

THE INSTITUTE FOR WORSHIP STUDIES

ESSENTIALS OF BIBLICAL WORSHIP

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CHAPTER 1

PRELUDE (INTRODUCTION)

The subject of worship is a source of unifying passion, great diversity, as well as widespread division within the Christian community. Worship wars are fought over its purpose, substance and style. The understanding of what worship is and how it is to be done seems to depend entirely upon one's scope of life experience, the ethnic and culture in which one lives, and the period of time in which one lives. In ancient times as well as now the object of "religion" is to secure the goodwill of the gods by faithfully carrying out the prescribed rituals. These rituals might be very different in ancient Greece, Rome, a Native American tribal gathering, a medieval church in France, a cult in South America, a liberal church in California, or a fundamentalist church in Texas. However, the purpose of specific actions would seek the same end results - acceptance by the God of their faith and/or actions.

Unfortunately, many "contemporary Christians obscure the breath and depth of the Bible's teaching on this subject when they persist in using the word 'worship' in the usual, limited fashion, applying it mainly to what goes on in Sunday services."¹ Gatherings of the congregation at a designated time and place for religious rites and proclamation are not what the New Testament means by worship.² The Apostle Paul preached at and participated in meetings and gatherings of Christians. However, he never directly described such activities as worship.

¹ David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 18.

² P. W. Hoon, *Worship*, p. 17 (*cf.* also pp.31-32) and David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 19.

Throughout both the Old and New Testaments we see the consistent pattern of God drawing near his people followed by a wide variety of responses to his initiative by those who seek to follow Him. Some of these responses are worship; many are not. We must focus our thinking to have the scriptures speak to us about what God says is acceptable worship. Only after the purpose and essence of worship is clear, will we be prepared to examine some of the important issues regarding community (or corporate) worship experiences.

CHAPTER 2

CALLS TO WORSHIP AND HYMNS (THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP)

We are always worshipping – something. The traditional study about Christian worship begins with the derivation of the English word “worship” meaning “to attribute worth.”³ Certainly, we are to render to God his due glory and praise.⁴ However, this narrow definition omits the historical scriptural story of God with humankind. It leaves open the possibility of people making their own assessments of God’s worth and the response, which they consider to be adequate.⁵ Surprisingly, certain expressions of worship recorded in scripture are regarded as unacceptable to God.⁶ Some of these included Cain’s offering of fruit of the soil⁷ and the Israelites fabricating a golden calf.⁸ A religious leader (a Pharisee) and a tax collector came to the temple to pray. Both prayed quite sincerely, but the prayers were very different.⁹ Even the traditional burnt offerings could be unacceptable.¹⁰ Therefore, we must infer that what might be impressive to us, however excellent, orderly, and sacrificial, and publicly affirmed by the

³ From Old English, *weorthscipe*, “worthship.”

⁴ Ps. 96:7-8; Ps. 148:13; Ps. 150 and Rev. 5:12.

⁵ Note this helpful criticism of this common approach to the subject of worship by P. W. Hoon, *The Integrity of Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), pp. 91-94, also noted in David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 17.

⁶ Genesis 4: 3-7; Ex. 32; Is. 1.

⁷ Genesis 4:3-4. Cain offered “some” grain and Abel offered the firstborn of his flock, which acknowledged his Heart.

⁸ Exodus 32:1-10.

⁹ Luke 18:9-14.

¹⁰ See Hosea 6:6 and Hebrews 9-10. Any sacrifice offered apart from faithfulness to the Lord’s will is wholly unacceptable.

majority, may actually be offensive to God. We cannot simply determine for ourselves what we believe (subjective) is honoring to him. We must discover from God's own self-revelation (objective) in scripture what pleases him. The Bible tells us that God must draw us into relationship with himself before we can respond to him as he requires.¹¹

Looking into the scriptures we recognize God's ongoing initiative with us. We see the persistent thread of his faithfulness in spite of human rebellion against God. The first scriptural point of God's initiation with humankind is seen in the creation story. God made us in his image (*imago Dei*).¹² All of humankind (men, women, adults, youth and infants) both in and outside the church collectively reflect the image of God. As individuals none of us completely reflects God's image. Nonetheless, God's decision to make us in his image is a great declaration of love to us. No other products of creation are bestowed with this blessing. I Corinthians 15:49 also states, "And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven." This means that just as humankind bears the likeness of the first Adam, we will also bear the likeness of the last Adam, Jesus.

In Exodus we learn that God first brought the Israelites out of slavery and then gave them personal direction and moral guidance through the Ten Commandments. In the Old Testament we see God drawing near to his people by using the Ark of the Covenant, the tabernacle and eventually the temple to manifest his presence to them. When the Ark was moved to Jerusalem and the temple was constructed, it marked God's choice of where he could be experienced and sinful people could draw near to him, to receive his grace and blessing. Godly Israelites gathered there for prayer and the offerings of ancient sacrificial rituals by the priests. Jesus and His

¹¹ John 16:7-11. Conviction of sin of those who are not Christians is the work of the Holy Spirit.

¹² Genesis 1:27.

disciples met and taught at the temple. It continued to be a center of revelation and prayer for early Christians, until the disciples' teaching about Jesus led to their expulsion, because the Jewish leaders perceived Jesus as a threat to their religious and political power over the masses. Throughout the gospels we read that Jesus declared that he is the new temple. He fulfills and replaces the physical temple and the entire method of approach to God associated with it. Both the Law and the temple were preparatory to Christ and pointed to him.

This historical record shows us many examples of God's initiation with us. Our creation in his own image, the Ten Commandments, the ark, the tabernacles, the temple, the person of Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Church are but a few examples of God's ongoing initiative with his people, drawing them to himself. Worship in the Old Testament is presented as an expression of the covenant relationship established by God between himself and Israel. The Old Testament shows us that the sacrificial system, which was given by God to be the means of dealing with the problem of sin and maintaining covenant relationship with his people, was only effective because of his promise and his gracious enabling. The Old Testament teaches us that God continually drew near to Israel so that his people might draw near to him. "They will know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God."¹³ The ongoing problem of sin made it necessary for rites of cleansing and reconsecration to be repeated under the old covenant year after year.¹⁴ However, the blood of Jesus provides a once for all time cleansing and consecration to the service of God under the new covenant.¹⁵ Thus the sacrifice of Christ is foundational to a Christian theology of worship. The

¹³ Exodus 29:42-46.

¹⁴ Hebrews 10:1-4.

¹⁵ Hebrews 9:14; 10:12; 13:12.

high priestly work of Christ makes it possible for us to draw near to God on a new basis and, in effect, to share in the Son's relationship with the Father. It is "by the blood of Jesus" that we are to approach God.¹⁶ It is through Jesus that we are to offer praise and obedience that is pleasing to God.¹⁷

The focus in the New Testament is on Christ's death as the new covenant and the means by which we are sustained in an eternal relationship with God. Acceptable worship involves acknowledging and accepting God's claim for exclusive devotion and loyalty by rejecting every alternative. In the marketplace, in politics, in the field of education or in the arts, the Christian is constantly challenged to make the decisive choice for God that Jesus himself made, when he was tested so forcefully in the wilderness.¹⁸ Worship in New Testament terms means responding with one's whole life and being to the divine kingship of Jesus.¹⁹ Acceptable worship under both covenants is a matter of responding to God's initiative in salvation and revelation and doing so in the way that he requires.²⁰

Worship is "ultimately linked with all the major emphases of biblical theology such as creation, sin, covenant, redemption, the people of God and the future hope."²¹ It has to do with the fundamental question of how can we be in a right relationship with God. Worship is a life orientation.²² Our worship is to be our whole life response with our minds, our will, and our

¹⁶ Hebrews 10:19; 7:25.

¹⁷ Hebrews 13:15-16.

¹⁸ Matthew 4:8-10.

¹⁹ David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 144.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²² I Thessalonians 5:16-22.

emotions issuing forth response to God. Worship cannot begin with our actions, but must originate within our hearts. A broken spirit and contrite heart are pleasing to God.²³ God sets the standard for what in our hearts is acceptable worship.²⁴ God requires a pure heart.²⁵ Psalm 119 describes what we are to be like to please him.

The word in the Greek Bible most commonly translated “to worship” is *proskynein*. This word was used for the inward attitude of homage or respect, which the outward gestures of bowing or kissing represented.²⁶ It usually implies humble submission to the will of God or grateful acknowledgement of his gracious initiative to those concerned, not primarily supplication.²⁷ Deuteronomy 10:12-13 exhorts us to serve the Lord our God with all our heart and with our soul and to observe the Lord’s commands. This implies a total lifestyle allegiance to God in all our heart and behavior.²⁸ The service (worship) of God is not possible by those who indulge in a life of sin and rebellion against God.²⁹

The Hebrew and Greek scriptures used many different words that were often translated to the same English word “worship.”³⁰ For example, meanings included service, engaging in religious ceremony, an attitude or outward gestures representing homage, submission, adoration, reverence and respect. Reverence or fear of the Lord (*revere*) is not just respect; reverence

²³ Psalm 51:16-17.

²⁴ Psalm 15.

²⁵ Psalm 24:3-5.

²⁶ David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 57.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²⁸ Joshua 22:5.

²⁹ Joshua 24:19-20.

³⁰ David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 55-74, 147-158.

results in faithful obedience. Adoration is not a form of intimacy with God or an indication of special affection toward him, rather it is an expression of awe or grateful submission – a recognition of his gracious character and rule. Worship is never the outward physical acts alone, rather it is inner faith, gratitude, and obedience, which are the prerequisites for acceptable worship. Worship following Jesus’ ascension into heaven continues the same theme of responding with one’s whole life. Scripture indicates that it was only possible to serve the Lord acceptably because of his gracious initiative, rescuing his people from bondage to other masters, and revealing his will to them. The service of God demands obedience and faithfulness in every sphere of life, with submission to God. Romans 12:1 exhorts us to present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God and that this is reasonable. Our living bodies are to be living sacrifices of service to God involving our hearts, minds and wills through obedience service. Throughout all of chapter twelve, Paul emphasizes the corporate responsibility of obedience and connectedness, not just individualized striving toward service and character perfection.

In the Decalogue we are warned against idolatry.³¹ It can be idolatry of physical objects or it can be of making sacred that which is sanctified. I Thessalonians 1:9 states, “They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” Worship was understood to mean the consecrated lifestyle of the converted. The Greek verb *douleuein* used here was regularly used in secular contexts for the obligation of a slave (*doulos*) to his master. Since it conveyed the notion of total dependence and of obedience without any right of personal choice,

³¹ Exodus 20:3-4. The author understands idolatry to be for us to look to anyone such as stars in the Christian community or anything internal or external other than God to give us life. The first commandment warns against this in all forms, which would include both spiritual and physical in nature. The second commandment is a specific prohibition of making a visible symbol of that idol. Idols might take the form of small carved statues in one culture and in other cultures become spiritual disciplines or styles and forms of worship, that are imposed as necessary for one to worship “correctly.”

it would not have been regarded as an appropriate expression of service to the gods in Greek religion. The Greek translators of the Old Testament frequently used this word to describe the bond-service due to the God of Israel. In other words, Christianity was to be distinguished from the various cults, which flourished in Thessalonica, not by any rituals or secret practices, but by the consecrated lifestyle of its adherents.³²

Our worship of God is not something that we do to bring us into favor with God. Jesus' sacrifice is the only acceptable sacrifice to God for our sins. In Hebrews it is clear that the blood or death of Jesus is what actually removes sin and makes it possible for sinners to draw near to God.³³ Because Jesus offered himself as a perfectly obedient and unblemished sacrifice to his father, Jesus' death has atoning significance.³⁴ With a single sacrifice for sins, Christ has removed the necessity for the old covenant sacrificial system, providing the final and decisive forgiveness of which Jeremiah spoke.³⁵ This is not only sufficient but also exclusive.³⁶ In Romans 12:1-8, the Apostle Paul teaches us that our spiritual act of worship is that we are not to be conformed to our secular or religious world, rather that we are to be transformed by a new mindset in contrast to the world, and live in humility and faith as God apportions to us. We worship when we live in community as belonging to one another, to serve, teach, generously give to the needs of others, provide leadership, and exhibit mercy to one another, all according to the grace that God gives to us. We are not all alike, but we are all to be respectful and honoring to one another and value God's provision of diversity of spiritual gifts. Paul continues exhorting

³² David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 168.

³³ Hebrews 9:12-14, 15-22; 10:19,29;12:24; 13:12.

³⁴ Hebrews 5:7-9; 7:27; 9:14, 28.

³⁵ Jeremiah 10:17-18. See also David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 231-232.

³⁶ Hebrews 10:10, Hebrews 5:8-10 and John 14:6.

us to hate what is evil, cling to what is good and be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Throughout Romans 12, Paul continues to explain that worship is our lives exhibiting a lifestyle of character and service to others, not so that we are an example for them to follow, rather as a response to God's initiative and Jesus' sacrifice for us. Paul's teaching about worship makes no reference to requiring these actions to take place in the context of church gatherings (what we might call "worship services"), although many of the actions are corporate in the sense that they require relationships with others. Character which is above reproach and servanthood are to be the hallmark of our entire lives, with all people in all contexts.

Both Matthew and John clearly portray Jesus as the fulfillment of everything for which the temple stood, under the new covenant.³⁷ While standing in the temple, Jesus claimed that "one greater than the temple is here."³⁸ Jesus saw himself as the new temple or the earthly presence of God. He predicted the destruction of the temple and its rebuilding in three days.³⁹ Although locals thought Jesus meant the Jerusalem temple, He was clearly referring to his earthly body. Jesus has now replaced the Jerusalem temple as the source of life and renewal for the world. At the moment of Jesus' death the curtain, which isolated the temple's Holy of Holies, was torn apart making the Ark visible to all.⁴⁰ This is a graphic symbol of the opening of a new, direct way to God through the death of Jesus, no longer requiring the intercessory sacerdotal acts by human priests. God's presence with us is now no longer limited to his historic dwelling place in the temple or the physical person of Jesus. Jesus rejected circumcision, Jewish descent, and obedience to the law as the basis of a relationship to God. Through his

³⁷ David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 81.

³⁸ Matthew. 12:6.

³⁹ Matthew. 26:59-61 and Mark 14:57-59.

⁴⁰ Mark 15:38 and Luke 23:45.

incarnation⁴¹, death and exaltation Jesus is now our high priest, bringing us into a direct, shared relationship with God the Father and Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Neither religious ceremonies, personal morality nor preoccupation with social justice can ever rightly usurp our passion of knowing Jesus directly.

Engagement with God through Christ is now the only way to offer the acceptable worship due to him. Jesus is both the object of our worship and the leader of our worship.⁴² Our worship must be Christocentric not just Theocentric. Explicit mentioning of Jesus does not make our worship Christocentric. Worship must acknowledge the person and the exclusive saving work of Christ at the center not just God the creator of the universe (Theocentric).

Not only must worship be Christocentric; it must also be Trinitarian, acknowledging the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Participation in Jesus' worship of the Father is what is required to be acceptable. Trinitarian worship does not rely on *our* religious experience, faith, repentance or decisions. What is at the center is a unique mutual relationship of love between Jesus and the Father. We are adopted into that unique shared life of intimate communion with them. It is a twofold relationship between the triune God and us, through the Holy Spirit. God's primary purpose for humanity is filial, not social justice or individual self-actualization. The gift of grace is to participate through the Holy Spirit in Jesus' communion with the Father. Implicit in our receiving of grace and forgiveness is a humble submission to the verdict of being guilty. Our repentance is a response to grace, not a condition of grace.

⁴¹ The prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 is restated in Matthew 1:23; a son will be born of a virgin and His name will be Immanuel, which means "God with us." This is the best example of God's initiative to be with us to draw us to himself.

⁴² James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community & The Triune God of Grace*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 64-65.

Our response to God with worship, although first internal, will also manifest itself in external physical behavior. The external actions have no eternal significance without our heart being right with God. It is clear that a response of faith, gratitude and obedience is essential for acceptable worship. Faith is believing that God will be faithful and keep his promises.⁴³ Gratitude is our response to God's initiative with us. Obedience is both a sign of our knowledge of his word and his will followed by our response of service to him.

⁴³ Quotation from IWS-501 Class lecture by Dr. Eric Bolger, January 2004.

CHAPTER 3
MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY WORSHIP
(CHRISTIAN GATHERINGS AND WORSHIP BY THE CHURCH)

Many contemporary discussions about the quality of community worship focus on matters of our personal preference such as style of music or levels of formality. Authentic worship is not about what we want. It is not regulated by our tastes. Neither is its acceptability to God is validated because it attracts many attendees to our church gatherings.

While Christians often wrongly limit the word “worship” to what goes on in church services, our gatherings can be an expression of our worship. However, Paul does not apply the language of worship specifically to what goes on when we Christians meet together. Scripture teaches that gatherings are for fellowship, edification of one another, and mutual ministry. Gatherings are to benefit the believing community.⁴⁴ We are to gather together regularly to give in ministry, and not simply to receive.⁴⁵ In contemporary English, the affirmation that something is edifying usually means that it was personally helpful or encouraging. It is easy to misinterpret Paul and to think of edification individually, meaning the spiritual advancement of individuals within the church in their personal piety. However, the word church in the apostle’s teaching has a corporate reference to the community of believers. When the word “you” is translated, it is from a plural “you” much more often than a singular “you.”⁴⁶ For example, you (plural) are the

⁴⁴ Hebrews 3:12-15; 10:24-25.

⁴⁵ David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 249.

⁴⁶ Quotation from IWS-501 Class lecture by Dr. Eric Bolger, January 2004.

church. You (the church, not the individual) are the temple of the Holy Spirit. You (plural) are the light of the world⁴⁷

The purpose of spiritual gifts is for the edification of the body of Christ – to prepare the rest of God’s people for works of service. This edification is also a community experience. We cannot be edified in isolation from one another. We can only edify one another if we are together. Paul frequently refers to upbuilding or edification of Christians, rather than the language of worship, to indicate the purpose and function of Christian gatherings.⁴⁸

It is simplistic to argue that because we see a certain activity in the early Christian churches, that the replication of such action should be the norm for the church today. We must see these external actions in the context of their real internal meaning, not just observe and copy the external actions themselves. For example, kneeling or lying prostrate on the floor was recognition of God’s revealed character, not just his presence.⁴⁹ The nature of the recorded Christian group worship experiences changes dramatically through the centuries. One model for the Christian congregation is Israel gathered at Mt. Sinai to receive the word of the Lord (Ex. 19-24). Israelites assembled in Jerusalem to hear the book of the law read by Ezra and interpreted by the Levites (Nehemiah 8-9). Yet the profound difference in the New Testament view of the Lord’s assembly is that God now comes to his people, wherever they are gathered in his name.⁵⁰ God encounters them through the ministry, which he enables them to have to one another, as an

⁴⁷ Matthew 5:14

⁴⁸ 1 Cor. 14:3, 4,5,12,17, 26; I Thes. 5:11; Ephesians 4:11-16.

⁴⁹ David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 63.

⁵⁰ Matthew 18:20.

outworking of the promises of the new covenant. We meet with God when we meet with one another.⁵¹

There are diverse examples of worship described in the Psalms. Arts, skills and crafts employed by the Hebrew community in the service of worship: visual art (engraving, metal working, woodworking, stonecutting, textiles weaving and embroidery), perfumers' art, music (singing, making and playing musical instruments, new psalmody, dance, lamentation) and others such as oration and interpretation of God's law, literature and storytelling with imagery and poetry.⁵² In the New Testament, the book of Acts presents the gatherings of the churches that met in homes, rather than at locations built for exclusive religious expression. I Corinthians 14 addresses a great deal about anticipated activities, when the church is gathered for meetings. There are many listed activities, such as praying, instructing, speaking in tongues, giving thanks and singing hymns. Neither evangelism nor edification of God was the purpose of the gatherings. This passage indicates that the purpose of all these shared activities was to edify one another, the Christians, themselves which brings glory to God.⁵³ If, however, a non-believer were to be present, although (s)he might not understand what is happening and why, the observations of and testimony of the believers will draw him/her to repent and worship God.

Preaching about Christ must be at the heart of a Christian theology of community worship. Preaching about the person and work of Jesus Christ is to bring about a consecrated lifestyle, which enables believers to glorify God in all venues where we live, work and play. This view of worship highlights the importance of the family, the workplace and leisure

⁵¹ David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 198.

⁵² Andrew H. Hill, *Enter His Courts With Praise*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), p. 214.

⁵³ I Corinthians 14:17.

activities as the spheres in which to work out the implications of a genuine relationship with God.⁵⁴

Jesus intended for his disciples to recall and celebrate the benefits of his saving work in the context of a community meal, as he did in his last supper, when they celebrated Passover on the night before he was betrayed. Communion was an act given by Jesus for us to express worship. Jesus did not specify how often we should do this. This is a meal that is shared within the Christian community, not a meal that we can celebrate alone. We look back in history from the scriptures and in our own lives as to what God has done for us. We express our gratitude for his grace toward us and reach out together to experience the forgiveness and restoration he has promised. We can then look at what it will mean to share with Christ in his coming kingdom and encourage one another and to learn what it means to live in the redeemed community in the present.⁵⁵ However, we must not let liturgical or non-liturgical traditions obscure these graceful treasures, which the Lord extends toward us to receive and share through this community encounter with him.

The Holy Spirit now is present in the corporate us, the church. The church is the temple of the Holy Spirit. I Corinthians 3:16-17 teaches that that we, the church, are God's sacred temple and that God will destroy anyone who destroys the church. The temple is not our individual physical bodies, but the body of Christ. Paul is teaching against divisiveness here, not against smoking or excessive drinking. We meet with God when we meet with one another. Christians are mutually dependent upon one another and collectively dependent upon Jesus

⁵⁴ David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 188.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

Christ for life and power.⁵⁶ When we share and receive the use of spiritual gifts (worship), we are witnessing the hand of God. We are consecrated to God because Jesus Christ died and rose for us, and because the Spirit of God enables us to believe the gospel and yield ourselves to God.⁵⁷ “Consequently, the sacrifice we offer is already holy. We are holy, like the Israelites redeemed from Egypt, because God has graciously brought us to himself.”⁵⁸

Christian gatherings should 1) proclaim and apply the truths of the gospel, 2) keep the focus on God’s gracious initiative, 3) elicit appropriate expressions of that faith in the assembly and in everyday life, 4) exhibit prayer and praise if they are faith responses to the gospel,⁵⁹ 5) celebrate the communion meal which Jesus instituted, and 6) build up the believers.⁶⁰

Neither sacramentalism, nor the development of an inner life, nor a preoccupation with issues of social justice⁶¹ can rightly usurp the role of reading, teaching and application of scripture.⁶² When Christians become preoccupied with the notion of offering God acceptable worship in a congregational context and thus with the minutiae of church services, they must be reminded that Paul’s focus was on the service of everyday life.⁶³ If the purpose of a Christian meeting is worship, we must take great care to follow the principles presented in Chapter 2 of this paper. All of this applies in the community worship times. The same temptations of idolatry

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 208.

⁵⁷ See I Cor. 1:30, II Thes. 2:13 and I Pet. 1:2.

⁵⁸ David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 177.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 220.

⁶⁰ I Cor. 14:7.

⁶¹ James B. Torrance, *Worship Community & The Triune God of Grace*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 1997), p.29.

⁶² David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 102.

⁶³ David Peterson, *Engaging With God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 187.

of form and structure over substance can be present in gatherings of the church. Some worship attempts substitute Theocentric worship for Christocentric worship. Trinitarian worship can be traded in for unitarianism – approaching God directly rather than through Jesus. Any temptation to exchange the grace extended to us by God through the person and life of Jesus for shallow satisfaction of our social, cultural and narcissistic gratifications must also be resisted as much in our community worship as in our individual walks with God.

CHAPTER 4

RECESSIONAL (CONCLUSIONS)

The author believes that these observations, judgments and conclusions within this paper about Christian worship are essential to embrace, in order to break the cultural Christian worship mold espoused by the secular society and much of the greater Christian community. Although each subject is essential, these important perspectives cannot be considered exhaustively presented herein. The author continues to learn from scripture about a significant redefining of what is Christian worship.

Worship “in truth” connects the heart or spirit of our worship with the truth about God and his work of redemption as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and the scriptures.⁶⁴ Worship begins when we acknowledge and respond to God for his extended grace and mercy to us. This response is first found within our individual obedient hearts and is externally exhibited through our participation with others in the church through service pleasing to God. King David understood the importance of connecting his worship with truth when he wrote, “Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may hear your name.”⁶⁵ Our true worship of God begins as an internal issue, a matter of the heart, and is rooted in the knowledge of and obedience to the revealed word of God. Our individual activities and Christian gatherings must reveal the reality of our hearts if they are to be acceptable worship of God.

⁶⁴ Andrew H. Hill, *Enter His Courts With Praise*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), p. 25.

⁶⁵ Psalm 86:11; 145:18.