

Christ for the World We Sing  
*Worship and Apologetics*

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**What is worship?** The called-out, gathered-together people of God, believing parents and their children, aged adults to young kids, who give and receive—to praise and be edified—God’s appointed service of love and obedience to the Father through the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. One writer said, “Worship is the gift of participating by the Spirit in the incarnate Son’s communion with the Father.”

**What do we mean Christ-centered and Gospel-centered?** As Christians commonly acknowledge: just as the Lord Jesus alone saves us by his atoning death on the cross and by his resurrection, so only Christ can bring us sinners into the Father's Presence (John 4:24; Rom. 8:34; Hebrews 7:25).

**Ordinarily, why is Scripture used throughout a worship service, from the call to worship to the closing benediction?** We are the children of God (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1-3). We are learning to speak to God, like children with their parents. As children talk to them, so we learn to talk (praise, pray, teach/preach, and sing) to God by his Words.

**Sometimes the word, *dialogue*, is used to describe alternating, taking turns of speaking: God and man.** There’s the dialogical principle of worship. Parents might explain it to children as the friendship principle of worship. God speaks to his people, and then we respond. Like two friends, God and his people take turns speaking and listening through the parts or elements of public worship. He welcomes us and tells us who he is and what he has done, and we return thanksgiving and adoration to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Isaiah 6:1-13 outlines the taking of turns between God (with his heavenly angels) and Isaiah the prophet.

The OPC Directory of Worship puts it this way:

As a service of public worship is in its essence a meeting of God and his people, the parts of the service are of two kinds: those which are performed on behalf of God, and those which are performed by the congregation. In the former the worshippers are receptive, in the latter they are active. It is reasonable that these two elements be made to alternate as far as possible. (3.1)

## **Introduction—The Book of Hebrews**

### **The General Approach from the Book of Hebrews**

Our Lord Jesus opened heaven to us, and he's the One who serves on our behalf at the Father’s right hand (Heb. 8:1-2). Public worship, we're told in Hebrews 10:24-25, uniquely localizes the venue for giving consideration to one another—that is, providing the vital role for growth that we have with one another. Significantly, we exhort one another in worship for the express purpose of promoting love and good works. Lord’s Day worship aims at training.

The Book of Hebrews (chapters 12 and 13)

Hinge: summary of worship to various practical arenas for daily living Heb 12:28-29; 13:1-ff.

### **Worldview Training** (Gospel Nurture, Witness Fortification, Apologetics Strengthening)

We've had the tendency in recent years to move from worldview training *to* worship, and it's time that we work in the reverse.

The parts of worship are: the reading and preaching of the Word, prayer, singing songs that praise God and tell of his works, the collection of the offering, and the administration of the sacraments (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). These parts may vary from congregation to congregation as to how they are practiced. But they are like windows on the world of faith and life for all.

Without giving attention to the order of the elements as they might appear in public worship, consider their influence on discipleship, worldview training, and standing firmly on the Bible:

1. *Respect for Authority*: It is the Word of God, the Bible as God's covenant document that ought to give shape to the church and her ministry. That authority comes to us by those who lead us in worship. They represent the love, care, and discipline of our Savior. Where are we instructed and reminded week after week about the importance of lawful, Christ-supplied, and Spirit-nurturing authority? Our children are first to learn to honor all lawful authorities, by the honor we're all to give to God and his Word, and to faithful church officers. From worship we learn that God alone is Lord. The heart is to seek him; other gods must be put away.

2. *Stewardship*: As we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matt. 6:33), then all other important creaturely matters get their needful attention. In what way can we train one another about finances, stewardship, and generosity? In what way might there be role modeling for diaconal ministry and care? We find that in the pattern and priorities of giving unto God in the week-to-week offering and the special offering for the deacons.

3. *Marriage and Family*: Faithfully assessing God's design for men and women and their suitable stations for service is key nowadays. Such callings are properly advanced by the model of Lord's Day worship. Here young men learn thoughtful, unselfish ways of serving ladies, and women learn respect for men. Husbands and wives learn loyalty. We all learn care and compassion for the disabled, singles, widows, and the aged. Worship is to be pacesetting. Are you helping your twenty-three-year-old to root and expand his vision of marriage commitment, vow taking, and promise keeping, by keeping the covenant between God and his people in the foreground? Here's a curriculum to be harnessed.

4. *Communication and Understanding*: The first priority for worship is declaring that God's name has been glorified in the work of his Son, Jesus Christ, and that eternal life comes through faith in Christ. In the message of Christ, parents and children want assurance in the home that *their* words can be understood and used. Where do we learn God's content and manner of

speech? Parents, where can we learn to better train and instruct? Where can effective, captivating storytelling from the Bible take its cue? From the pulpit. All words—the apt, wise, penetrating, and persuasive ones—are for life-training and discipleship; and the stem from the reading and preaching of the Word.

5. *Gifts, Callings, and Occupations*: The work of the church, with order, roles, and functions, sets the pace for roles and callings in everyday life. The gathered people of God display the society of God's city—calling in Christ and calling in his service serve as vehicles for youths. Apprenticeships, vocational interests, and affirmations of all lawful callings get their start from worship.

6. *Peacemaking and Unity*: Where are mothers and fathers to see a faithful model of spiritual mothering and fathering? How do we best demonstrate that disputes between covenant members are to be settled by faithful church discipline, in order to promote unity? Part of the purpose of our assembling for the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper is to give focus to our love for one another and being set apart as God's people. The preached Word and our member-to-member care for each other provides discipline. Worship supplies the handbook (a guide) for this.

7. *Beauty and Aesthetics*: Our God is to be worshiped with mind, heart, and hands. There is to be awe-inspiring faith and biblically informed knowledge in praise and petition, and in songs of thanksgiving and edification. With responsive readings, declarations of praise, and the congregational amen—with or without music—God is praised by his appointed means of beauty (Ps. 33:1-3). In the worship of God, we should see order, hear harmony, and take part with all of God's people, using texts and tunes acceptable to our God. Truth, goodness, and beauty are found in, and take cues from, worship.