

Worship of The Church

Today when you discuss worship you have to address “Worship Warfare.” Albert Mohler does in *He is not Silent*: “The subject of worship is now one of the most controversial issues in the local congregation” (page 23). The only part of his statement that I disagree with is the one word “now.” Worship warfare has been raging for centuries. It took Benjamin Keath (1640-1704) twenty years to persuade his Baptist congregation to sing hymns and not just Psalms. Even after twenty years, some of his members left and started another church so they could sing just Psalms.

In our series on The Church we have studied pictures of the Church which showed us who we are as the church which affects what we practice.

1. Pictures of the Church:

The Church is the Body of Christ who worships our Head so that He has the preeminence. The Church is Temple of the Holy Spirit. We worship the only true God as the temple. The Church is the Bride of Christ who adorns her Bridegroom. We are the Priesthood who exercises our priestly function of the sacrifice of praise. The Church is the Flock of God who with David worships The Lord our Shepherd.

2. Practices of the Church (Acts 2:42-47)

Not all would agree that Acts 2:42-47 is the text for the model of church practices. Rick Warren states that the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40) plus the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) makes a Great Church (*The Purpose Driven Church*, 102-103). The first local church described by Luke for us in Acts 2:42-47 shows us what a church looks like that obeys both the great commandment and the great commission. So there is no real contradiction.

A. *Teaching*: “They continued stedfastly in the apostle’s doctrine.” Teaching and preaching of God’s Word are first mentioned for emphasis. The first Christian ministry performed after the founding of the Church on the Day of Pentecost was preaching. This was a statement.

B. *Fellowship*: “They continued stedfastly in ... fellowship....all that believed were together, and had all things common....breaking bread.” Fellowship is not contact. Fellowship is more like discipleship. Robert Anderson mentions a church that disciplined a church member and forbade the other members from having any contact with that member. If a member saw the disciplined member in the grocery store that member was to turn and walk away. This church was confusing contact with fellowship. Biblical fellowship is a deep involvement in another believer’s life in order to help him spiritually as the Philippians did with Paul at Thessalonica (Philippians 4:15-16).

C. *Worship*: “Fear came upon every soul....praising God.” John Hammett describes these two aspects of worship as reverent awe and joyful praise (*Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 249). Traditional churches have to be careful not to go to seed on reverent awe and contemporary churches must be “take care that they not obscure God’s holiness. One of the earliest studies of

Willow Creek found that 70 percent of the sermons emphasized God's love, while only 7 percent dealt with God's holiness....Traditionalists need to guard against the opposite danger, that of joyless worship that does not actively engage worshipers in praise, but leaves them to sit in silence" (Hammett, 249).

D. *Service*: "and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." This is the outgrowth of worship. In Heaven, the result of our worshiping God and the Lamb will be that His "servants shall serve him" (Revelation 22:3).

E. *Evangelism*: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." This is another by-product of worship

Today there are "Worship Wars."

1. War between *contemporary music and traditional music*. This is the battle between those who want reverence and others who want relevance in the worship service according to Ed Stetzer.

2. War between *seeker sensitive or evangelism and glorifying God and edification of believers*. On this point I must take sides with glorifying God and edification of believers and use Ephesians 4:11-12 as my bases. Evangelism, as we saw in Acts 2:42-47, will be the fruit.

3. War between *experience oriented worship and God centered worship*. David clearly advocated God centered worship in 1 Chronicles 16:29.

4. War between *the regulative principle of worship* (include in worship only what Scripture endorses) and *the normative principle* (include whatever is not prohibited in Scripture). Most churches use both principles to varying degrees. We must be regulative in regard to the pattern seen in Acts 2:42-47. But normative with parts of our worship not directly addressed in Scripture such as sound equipment, technology, padded pews, announcements, architecture, service order, and please don't forget the nursery.

True Worship

John 4 is the worship chapter. Jesus pursues and converts a non-worshiper into a "true worshiper" (4:23). From this chapter we learn that true worship

1. Is Directed to God *the Father* (John 4:21-24). Jesus informs the Samaritan woman that worship is not limited to a time and place. Worship is a lifestyle according to Hebrews 13:15-16 that should take place "continually." We don't just worship one hour from 11:00 to 12:00 Sunday mornings. We worship every waking hour. We worship God or ourselves and our pleasures and possessions. We either worship God or commit idolatry.

2. Is Directed to the Father through *the Son* (John 4:26). The Samaritan woman went from seeing Jesus as "a Jew" to "sir" to "a prophet" to "Christ." Even Jesus said, "No man comes to the Father but by me."

3. Is Directed to the Father through the Son in *the Spirit* (John 4:24).

A. *“In Spirit”* (The Spirit empowers the human spirit). The Samaritans worshiped in the spirit but not in truth. They associated with pagans and worshiped enthusiastically but shallowly. They Samaritans rejected all of the Old Testament but the Pentateuch. Jesus said to the Samaritan, “You know not what you worship” (4:22).

B. *“In Truth”* (The Spirit enables us to understand God’s Word). The Jews on the other hand worshiped in the truth but not in the spirit. The religious Jews believed all of the Old Testament was God’s Word but their heart was not into worship. Jesus said to the religious but unsaved Jews, “this people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” They were straight as shot gun barrel and just as empty.

The divine method was demonstrated with Jesus and the Samaritan woman. He gave her the truth in 4:26 and she enthusiastically responded in 4:28. If our worship is Word driven we will both worship in spirit and in truth. We will like Daniel, after reading Jeremiah 25:11-12, fall to our knees in prayer (Daniel 9:1-3). We will experience what Ezra enjoyed when he expositively preached the Word in Nehemiah and the people wept as they heard God’s word.