

Enhancing Your Service of Worship

God the Father has sought those who will worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. In teaching this to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4:24), Jesus set the biblical hallmark for the New Testament calling of the redeemed. Even as God pursued us to be worshippers, we must pursue worship as our godliest priority.

Why We Do What We Do

The Bible reveals worship to be a dialogue between God and those who worship. For this reason we design our order of service to enhance this dialogue according to a pattern that is biblical and gospel centered. This pattern is the familiar ACTS model which many Christians have adopted for their private devotions: adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. When we add instruction, sacrament and benediction we have all the essential elements of biblical corporate worship. Further, the dialogue of worship involves God speaking and our responding. Thus, in each section of our worship God speaks to us through his Word. We speak back in our prayers, both spoken and sung. As Calvin wrote, "As for public prayers, there are two kinds. The ones with the word alone: the others with singing" (Preface to the Psalter, 1565). This pattern, of Scripture reading and prayers in response, structures the entire worship order.

What We Can Do To Do It Better

To assist the congregation in preparing for Sunday worship, we plan to send the worship service outline to you weekly a few days prior to each Sunday. Contained in the outline are the parts of the service and the songs that we intend to sing, along with the basic theme of the upcoming message. Just as Calvin taught his Genevan congregation, we endeavor "to have songs not only honest, but also holy, which will be like spurs to incite us to pray to and praise God, and to meditate upon his works in order to love, fear, honor and glorify him" (Preface to the Psalter, 1565).

Further, we plan to attach files of the lyrics and music for the songs for the coming Sunday. The PDF files contain the melody, in music notation, and the lyrics of

each song. The mp3 files will be condensed music files which contains one stanza of the melody, or tune, of each song. We encourage you to save these files so that you can open them later while listening to the melody of each song. Real Player, Microsoft's Media Player, or I-Tunes should be able to open these mp3 files. Our basic aim is simply this, to give you the opportunity to prepare personally for Sunday worship by practicing the songs we will sing each week. We also recommend the practice of meditating on the lyrics, reading the scripture each song is based on (given below the title of the song), and when you have learned the songs, singing them at home, in your car, or in your heart as praise and thanksgiving to God.

So Great A Cloud of Witnesses

God has blessed his church in all ages with song writers. We honor God when we "sing to the Lord a new song" (Psalm 96.1). For this reason we will introduce new songs on a regular basis and spend time learning them. Some songs we sing were sung by saints in ancient times. Some are from the rich heritage of the Reformation. Others are from America, Europe, and even from other tribes and peoples throughout the world. Some songs we sing will be those written by musicians and poets of our generation (perhaps from our own congregation!). The result is this: our Sunday worship is a continuation of the worship offered by saints since the Fall. We stand on the shoulders of those who have lived and died for "the faith once for all given to the saints." When we worship together each Sunday we are part of that great cloud of witnesses joining together in praise and thanksgiving to Him alone who is worthy of our worship.

We pray that you will be blessed as you prepare for Sunday worship. We trust your efforts will reap a godly reward as you learn, practice and meditate on lyrics that many godly men and women have given us. We have been redeemed to worship. May the time you spend during the week preparing for Sunday worship enhance your ability to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.