

Philosophy of Corporate Worship at Trinity BFC

We believe that corporate worship[1] at Trinity Bible Fellowship Church should be...

1. God-centered
2. Scripture based
3. Expectant
4. Whole-hearted
5. Blended

1. God-Centered

Our intent is that each worship service glorifies the triune God. We will strive to avoid a man-centered approach to worship which focuses on the talents and abilities of others. Although our corporate worship involves the talents and gifts of many people, the focus of the worshipers is not to be on those leading the worship, but on God.

Real heart-worship of the triune God can only be done by people who have experienced the new birth.[2] Therefore, when we schedule a worship service we plan for whole-hearted meaningful worship for Christians. We recognize that non-believers will be present in the services and we welcome them, but generally we do not plan our worship around them. We trust in the contagious self-sacrificing love of our people towards non-Christians, the promise of God to use 'the foolishness of preaching,'[3] and the irresistible drawing of the Holy Spirit, to keep non-believers coming to our services, and then ultimately, to come to Himself.

2. Scripture Based

We choose to let Scripture guide and permeate our corporate worship. We joyfully submit ourselves to God's word. We do this when we plan our corporate worship by striving to be consistent with Biblical principles and teaching. Although there is no specific 'worship service' given to us in the Bible, there is ample biblical justification for planning and participating in corporate worship services.[4]

We understand that the Scriptures describe the Christian's entire life as worship. All of our life – our work, our relationships, our leisure, our family life – everything is to be lived as an offering of gratitude and worship to the Lord.[5] However, in this Philosophy of Corporate Worship we are concerning ourselves with the worship that occurs as we meet corporately and respond to the Lord.[6]

We rejoice that God has not left us to our own wisdom in the matter of worship. We believe that all essential elements of worship are given to us in the Scriptures (in love, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, praise, and service God's worth is declared).[7]

We approach worship prayerfully, carefully, reverently taking our direction from the Scriptures.

3. Expectant

We meet together for corporate worship, expecting to sense His presence and hear from Him.[8]

We believe that hearing from God through His word, if done with a humble heart and mind is in itself worship.[9] We, therefore, joyfully submit ourselves to the preaching of the Word of God.

4. Whole-Hearted

Jesus taught us that outward worship which does not involve the whole heart is not acceptable to God.[10] Examples of whole-hearted worship fill the Scriptures.[11] We will seek to foster “worship that aims at kindling and carrying deep, strong, real emotions toward God, but does not manipulate people’s emotions by failing to appeal to clear thinking about spiritual things.”[12]

Ultimately each individual is responsible for his/her own heart attitude. We will attempt to provide the best stimulus for whole-hearted worship, but each individual attending must exercise his/her personal responsibility to engage the whole heart in worship.

5. Blended Music Styles

Though Scripture prescribes elements of worship; love, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, praise, and service, it does not prescribe forms or styles of worship. Our unity in the Lord and our desire to worship Him in spirit and in truth are much more important to us than our choice of music styles. We cherish our heritage and gratefully cling to hymns, music and songs which have been an important part of our past. Likewise, we rejoice in the new songs[13] and music which resonate deeply in the hearts of today’s generation. We will aim at making the music used in our worship a combination of historic and contemporary styles.

Since we are a blended body of believers, made up of people with a wide variety of musical preferences, we will embrace various musical styles. Thus, the music styles we use in corporate worship will reflect all people who make up our family.

A Few Practical Considerations

Among the many legitimate expressions of worship, we will endeavor on Sunday mornings to highlight two by providing ample time for them. Those two are: expressing our praise and adoration to the Lord corporately in music and hearing from God through the preaching of His Word.

We understand drama to be especially effective when used on special occasions and/or when there is an intricate connection between the dramatic presentation and the subject of the preaching. We will use drama in such a way that it is clearly not meant to be a replacement or a ‘shoring up’ of preaching. We deem it best to use drama sparingly and very carefully in our Sunday morning worship services.

We are concerned for the issue of excellence. Those who lead the congregation in worship must endeavor to maintain a balance between standards that are too high or too low. We will strive to maintain a quality of worship that will draw people’s attention toward God.

Raising hands in worship is certainly biblical. This is not an issue that should be controversial. Those who feel comfortable in raising hands should be free to do so, and those who do not want to should not feel intimidated by those who do. Lifting hands can mean several things: surrender, receiving,

celebration, dependence, adoration, focus of attention. Since it is an outward expression it should reflect an inner attitude. Those who do raise their hands are not any more spiritually mature than those who do not.[14]

The purpose of music ministries is not to perform, but to contribute to leading the congregation in worship. We will strive to instill this mindset in all those who participate in music ministry, and indeed, to instill it in our entire congregation.

We recognize that our culture is awash in entertainment, and therefore we will have to work against the tendency to arrive at services 'programmed' to be passive observers. We will work towards helping people to participate in worshiping the triune God.

We will attempt to provide order to the worship services. Orderliness reflects the nature of the God whom we worship. It is spiritual and proper that the leader's direction is followed by the congregation.[15]

[1] The Bible Fellowship Church statement on worship found in Biblical Principle of Living number 101 is given below:

101-1.1 Worship is response to God, whereby, in love, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, praise, and service God's worth is declared.1 Worship is rooted in reverence for and awe of the Lord and deepens as knowledge of God increases.2 Worship is the privilege and responsibility of each individual, family, and congregation. For the believer, worship is a life style not limited by location or circumstance.

101-1.2 Worship is the ultimate goal of the church. The mission of the church is to declare God's glory and His salvation to all ethnic groups so that some from all the families of nations shall worship Him.3Corporate worship is the assembled church celebrating the glory of God and ascribing to Him praise and honor. Christ, the head of the church, meets with and strengthens His people, called out from the world by the Holy Spirit.4

101-1.3 God declares that He alone is to be worshiped 5 and tells how He is to be worshiped. For disobeying these instructions and substituting their own form of worship, 6 Israel was severely punished. We therefore seek to learn from the Bible what kinds of worship please the Lord.

101-1.4 Worship in the Old Testament was a celebration of the mighty acts of the Lord, the covenant God of Israel. Corporate worship was highlighted through prescribed ritual: a priesthood, a sacrificial system looking forward to Christ's atonement, 7 and particular times and places when and where worship should occur. 8 This ritual was not made valuable by its repetition. 9 Its value came through heartfelt, thoughtful response to God, uniting the worshipers. Ritual is unacceptable as true worship unless it comes from the heart.10

101-1.5 Worship in the New Testament is a celebration of the finished work of Christ, His victory over Satan, sin, and death through His own incarnation, death, and resurrection. Jesus claims for Himself authority over temple, Sabbath, sacrifice, and service. 11 The former place, priesthood, and ritual were set aside. 12 The Lord gives His blessing to a new liberty as believers observe a new day, the Lord's Day, 13 and a new ordinance, the Lord's Supper. 14

101-1.6 The descriptions of corporate worship in the New Testament reveal prayer, praise, confession, singing, giving, thanksgiving, teaching, and the ordinances. 15 The expression of these may be shaped by the cultural setting of a particular church but must be “orderly” and “decent”. 16

101-1.7 The goal of corporate worship is not entertainment, but rather the glory of God. Worshipers are not to think of themselves as spectators, but rather as active participants in a celebration.

1 [Psa.96:7-9](#); [Rom.12:1](#) 2 [Psa.96:4](#), [2:11](#) 3 [Psa.96](#); [Isa.56:3-8](#); [Rev.7:9-10](#) 4 [Eph.1:22,23](#)

5 [Exo.20:1-4](#) 6 [1Ki.12:25-13:10](#) 7 [Heb.9:13,14](#) 8 [Exo.20-40](#) 9 [Isa.29:13](#)

10 [Psa.51:16,17](#); [84:1,2](#) 11 [Mark 2](#) 12 [Heb.10:8-18](#) 13 [John 20:19,26](#); [Acts 20:7](#)

14 [1Cor.11:23-26](#) 15 [Acts 2:42-47](#); [4:23-37](#); [1Cor.14:26-40](#) 16 [1Cor.14:40](#)

[2] Prior to being born again we are all incapable of a personal relationship with God and are, in fact, His enemies! [Ephesians 2:1-3](#). Although we could ‘go through the motions’ of worship when we were still unbelievers, we could not truly worship Him.

[3] [1 Corinthians 1:21 \(KJV\)](#)

[4] Scripture references for examples of the N.T. church meeting together are: [Acts 2:42-47](#); [4:23f](#); [6:1-6](#). Scripture references for N.T. instruction concerning what to do when the church meets together are: [1 Cor 14:26f](#); [1 Tim 2:1f](#); [4:13-14](#); [2 Tim 4:1-5](#); [Heb 13:15-16](#). These lists are not meant to be exhaustive. In striving to design our corporate worship services according to the Scriptures it is valuable to ask the questions: What did the N.T. church do when they met together? and, What does the N.T. instruct us to do when we meet together? We find the answer to those questions to include such things as, teaching, fellowship, caring for each other’s needs, the use of our spiritual gifts, prayer, praise of God, and the Lord’s Supper and baptism.

[5] [Romans 12:1](#) “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”

[6] John Frame, in pages 29-35 of his book *Worship in Spirit and Truth: A refreshing study of the principles and practice of biblical worship*, explains the concept of worship in the broad and narrow sense.

[7] An extremely important principle when attempting to apply the Scriptures to life is this: Everything that is essential to church-life (including worship) is found in the Scriptures. Therefore, we cannot consider anything as essential which is not found in the Scriptures. Keeping this principle in mind will help us immensely in thinking about and doing worship in a God honoring way.

[8] John Frame, in pages 29-35 of his book *Worship in Spirit and Truth: A refreshing study of the principles and practice of biblical worship*, speaks about the sense of expectancy.

“Jesus promises a special blessing – indeed, his special presence – upon his people when they are gathered in his name. ([Matt. 18:2](#) compare [John 14:13-14](#), [26](#); [16:23-26](#))...

From the beginning of the New Testament church, believers delighted in meeting together, and in those meetings they experienced unique blessings of the Spirit of God ([Acts 1:6,14](#); [2:42-47](#); [4:23-31](#); [5:42](#); [13:2](#); [20:7-38](#); [1 Cor. 11:18-34](#); [14:1-40](#); [1 Peter 3:21](#)). They met for prayer, teaching, and

sacrament. They pronounced publicly in the meeting the judgments of church discipline ([1 Cor. 5:4-5](#)). The church received gifts for Christians in special need ([1 Cor. 16:1-2](#))...

By the Spirit of God, supernatural events took place...it cannot be doubted that in the permanent aspects of New Testament meetings, as well as the temporary extraordinary aspects, God is present in a special way in the Christian meeting. When Christians worship as God commands them to, even an unbeliever will be driven to worship, recognizing that "God is really among you!" ([1 Cor. 14:25](#))...

What does "draw near" mean in this context? I have said that it is hard to define, but let me try to clarify the idea somewhat. When God draws near, he has special business with us. As in Isaiah's case, he wants to remind us of his greatness and holiness. He wants us to acknowledge that greatness in our praises. He wants to convict us of sin, and he wants us to confess that sin and receive his forgiveness. He wants us to hear his word and obey it. He wants to hear our baptismal and membership vows, and to preside at the discipline of the church. He wants to fellowship with us in the Lord's Supper. He wants to receive our gifts. He wants us to acknowledge our unity and love for one another as his body. For such purposes, God draws near. And from such fellowship with God in the name of Christ, we arise, empowered by his Spirit, to do his bidding.

When God draws near, we may be greatly blessed. Good things happen. It is also true, however, that God sometimes draws near in judgment (see [Gen. 3:8-19](#); [Joel 2:1-2](#); [Mal. 3:1-5](#); [Matt. 25:31-46](#); [2 Thess. 2:8](#)). Those who disobey his word, and who do, not pay him proper homage, are terrified when God approaches. All of us have offended him; we can only be thankful and amazed that in Christ he has spared us. Not all will be so spared. Of course, the final judgment will not come until the end of history. Therefore, in our worship today, God does not draw near to us in final judgment. But he does reprove sin in the preaching of the word and in the discipline of the church. And those reproofs are particularly intense when God's people are meeting in his name. Consider again [1 Corinthians 14:24-25](#), in which, as we have seen, an unbeliever visiting the Christian meeting is convinced of sin and worships God, "exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'"

[9] There are verses which show that silence and listening to God are appropriate in the context of God meeting with His people. [Jeremiah 7:2](#), [Nehemiah 8:1-8](#), and [Psalm 65:1](#) are a sampling of such verses.

[10] [Matthew 15:7-9](#) "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'"

[11] Scriptural worship is whole-hearted worship: Intense emotion and an obedient will springing from the impact of truth upon the mind – that is the exciting picture of worship we see in the Bible, and that is what we earnestly desire God to produce in us!

[Psalm 2:11](#); [66:1-4](#); [86:8-10](#); [95:6](#); [96:9](#); [99:1f](#); [Jer 26:2](#); [John 4:22-23](#); [Rom 12:1-2](#); [1 Cor 14:25](#); [Rev 15:3-4](#).

[12] This statement is taken from point #4 of the worship philosophy of Bethlehem Baptist Church of Minneapolis, MN. www.desiringgod.org

[13] Several times the Scriptures command us to sing a new song. [Psalm 149:1](#) says, “Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, And His praise in the congregation of the godly ones.” Some of the other references to singing a new song are listed here. [Ps. 33:3](#); [Ps. 96:1](#); [Ps. 98:1](#); [Ps. 144:9](#).

[14] “[Psalm 63:4](#) “So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.” Some other passages referring to raising hands are [Psalm 28:2](#); [119:48](#); [134:2](#); [Lamentations 2:19](#); [3:41](#).

[15] [1 Corinthians 14:32-33](#) “and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”

[1 Corinthians 14:40](#) “But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.”

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