; John 4:23-24; Acts 2:42; Phil. 2:10-11; 3:3).

Impacting worship knows that our primary purpose, as our confessions state, is "to glorify God and worship Him forever." That means we are transformed by God's grace for His glory (Job 40:6-41:34; Psalm 29:1-2; Jer. 9:23-24). You may know this, but do the people in your church? Do they know that Jesus extends His hand of grace to us, who do not deserve it? Do they realize His sacrificial death by being crucified, and His resurrection? Do they realize He intercedes for us and pays our debt of sin before the Father? Do they realize we receive His grace apart from any merit or worth on our part? Do they realize what a privilege we have been given in that closeness to Him that the Prophets of old so passionately desired? Do they know that we should feel gratitude for what Christ has done and praise Him accordingly? Do they know we are to come to Him in humbleness and surrender to His Supremacy and wonder? This is what we celebrate when we come to worship at church (Matt. 4:17, 7:13-27, 9:13, 16:24-26; Luke 14:26-33; John 1:12-13; Acts 20:27; Rom. 3-5, 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 2:2, 9:16; 2 Cor. 4:5, 7:10; Gal. 1:6-8; Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 2:9-18; 1 John 2:22-23, 4:1-4, 5:1-3)!

Real, heartfelt, God-exalting adoration must be the focus of the worship service. It must never lift up the leaders or be a performance for entertainment. It is God who is the audience and we are the people who are to praise and glorify Him! We are still to make our services friendly and innovative, as there is nothing wrong with being creative—even using drama and contemporary themes—as long as the service glorifies Christ and is not just a medium meant to entertain the people. Remember, the congregation is the performer, the worship team is the leader, and God is the audience! Don't mix these up! Many of my colleagues get this skewed as they look to business paradigms and trends for church growth principles and negate God's percepts (Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:7-9; Gal. 10: 1-10; 1 Thess. 2:4). You need to focus on Him, not what others have to say. The focal point—the reason for discipleship and maturity—is to lift up Christ and not be afraid to offend those who do not "get it." All that we do in the church--from faith, fellowship, and outreach to facilities--come to this point and reason: TO WORSHIP CHRIST (Psalm 138:1-4)!

The History of 'Doing Church' through the centuries

The Time of the Patriarchs

Before the Exodus, the Hebrew people worshiped God, following a simple pattern of praising Him, providing Him sacrifices, both of the farm animals and from the land with grain offerings (Gen. 4:3-5). Each family unit or clan held their worship as they saw fit. They had a fear of God (Gen. 2:3; Judg. 17:6; 21:25; Prov. 3:5), and knew it was a privilege to be able to draw near to God the Creator. There was no real unity or formula that we know of, other than the praise, sacrifice, and petition, or, as we say today, supplication--seeking help from God. Supplications comprise 99% of our prayers today (not supposed to, but they do, we forget intercession, thanksgiving...etc.), and since human nature has not changed, due to our sinful nature, we can surmise it was the same then too. Perhaps Adam himself established a worship tradition that was followed through the centuries until Moses. We only get a taste of what might have happened through the first few chapters in Genesis, and our understanding of ancient Hebrew culture only comes through archeology, Scripture, Jewish tradition and writings.

After God established a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12), he and the rest of the patriarchs worshiped God with sacrifices, singing, prayer, self-humbling confession of sin, then the retelling of God's promise and their special place as His chosen people. It was an awesome, special privilege to be allowed to worship the One True God. This pattern kept the Hebrews a close-knit family, and drew them together even during the persecution and turmoil while living in Egypt. In contrast, other ancient ethnic cultures, when faced with such adversity, either blended in with the dominant culture or disappeared. The Jews remained stable, set apart, and strong, and even grew through such tough times.

The Exodus

Then, a more specific model and framework was developed from the Mosaic Law, during, and polished after the Exodus. The primary model of worshiping God was due to a response to His provision and Grace. God laid out specific formulas on how He was to be worshiped; this is what the books, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, are all about.

The people are instructed on how to address and come before God, as well as how to deal with sin and human relationships. These new ways of worship were not so much new as they were expansions of what was already being done, cementing its urgency and importance. The new ways included a specific day, a unified way and place of doing a worship service, a Day of Atonement; and three feast days and rituals that formed the worship services and festivals.

Worship was then and still is now a means to honor God, glorify Him, and His good works, gifts, greatness, graciousness, mercy, judgment, power, instruction, and knowledge. The worship pointed to the coming of the Messiah *Christ* and what He would do. The main difference is the Christian worship today lifts up Christ, and what He has done, whereas the Jewish services of worship looked toward the coming of the Messiah--Christ. Thus, praise and thanksgiving were primary aspects in *doing* Church.

The major, striking similarities we have today with the Mosaic traditions are that the priests led the service as a large unified assembly. Even *Sunday School* finds its roots back then, as further instructions and teachings were carried out by the Levites (then, the Rabbis, during the captivity, in Jesus' time, and continued today) to the various tribes, clans, and families. Levites were assigned as teachers to family units who were to care and provide for them, while the Levite taught the Law.

The book of Psalms was and is the collected hymnal of the Jewish church service. Some of the Psalms date back to the Patriarchs, while others are *new*, written during the time of David and Solomon. They even included music notes for the worship leader. That is what the term, *Selah*, is!

The pattern of worship from the Law / Moses:

1. **The Sabbath**, the seventh day of rest and worship. The Sabbath was instituted at creation. This started on Friday evening and went all day Saturday. This was done at the temple meeting (tent of the Ark) before the Temple of Solomon was built, and then in the temple of Solomon centuries later.

Since the people did not have cars, there were also synagogues in every town, where the Levites led the services. These synagogues were further developed during the Exile. After the Exile, the Sabbath became a day for worship and the study of the Law, as well as a day of rest. Each family unit would take a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem every so often, just as Jesus did as a child with His earthly family. The term *Rabbi* meant *teacher* (not necessary a Levite), and they led the service after the captivity, during the time of Christ, and to the present. (Gen. 1:1-2:3; Ex. 16:21-30; 20:8-11; 31:12-17; 34:21; 35:1-3; Lev. 19:3; 30; 23:3f; 58:13-14; Num. 15:32-36; Duet. 5:12-15; Isa. 58; 13-14; Luke 2:41-50)

The Christian church today as a whole recognizes Sunday as the Sabbath and day to *do church* because it is the day Jesus rose from the dead (the exception is the Seventh Day Adventists, the Seventh Day Baptists and some Christian Messianic groups such as Jews for Jesus). But, Scripture is clear that day now is irrelevant, pointing out that every day is a day to honor God and worship Him (Matt. 12:1-12; Rom. 12:1; Col. 2:16-23; Heb. 4:8-11).

2. **The Sacrificial System** was the essential ritual that cleansed their sins. This is where burnt offering of animals, grains, and even baked goods were offered up to deal with their sin, and appeasing God's wrath. These sacrifices were personal purification and/or collective atonement for the town or the nation. They must be a true sacrifice, where the person would miss and lose out, suffer a loss, and give up any right to the item offered up to God. It must be pure, without blemish, and flawless. The entire universe is a testament to sacrifice, as the lamp's filament is sacrificing itself to give me light to write this article, and our sun burns its finite and limited fuel to warm our earth. All of creation and life is due to sacrifices of some kind. We may not see it; nevertheless, it is there. We need to acknowledge the importance of sacrifice, our Lord's sacrifice, and our hope to come (Ex. 13:1-16; Lev. 12-15; 17; Num. 19; 28:1-5).

In the church today, we may not have to drag the cat to the altar, or give up a valuable item, but we need to know that all things belong to God, and He provides for us. Christ is our perfect, flawless sacrifice who took our place to appease God's wrath and atone for our sins. Thus, He is the essential sacrificial Lamb, whose blood was shed for us.

3. **Annual Feasts.** Three were held each year to honor God and His provisions, including the Passover (Ex. 23:14-17; 34:23; Duet. 16:16.) These were also known as the pilgrimage festivals, because people would travel by family and clan units, sometimes very far, by foot. The people gathered to offer sacrifices and praise God for the bounty they received from Him. It was a time of great joy, as well as humbleness in the knowledge that God, as the great provider, made them the recipients of His grace and mercy. It was also a time when they celebrated their deliverance. It pointed to how God reconciles Himself to humanity, ultimately, in the final recompense and reconciler to come, Christ.
 - a. **The Passover**, otherwise called The Feast of Unleavened Bread, is celebrated because of God's mercy in sparing them when the Angel of death took out the entire first born of Egypt, humans as well as animals while he *passed over* the obedient Hebrews (Ex. 12; Lev. 23:5-8; Num. 28:16-25; Duet. 16:1-8). This was and is the biggest 'holiday' and festival, as it celebrated God's saving mercy shown through the exodus from oppression into the promise land. This was and still is celebrated the fourteenth day of the first month of the Jewish calendar, the month of *Nisan* (March/April).
 - b. **The Feast of Weeks**, also called *First Fruits*, *Harvests*, and *Pentecost*, this was celebrated on the sixth day of the month of *Sivan* (May/June). The priest would offer up to the Lord by waving two loaves of leavened bread (made with yeast, versus unleavened

made without yeast, for Passover), made from ripe grain that had just been harvested. The characteristic ritual of this feast was celebrated at the end of the grain harvest as thanks for the food, and was held (not celebrated much since, and perhaps before the time of Christ, but some orthodox groups still celebrate today) fifty days after the Passover. The term *Pentecost*, means *fiftieth*, because there was an interval of fifty days between Pentecost and Passover. (Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:15-22; Num. 28:26-31; Duet. 16:9-12). And it was on this feast day God chose to send His Spirit in permanence as recorded in Acts (Acts 2).

- c. **The Feast of Tabernacles**, or *Booths*, or *Ingathering*, this was celebrating how God led them through the desert for forty years, providing for them as He continues to do today. This was held in the seventh month of *Tishri* (Sept./Oct.), which celebrated the end of the agricultural year that began five days after the Day of Atonement and lasted seven days. It marked the end of the harvest, and also commemorated the Jews' forty-year wanderings in the desert.

During this festival, the Jews built and lived in booths or tents near the Temple/Tent Meeting in Jerusalem as a reminder of their ancestors, who wandered and lived in booths (The word, *Hebrews* meant *wanderer*). The sacrifices of this feast were usually more numerous than at any other festive day, since they had more with which to celebrate. It corresponds to our New Year's Day, and was celebrated from morning to evening while various types of horns and trumpets were blown. (Lev. 23:34-43; Num. 29:12-38; Duet. 16:13-15).

4. **The day of Atonement** was the acknowledgement of sin, today called *Yom Kippur*. It was not a feast, but rather a fast, as the distinctive purpose of the this day was to bring the collective sins of the people for the whole preceding year to remembrance and confession before the people, so that it might earnestly be dealt with and then atoned for. Once a year the high priest would have the tribes gather on the tenth of the seventh month of *Tishri*, the tenth day (Sept.), where the high priest sacrificed an animal--usually a red bull--and then spread the blood over the innermost part of the Tabernacle/Temple. The high priest then made the confession of all the sins of the Twelve Tribes, and entered, on their behalf, into the Most Holy Place with the blood of reconciliation. This was the only time the priest would venture into the inner part of the sanctuary where the Ark was kept. Then he placed his hands on a live goat to absorb all of the sins of the people. The *scapegoat*, as it was called, was let loose to atone for the sins of the people (Lev. 16; 23: 26-32).

Extra Biblical Feasts that were grafted in:

- 5. The Feast of Lights**, now called *Chanukah*, was observed for eight days beginning on the twenty-fifth day of *Kislev* (Nov./Dec.). The eight days were set aside to honor God for allowing the lamp to stay lit for those days, even though there was only enough oil for one. Judas Maccabeus initiated this feast in 164 B.C. when Epiphanes, the king of Syria, defiled the temple. During these days the Israelites met in their town's synagogue, carrying branches of trees in their hands (as they did to honor Jesus in Luke 19:28-40, what we now celebrate as *Palm Sunday*), and held jubilant services. Then the Temple was cleansed and rededicated to the service of the Lord. Children have been told about the brave deeds of the Maccabees for the last 2000 + years so that they might emulate their character. This was a very minor feast day that arose in popularity in Europe because it corresponds to the time of Christmas.
- 6. The Feast of Purim** was celebrated on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of *Adar* (Feb./Mar.) The word *Purim* means *lots*, as in casting lots or dice. This feast day recalls the time in Jewish history when the *lot* was cast to decide the day of destruction of the Jewish people and how God intervened so that this plan was not carried out. It was started by Mordecai to commemorate the failure of Haman's plots against the Jews. On the evening of the thirteenth, the whole Book of Esther was read publicly in the synagogue. It was a joyous occasion (Esther 9:20-22, 26-28). This day instills to us that, "*Without faith, it is impossible to please Him.*"

Why were these Feast days and Atonements important? Because, they pointed to the sacrifice of our Lord on the cross to come!

Based on the Old Testament precepts, God has revealed His general truths to us:

1. God is a holy and jealous God, thus we are to honor and worship only Him. He has forbidden us to worship anyone or anything besides Him! Therefore, nothing should get in the way of our heartfelt devotion to Him, and His Lordship in our lives. That He is Lord and ruler of our hearts and mind not things, careers, friends, pride, agendas...
2. God has given us the proper pattern for worship. He calls us to honor Him in an orderly way. This is because our sinful nature will cause us to corrupt all that we do, including the worship of God. We do not have the right to take away any of His essential orders of worship. We cannot just do what we feel like and do church the way we think is best, or by what is popular; we must do what is acceptable and what honors Him!

3. God demands that we remove all of the false and corrupt manners of worship.

Now we are under the New Covenant.

You may think that since this is the Old Testament, it does not apply to us. The answer is both yes, and no. Yes, we do not need to follow the feast days, but we are to follow the pattern of worship that He has set up, and is confirmed in the New Testament. Christ is our supreme Priest, and the means of atonement. The cross supersedes the Law's requirements, but not the Law itself, because the Law points us to our depravity and need for our Savior (Heb. 7-10).

There are three major points distinguishing the New compared to the Old Testament practice of worship:

1. There is no longer a Temple; therefore there is no one or central place for worship. The Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ have fulfilled the purposes of the Temple ordinances. There is no one true Church, as we have many denominations and churches that we can choose to go to.
2. Christ has also fulfilled the regulation that only the Levitical priesthood performs public worship. Today all Christians are priests in a sense as the doctrine the priesthood of all believers. God will call certain godly people to lead, the role of Pastor.
3. The church no longer needs to practice the sacrificial ordinances, as Christ is our supreme sacrifice.
4. The system of *Sacraments* or *Ordinances* (meaning the allegiance, or oath to the teaching of Christ that is sacred, His most important teachings) in traditional Christianity, and practiced by most Protestant and Catholic Churches, have replaced the Feast days and the Day of Atonement, circumcision, Passover, and sacrifices.

The sacraments are the specific things Christ told us to do (Mark 7:19; 1 Cor. 5:7-8; 11:23-26; Gal. 2:3-5; 4:10; 6:12-16; Col.2: 16; 1 Tim. 4:3-4). All denominations look to them as models of worship and practice in the church. They may disagree on how many (throughout church history, as many as thirty have been claimed. Catholics say seven, as they add penance, marriage, confirmation or first communion, and the priesthood; most Protestants claim two or three, communion, baptism, and worship (some denominations do not consider worship as a sacrament). The Greek Orthodox adds the washing of feet. The Quakers and the Salvation Army do not practice any of the Sacraments, due to an overreaction to the abuses they observed of them in other denominations, while denominations such as many Baptist, Independent and Fundamental groups use the term *Church Ordinances* declaring them a

ceremony. Most liturgical Denominations see the sacraments as a *means of grace* where Christ can minister His salvation through them such as the Catholics, Episcopalians and Lutherans.)

The Reformed view sees Sacraments as the term means the *mystery of something sacred*: A visible and tangible *sign* of God working in the elements lifted up to Him, such as the bread and water that *show* us the His promise of grace. However, the person still receives Grace by faith alone. In other liturgical Denominations the elements are sufficient to communicate God's grace. Just read the Scriptures listed next to the sacraments below and see for yourself what God's Word has to say. Salvation is NOT through the sacraments; they are the signposts of God working. Salvation is only by faith in Christ! We are still to respect the sacraments, adhere to them with honor and joyfully partake in them. We are also to guard that they do not get corrupted.

The Major Sacraments:

1. **We are to Celebrate the Lord's Supper/Communion** (Isa. 52:15; 53:12; Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20; 1 Cor. 11:20-25) This was instituted by Jesus on the night before His Crucifixion. He told the Disciples that the cup of wine (most Protestants now use grape juice; however, the type of element is irrelevant to the obedience of the statute) represented His own blood, shed to establish a new covenant between God and humanity. The bread represents His body broken on our behalf. Thus, when the Lord's Supper is partaken we meet Christ and are made present with Him (Omnipresence of God) in remembrance of His atoning death and sacrifice on our behalf, and looks to the fullness of the Kingdom of God. As Calvin said, "*we are given a taste of Heaven*")

There is debate amongst denominations whether Christ is actually the elements of bread and wine (Catholic- transubstantiation), physically added in to the elements (consubstantiation- Lutherans), Christ is not physically present as His body is not there but in Heaven; however, He is still really present (Calvin-Reformed), or partially present or it is just a memorial (Zwingli-Baptists).

The Lord's Super also pointed toward consummation of the Kingdom of God. At first, the Communion was a part of a gathering for a meal in private homes (1 Cor. 11:17). Over time, it became a part of the Sunday worship of the local church. To the Catholics, this became the focal point of the service, observed toward the end. The first parts were the reading of the Word, prayers, singing of psalms/hymns, intercessions, and a homily (the Reformers switch to the sermon as the focal point).

2. **We are to Baptize** Believers and/or dedicate our children. (the Reformed position allows for the baptism of infants as an identification to the

circumcision covenant, which looks to their faith to come that becomes sealed when the person professes their faith as an adult. This also dedicates the child to the Lord and governs the responsibly of the parents and church to raise the child in a godly way. Then the child, when he/she becomes an adult, professes that faith publicly to fully receive the baptism they had as an infant. Adult baptism looks to the faith they already have accepted) (Matt. 28:19).

3. **We are to Worship God** the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10). Because Christ rose from the dead that day, the service is to praise God, lift up the cross, and celebrate what He did for us.

Our Pattern for Worship

As we can see, the principle pattern of worship has existed from the beginning; it has been refined as humanity grew in understanding of God and as He revealed Himself to us. The standard church meeting we have today still has the original pattern that God instituted. We gather to worship through singing, prayer, liturgy, the reading of the Word, and a message/sermon/homily. Each denomination and individual church has added *traditions of man* in the mix. Hence, the various worship styles, orders, preaching, and building architectures. These minor differences need not be debated, as there are many ways to express our devotion and love to the Lord. The important thing is to honor Him in the proper pattern and essentials.

The intention of doing church remains steadfast for the most part. There are churches that are apostate and forget God and do their own thing. As a community of believers apart of the universal Church, and the bride of Christ, we are to follow the pattern that the Bible lays out. And, it should be the same through all denominations that acknowledge Christ as LORD.

The Essentials to Worship God

The changes over the centuries have been momentous, but the basics have remained the same:

1. **Honor God by reverence and awe** as respecting and honoring His Lordship and sovereignty. As a community of believers, we are to gather weekly to mentally focus on God, and pour our hearts out to Him (1 Samuel 15:22; Matthew 15:9; Luke. 11:41-42; John 4:23; Acts 20:27; Galatians 2:20-21; Hebrews 10:24-25; 12:28-29; Revelation 1:10). Ecclesiastes 5:1 says, *Guard your steps when you go to the house of God.*
2. **Praise His Name** by singing of hymns/praise songs, prayer and/or liturgy/ Psalter (reading or singing the Psalms)--(Isaiah 6:1-5; Luke 11:41-42; Psalm 19; 29:2; 95:6-7; 150; Ephesians 5:19). The type and style of songs are not

as important as the heart and intention of the leader and congregation. The words need to be Biblical and point to the Glory of Christ. The focus is glory and honor; it is never to be entertainment to the congregation. God is the audience and we are the performers to honor Him. It is OK to be creative in worship, such as skits, plays, and various expressions, but not for the sake of entertainment. The question to ask is, *does it distract people from the reverence and glory of Christ?* If not, it probably is OK. If it does, or could, then save the entertainment for the social times.

3. **Confession of sin:** We are to acknowledge our sin, and also offer our sincere repentance (Lev 4; 6:24-f.; 7:1-f.; 16:1-f; 1 Kings 17:18; Ps 51:4-6; Isa 6; 53:10, 12; Matt 12:24, 31; Mark 7:20-23; John 1:5; 3:19-21; 8:31-34; 16:8-9; 15:22; Rom. 3:20; 5:12-20; 6:15-23; 7:7-20; 2 Cor. 11:3; Gal. 3:19-24; 1 Tim 2:14). We have to realize the impacting nature of sin, how it destroys, and how Christ paid our penalty for it! If you have any doubt, remember, the outward life is determined by the inner (Matt 5:17; 7:15-17).
4. **Prayer** must be the focus of the church, with intercession, and thanksgiving, as well as supplication (Acts 2:42).
5. **Reading of the Word:** We are to never forsake the reading of the Bible; if you do, you have a club and not a church (Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 3:17).
6. **Commentary:** The applying of the Word by the worship leader/ pastor is the sermon or homily. In the Reformed perspective, the whole church service should revolve around the ministry of the Word. The sermon is central to the worship services. Everything else is either preparatory to, or a response to, the message from Scripture (Acts 2:47; 20:7-8; Col. 1:25; Philippians 3:3; 1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:24; Tit. 1:9).
7. **Fellowship** is to build up and honor one another in order to strengthen the church, the people of God (Eph. 4:12; cf. 1 Cor. 14:12).

True worship will have these six aspects:

"At the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:10-11)

1. **First, worship is appreciation and our identification**, of who Christ is in our lives. He first reaches out to us, and because of our gratitude, we are to love Him back. We are to respond to Christ's claim upon our lives. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can recognize God's revelation to us. We can see who our Redeemer is, what He has done for us, and what He requires of us.

2. **Second, worship is a response** to God's revelation, because God makes known His love to us. Christ reveals Himself to us in the Word and in His character. God revealed Himself to the Patriarchs, and then to Moses, and gave us a pattern for worship. He reveals Himself in the *still small voice* of the Holy Spirit, and in the quiet assurance that He is there with us!
3. **Third, worship is a relationship**, because God seeks us, then abides with us. Thus, in worship, we are praising and speaking to the audience, and that audience is God! Then, we are to listen as He speaks to us through His Word. Christian worship is a conversation with our God through His Holy Spirit. It is not a performance or a show; we are not seeking to entertain or promote ourselves, but to make known Christ, crucified. Worship is also an intimate and personal encounter with the Creator of the universe who first loved us. We are to make known our adoration, gratitude, and our needs, (not needs first!) and through this, discover His Will for our lives--to know Him, and make Him known.
4. **Fourth, worship is reverence.** We need to know the seriousness and awesomeness of God. We are to fear Him as in Proverbs 3:5. He may be our best friend, and we can talk to Him in that way, but He is first, and foremost the King and Creator of all. He is to be placed first, and is not to be an *after thought*, especially in church! God does indeed desire that we admit our spiritual need for Jesus Christ, so we can put away pride and arrogance, and be surrendered and poured out to Him (Gal. 2:20f; Phil. 3:10). This reverence is the essential duty of all Christians, and is the proof of the working of the Holy Spirit within us. His presence (Spirit) will cause us to give glory to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
5. **Fifth, worship is a cleansing of sin.** We are to acknowledge our sin, and turn from it. Then, we will see our churches revitalized and sanctified. Then, we can have an impact in the community and world. We have to be the people of God to do the work of God! When we become emptied of all self-concern, pride, and arrogance, God will enter in with more power! What is stopping Him now? Us! It is our petty political struggles, gossip, slander, pride, self-delusions, and refusal to acknowledge Christ as Lord over all! We have to realize the Christian life is about seeking God's direction of holiness and service.
6. **Sixth, worship will lead to renewal.** The point of the Christian life is to know Christ, to be like Christ. Thus, the longer we are in surrendered worship and prayer, the deeper in the walk with Christ we become; through the power of the Spirit, renewal will come.

Prayer as Worship

1. Public Worship.

Ps. 122:1; Acts 2:42, 46-47; Heb. 10:25.

We "congregate" as a redeemed family to worship God.

- Worship is an end in itself, not merely a means to an end.
- We do not worship to become holy. We are made holy to worship.
- We do not worship to get ourselves "charged up" for evangelism.
- We evangelize in order to bring men and women to worship the true God.

2. Private Worship.

John 4:24

3. Worship through life, love, service and witness.

Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15-16; I Peter 2:9-12.

4. Praise joined with prayer in Scripture.

Phil. 4:6; I. Th. 5:16-18.

- The "house of prayer" is to be entered with praise and thanksgiving (Ps. 100:4; Mark 11:17).
- Scripture calls us to worship, praise and thanksgiving. Ps. 9:11; Heb. 13:15; I. Pet. 2:9; Rev. 19:5.
- Because of who God is. I Chr. 16:29; Ps. 18:3, 96:9; Is. 6:1-8; Rom. 11:33-36; Rev. 4:8-11.
- Because of all He has done. Ps. 103:1-5; Luke 17:17-18; Ro. 12:1; Rev. 5:11-12.
- Because of all He is now doing.
- The common mercies of life, health, food, shelter, security, and peace.
- The assurance of God's presence, provision, and mercy.
- The people around us--family, friends, colleagues, brothers and sisters in Christ.
- The privileges given us in life.
- Opportunities before us for love, service and witness.
- The high calling given us and the privilege of prayer.

5. Because God is at work for good even when things go against us.

Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 4:7-12.

- "Always and for everything give thanks." I. Th. 5:18, "giving thanks in all circumstances." Eph. 5:20
- "Jesus took the cup and gave thanks" Mt. 26:27, I Peter 1:3-9
- Peter miserably denied his Lord. Mk. 14:66-72, Acts 3:11; 4:13.
- Stephen was martyred for his witness, yet in ...Acts 7:51-8:1; 26:12-19.

- Paul was under pressure "beyond ability to endure" (II Cor. 1:8-11; 2:14-17).

Though giant rains put out the sun, Here stand I for a sign. Though earth be filled with waters dark, my cup is filled with wine. Tell to the trembling priests that live under the deluge rod, One nameless, tattered, broken man Stood up and drank to God. G.K. Chesterton

6. Because of all God will do.

I Cor. 15:20-28; Phil. 2:9-10; I John 3:1-3; Rev. 22:3-5.

7. A pattern for private worship.

- Look up - in adoration.
- Offer up- in whole 'souled out' dedication.
- Gather up- in heartfelt praise and thanksgiving.
- Get up - go with God in commitment and confidence .
- Reinforce - with teammates in Christ.

8. Praise also releases God's power.

The Three Essential Priorities for the Church

The church has many roles and duties that have been expounded in Scripture and have been found by the experience of ministry. For example, the Bible says nothing of youth ministry, or children's ministry specifically, so does this mean we are not to do such things? Or do we respond to the call to make disciples and take the imperative directive from our Lord and contextualize it to our situation? The Bible is clear on our responsibility, we are to look at those responsibilities and make them work in our context of life and the needs of the community. For example, in youth ministry several years ago, I started a skateboard ministry to reach out to the neighborhood youth, and it was an extreme success. I took the command of the Bible, and then saw the need of the youth to skate in a city that outlawed it. I received a variance from the city to proceed, and the call was fulfilled, and the need was fulfilled, this is called contextualization.

When we take careful view of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, we see three areas of responsibility that we are called to do. John 15 expresses these three priorities all together beautifully, and I list several other passages that support these essential priorities, just turn to a concordance and see for yourself. Out of these priorities, we can take God's Word and contextualize it to the streets and to the direct needs of the people, so they can come to the knowledge of our Lord.

We see from Scripture, the importance and mandate of our relationship and intimacy to our Creator. The only way we can remain in that relationship and share His intimacy is to do just that, remain. We remain in Him by His nourishment, and not of ourselves, not of our thinking and sense, and not just emotional devotion. No, we need rational commitment that will have emotion with it but not driven by it. Our nourishment will be set by the effort and time we put in it as with just about anything else. And the calls and priorities the Lord has for us will be greeted with anticipation and eagerness to build His Kingdom. _

Priority One: Commitment to Christ

To Love, Worship, and Praise God is our prime commitment and call from our Lord. Here are a few Scriptures testifying to this first priority:

Joshua 1:8: *"you shall meditate on it day and night"*

Psalm 1: *"His delight is in the law of the Lord"*

Psalm 63:1: *"O God, Thou art my God: I shall seek Thee earnestly"*

Psalm 42:1: *"As the deer pants for the water, so my soul pants for Thee, O God"*

Matt. 6:33: “Seek yee first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”

Mark 1:16: “Follow Me”

Mark 8:34: “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him...”

Mark 12:30 : “Love the Lord with all...”

John 15:1-11: “Abide in Me”

John 17:3 : “*That they may know Thee*”

Romans 8:29 : “*predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son*”

Romans 12:1,2: “*Present your bodies to God*”

I Cor. 10:31: “*do all to the glory of God*”

II Cor. 5:15: “*He died for all, that they who live should live for Him*”

Phil. 1:21: “*For to me, to live is Christ*”

Rev. 4:10, 11: “*(They) will worship Him, saying, 'Worthy art Thou, O Lord...'*”

Rev. 5:12: “*Worthy is the Lamb*”

The magnitude of these and many more Scriptures are almost overwhelming to our efforts and His call, but are still clear for us to understand and obey!

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. [This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” {John 15:5-11}

“Remain” in this passage means to abide, to be steadfast and sure of our Lord and who He is, and who we are in Him. The imagery is perfect, as a vine needs the nourishment throughout its whole system from roots to leaves, and without any one of the main parts, the whole vine will die. It is also with us, when

we are not in Christ, we will wither and die. Only when we are rooted in Christ and are receiving our nutrients from Him can we grow and thrive!

The church is us, the people of His pasture, in the care of His majesty. We are joined to Christ, and this is the true church. Thus He is our Lord, purifier, overseer, boss, and Savior. If we remain in Him, then we fulfill the call He gives us and the nourishment that flows from Him to us, will then flow to those around us. As we remain in Him with a surrendered will, we will grow and will receive purification. We must realize the gravity of our situation when we are not in Christ, or when we turn our will away from Him. When we are the fruitless branches, we will be subject to pruning, which could mean suffering and trials brought on by our stubborn nature. He must purify, for He is holy and calls us to holiness. Let us not be the branch that is thrown away, the dead wood that sits in a pew and does nothing, except to receive salvation.

We could not have been saved by our own efforts or reborn to receive our salvation and grace. We could neither receive nor exercise the gifts for His purpose, this is nothing of our doing. When we bow to our own will over our Lord's, then we will receive our self-inflicted damnation, strong language for a strong opposition and will. Our call is to seek holiness, not to seek ourselves.

We must abide in Christ as the principle priority of our life and work. Without this sense of purpose, we will fail to our schemes and worst laid plans that will derail us from His holiness and will. Without our Lord's presence and leading, we cannot do anything, we could not have been created, we could not live, and we could not work and serve, nothing. The only true good thing we can ever do in life is to remain in Christ. Then the fruits will flow, but they cannot unless we are in Him. No work can be good unless it is flowing from our Savior. If we start off good and growing in Christ then forsake Him with our busyness and distractions, we will dry up and wither away. Let us stop, fall to our knees in prayer, and repent to stop the action of the fire, with a surrendered purpose and abiding in His majesty.

For us to be a successful church and a growing disciple, we must abide and remain in Him, and not ourselves. The life of prayer will keep the connection and the abiding in Him. Our obedience comes from the worship, the Bible learning, and prayer life that lays the pipes for His nourishment to flow.

We need to see it this way, when we are obedient, then we will succeed, and then we will prosper no matter what we will face! So let us embrace His friendship and directive. Because His incredible self-sacrifice should empower us to obey with power, conviction, and joy that flows from us and then to others.

We must have a commitment to Christ in our worship, devotions, service, and in our surrendered will. We are modeling His character and the relationship He gave us back to Him, being thankful for our grace. We must and can do this

by our loving response of worship, truly desiring to be poured out and surrendered to Him. To be in fervent Bible study and the learning of His character and purpose: to be in in-depth prayer and two-way communication with our Lord.

The result of our surrendered will is to be in an abiding relationship with our Lord, then we will be a healthy church doing and following the design and purpose of our Lord. Then we revive a great comfort of verse 11, "*my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*" There is no other true and joyful way than to follow our Lord's decrees. We need to see it as Christ's joy is living in us, and thus needs to flow through us into the second priority.

The model for us to follow is who Christ is and how He abided in the Father, that the Father loves His Son without any limit or measure, as Christ loves us without any boundaries. Before we were born and beyond our death is His love for us. So what is our response to this first priority? Are we worshiping out of obligation, out of social reasons, out of habit? Or do we worship out of a response to His deep love for us? Is our worship so formal that we never see His presence, or is our worship so bare that we are as dry as the effort we put in? Spurgeon says we ought to be "*Prevalent pleaders, and not formal worshipers.*" {Morning and Evening}

Give careful notice to this, you cannot worship God with a heart filled with yourself. You cannot worship God with a heart that is occupied by greed, slander, arrogance, pride, envy or malice. Neither can you worship when you are filled with worry, because these things take up all the room in our worship and then no room is left for God!

As we grow and learn in our personal discipleship, so will our church grow collectively, and our commitment will increase as our love and devotion increases. And the best way is to do our time joyfully in our growth, to be our best for His glory. We can do that by making sure that His call is released in us, that His choice and elect is our response, and then we will bear His fruit.

Priority Two: Commitment to the Body of Christ

To love and care for each other in the body of Christ is our second commitment and call from our Lord. What flows out of the first priority is the response to pass it on to those around us as a gratitude response! Here are a few Scriptures testifying to this second priority:

John 13:33-3:15:12,18: "*Love one another*"

John 17:21: "*That they may be one*"

Eph. 4:11-16: *“He gave some as apostles; for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ”*

Col. 1:28, 29: *“That we may present every man complete in Christ”*

II Tim. 2:2: *“These entrust to faithful men”*

Heb. 10:24, 25: *“Stimulate one another to love and good deeds”*

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.” (John 15:12-15)

Love comes from the self-sacrifice of our Lord, who paved the way for our relationships, especially to God, then we must respond gratefully to our fellow believers, this is the fruit called from us. This starts off as a commandment! Love is an imperative response of the will, a choice we make and a choice to follow His directive and will. Love is life and a response, and love is a reward for our obedience, yet love comes before obedience, and love is the result of obedience, yet this is non-contradicting. Love is the elixir of life and the reward for all that remains in the vine.

This was a core Jewish belief as stated in Leviticus 19:18, and is quoted by our Lord when asked what was the greatest commandment in Mark: 12:30-31. Since the Lord loves us, then we should.... respond in love to each other! Since Christ is our model and Lord, we should follow His example. Christ will walk with us, the question is will we walk with Him and allow “priority one” to be our rule, so priority two can function, so love will flow both ways?

Now remember that the love that Christ showed us was sacrificial, not superficial, so our love should not have any strings attached, and be real and flowing.

What flows from love is obedience, another response we are to give our Creator. Just as our Lord was obedient to His call, so must we be to His call to us. Real friendship is trust and obedience, not too common today, but required in the body of Christ for us to function correctly. We place strings and conditions on our relationships {yes we need boundaries, to protect others and ourselves, but not chains}, and then wonder why our families and churches are so dysfunctional. It has materialized and risen from our refusal to obey our Lord!

The basic theme is for us to model the first priority, our relationship with Christ to those around us. If we cannot do it, then our relationships with each other will be dysfunctional just as the daytime talk show crowd. Thus when we are in a good, healthy relationship with the Lord then what should naturally fall from it is good relationships with people around us.

Just as God the Father models to Christ the Son and a good earthly father will model to his son, we are to model to our siblings, that is all those in the body of Christ. We are to be in growing and encouraging relationships, which are based on His redemption and our loving response and heart for His people. All those in the body of Christ are our brothers and sisters. The more we grow in priority one, the more we will grow in priority two, and this is progressive just as any growth. God asks us to sit at His feast and eat from His table, do we do the same with those around us? If our relationships are not growing progressively, then we have something blocking us, usually sin and our selfish will is getting in the way of our relationship with Christ!

Let us heed the great call that He chose us first! It is God's choice and not ours. What great comfort that He took the first step in our reconciliation. But God did not choose us just to sit in a pew, He chose us for a reason and a plan. His plan is for us to bear fruit. Not to just do it when it is convenient or when we feel like it, but continually, whenever we are {that time does not constrain us}, whatever we are {that culture does not hold us back}, and wherever we are {that our place or location shows no limits}! To be encouragers of each other is the call for the good productive church that builds the Kingdom of God. If not, all we do is build the kingdom of disease and dysfunction, and all we have to blame is ourselves for refusing to play ball God's way, which is the best way.

Priority three: Commitment to the Mission of Christ

To Love, and care for each other in the community and world is our third commitment and call from our Lord. What flows out of the first and second priority is the response to pass it on to those around us as a gratitude response for what Christ did for us! Here are a few Scriptures testifying to this second priority:

Gen. 12:1-3: *"Blessed to be a blessing"*

Dan. 12:3: *"Those who lead the many to righteousness will shine brightly, like the stars forever and ever"*

Proverbs 11:30: *"He who is wise wins souls"*

Matt. 9:37-f *"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray"*

Matt. 28:19, 20: *"Make disciples"*

Mark 12:31: *“Love thy neighbor”*

Acts 1:8-28:30 *“Be witnesses”*

Mark 16:15: *“Preach the Gospel to all creation”*

Mark 1:17: *“I will make you become fishers of men”*

John 17:34: *“That the world may know”*

II. Cor. 5:18: *“God...gave us the ministry of reconciliation”*

II. Cor 5:20: *“We are ambassadors for Christ”*

Gal. 6:10-f *“Do good to all men”*

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: They hated me without reason. When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.” (John 15:18-27)

To reach out to the community and world, is one of the prime purposes for us to be a church. This is what flows from our devotion and worship, and then our healthy relationships with Christ and each other. In a nutshell, these are our fruits! If we are not reaching out; then we become a Dead Sea, just like the Dead Sea in Israel. It has a fresh flow into it, but no flow out of it, thus it is stagnate and lifeless. If we refuse to follow the great commission, we too will be a dead church, stagnate and lifeless, only existing for our selfish purposes and not to God’s call. This selfishness does not make us a church; this is not what Christ has called us to do! We cannot just be a church for our own whims and agenda, we are to follow Him!

A lot of pastors and Bible expositors have made the mistake that this passage is an excuse to be a recluse from the world, hence the monastic movements of the Catholic Church, and the refusal to reach out by the some of

the Reformed denominations and Main Liners. Jesus made it clear that the world will hate us, but that is no excuse to ball up by ourselves, just a further reason and need for us to reach out in love and care. So when we receive insults and rejection for living out our faith, we are to rejoice as our Lord is working in others, and us. So should we be expecting to receive such a positive response? Should we expect better? No! We are to respond to the need with a grateful will and with joy that flows from the first two priorities.

As Christians, we will receive the Lord's love and acceptance, which is the greatest treat and gift conceivable. Thus when we do not receive the world's devotion, let us not retreat and fall back from our responsibility and call. We are secure in Christ and we need not to feel the security of society, even though we may feel it is necessary for our self-esteem. We are to rely on Christ's esteem and not our self-esteem!

We cannot go through life just eating junk food and sweets, just as we cannot expect to go through life just receiving praise. We have to expect to receive tension as we go against the flow of our society and even sometimes people in the body of Christ. Christ was crowned with thorns, should we expect to be crowned with anything better?

We know better! If we grew up in the church, or spent any time reading His Word, then we know better, even if we are fairly new to the faith.

Verse 22 tells us of the seriousness of our call, it is not a maybe or an option, it is clearly an imperative, that is a straight forward command as a superior officer gives a direct order to their troops! God is our Lord, which means He is our commander and chief, no direction should come to our path that is not given from Him! When we refuse the command, we should expect punishment. This may not be a very "churchly" politically correct idea in a 'Jesus loves you' and 'gives you what you want' church. But this is the truth from God's Word! Hard medicine to swallow for our feel good and complacent way of doing Church, but again, it is why we have buildings, budgets, resources, and people, to go out and fulfill His directive. When we sit in meetings and just talk about it and do little to nothing, we are refusing to yield to our Lord's very teaching!

How can we worship and praise God, then hate our neighbor? How can we kneel down in prayer but not take the time for the people around us? If we sit and hear the teachings of our Lord and then do nothing with it, we are in fact practicing atheism and not Christianity! Because that is exactly the philosophy of people who reject God, is to reject His teaching. Thus we are no better than they who claim themselves as their own god!

The wonderful news of our directive is we are not at it alone, and I do not mean our fellow believers, but we have the Creator and Equipper of all things to empower and come alongside and help us! We are not alone! God first comes to

us, then desires us to love and worship Him, and to allow that testimony to spill and fill those around us! The Holy Spirit is our power agent for the task, Now we have no excuse but to be poured out as He pours His Spirit in us. If not, what we are doing is being antagonistic to the building of His Kingdom, just as the atheists are!

Understanding the Character of Reverence

Understanding what reverence is will help build a better attitude of worship! So are you a person who is reverent to God? What about to others? Here is how you can find out. Take a careful look at this character and fruit of Reverence from God's most precious Word, by examining the passages below. Now ask yourself:

1. How do I exhibit Reverence in my daily life?
 2. What can I do to develop a better willingness to have a sense of awe and fear of God and respect for people?
 3. What blocks Reverence from working and being exhibited in me?
 4. How can I make Reverence function better, stronger, and faster, even in times of uncertainty and stress?
- Here are positive examples from Scripture (Ex. 3:1-6; 1 Sam. 26:6-12; Psalm 34:1-14; Isa. 6:1-8; Rev. 4:6-11)
 - Here are negative examples from Scripture (2 Sam. 16:20-23; Mal. 1:6-14; Matt. 21:33-43; Luke 23:39-43)

Reverence (Psalm 89:5-18; Proverbs 1:7, 29: 3:5-9; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Peter 2:13-14; 3:15a) is the true response that leads to worship to all that come before God. It is recognizing and honoring the authority of God with awe and fear because He is God, and He is more awesome than anything or anyone--period. It also means respecting people, not just because of their position and authority, but as brothers and sisters in the Lord, regardless of their personality, and knowing He loves them too!

Hatred, disdain, disloyalty, and contempt are the opposites. With these attitudes, we will flee from God's love and precepts, ignore His call, and just do our own thing. We will have no fear of God; we will do as we please, thus placing us on a path of chaos, strife, and destruction. We will have no desire to serve Him, or do the right thing, outside of obligation. We will miss out on true intimacy with Him, destroy relationships, hinder growth in ourselves, others, our church, and miss out on the process of maturity, as well as the wonder of His plan.

Further Questions

1. How would you define Reverence? Do you fear God?
2. What part do reverence and respect play in our relationships with church leaders, the elderly, and to one another? Do you think God desires that we give special care or reverence to the church sanctuary and facilities? What about traditions?
3. How does Contempt counteract Reverence? What is the cost to others (God, family, friends, neighbors, church, workplace, etc.) when you are a disloyal person?
4. What happens to your relationship with God, with others, and with the opportunities God gives you, when you are disrespectful?
5. When have you been filled with Reverence the most? Do people have to earn your respect? If so, why? Is that Biblical?
6. In what situation did you fail to be respectful to someone when you should have been?
7. What issue is in your life that would improve with more Reverence?
8. Think through the steps you need to take to put Reverence into action in a specific instance. What can you do to develop a deeper sense of reverence to God? How would this respect and honor of God affect your relationships?

Proverbs tells us that *the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom*. This type of fear is not being scared, or fearful of what will happen, nor is it distrust or terror of God. Rather, it is reverence and awe that fuels our worship and faith. It is the understanding of the wonder and majesty of our incredible God, who transcends time and space, and who is bigger than the entire universe He created, yet, He personally knows and loves us with deeper and more love than we could ever comprehend. In the Old Testament, the stipulation put to the Jews was that they follow their God and stick to the covenant. The covenant we have now is grace; the stipulation is that we accept it by faith. The growth of our fear (awe) is the response to His majesty. Reverence is taking the incredible knowledge of His majesty, and applying it to our lives, so we will walk with confidence in our Lord, and operate with respect to Him, and to the others whom He knows and loves.

Reverence leads to worship because we can acknowledge whom God is, and respond in the only way we can, to surrender our will to Him and worship Him! As His created being, saved by His grace from a destiny we created and deserved, we have an obligation to give Him all of our honor, all our praise, and all our adoration. This is the reason for the primary purpose of our saved lives--to

give God the glory that is rightly due Him. Why must we? Because He is the Holy, Sovereign, the Creator (Duet. 7:21; Neh. 4:14; Psalm 48:1; 86:10; 95:3; 97:2; 145:3; Dan. 9:4; 1 Cor. 13:12; Heb. 12:28,29)!

The Bible plainly tells us that we are to show reverence to God and to the things that represent His person and presence (Heb. 12:28,29). Most Christians will say, yes, to the first part, to fear and respect God, but do they do so with one another? What about the things and stuff that represent God, such as stained glass, icons, pews, and the church lobby? Many Christians today do not believe that church facilities need respect. Yet, God's Word tells us, "*Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the LORD*" (Lev. 19:30, 26:2). This passage is referring to a tent where God's sanctuary was set up, not the great temple of Solomon that was built later. So, even the most commonplace location is considered very special to God, and thus is also deserving of our reverence.

Reverence is a very important character regarding how we relate to both God and others. *Reverence* and *respect* have similar meanings. However, *reverence* has more of the meaning of worship, and pertains to God. We used to call our ministers, "Reverend" as a means of respect. However, we do not worship them, only God. Ministers are God's representatives, and to a degree, all Christians are included in the doctrine of the "priesthood of the Believer." But, most people no longer call their pastors, *reverend*, no longer do children respect their parents. Often they even call them by their first names. We mock our church leaders; ignore their advice, while our churches run down into dysfunction and irrelevancy. We need to be respectful to all people, whether we agree with them or not. We need to recapture the respect of parents and authorities, something that has eroded, and caused so much rebellion, creating strife, dysfunction, and chaos in our society (Rom. 12:10; 1 Peter 5:5).

When we grow in maturity in the Christian walk, we will naturally show more reverence and respect for God's presence. This mindset must also transfer to how we deal with His creation, with people, and with what represents Him. We do not wake up one day with Character. When we do have it, others will see it, may even point to it, or be disciplined from it.

Appreciation is essential for showing God's love and it is proof of His Fruit coming from you! Let us allow our value of others to appreciate in depth and quality!

Additional Scriptures on being thankful: Chron. 16:8; Psalm 100:4; Eph. 5:20; Philip. 4:6; Col. 3:17

Extra Insights:

Contemporary Christian Music: Misunderstood Melodies

by Deral Carson

For centuries, contemporary Christian music has been the subject of controversy. It's referred to as anything from mind control to the Devil's own music. From traditional chants, psalms, and hymns to the Christian rock, metal, and rap styles of today, forefront Christian music has and always will bring on some form of discord. Yet today, modern Christian music styles have proven popularity and positive effectiveness.

Contemporary Christian music has more supporters today than at any other point in history. Carman, a top-ranked Christian artist, recently made history at the Texas stadium in Dallas, Texas, when 71,000 people attended his concert. This is the most people to attend a Christian concert anywhere. This is also a higher attendance than any Dallas Cowboys game. Donald P. Hustad, a professor of church music, surmises that we are seeing "the most significant new development in Christian witness music since Ira Sankey popularized the gospel song more than 100 years ago" (qtd. in Miller 173). However, some groups are still reacting in less than a positive manner.

New secular music forms are usually met with little resistance while contemporary Christian music always moves headlong into it. There are three reasons for this resistance: first, preconceived ideas and a general lack of knowledge of the subject causes misconceptions; secondly, the value of this essential form is not clear; and thirdly, they do not see the positive impact it makes on society as a whole. A proper assessment of these three areas clears all misunderstandings.

Various groups of people react adversely to Christian music for a variety of reasons. Understanding the origin and history of such music helps explain why. Since the beginning of the early church, music had to be proven trustworthy at every turn before considered sacred. In Steve Miller's apologetic book, *The Contemporary Christian Music Debate*, he points out that church music was resisted at every stage of development and that several so-called sacred forms led a bit of a checkered past. For instance, the chants of the early church are fashioned after certain heathen temple expressions (109). During the reformation, common people adapted songs originally written for heathen deities to Christian worship. Later they wrote hymns of their own along with the closed, sacred collections (111). From the days of John Calvin to William Booth, pub tunes were combined with new lyrics, so the newly converted could pick the songs up quicker. Booth took the tune from "I traced Her Little Footsteps in the Snow" and changed the words to "O, the Blood of Jesus Cleanses White as Snow" (135). A modern example of the concept is

Mark Farner's remake of "Some Kind of Wonderful." The original recording, as performed by the late sixties group Grand Funk Railroad, was made over with lyrics that reflect a love for Jesus. It is important to remember that all of these trend-setting and controversial music forms replaced their forerunners and were deemed the new "sacred standard." Today is no exception.

Ironically, the traditional religious community has been and always will be the greatest opposition to contemporary Christian music forms. The major concerns about the new music are: the sanctity of the new music with the arousing rock beat; and likewise, fear of the new and unexpected unknown. When religious leaders should be embracing the new forms as a fresh, new move they forbid it instead. Miller makes the observation that "tradition drives in stakes that are difficult to remove" (146).

Since the early church's origin, its leaders have viewed what has already been proven in the past as sacred, and that which is new as worldly, unclean, or of the Devil. This is true concerning the music produced and the instruments introduced for worship. Unfortunately, the church never learns from its past. Even the religious leaders during the ministry of Jesus could not comprehend the importance of overcoming their faults. The error embedded within the doctrine of the Sanhedrin caused them to egg-on the crucifixion of Christ--they could not accept change.

Today's church communities are no different except for one slight variation: instead of one level of contemporary Christian music expanding over another, there are three to four inter-linking waves of music involved. Gospel, praise and worship, and pop-rock styles are trying to stake a claim as to which will become the next "sacred standard." Some orthodox churches are still trying to hold onto the traditional hymns, however, due to the age of the congregations who desire such a style, combined with the fact that younger generations abhor traditional music, such churches will virtually die off. This is not to say that any style of Christian music should be condemned or eliminated. Each form is useful in its own way. Still the ever-present view of traditional-over-creativity continues onto the instruments used to produce the music.

Hustad points to the organ as an example of tradition over timeliness. Its first recorded use appearance traces back to the third century B.C. He speculates, "this early organ may even have accompanied the slaughter of early Christians in the Roman arena" (qtd. in Miller 139). Because of its tainted beginning, Miller points out that organs met serious opposition after entering the churches of England and Scotland. Organs were introduced into church worship during the thirteenth century, then dubbed the "Devil's bagpipe" in the fourteenth century, and nearly all destroyed by the fifteenth century. Even the coming of the piano was disdained (140).

Obviously, the organ and the piano have both become deeply entrenched within the strictest of church tradition. Almost every church in nearly every major Christian denomination has at least one set. They are displayed prominently in the front of the sanctuary. These instruments are icons that indicate that we will eventually accept all things that prove to be good--arriving much too late to be wholly useful.

Today Christians debate over issues concerning which instruments are acceptable for use in Christian music and which ones are not. If Christians would only take note of the past historical struggles, then much time and energy could be saved. Instead of fighting over organs and pianos, the discussions are over drums and electric guitars. Secular groups have had little trouble in determining the usefulness of such instruments. They have seen the good in them all, and so have our children.

Considering the environment of Christian music, the Bible is the guidebook that must be considered. Whether a Christian, a member of another major religion, or agnostic, contemporary Christian music must be measured by its foundation. Christian affiliated groups and churches have failed to hold onto the youth for one very important reason: "Where [there is] no vision, the people perish..." (Proverbs 29:18). The ingrained tradition of Christianity fails to look forward toward the future of the younger generation growing up in a modern world. The elder generation tends to look back at their own experience just as the others before them. Once the forerunner generation of leaders establishes a system of acceptable standards for worship, they have no desire to change it. It's much easier to blame the "Devilish rock beat."

Here is a scripture that is often confused when considering it in terms of renewal: "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). Some tend to think of the Devil as a creator as well. John 10:10 says that the Devil is a destroyer and creates nothing. Also, according to Genesis 1:26, God gave the whole Earth to mankind to rule over it. From these scriptures alone, it can be determined that everything--every sound and every beat--must be considered an original creation of God intended for His good works. It is up to the heart of every person whether they will purpose to use music for good or evil intentions. Has history not bared this out in the various church music forms as true?

Advocates who back modern Christian music do so because they have overcome the common pitfalls of tradition and the misunderstandings of the music form. Moreover, they see the value of contemporary Christian music. Yet secular music has not gone without having a dramatic impact of its own. In a Seattle Times article, Koch and MacDonald made this following report: in September 1993, grunge rocker Kurt Cobain of the group Nirvana, followed the advice of his own suicidal masterpieces by taking his own life with a shotgun

blast to the head. As if this episode was not tragic enough, a Nirvana groupie soon followed down Cobain's path by ending his own life in the same way.

Secular music continues to discover new ways to be crude, tasteless, and demoralizing. Suicide is obviously one of the most extreme examples of influence some secular groups have on young men and women. Life styles that most parents prefer their children not to take up--sex, drugs, violence, and murder--are often glamorized by secular groups. Today's youth needs an alternative music to listen to that will provide them with positive and wholesome values. Christian music certainly doesn't cause an individual to do something against their will, but it does offer a choice of a higher quality product of which to add to a lifestyle. Everyone has a choice. Most younger men and women that listen to contemporary Christian music claim that it is a source of encouragement to have higher moral standards, help them to do what is right, and to think better of themselves. The contemporary Christian music festival is one outlet that is popular with youth today.

Christian music festivals have become more popular than ever before. Teens love them because they can get away from the peer pressure for three or four days and have a good time without getting into trouble. They can see several big-name Christian artists at one location. But a weekend's entertainment is not all the youngsters experience. These events have expanded to include workshops that help teens get answers to questions concerning their personal lives. Concerts also provide them with information about issues they face today. Most importantly, there are plenty of opportunities for youth to commit their lives to Christ, should they desire to do so. Christian music festivals give the younger generation an avenue of escape from the entrapment of secular music. Christian radio does this as well. There are various groups that have caused contemporary Christian music to become better known.

Only recently has Christian radio considered Christian rock music "safe." During a Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) magazine interview with Devlin Donaldson, Amy Grant said she mostly struggles with "Where the church is right now and how the stage fits into it (qtd. in Styll 54). Miller observes that even Petra--Christian rock's most popular group ever--suffered as a little-known group during their first three albums due to a lack of air-play. He says, "Christian radio shied away from the rock style; secular radio couldn't stomach the Christian lyrics" (174). What changed the minds of radio station managers and owners? Supporters and advertisers did. Such businessmen and women recognize the character of the contemporary Christian music audience, and they like what they see. Most profit and non-profit Christian radio stations get very little church or denominational support. Instead, most of a station's revenue comes from the business community. Business owners like the clients that respond to the advertising they air on Christian radio. The impact this has on the music community as a whole is evidenced by the number of cross-over

Christian entertainers and groups that have made it over to the secular pop and rock charts. Stars like Amy Grant, Stryper, and others have made a significant impact on both markets.

It has been Christian and non-Christian business people that made the contemporary Christian music industry explode. As usual, the formal church will continue to have nothing to do with this move until it is practically over and something else rises up to take its place. The informal church--individual's who have a burden for the youth--will continue to be the supporters. Modern-day evangelists have a lot to say to today's youth, and they are doing it in a powerful way.

Most Christian entertainers, on the whole, are accused of being gold diggers who are only in it for the money. Miller refers us to the rocky past of today's Christian super groups: "Those who accuse these bands of delusions of grandeur and financial gain need to remember the dismal market for a Christian rock band in the early seventies" (174). When this tactic does not work, Christian music artists are accused of procuding obscure, washed-out lyrics that are meaningless. The paraphrased Apostle's Creed make up the words of Petra's song "Creed." These lyrics are anything but mediocre:

- I believe in God the Father--maker of heaven and earth
- And in Jesus Christ His only Son
- I believe in the virgin birth
- I believe in the Man of Sorrows, bruised for iniquities
- I believe in the Lamb who was crucified and hung between two thieves
- I believe in the resurrection on that third and glorious day
- And I believe in the empty tomb and the stone that the angel rolled away
- He descended and set the captives free
- And now He sits at God's right hand and prepares a place for me. . . . (qtd. in Miller 176,177)

Lyrics such as those contained in "Creed" can hardly be called a shallow compromise. After reviewing hundreds of Contemporary Christian music recordings, I find that strong , unveiled messages are the industry standard. Some will still insist that the lyrics cannot be understood over the "clamor of noise" and therefore are not of any value.

Some groups do make it hard to understand the lyrics of their music due to heavy artistic style. This is not altogether a bad thing. Children have an incredible need to obtain information. This is amplified when it comes to music, and they are going to know exactly what the artist is singing. This applies to secular, Christian, or any other music form as well. Every contemporary Christian artist or group lists the words to their lyrics in the recording jacket. While kids read the lyrics, they learn a wealth of good information. Parents also

get a chance to see what the group is about. The artists include the lyrics because the integrity of their reputation is at stake.

Because people have such an intense interest in what Christian artists are doing, most of them subscribe to accountability services where they openly disclose their personal income from a ministry (if any), and the financial status of the ministry they are involved with. The Christian music industry does not tolerate anyone who is not genuinely committed. In a CCM magazine interview with John Styll, Carman replied to the question on how he was accountable: "We have a very strong system of accountability.... We have a pastor who oversees this ministry specifically--Pastor Bob Yandian.... Also we are accountable to each other" (29). Christian artists are more than willing to maintain their integrity to bolster the opinion critics have of them. This is important so they can meet their objectives both on and off stage.

Mylon LeFevre, leader of the Christian rock band Mylon and Broken Heart, believes along side all other Christian entertainers that contemporary Christian music is a vehicle, or a tool of the trade. He feels it is to be used to present the gospel message to the world. In a 1986 interview he said "There are 52,000 people who have signed a little card that says...I want Him [Jesus] to be my Lord.... I believe we are speakin' life into people's hearts" (Styll 83). Since 1986, Lefevre has seen many times over 52,000 people commit to the gospel message at his concerts alone.

I personally had the opportunity to talk with Christian artists and groups; such as, Newsong, 4-Him, Harvest, Al Denson, and the production cast of Toymaker's Dream. All of these entertainers have an intense desire to share the gospel account, and help the children of today cope in a violent world. Kids who come to Christian concerts are not always perfect cherubs who grew up in a church all of their lives or have never been in trouble. Children come telling their shocking stories of drug abuse and attempts of suicide. Most often, they are looking for a way out of their situation and feel they have no one to turn to. Christian events, as those mentioned, help to get young people pointed in the right direction that will lead them to the solution to their problem.

Not all of these adolescents will become totally committed, and some will in time return to their old life style. Nobody will ever know how many of them will make another attempt to regain control of their lives, but several of them do. One young success story I had the pleasure of working with, attempted suicide twice before committing his life to Christ. He is now attending The Assembly of God Southwestern College and preparing to become a youth pastor. He greatly desires to help young kids who can relate to his testimony. This young man attributes much of where he is today to contemporary Christian music and the associated concerts. He uses Christian music as a strengthening tool and recognizes it as the vehicle that got him help.

Contemporary Christian music isn't traditional--it's radical. It's not political--it's controversial. It's one of the most enduring and dynamic music forms of the ages, and it will undoubtedly be around for an eternity. It has become ingrained in our society, unwilling to fade away. It's a style that may not appeal to everyone. It will never make it to the top with popularity, but it will never outlive its usefulness. Therefore, new models of Christian music will always be around to debate on, new instruments to squabble over, and greater reasons for upholding what hearts of good intention create. Contemporary Christian music will never be understood by all. It will marvel some in how it manages to endure. For those who see value in it, and realize that it is more than just music, they will appreciate what it has to offer. Contemporary Christian music is not the evil force it is made out to be. It is merely a collection of misunderstood melodies.

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cmusic@cm-online.net

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A call for REFORMATION in the contemporary Christian MUSIC INDUSTRY:

BY STEVEN JOHN CAMP

Those of us who are privileged to represent our Lord Jesus Christ in the arts should be galvanized by mission, not by ambition; by mandate, not by accolades; by love for the Master, not by the allurements of this world.

Out of love and zeal for Biblical truth and the desire to bring it to light, I come to you, brethren, burdened and broken over the current state of Christian music. I come--not out of a heart of condemnation, but out of convictions immersed in tears as one in desperate need daily of our Lord's grace to be conformed to His image. I come aware of the depravity from which I have been saved and that my heart, apart from the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, is desperately wicked and eternally sick. Early in my own musical journey I wrote songs that neither

represented good music or precise theology. My motives were vitiated; my actions were not godly; and my lips were unclean. The thirst for prominence and position made my heart prideful, judgmental and callused. But the Lord, out of His infinite grace and otherworldly love, broke me with His chastening hand to bring true repentance in my own life--and it's that life of repentance, which is my greatest desire and my greatest failing. It is out of the crucible of those experiences that I am driven to speak with conviction on these issues.

This document is a call to Reformation--a clarion call to recover Biblical Christianity in the arts. Music is a powerful tool from the Lord Jesus to His church intended for worship, praise, encouragement, edification, evangelism, teaching, admonishing. And exhorting God's people to holiness--with always our chief aim "to glorify God and worship Him forever." But beloved, the serpentine foe of compromise has invaded the camp through years of specious living, skewed doctrine and most recently secular ownership of Christian music ministries. While I assert this, I recognize that there are godly men and women who love the Lord that work for these companies and record for these companies, but that's not the issue here. The crux of the matter is that the overall nature of our industry has dramatically shifted. The Apostle Paul warns... "It takes only a little leaven to leaven the whole lump." (1 Corinthians 5:6) When sin is tolerated it ultimately permeates and corrupts the entire church. What is pure today will inevitably be polluted tomorrow if we do not "purge out the old leaven..." (Ibid. 5:7) In the past several years there has been a non-so-subtle drifting away from Christocentric music to an anthropocentric music. Sadly this has resulted in various visible manifestations of spiritual sedition-- where currently, the CCMI finds itself on a slippery slope sliding away at accelerated speeds from the Savior, the Scriptures and the church.

Contemporary Christian music originally began unashamedly declaring Jesus Christ as Lord. Within a few years His name was replaced by several generic titles filtering out the name of God ultimately to the non-specific cognomen, "Love." This led to a multitude of synonyms: "The Man Upstairs"; "My Higher Power"; "Our Family Values Expert"; ad nauseam...ad infinitum. This Biblical illiteracy I've coined as theological ebonics - Biblical language diminished to cultural unintelligible chatter affirmed as profound, acceptable spiritual truth. Os Guinness is "spot on" when saying "[we have seen a change] from the emphasis on 'serving God', to an emphasis on 'serving the self' in serving God." The object of faith is no longer Christ, but our self-esteem; the goal of faith is no longer holiness, but our happiness; and the source of our faith is no longer the Scriptures, but our experience. Christian music currently reflects this. We are producing a generation of people that "feel" their God, but do not know their God.

When Martin Luther stood at Wittenberg's Door in the year 1517, he called for reformation from the recalcitrant Roman Church. Now is our turn, almost five centuries later, to sound the alarm in our generation. This time, to call the Christian Music Industry to reformation--back to the supremacy, sufficiency and

Lordship of Jesus Christ. Genuine revival--a fresh return to obedience in Christ--is surely needed today, but that would be almost impossible given the current environment of our industry. Why? True revival is marked by repentance; true repentance brings restitution; true restitution demands that Christian music be owned and operated only by believers whose aim is the glory of God consistent with Biblical truth. This means that the current CCMI labels music return all the money they have received to their respective secular counterparts that purchased them and divorce alliances with them. The CCMI has gone too far down the wide road of worldliness and there is not the tenacity of character and the Biblical courage of heart and mind to do the right thing no matter what the cost.

These are serious times, brethren, that call for real answers. This is not a time for duplicitous people, proclaiming a diluted message, from disingenuous ministries. It is a time for those whose lives are tempered with the steel of righteousness, girded with the belt of truth, standing firm in the gospel of peace, raising high their shield of faith, guarded with the helmet of salvation, to wield the sword of the Spirit with a surgeon's exactitude, praying always with all prayer and supplication, with all perseverance for all the saints in the Spirit. (Ephesians 6:10-20)

Will we champion again the manifesto of the Reformers: Sola Fide (by faith alone); Sola Gratia (by grace alone); Sola Scriptura (on the Word alone); Solus Christus (because of Christ alone); and Soli Deo Gloria (to the Glory of God alone)? Do we have the conviction of heart and courage of mind to do what's just? Do we have the boldness to shout above the roar of the marketplace that the Emperor has no clothes? Will we leave our careers, our contracts, our carefully cultivated plans and press releases, our unequally yoked record companies to serve the Lord again with all our heart, soul, mind and strength? There is no gray in this--it's a matter of obedience.

Oh brethren, "we have a name to be alive, but we are dead." (Revelation 3:1) There is no greater love song to proclaim than the once for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord at Calvary, but yet others feel content to sing about the chaff of this world. What the New Testament church wrestled with the least is what our industry craves the most--money. How dare we think we can play politics with God, with His truth and with His church. We can't negotiate with sin no matter what kind of capital is at stake--and that really is the issue here.

Let us "press on, that [we] which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of [us]." (Philippians 3:12) Let us "lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily ensnares us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." (Hebrews 12:1) Let us fall on our faces before our Holy Lord, repent of our sin and return to our First Love. With lives bathed in His grace, let us provoke one another to love and good works. With undivided hearts may we leave the prodigal's pigpen and come back to the Father's house. Let us commit to prayer

and fasting, seeking the Lord's will with a broken, contrite and obedient heart. Let us return to our churches and to the faithful pastors/elders that shepherd us-submitting ourselves to their godly leadership. May we be students of His Word being filled daily with His Spirit. Let us come away from an industry that has all but abandoned Christ and forge, by God's grace, what it was always meant to be ... a ministry. Doing His work, His way, according to His Word, by His Holy Spirit.

Pray on this, Pounding on "Wittenberg's Door", let us come together to make history- to make Contemporary Christian Music...Christian again.

Yours for the Master's use,

Signed: Steve Camp
2 Corinthians 4:5

PART ONE: TO DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD

1. All our works, both musical and written, must produce a high view of God-with our chief aim being to glorify God and worship Him forever. (Job 40:6-41:34; Psalm 29:1-2; Jeremiah 9:23-24)
2. This means we are to represent God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in fullness of Trinitarian character and attributes revealed through the scriptures. (Romans 11:33-36; 2Thessalonians 2:13-14; Revelation 5:12)
3. This is paramount-for it brings glory to God to reverence Him in the totality of His worth and works. It elicits holiness and obedience in the life of the believer. (Psalm 96:9; 103)
4. Even in God's redemptive plan for man....salvation never begins with man and his need but with God and His glory. And no one ever lives greater than his or her view of God. (Ephesians 1:3-14; Hebrews 11:6; 1John 1:7)
5. "Whether, then, [we] eat or drink, or whatever [we] do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)
6. We fail to glorify Him when we praise the servant through awards and accolades rather than exalt the Master. "I was but a pen in God's hand and what praise is due a pen?" (Baxter) God will not share His glory with another. (Psalm 115:1; Isaiah 42:8)
7. We fail to glorify Him when we speak of God out of our own vain imaginings or recreate Him in our own image; instead of honoring Him by how He revealed Himself through His holy Word. (Psalm 50:21; 1 Corinthians 2:13-16)

8. We fail to glorify Him when we make money a prerequisite for ministry; some, to their own destruction, teach that godliness is a means to financial gain. "Freely you have received; freely give." (Matthew 6:24-34, 10:8-10; Acts 3:6, 20:33; 1 Timothy 6:5)

9. We fail to glorify Him when we publicly honor with Him with our lips, but privately have hearts that are far from Him. (Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:7-9)

10. God cannot be glorified where sin is pacified; and He cannot be extolled where sin is entertained. To live in and tolerate unrepentant sin is to write Ichabod across the doorpost of our lives and industry- "the glory of God has departed." (1 Samuel 4:21-22; 1 Corinthians 5:1-8)

11. We fail to glorify Him when pride struts like Nebuchadnezzar across the Babylonian palace of our accomplishments thinking our own hand has made us, our own hand has delivered us, our own hand has provided for us, our own hand has promoted us and our own hand has saved us. (Daniel 4:28-37; James 4:6)

12. We fail to glorify Him when we strive to please man rather than to please God. (Galatians 10: 1-10; 1 Thessalonians 2:4)

13. We fail to glorify Him when we speak and sing of the benefits of the gospel, but fail to proclaim the Gospel itself. (Matthew 4:17, 7:13-27, 9:13, 16:24-26; Luke 14:26-33; John 1:12-13; Acts 20:27; Romans 3-5, 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 2:2, 9:16; 2 Corinthians 4:5, 7:10; Galatians 1:6-8; Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 2:9-18; 1 John 2:22-23, 4:1-4, 5:1-3)

PART TWO: The authority and sufficiency of scripture-the hymnbook of Heaven

14. The highest worship of God is the preaching of His Word. (Luther) We cannot honor God more than listening to his Word with an obedient life. Music that is saturated accurately with the truth of God's Word is worthy of worship to the Lord. (Romans 10:14-17)

15. There is only one inspired, infallible rule and authority for all matters of life and godliness and it is the sufficient, pure, perfect, inerrant Word of God. (Psalm 19:7-14; 2 Timothy 3:16)

16. For God has even "exalted His Word above His name." (Psalm 138:2)

17. God's Word is His ultimate revelation and is thoroughly accurate, comprehensive and exhaustive in all its parts, even as it speaks to theology proper (the doctrine of God), doctrine, ethics, religious practice, science, geography, history (redemptive and actual), or any other topic. (Psalm 12:6; 119:160; John 17:17)

18. All Scripture must harmonize (agree) with itself and thus interpret itself. Therefore, the greatest commentary and interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself. (2 Peter 3:15-16)

19. Theology (the Word of God) and doxology (a word of glory, a note of praise, or a saying ascribing worth) are inseparable. As David says, "Thy statutes are my songs, in the house of my pilgrimage." His Word is our music, His lawbook is our songbook, and His statutes are our songs. (Psalm 119: 54, 172)

20. Scripture speaks to all of life-therefore, our music may speak to every aspect of living. However, it must be based upon and not contrary to God's Word in principle, ethic, content and conduct. (2 Timothy 3: 16-17; 2 Peter 1:3-4)

21. For instance, Esther and Song Of Solomon are the only books in the Bible that never mention the name of God. Yet, they speak with absolute clarity about the sovereignty of God in the political arena and of the beautiful expression of physical intimacy between a man and a woman in the context of a faithful, committed marriage.

22. In this Biblical world-view where are those like St. Paul, engaging the unsaved on Mars Hill, explaining "The Unknown God" in the midst of worldly philosophy and beliefs? That requires wisdom, integrity, cognitive reasoning, and a profound understanding of God's Word and unwavering courage to communicate the truth in love. (Acts 17: 16-34)

23. As artists we have a tremendous responsibility to exegete the times. We are teachers of God's truth, through the arts, that are deserving of a more strict judgement. (Colossians 3:16; James 3:1)

24. Paul soberly proclaims, "we are not like, as so many, peddling the Word of God for profit...." (2 Corinthians 2:17a) To peddle means to make retail of, to huckster or to pawn something off as merchandise.

25. Isaiah 1:22 uses the same Greek word in the LXX as Paul uses for "peddling" when saying, "Your silver has become dross and your wine mixed with water." Those who mix wine and water did so to cheat the buyer. It resembled real wine and had the aroma of real wine, but in actuality was nothing more than a watered-down substitute- a cheap imitation.

26. Paul sternly warns that there are many con men who by slick eloquence and deceptive speech huckster or corrupt the true Word of God as retail merchandise; they dilute its truth to suit itching ears, while representing it as genuine, to purposely deceive and cheat the recipient for the sake of financial gain.(2 Corinthians 4:1-2; 2 Timothy 4:3-5)

27. As Paul admonishes he also affirms, "but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ." (2 Corinthians 2:17b)

28. We have been given a sacred trust and holy privilege to be a steward of the mysteries of God in music ministry. If our music does not square with the truth of God's Word, it must be rejected and cannot be embraced as profitable for godliness, beneficial exhortation to the church or as an effectual proclamation of the gospel. Dare we take it flippantly? (1 Corinthians 4:1f; 2 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:13)

29. Artistic license may be enjoyed when describing personal testimonies or life experiences, but our music must conform precisely to Biblical truth when addressing the person of God and His character, the gospel of Jesus Christ or the working of the Holy Spirit. (Psalm 50:16-23; 1 Timothy 6:3-5)

30. We need artists who will balance their zeal with knowledge to invest their lives in the daily discipline of Bible study, and then, to write with the fire, passion and enthusiasm which that study has illumined to communicate the glorious language of the church-the holy Word of God. (Psalm 1, 119)

31. For if in our worship we pervert His Word, we pervert the truth about God. If in our music we distort His doctrine, we distort a right view of Him. If in our song we misrepresent the Scriptures, we misrepresent the Savior. And if in our ministries we twist His truth, we dishonor His character. (2 Timothy 2:15)

32. Failure here is costly-for it is tantamount to breaking the third commandment: "do not take the name of the Lord God in vain." (Exodus 20:7)

33. We are to crave the Word (1 Peter 2:2); have a delight in, a longing for and love of it (Ibid.); preach, admonish, exhort, and teach its truth (2 Timothy 4:2); take it as our song (Psalm 119:54); hide it deep in our hearts (Ibid. 119:11); meditate upon it (Ibid. 1:2); obey it (John 14:15); proclaim it (Matthew 4:23); guard it (1 Timothy 6:20); hope it (Romans 15:4); be sanctified by it (John 17:17); desire it more than all the world's delicacies and treasure it more than all the world's riches (Psalm 19:10); to be hearers and doers of it (James 1:22); contend for it (Jude 3); rightly divide it (2 Timothy 2:15); never add to it or take away from it (Revelation 22:18-19); for it is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean and true (Psalm 19:7-9).

PART THREE: The Character of Christian Music

34. Our Creator God has given us music-psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to use for praise and worship, the proclamation of His name and attributes, to teach and admonish one another unto holy living and to provide thanksgiving for His worth and works (1 Chr. 16:7-36)

35. Genuine Christian music has as its ultimate aim the glory of God. Anything less than this will at the end bear the fruit of self-glory and is music not honoring to the Lord. "Blessed is he who sings when no one is in the auditorium"-for that checks motive (Miller) (Psalms 18:1-6; 105:3)

36. Music is used according to the Apostle Paul in Colossians 3:16 to encourage council, warn, correct, comfort and teach the Biblical truth. According to David in Chronicles 25:1-5 the Levites used music to prophesy, give thanks and praise to the Lord. It was music rendered in the house of the Lord for the service of the house of God.

37. The first song ever recorded in Scripture is in Exodus 15 as a song of deliverance written by Moses after God had delivered them out of Egypt and destroyed Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea. It describes God's glorious deeds, His inscrutable ways, His attributes and character, His preeminence as the only true God and His eternal reign as Sovereign Lord and King. (compare, 1 Chronicles 16:8-36)

38. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs flow from a life where His Word richly dwells and out of the life that is filled, or controlled, by the Holy Spirit. (Col. 3:16-17; Eph. 5:17-20)

39. Life in the Spirit and life in the Word are identical bearing the fruit of godly music honoring to the Lord. (1 Tim. 1:18-19)

40. Authentically Christian music was never intended for casual use or purely for entertainment. (1 Chronicles 23:5)

41. Christian music, originally called Jesus Music, once fearlessly sang clearly about the gospel. Now it yodels of a Christ-less, watered down, pabulum-based, positive alternative, aura-fluff, cream of wheat, mush-kind-of-syrupy, God-as-my-girlfriend kind of thing.

42. Christian music today lacks the power and authority that it once enjoyed for it has lost its identification with the Lord Jesus Christ. As Moses has said, " The Lord is my strength and my song" (Exodus 15:2)

43. We are to sing a new song to the Lord. It is a song of the redeemed people of God. This new song is a different and distinctive song, a more glorious song, a purer, truer and more beautiful song than the world can ever sing. (Psalms 33:3; 96:1; 149:1; Rev. 5:9-10)

44. "In scripture, the word new is used more frequently in relation to song than to any other feature of salvation." (MacArthur) New is not used to mean new in time, but new in character or of a different nature compared to what was old. (Isaiah 42:10)

45. Christian music stands separate from the world's music for by definition it is Christ-centered music. Even the style is not neutral and music in and of itself is not amoral, but it is "the incarnation of the message." (Horton) Both must honor and bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Chronicles 15:16)

46. Therefore, when Christian artists today take the old song of the world, dress it up, modify it and say it now represents the person of Jesus Christ, a Christian message or describes the character of God, they fortuitously assault the gospel and diminish the gift that has been entrusted to them. This is inappropriate at best and sacrilegious at worst. We cannot pour new wine into old wineskins. (Psalm 137; Mark 2:22)

47. Music can be appreciated and used in two wonderful, yet unique ways: creatively and redemptive. (Psalms 150:96:9)

48. Creatively, it is enjoyed as part of God's creation, celebrated and shared by Christians and non-Christians alike under God's common benevolence- "the rain falls on the just and the unjust." (Matthew 5:45)

49. Redemptively, it is used in the church corporately and individually as part of the totality of worship and praise to the One Triune God. (1Chronicles 25:1-8)

50. While God has created many expressions to communicate His truths, music is unique. It is the only art that has a place in heaven and will endure for eternity. The angels sing, the elect saints sing and someday, we will hear the Lord Jesus Christ Himself "sing praise in the midst of the assembly." (Hebrews 2:12; Revelation 15:3-4)

51. Christian music is unlike the music of Babylon, the world, which near the end of the age will cease: "The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters, shall not be heard in you anymore." (Revelation 18:22)

52. God promises to silence the song of the ungodly. "I will silence the sound of your songs, and the sound of your harps will be heard no more." (Ezekiel 26:13)

53. Beloved, as Christian artists, may we sing of that which endures for eternity.

PART FOUR: The Character of the Christian Musician- Personal Integrity and Holiness

54. The Biblical model of the musician originated from the Levitical priesthood, as musicians were appointed by the Levites under King David's command, to proceed in worship, with the priests, before the ark of God. It's nature was prophetic to Israel and ecclesiastical in role, i.e., used in temple worship. (1Chronicles 15; 16; 23:5; 25:5-6)

55. They were able to teach and were skillful in craft. "The chief of the Levites was Chenaniah, the master musician, who gave instruction to the singers because he was skillful". (1 Chronicles 15:22)

56. They served in the context of temple worship. "Of the thirty-eight thousand Levites who ministered in the Temple, four thousand were appointed to lead in worship, thanksgiving, and praise of the Lord." The model is clear. Pastoral charge over the arts is essential. (1 Chronicles 23:5)

57. Those calling themselves Christians are characterized by new life in Jesus Christ-old things pass away, all things become new.(2 Corinthians 5:17)

58. The Christian singer has a triumvirate charge of service to the Lord Jesus: Sound doctrine, Christ-centered worship and holy living. These three pillars elucidate the foundation of true Christian music and ministry and godly character. (Psalm 119:54, 172)

59. Take away any one of these pillars and the structure topples. For example, an obedient life given in worship to Christ absent of sound doctrine will be empty praise and on the path to error. (Colossians 3:16)

60. Secondly, the sound theology sung out of the beauty of holiness but lacking in heartfelt worship to Christ leads to pride or self-glory and the chastisement of the Father. (Hebrews 12:5-11)

61. Lastly, a powerful doctrine sung in glory to Christ with an impure life is noise to the ears of our holy God. Submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the obedience to the Word of God are marks of the worthy walk of faith. However, when Biblical standards are dishonored and unrepentant sin persists we must adhere to the instruction of the Word-stop the music until life is right. (Amos 5:23-24)

62. Godly character exhibited in response to sound doctrine is paramount in serving the Lord. To live privately what we proclaim publicly is the manifestation of genuine faith. That is why from the stockroom to the stage Christ-likeness should evidence our behavior. God has not called us to be successful but faithful. (2 Corinthians 6:3-10)

PART FIVE: Guarding The Trust- Accountability to The local Church

63. Music, by Biblical definition, is a ministry. (1 Chronicles 16:37,42)

64. Ministry is defined as service to God and His creatures as we employ our Spirit-given giftedness, according to the instruction of Scripture as good stewards of the manifold grace of God for the advancement of His Kingdom; that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 4: 10-12)

65. God has designed genuine ministry to be inseparable from the life and leadership of the local church. Any ministry that does not strengthen one's commitment to the local church is inconsistent with the purpose of Christ. (Acts 2: 42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25)

66. There are five reasons why we should love and serve the church: Firstly, Jesus Christ promised to build the Church- therefore, my commitment should be to it. (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:39-47)

67. Secondly, He purchased the Church with His own precious blood-therefore, I love those for whom He died. (1 Peter 1:19; 1 John 3: 14-16)

68. Thirdly, the church is the predominate agency through which God's will is manifested on earth-therefore, it is the community with whom I labor. (Ephesians 1:9-10; Colossians 1:28-29)

69. Fourthly, the Church is the only earthly expression of heaven-therefore, we must daily grow together in conformity to the fullness of Christ.(2 Peter 3:10-14; Revelation 4:4-11; Ephesians 4:12-13)

70. Fifthly, the gates of Hades will not prevail against the Church-therefore, in light of the assured victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, our worship and toil is not in vain. (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 15:54-58)

71. In response to these truths and to insure a life of godliness and holiness and to guard against blind spots in personal issues, vocation and theology- submission to the plurality of godly leaders within the church is essential. (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

72. We are to obey, honor, and pray for the faithful pastors in the church who have been given this sacred trust. They are those who are instructed by the Lord to keep watch over souls as ones who will give an account. Woe to the shepherds who do not take their responsibility to shepherd the flock of God seriously. They dishonor the Savior. They disobey the Scriptures. They diminish their office and defame their calling. (Hebrews 13:7, 1 Peter 5:1-4)

73. In the case of a Christian being overtaken in sin, proper discipline must be exercised within the church to bring restoration and reconciliation (as prescribed in Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1-2; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15). This is to confirm repentance and to guard the purity of one's life personally as well as the entire body of Christ corporately.

PART SIX:

TO NOT BE UNEQUALLY YOKED WITH AN UNBELIEVING WORLD

74. The CCMI has committed spiritual adultery in joining itself with the wayward world in trying to forward the message of the gospel. This has and will prove to be fatal for Gospel music, as we know it today. (Deuteronomy 32:22-24; Psalm 1; Jeremiah 17:5-8)

75. We cannot partner with the believing world in common spiritual enterprise or ministry. To harness unbelievers and believers in a Christ-centered endeavor is to be unequally yoked. (2 Corinthians 6:14-16)

76. We must be separate from non-Christians in positions of ownership, authority or influence in the advancement of the gospel. (Ibid.)

77. The kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness are two mutually exclusive worlds; two opposing societies; two converse communities that are incompatible and incongruous with each other in regards to the faith. (Ibid.)

78. One is characterized by righteousness. Light, Christ, believers and the temple of God. Lawlessness, darkness, Belial, unbelievers and the temple of idols distinguish the other. One is based on God's truth-the other on Lucifer's lies. In matters of Christian faith and belief no partnership does or really can exist between these two realms. (Ibid.)

79. "To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being detestable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work." (Titus 1:15-16)

80. God is our Father and we, as His children, must disavow all praetorian religious and spiritual alliances with sin and Satan or we will forfeit the joy and blessing that flow from obedient fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:17-18)

81. Satan's number one assault on the church is to infiltrate with error. He doesn't want to fight the church-he wants to join it. (John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:12-15; 1 Timothy 4:1)

82. Undiscerning believers think it a profound ministry strategy to join forces with unregenerate people in forwarding the gospel. Unwittingly, they harness Jesus Christ, the Worthy One, with Belial or Satan, the worthless one, in an unholy alliance-the very essence of being unequally yoked. (2 Corinthians 6:15)

83. "Ephraim is joined to idols. Let him alone" (Hosea 4:17)

84. We are not, however, called to isolationism. We are called to be salt and light in the world. We are to be faithful witnesses of God's mercy, love, and grace to the lost and dying. We are to cultivate personal relationships with unbelievers,

love our neighbor and our enemy, serve them and share our faith with them. (Matthew 5:13-16; 40-44)

85. We are to be in the world but not of it-and this is our greatest challenge. Separation is not being divorced from our contact with the world, but from complicity and conformity to it. (1 John 2:15-17)

86. For instance, it is not unBiblical to consult non-Christian experts in matters of business, craft or trade (though whenever possible, Christian experts respected in these fields are preferable because of shared integrity), but we can never engage in intimate binding-indissoluble relationships, alliances, or partnerships that result in shared responsibility or authority for ministry purposes. (Deuteronomy 22:9-11; Philippians 2:14-15)

87. The promise of increased financial resources, wider distribution and a larger audience is not justification for the surrender of our spiritual autonomy. (Luke 4:4-12; Ephesians 5:8-12)

88. It is impossible for God to fully bless and use His children who are in compromise with non-believers. (Romans 8:7-8)

89. "Adulterers and adulteresses. Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (James 4:4)

PART SEVEN: TO BE ABOVE REPROACH IN ALL BUSINESS ACTIVITY

90. If true reformation in CCMI occurs, it will mean that every facet of music ministry will ultimately be affected and undergo godly transformation. The need to recapture "the economy of God" in our daily business activities is not optional, but essential.

91. Honesty in business dealings, practice, relationships and all activities pursuant in our service to the church, the world and to the Lord Jesus is indispensable to effectively carrying out the calling and mission of Record Company Executives, Promoters, Agents, Managers, Artists, Publishers, etc. (1 Peter 2:12-18)

92. To have a good name in the community-at-large is vital in handling of the lesser things: business, money, trade, etc., in order to be entrusted with the superior things: His word, the church and the souls of men. (Psalm 15:2-5)

93. To that end, we must purpose to have our yes mean yes and our no mean no. (Matthew 5:37)

94. To never sue a fellow Christian to resolve disputes, or risk damaging a witness or testimony to an unbeliever through civil litigation for requital. We will reserve the right to be wronged rather than wrong someone by demanding our rights. (1 Corinthians 6:1-7)

95. Exhaustive means to settle conflicts should be pursued through Christian arbitration as overseen in the context of the local church under duly recognized pastoral authority. (Ibid.)

96. We will purpose to keep personal relationships more important than business deals; family more valuable than commodities; and faith more precious than fortune. The struggle is maintaining an eternal perspective in the transitory moments. May our light so shine before men. (Psalm 90:12; Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 5:22-33; Philippians 2:1-5; 1 Peter 3:7)

PART EIGHT: Reclaiming Christian Music for Christ

97. To bring reformation to Christian music we must purpose, by God's grace, to do several things. (2 Corinthians 13:7; 2 Timothy 2:1; Titus 2:12-13)

98. Fast, mourn, weep, and pray over the sins of our industry, the church and our personal lives. (Nehemiah 1:5-11; Isaiah 6:4-39; Daniel 9:4-9; Ezra 9:6-15)

99. Return to our First Love. (Matthew 22:37; Romans 5:5; 1Peter 1:8; 1John 5:3; Revelation 2:4)

100. Remember how far we have fallen. (Luke 15:11-32; Revelation 2:5)

101. Repent of our sins. This is a complete, decisive change of mind and action. (Jeremiah 51:45; Luke 16:11; Revelation 2:5,16,22; 3:3,19)

102. Repeat the deeds we did at first. "It is a reversal of the status quo, a deliberate repudiation of former sins and a complete return to the standards and will of God" (Thomas) (Ephesians 2:10; James: 2:14-26; Revelation 2:5)

103. Reform or be removed. The Lord promises to remove the lampstand from its place -unless [we] repent. God's judgement always follows habitual, unrepentant sin. (2 Timothy 2:19;Hebrews 12:5-11; Revelation 2:6)

104. Renew your obedience to walk by, be-filled with, pray in, to not grieve or quench the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:18; Jude 20; Ephesians 4:30; 1Thessalonians 5:19)

105. Reconcile yourself to the local church. Place yourself, your family and your vocation under faithful pastoral instruction. (Hebrews 13:7, 17)

106. Pray for the leaders of every facet of our industry that they will honor the Lord Jesus with obedient lives in doing the right thing, consistent with Scripture, no matter what the cost personally or corporately. (Ephesians 6:18-20; 1 Timothy 2:1-3)

107. Take a step of faith. Come away from the current industry model like Abraham venturing out into the wilderness with only the promise of God as his surety. Begin to build authentic Christian Music Ministry again. (Romans 1:17; Hebrews 10:38, 11:1, 6)

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Richard Joseph Krejcir is the Director of "Into Thy Word Ministries," a missions and discipling ministry. He is the author of the book, Into Thy Word, and is also a

pastor, teacher, and speaker. He is a graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena California (M.Div.) and Canbourne University in London England (Ph.D Doctor of Philosophy in Practical Theology). He has amounted over 20 years of pastoral ministry experience, mostly in youth ministry, including serving as a church growth consultant.