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REFINING THE CORPORATE WORSHIP OF CROSSROADS
CHURCH IN HAMMOND, LOUISIANA,
ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE

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REFINING THE CORPORATE WORSHIP OF CROSSROADS
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I dedicate this project to my wife, Tara.

“An excellent wife, who can find?”

By God’s grace I have and “she is far more precious than jewels” (Prov 31:10).

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PREFACE

God has blessed me with the joy of being the pastor of Crossroads Church. It is a great privilege to be among a faith family that constantly looks to the Bible and then to themselves, always willing to conform to Scripture. Their love of the Word and willingness to submit to it prompted me to pursue this project. Their support during this project was a great encouragement to me. My hope is that by looking to Scripture to refine our corporate worship we will become a healthier church that will display the manifold wisdom of God to the heavenly beings (Eph 3:10).

I am deeply humbled by the sacrifices made by my family throughout my theological education. My wife, Tara, has encouraged, edited, prayed and supported me to the end. There are no words to explain my gratitude to God for richly blessing me with her companionship. Without her constant love, support, and encouragement this project would not have been completed. Our sons, Jordan and Jaxon, have been encouraging and supportive when I needed to pull away for a while to read and write. I am proud of the young men they are.

Finally, I am grateful to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for the opportunity to study with a top-notch faculty, especially my project supervisor, Dr. Scott Connell. His guidance through this project honed my thinking, leading to a better understanding of corporate worship. Dr. Connell, your knowledge and gracious encouragement are, in large part, why this project was completed. Thank you.

Asah Hudgins

Hammond, Louisiana

May 2019

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sufficiency is an attribute of Scripture that many churches affirm with their lips, but this attribute is often far from their hearts. A church may affirm Scripture's sufficiency in its documents, like the statement of faith, covenant, or constitution and by-laws, but the practice of the sufficiency of Scripture is difficult to find in the day-to-day life of that church. This lack of application is odd for churches with deep roots in the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century because one of the principle tenants of the Reformation was *sola Scriptura*—Scripture alone. From the beginning, Protestants have held that the Bible is the final authority for faith and practice. The problem faced by many Protestant churches now is that *sola Scriptura* has become merely a slogan—something they are proud of and repeat enthusiastically, but practice does not always match the fervent affirmation. At the heart of this separation is the issue of the sufficiency of Scripture.

Recent history has seen a rise in differing opinions on how sufficient the Bible is in orthopraxy. Gregg Allison has noted this widening divide:

In terms of the practical outworking of the doctrine of Scripture's sufficiency, the last part of the twentieth century into the twenty-first century witnessed an ever-widening divide between evangelicals over the issues of counseling, church planting and church growth, church leadership and administration, even preaching.¹

This last issue, preaching, presses the church to consider more broadly the entire worship service. It is here that many churches must grapple with how and to what extent the Bible should inform worship. Crossroads Church in Hammond, Louisiana, is no exception.

¹ Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 161.

Context

Crossroads Church (CRC) has affirmed the sufficiency of Scripture from its beginning by adopting the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 (BF&M) as its doctrinal standard. Although the BF&M does not explicitly state that Scripture is sufficient, it is inferred in the second sentence of the first article, which states, “It [the Scriptures] is a perfect treasure of divine instruction.”² By applying the adjective perfect to this description of divine instruction, sufficiency is inferred. Having this statement of faith ensures that the members of CRC know the church’s stance on the Scriptures. Although it is necessary and helpful to know what the church believes about the sufficiency of Scripture, knowledge alone is far from adequate—it must be applied.

On March 1, 2007, I was called as the second pastor in the history of CRC. At that time, the church began a journey to reform its practices to align with its belief in the sufficiency of Scripture.

The first and most foundational shift that occurred was in the preaching. The first pastor led the congregation well through topical exposition, resulting in solid biblical views on the topics that he chose. When I began, the shift was from topical exposition to exposition through books of the Bible. It was not a departure from exposition but a deepening of trust in the sufficiency of Scripture. Expository preaching through books of the Bible allowed Scripture to direct not only the main points of any given sermon, but also to determine what topic would be addressed each week. The benefits of this shift in preaching have been innumerable for the members of CRC.

The second shift was to realign the small group ministry along with what was being preached on Sunday mornings. Each week the group leaders received questions related to the previous Sunday’s sermon. The groups then worked on applying what was preached. The reason for adopting this model was to reinforce the belief in the

² The Southern Baptist Convention, “The Baptist Faith and Message,” accessed March 1, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>.

sufficiency of Scripture and to encourage members to practice living according to the truths in Scripture. The goal was to inform both belief and action.

These first two shifts provide the church with weekly reminders that the Bible is the source for faith and practice. Together, these changes have created a desire in the congregation for biblical truth and an intolerance for doctrinally weak teaching. This desire to trust more fully in Scripture has led to other reforms that have made CRC a healthier church.

One such reform has been to adopt a biblical approach to church discipline. The majority of CRC's members had never been a part of a church that practiced church discipline. When the need arose for CRC to discipline a member, the congregation embraced the biblical teaching and their responsibility to carry it out. Since that time, three other cases have come before the church and each time the church has chosen to set aside personal comfort and trust what Scripture says. Every time the church has done this they have benefitted from it by being warned of the deceitfulness of sin and committed to following the Bible for the glory of God.

As the congregation saw the fruit of biblical wisdom applied, momentum grew for evaluating all of the church's practices according to Scripture. The next shift was in our polity. CRC was founded as a church with one pastor and deacons, but the church came to see that there was a biblical precedence for multiple elders and deacons. After hearing biblical teaching on the need for multiple elders, the church unanimously voted to adopt a constitution and bylaws allowing for this form of polity. In August of 2014, the church affirmed two elders to join the pastor in leadership, oversight, and shepherding of the congregation.³

³ CRC does not make a distinction between elder and pastor. It is the same office. The only difference is that I am vocational and the other elders are lay elders. For a discussion on the use of the terms *elder* and *pastor* for the same office, see Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, 3rd ed. (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995); Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013); and Jeramie Rinne, *Church Elders: How to Shepherd God's People Like Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).

CRC has been a reforming church, but it must always continue reforming to reflect what is found in Scripture. To that end, it is time to revisit how CRC conducts corporate worship as a means for the congregation to practice what it believes about the sufficiency of Scripture.

Rationale

Three important questions emerge from the context concerning the worship of the church: (1) Should the Bible regulate the worship of the church? (2) To what extent does Scripture regulate worship? (3) Does the Bible only negate improper forms of worship or does it prescribe necessary forms as well? Answering these questions provided CRC the opportunity to reaffirm and practice the sufficiency of Scripture in corporate worship.

This project sought to deepen the membership's trust in the sufficiency of Scripture both explicitly and implicitly. Scripture's sufficiency was explicitly taught in three ways. First, by formulating a systematic and biblical-theological understanding of corporate worship that served as the rationale for the way CRC conducts services. This understanding was used to refine CRC's corporate worship according to principles found in the Bible, as opposed to adopting extra-biblical practices as long as they are not negated in the Bible.

Second, a sermon series was developed to teach the congregation what the Bible teaches about corporate worship. The sermon series was developed using both the Old and New Testament to ensure that the congregation could see how the themes of gospel-shaped worship are taught throughout the Bible.

Finally, small groups were developed to discuss the congregation's understanding and application of the gospel-shaped worship from the Bible. All of these means of teaching were used in an effort to ensure that our belief in the sufficiency of Scripture as it relates to corporate worship is thoroughly understood: helping the church to develop biblical convictions in the area of worship. The goal is that those who transition out of CRC will be equipped to find healthy churches to join wherever they go.

All of these ways of explicitly teaching how the Bible regulates worship strengthened the understanding of what the membership of CRC affirms about the sufficiency of Scripture. As was mentioned, knowledge alone is only half the battle. Many churches affirm sufficiency of Scripture but do not appear to practice it. This contradiction likely encourages the members of those churches to do the same. Therefore, this project also sought to teach the sufficiency of Scripture implicitly by applying the regulative principle in corporate worship of CRC. As the congregation sees the church acting on what it believes, it should encourage the congregation to do the same.

After teaching the doctrine of sufficiency of Scripture to the congregation, the final step was to lead the church to reform their practice to incorporate all the elements of corporate worship found in the Bible, or at the very least, to identify why the church worships as it does. There were two goals of this kind of implicit teaching. The first was to strengthen the church. As the church seeks to follow God in all aspects, they should witness the blessing of following God’s wisdom. This blessing may be by numerical growth or by spiritual depth or both. In either case, the church ought to be healthier.

Second, as the congregation witnessed the church’s submission to Scripture, it encouraged the members to look to the Scriptures as their all-sufficient source for life and godliness. If the church—the “pillar of buttress of truth” (1 Tim 3:15)—does not consult the Bible as to how it should conduct its worship of God, how can it then recommend its members consult the Scriptures for all matters of life? This implicit way of teaching will be a continual reminder of the sufficiency of Scripture among our church body.

Purpose

The purpose of the project was to promote trust in the sufficiency of Scripture by refining the corporate worship of Crossroads Church according to Scripture.

Goals

The following four goals reflect the steps necessary steps for accomplishing the purpose of this project.

1. The first goal was to assess CRC members' understanding of how Scripture informs corporate worship.
2. The second goal was to develop a five-week sermon series and corresponding guided discussion on worship according to Scripture for the members of CRC.
3. The third goal was to increase the knowledge of Scripture's teaching on corporate worship among the members of CRC.
4. The fourth goal was to assess and make any needed changes to the patterns, practices and elements of corporate worship at CRC.

Research Methodology

Four goals determined the effectiveness of the project. The first goal was to assess CRC members' understanding of how Scripture informs corporate worship.⁴ This goal was measured by administering the Corporate Worship according to Scripture Survey (CWAS) to a small group of CRC members.⁵ Each member drew a number for identification on the pre-project survey that was matched with the post-project survey results. Included in the survey are questions regarding the understanding of the biblical definition, elements, and practice of corporate worship. This goal was considered successfully met when at least fifteen members of a small group completed the CWAS and the inventory was analyzed yielding a clearer picture of the current understanding of how Scripture informs corporate worship.⁶

⁴ All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

⁵ See appendix 1.

⁶ There are 120 adult members of CRC. The CWABS was administered to the gathered congregation on Sunday of week 1 of the project.

The second goal was to develop a five-week sermon series and corresponding guided discussion on worship according to Scripture for the members of CRC. The sermon series and guided discussion covered the sufficiency of Scripture, the Christocentric hermeneutic in the use of Scripture, and the elements of corporate worship. This goal was measured by an elder of CRC, The Director of Missions of the Northshore Baptist Association, and a newspaper editor, who used a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the sermon series and discussion guide.⁷ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level. If either the sermons in the series or the discussion guide had failed to meet the aforementioned benchmark, it was revised until it met the standard.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of Scripture's teaching on corporate worship among the members of CRC through the preaching of the sermon series and corresponding life group discussions.⁸ This goal was measured by administering the CWAS survey a second time to the same members of the small group of CRC who committed to listen to all five sermons and attend four of the five corresponding life group discussions.⁹ The CWAS was then used to measure the change in knowledge of corporate worship according to Scripture.¹⁰ This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in

⁷ See appendix 2.

⁸ "Life Group" is the name given to the small group discipleship ministry of CRC. There are three types: discussion-based groups that focus on the previous Sunday's sermon seeking to apply the truths to everyday life, curriculum-driven groups using *The Gospel Project* from Lifeway, and intentional evangelism groups that teach the foundational truths of the gospel. This project focused on the participants in the discussion-based life groups.

⁹ Approximately forty people attend both the corporate worship service and discussion-based life groups at CRC. The number of twenty participants was chosen to reflect a sample of five members from each of the four life groups.

¹⁰ See appendix 1.

the pre and post scores. A *t*-test for dependent samples “involves a comparison of the means from each group of scores and focuses on the differences between the scores.”¹¹ This comparison of means using the *t*-test ensures learning has taken place and the result was not due to mere chance.¹²

The fourth goal was to assess and make any needed changes to the patterns of corporate worship at CRC. The previous corporate liturgy was evaluated for biblical fidelity and effectiveness. All necessary changes were explained to the congregation and adopted so that the congregation was shepherded into a more biblically faithful corporate worship. This goal was measured by an expert panel consisting of the two other elders of CRC, one member of the worship team, and one staff member, who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness and effectiveness of the corporate worship.¹³ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion meet or exceed the sufficient level. If the corporate worship failed to meet the aforementioned benchmark, it was revised until it met the standard.

Definitions and Delimitations

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

Corporate worship. For the purposes of this project, corporate worship is defined by what takes place when the people of God gather. Frame helpfully differentiates between worship in a broad sense and worship in a narrow sense:

The Bible speaks of worship in broad and narrow senses. The narrow sense is public, corporate worship, what the Jews did in the temple, and what Christians do in their weekly gathering to celebrate the resurrection. The broad sense is the sense

¹¹ Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 191.

¹² *Ibid.*, 189.

¹³ See appendix 3.

of Romans 12:1–2: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Notice here the language of sacrifice, holiness, worship. But the worship here is not the weekly worship of the Lord’s Day. Rather, it is a worship that we perform all the time, as we seek to live godly lives. When we glorify God, it is a living sacrifice; it is true worship.¹⁴

Normative principle. The principle of worship that “allows any practice that the Scripture does not expressly forbid.”¹⁵

Regulative principle. “The principle that everything we do in worship must be prescribed in Scripture, either as an explicit requirement or as an application of an explicit requirement.”¹⁶

Sufficiency of Scripture. “The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.”¹⁷

Delimitations

Three delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project addressed matters of corporate worship. All expressions of worship that are not in the context of the gathered body of God’s people were excluded. Second, the project was confined to a ten-week timeframe. This gave adequate time to prepare the discussion guides for life groups and preach the five-week sermon series. It also allowed time to conduct the CWAS a second time, after all sermons and small group meetings were completed. Finally,

¹⁴ John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 1037-38.

¹⁵ Michael Barrett, *The Beauty of Holiness: A Guide to Biblical Worship* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2006), 2.

¹⁶ Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 1142.

¹⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 127.

participants in this project were required to be CRC members who regularly attended worship services and weekly life groups.

Conclusion

God is not silent concerning how his people should worship him. Wisdom would call the church to hear and submit to what God has given for its instruction and benefit in his Word. The hope throughout this project is that CRC aligns its corporate worship according to Scripture and that God would enliven the church by his Spirit. Additionally, it is hoped that the sufficiency of Scripture would be inculcated in the minds and actions of the church.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS
FOR REFINING CORPORATE WORSHIP
ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that the Bible encourages applying a gospel-shaped liturgy to corporate worship. To be clear, the Bible does not provide a set liturgy that must be applied to all corporate worship in all places for all times; rather, given the nature and purpose of the Bible and its ongoing necessity for spiritual formation, it provides, as a matter of wisdom, a ready-made gospel-shaped liturgy that amplifies the very reason Christians gather to worship. To prove this aim, it must first be shown that the nature of the Bible calls for a liturgical or patterned lifestyle.

**The Bible and the Liturgical Lifestyle
in 2 Timothy 3:14-17**

The nature and uses of the Bible may be best seen in 2 Timothy 3:14-17. The structure of these verses proves that the Bible is the foundation for coming to faith in Christ and growing in him. In verse 14 and the first half of verse 15, Paul appeals to Timothy to continue in what he has learned and has believed through the sacred writings. Verse 15 contains the purpose of Scripture—to make one wise for salvation through Christ. The focal point in Paul’s instruction comes in verse 16, where he states the nature of Scripture and then its uses. He finishes his appeal to Timothy by showing the outcome of continually returning to Scripture for teaching, reproof, correction, and training. The outcome he describes as completion and equipping is nothing short of spiritual formation.

The entire argument hangs on the first part of verse 16 where Paul states the nature of Scripture. To express his meaning, Paul invents a word, θεόπνευστος,¹ to describe the origin of Holy Scripture. “All Scripture is God-breathed” is exactly what the Greek says.² Lea and Griffin give the sense of what Paul intended:

The idea the term presents is that God has breathed his character into Scripture so that it is inherently inspired. Paul was not asserting that the Scriptures are inspiring in that they breathe information about God into us, even though the statement is true. The Scriptures owe their origin and distinctiveness to God himself. This is the abiding character of Scripture.³

Paul establishes that Scripture is divine, but he does not elaborate. John Stott explains, “All that is stated here is that fact of inspiration, that all Scripture is God-breathed. It originated in God’s mind and was communicated from God’s mouth by God’s breath or Spirit.”⁴ Paul does not go into detail about the means of inspiration because his point is not to prove it, but merely to remind Timothy of it. Lea and Griffin write, “We must not view Paul as attempting to inform Timothy of the inspiration of Scripture. Timothy had heard this truth since childhood. Paul was reminding Timothy that Scripture was profitable and ‘that the basis of its profitableness lies in its inspired character.’”⁵

¹ For a detailed discussion on the use of the term θεόπνευστος, see Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield: Revelation and Inspiration* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 1:227-80. George Knight identifies θεόπνευστος as a biblical hapax (a word appearing only once in the New Testament). George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 446.

² Ralph Earle, *2 Timothy*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 409.

³ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: B & H, 1992), 236.

⁴ John Stott, *The Message of 2 Timothy*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 102.

⁵ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 235.

Paul flanks his statement of the inherent inspiration of Scripture with two assertions about Scripture's usefulness. The first assertion is found just before it in verse 15. He writes that the sacred writings are useful to point Timothy (and everyone else) to faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. Paul is not making the point that Scripture somehow magically saves; rather, it testifies—and points to the means of salvation.⁶ Lea and Griffin explain:

The aim of the content of the sacred writings is to relate God's saving purpose in Christ. Timothy's study of the Scriptures had grounded him in that wisdom and enlightenment that leads to faith in Jesus Christ. The Scriptures lead to salvation but only as they point to Christ. The Scriptures themselves do not provide salvation, but they do point to the Savior who can provide it. The phrase "through faith in Jesus Christ" shows how the Scriptures make individuals wise. They enlighten them to the necessity for faith in Jesus Christ.⁷

Paul is addressing the usefulness of the Old Testament in this passage because the Old Testament is what they had as "sacred writings" at that time. Philo and Josephus use the same words Paul uses to describe the Old Testament.⁸ However, as Towner describes, "Paul was not concerned to distinguish between the authority of the Old Testament canon and the proclamation of the gospel by Jesus and himself, for the latter message was the authoritative continuation of God's revelation of grace."⁹

Previously, in verses 15 and 16, Paul has identified the origin of Scripture—God; and the end or purpose of Scripture—salvation through Christ. Paul then gives a second use of Scripture, namely, that it is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and

⁶ In v. 15, Paul is speaking to Timothy specifically about the Old Testament. However, it is appropriate to understand the usefulness of all Scripture to include the New Testament as well. For a good discussion as to why the New Testament should be included in the meaning of this text, see Stott, *The Message of 2 Timothy*, 101. For a good resource for the inclusion of the New Testament in the canon, see F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1988).

⁷ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 234.

⁸ Earle, *2 Timothy*, 409.

⁹ Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1994), 200.

training in righteousness (16b). Guthrie writes, “The four functions of Scripture cover a wide range from imparting doctrine to challenging behaviour and training in righteousness.”¹⁰ Stott groups these uses of Scripture into two pairs:

Paul goes on to show that the profit of Scripture relates to both creed and conduct (16b-17). . . . As for our creed, Scripture is profitable ‘for teaching the truth and refuting error’. As for our conduct, it is profitable “for reformation of manners and discipline in right living.”¹¹

Stott’s dichotomy of creed and conduct reveal a discernable pattern of revelation and response found in Scripture. *Creed*, as Stott uses it, refers to doctrinal beliefs that are revealed in Scripture. And conduct refers to the proper response to the doctrinal beliefs. Teaching and reproof form the doctrinal beliefs about God and the world by revealing the truth about them. Commenting on Scripture’s usefulness in teaching, Lea and Griffin assert, “Scripture is a positive source of Christian doctrine.”¹²

A few examples of the doctrinal beliefs will prove helpful. Scripture reveals the transcendent God who has always existed in a perfect relationship in the Trinity. Scripture declares that he created the world and mankind to display his glory. Man’s rebellion against God is explained through Scripture. The Bible also displays that God has mercy toward sinful man, but that he will not change who he is or bend his justice to have that mercy. Scripture reveals substitutionary atonement where something (or someone) can stand in and bear the wrath of God that people deserve, so that God exacts his justice on that substitute and has mercy on the sinner.

Scripture not only reveals doctrinal truth, but it is also where one learns how to live in light of this just and merciful God. The details of how to be a faithful people and

¹⁰ Donald Guthrie, “2 Timothy,” in *New Bible Commentary*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 21st century ed. (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1994), 1309.

¹¹ Stott, *The Message of 2 Timothy*, 103.

¹² Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 236.

live according to God’s truth are found in Scripture. To that end, Scripture is replete with practical wisdom.

Scripture’s wisdom is profitable for applying God’s truth. As an example, Scripture reveals what is wrong with the world. Sometimes, the best way to teach is to show what happens when the truths being taught are ignored or rejected. For instance, the Bible teaches that God created the world; therefore, everything he created, including humans, owe everything to him. Rejecting this truth leads to dire consequences. The Bible teaches that rejecting God makes one an enemy of God, damned to eternal punishment—that is reproof. The Bible reproves by showing the consequences of ignoring the God-breathed truth found in the Bible. Lea and Griffin state, “Scripture can show sinners their failures [and the consequences of those failures], clarify the point of the mistake, and lead them to a new sense of peace and wholeness.”¹³ If teaching gives the details, then reproof provides a clearer picture by showing what happens when those details are ignored. Reproof shows the consequences of sin.

Teaching and reproof together inform through revelation. They help to know truth from error. Stott identifies this as the Bible’s usefulness in forming creed. It is cerebral, but it is not intended to stay that way. The Bible not only informs of the realities of this life, it also instructs in what ought to be done about it. Following teaching and reproof, Paul adds correction and training in righteousness. These two combined address conduct.

Earle writes, “‘Correcting’ (*epanorthōsin* only here) literally means ‘restoration to an upright position or a right state.’”¹⁴ It is not necessary to understand “correction” here as merely a change of actions. Lea and Griffin clarify, “The term ‘correcting,’ used only here in the New Testament, suggests that Scripture helps

¹³ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 237.

¹⁴ Earle, *2 Timothy*, 410.

individuals to restore their doctrine or personal practice to a right state before God.”¹⁵ They point to both a restoration of doctrine and practice. It may be appropriate to understand the weight of Paul’s use of “correcting” here to fall more on the change of mind and actions because the change in actions seems to be Paul’s intention with “training in righteousness.”

To be clear, the relationship between “reproof” and “correcting” are similar but not the same. The term “reproof,” as Paul uses it, denotes Scripture’s declarative nature. The Bible is the record of God-given truth so that what is true or what is false is made known. Reproof occurs when the reader is confronted with truth while in his error. Correction, on the other hand, is the active work of the Spirit, applying the truth found in Scripture, to change errant actions. Reproof and correction, seem to be what the author of Hebrews has in mind when he writes, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12).

Paul closes his discussion on the profitableness of Scripture by turning attention to the use of Scripture for training in righteousness. Kelly explains that Paul’s reference to “training in righteousness” pertains to “constructive education in Christian life.”¹⁶ This constructive education is not mere knowledge, rather it is the outward evidence of putting that knowledge into practice. Towner explains, “Here *righteousness* describes the observable Christian life (1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22).”¹⁷ Paul has shown in 2:16 what swerving from the truth will do. His examples are Hymenaeus and Philetus. They have given themselves to irreverent babble and swerved from the truth. This departure from truth led them into iniquity. For these reasons, Paul exhorted Timothy to

¹⁵ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 237.

¹⁶ J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 204.

¹⁷ Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 202.

stay within the bounds of Scripture. It is within those bounds that he is trained in the conduct that naturally flows from right belief, preventing him from shipwrecking his faith and upsetting the faith of others. Paul wants Timothy's life to match what he teaches, not only for the sake of his hearers, but also for his own faith.

In the second half of verse 16, Paul has shown how the God-breathed Scriptures are useful in reforming thinking and conduct. He has also shown that Scripture reveals God's truth, making one wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. These two things are connected. The Bible teaches truth from God and "reproves" rebellion against God as he has revealed himself in the Scriptures. The Bible also corrects spiritual deadness through the enlightening work of the Spirit, and trains in how to live in light of the truth taught. In sum, Christians go to the inspired Scriptures to be made wise for salvation *through* God-given truth, and that truth forms them to completion.

God's wisdom for salvation is found in Scripture, and the Scriptures reveal what is useful for spiritual formation (orthodoxy and orthopraxy). Next, Paul's point in this passage must be uncovered.

Paul has only one imperative in this passage—to continue—and it is found in verse 14. Timothy is to continue in two things, and they are tightly connected. The first is to continue in what he has learned and has firmly believed. Paul wants Timothy to remain in what he has believed, knowing from whom he had learned it. Lea and Griffin write,

Paul was thinking of the moral impact made on Timothy's life by his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois (1:5) as well as by Paul himself. Perhaps the term also included a reference to other godly Christian instructors such as some of the "many witnesses" of 2 Tim 2:2.¹⁸

Timothy had seen examples of faith on display in the lives of those closest to him. This faith he has observed has an origin. That origin is the "sacred writings" (v. 15).

Therefore, the Scriptures are the second thing in which Paul wants Timothy to remain. He

¹⁸ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 233.

wants him to continue in the faith that is found in the Scriptures and that Timothy has observed in other believers. The weight of this instruction, however, falls on the Scriptures because of the extended detail he gives in verses 15 and 16.

Paul's logical flow in this passage is this: Continue in the God-breathed Scriptures so that you will be complete and equipped for every good work. Paul has identified the foundation of salvation and spiritual formation in the revelation of God. He has not instructed Timothy to merely read it and move on; rather, the instruction is to hold on to, or remain in, God's revelation contained in Scripture.¹⁹ The call to Timothy—to all Christians—is to repeatedly come to the source of revelation to be continually taught, regularly reproofed, constantly corrected, and consistently trained. The liturgical lifestyle Paul is commending to Timothy is a pattern of revelation and response that leads to spiritual formation.²⁰

Second Timothy 3:14-17 serves as an excellent pattern for personal spiritual formation. It may already be evident that there is wisdom in bringing the gospel to bear in liturgy for corporate worship. For precision, it is best to consider how to understand what is found in Scripture. The question to be answered is: Does the Bible provide a way to properly understand its contents? This question is important because the history of the church shows that there are inappropriate ways of understanding what the Scriptures contain. After all, are not most historic heresies rooted in Scripture? Indeed, they are. Most are based on poor hermeneutical practices that have led to a distortion of the historic Christian faith. How can one be assured that he is not making the same kind of mistakes? Is there a hermeneutical approach to the Scriptures that will enable one to see

¹⁹ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 233.

²⁰ By "liturgical" I mean "practices that form the habits of how we love." This definition is found in James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 21.

what God is really revealing? These questions are answered by examining Jesus himself in Luke 24:13-49.

A Christo-Centric Hermeneutic: Luke 24:13-49

The verses of particular interest for answering the question of a biblically sanctioned hermeneutic are verses 25-27, and 44-49; however, some context will be helpful. Liefeld writes, “The opening words of v. 13 link this story with the entire Easter event. . . . ‘That same day’ ties the narrative to Jesus’ death and resurrection (cf. the sequence in 23:54, 56; 24:1).”²¹ There are two encounters with Jesus in this passage, and both are helpful in answering the question at hand.

The first details an encounter with two disciples. They were not of the eleven; rather, they “belong to the ‘others’ of 24:9.”²² As they journey to Emmaus, Jesus joins them, but the disciples are kept from knowing who he is. Stein explains, “The passive ‘were kept from recognizing’ is a divine passive, i.e., *God kept them from recognizing Jesus*.”²³ Marshall writes, “The story depends on this element of dramatic concealment.”²⁴ The reason for the concealment will become evident in verses 25-26.

Luke reports that the disciples were sad because of their misunderstanding of what the Messiah came to do. They had placed their hope in Jesus and, according to their expectations, were left wanting. Marshall explains, “They had expected him to be the redeemer of Israel, but they could not understand how he had been rejected by the rulers. They remembered that there had been a prophecy of his resurrection on the third day, but

²¹ Walter L. Liefeld, *Luke*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 1051.

²² Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 24 (Nashville: Holman, 1993), 610.

²³ Stein, *Luke*, 610, emphasis original.

²⁴ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 893.

they had not heard of anybody seeing him.”²⁵ The disciples wanted empirical evidence. Perhaps they would have believed if they could have seen Jesus, but his concealment plays a crucial role. The disciples’ inability to recognize Jesus allows him to prove the necessity of his suffering and resurrection in a more lasting way than the immediate revelation of himself to them could have done. He teaches them to interpret the present situation concerning Jesus by what has already been revealed in the Scriptures. Bock states,

Jesus is not being cruel here, but his gradual revelation of himself allows them to learn certain lessons about trusting God’s promises. The disciples had been told about these events many times, but they cannot conceive how they could come to pass. The gradual revelation drives the point home vividly and calls on them to remember God’s Word while trusting that what he says will come to pass.²⁶

Jesus points the disciples to the promises of God in his Word. The confrontation begins in verse 25. Jesus interrupts the disciples emphatically, rebuking them for being slow to believe what the prophets had spoken.²⁷ He confronts these disciples with the fact that the Scriptures, specifically the prophets, pre-declared the events that took place, so it should not be a surprise to them. Then, Jesus takes them on journey: “Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures things concerning himself” (v. 27). Liefeld writes, “Jesus, who in his transfiguration was superior to Moses and Elijah (9:28–36), now invokes Moses and the Prophets to substantiate the divine plan of his path from suffering to glory (v. 27).”²⁸ Bock helpfully expounds on Jesus’ argument:

The disciples have been slow to believe. They have not read Isaiah 52–53 or Psalm 16 with understanding, not to mention Deuteronomy 18:15, Psalm 2:7, Psalm 110:1,

²⁵ I. Howard Marshall, “Luke,” in Carson, *New Bible Commentary*, 1019.

²⁶ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 383.

²⁷ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 896.

²⁸ Liefeld, *Luke*, 1053.

Psalm 118 or Daniel 7:13–14. No doubt when *beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself*, Jesus used many of the texts that show up in other places in Luke and Acts. By taking them back to the Scripture, Jesus is noting that what took place was part of God’s plan and promise. Luke highlights the point by speaking about *all the Prophets* and interpreting *all the Scripture*. Scripture’s promise centers on Jesus.²⁹

The answers to the questions at the beginning of this section are becoming clearer. Before conclusions are drawn, it is helpful to examine the second encounter with Jesus in verses 44-49 containing a similar encounter with some exceptions. This encounter involved the eleven disciples. The disciples present were not kept from recognizing Jesus. The message is more precise and encompassing. The details of this encounter begin in verse 36 when Jesus appears in the room where the disciples are meeting. Marshall writes,

The disciples needed to be convinced that they were seeing a real person and that it really was Jesus, and to have their fears at this supernatural manifestation calmed. Jesus therefore showed them his physical body of flesh and bones, and his hands and feet with the nail-prints in them. To give further proof of the reality of his presence he ate some food while he was with them.³⁰

After the post-resurrection pleasantries, Jesus instructs his disciples about the recent events concerning him and what was going to happen from there. Once again, Jesus directs their attention to the Scriptures so that they can understand the things that occurred during his life and especially the three days prior. He says, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (v. 44). In verse 27, Jesus walked the two disciples through Moses and the Prophets and interpreted for them things concerning himself from all the Scriptures. In verse 44, Jesus refers to the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. Johnson is helpful in explaining that the “all of Scripture” of verse 27 and “the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” of verse 44 are synonymous:

²⁹ Bock, *Luke*, 384-85.

³⁰ Marshall, “Luke,” 1019.

The canon of the Hebrew Scriptures, unlike our English versions (which derive their order from the Greek Septuagint (LXX), is divided into three sections: Law (Torah, meaning “instruction”), Prophets, and Writings. The Prophets section includes the “former Prophets” (Joshua-Kings), who narrated and interpreted Israel’s covenant history, and the “latter prophets” (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, twelve Minor Prophets), who pressed the Lord’s lawsuit against his wayward servant but also promised restoration after judgment. The Psalms lead the Writings section, and Luke may intend to refer to the whole section by mentioning its first book.³¹

Jesus’ point to the disciples here is that his life, teaching, and even his suffering, fulfilled Scripture. Next, in verse 45, Jesus “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” After this illumination, he shows that their apostolic ministry was also foretold. Stein points out,

To fulfill the Scriptures something else must also be accomplished, however, and this will be the theme of the second part of Luke’s work, i.e., the Book of Acts. This involves the preaching in Jesus’ name of repentance for the forgiveness of sins to all the world, beginning in Jerusalem.³²

Understanding what Jesus said in aforementioned encounters answers the questions posed earlier about a proper way of reading and interpreting Scripture. Jesus provides the hermeneutical key to understand the entire Bible—both Old and New Testaments. The hermeneutical key is Jesus—his person and his work. Vos writes, “Jesus does not represent Himself anywhere as being by his human earthly activity the exhaustive expounder of truth. Much rather He is the great fact to be expounded.”³³ In the encounters in Luke 24:13-49, Jesus tells the disciples that they cannot understand who he is or what he has done apart from the Old Testament Scriptures, which also means that no passage of Scripture—Old or New Testament—can be properly understood apart from knowing how they relate to Jesus and his work—in short, the gospel.³⁴

³¹ Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), 14-15n38.

³² Stein, *Luke*, 619.

³³ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1948), 302.

³⁴ A Christo-centric hermeneutic is essential for proper biblical interpretation. However, this hermeneutic can, of course, be done poorly. One might consider some of the allegorical interpretations in the history of the church. For a good understanding of how to apply a Christo-centric hermeneutic, see

In the quest to understand how the Bible encourages a gospel-centered liturgy in corporate worship, two vital discoveries have been made. It has been shown from 2 Timothy 3:14-17 that Paul commends the constant returning to the God-given Scriptures for spiritual formation. There is a pattern of coming to the source of revelation for the benefit of being made mature. It has also been shown from Luke 24:13-49 that Scripture can only be properly understood in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.³⁵ Johnson explains, “Since Christian growth in knowledge and godliness is always growth in Christ-likeness, we sense that no Scripture achieves these divinely designed objectives apart from its connection to Jesus, the only mediator between God and humanity.”³⁶ Therefore, Christian maturity occurs by a constant return to the God-breathed revelation (the Bible) with an aim to see Christ in every part.

These discoveries give rise to two questions: (1) Why does there need to be a constant returning to revelation? and, (2) Why does comprehending the person and work of Christ in all the Bible cause spiritual growth? The first question can be answered by a detailed look at Colossians 2:6-8, and the second by 2 Corinthians 3.

Remember and Remain: Colossians 2:6-8

The context surrounding Colossians 2:6-8 provides a better understanding of their meaning. Moo explains the reason for the letter:

The letter makes no explicit claim about its purpose. But the warnings about not being “deceived by fine-sounding arguments” (2:4) and about those who would take others “captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy” (2:8), who are “judging”

Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*; and Vos, *Biblical Theology*.

³⁵ By “the gospel” I mean specifically the death of Jesus for sins, his burial and resurrection as explained in 1 Cor 15:3-4: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”

³⁶ Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 128.

others (2:16) and “disqualifying” them (2:18), make clear that one of its purposes is to encourage the Colossians to resist some kind of erroneous teaching.³⁷

To combat the false teaching, Paul writes to root them in the truth of the gospel, explain his ministry, and point them to how they can be fortified against false teachers.

In an effort to ground the Colossians in the gospel, the entire first chapter and first five verses of chapter 2 are dripping with gospel truth. The Father has qualified the Colossians to share in the inheritance of the saints in light (1:12). He has transferred them from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of his beloved Son (1:13). It is in Jesus that they have redemption and forgiveness of sins (1:14). God is reconciling all things to himself through Jesus by making peace through the blood of the cross (1:19-20). Though they were hostile toward God and morally evil, Jesus reconciled them to God through his body of flesh by death so that he could present them holy and blameless and above reproach before God. Melick states, “One theme predominates: the centrality of Christ” in the gospel.³⁸ Melick points out that it is clear from the content of the letter that “Paul’s message was Christ. Clearly Paul conceived of the hope as Christians resting in a person. The gospel is not a system, hierarchy, or set of regulations. It is the person and work of Jesus, which is, indeed, the message.”³⁹

A second way Paul confronts the false teaching is by detailing the authenticity of his ministry to the Colossians. Vaughan writes, “Paul mentions his suffering and its bearing on the Colossians (1:24), his commission to preach and its implications for them (1:25–29), and his personal interest in and concern for them (2:1–5).”⁴⁰ His description of

³⁷ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 46-47.

³⁸ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Holman, 1991), 162.

³⁹ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 242.

⁴⁰ Curtis Vaughan, *Colossians*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 189.

his commission to preach in verses 25-26 are important to understanding verses 6-8. His commission is to make the Word of God fully known (v. 25), which is done by revealing a mystery that has been hidden but is now revealed (v. 26). Vaughan helpfully summarizes the disagreement among scholars as to the meaning of “make the word of God fully known”:

The purpose of the apostle’s stewardship was “to present the word of God in all its fullness.” Some understand this to refer to the geographical extension of the gospel (cf. Rom 15:19). But Paul probably means that his special ministry was to make clear the true nature of the gospel as a divine provision intended for all people.⁴¹

Whether or not Vaughn is correct in his assertion depends on the meaning of “mystery” in verse 26. Melick is helpful on this point:

In Pauline terminology, a mystery was a truth which lay hidden in the pages of the Old Testament, and its explanation awaited another day. The day of understanding came with the death and resurrection of Christ, and the mystery was revealed to the saints (believers).⁴²

So then, Paul’s ministry was to preach the Scriptures in a way that reveals the person and work of Christ. Paul continually labors to preach Christ so that he could present everyone mature in Christ (1:28).

The first two ways Paul sought to fortify the believers at Colossae against false teaching were explanatory. He reminded them of the gospel they had received. Then, he explained his ministry in light of the gospel. Paul then turns from explanation to imperative and informs the Colossians of their need to constantly return to the gospel to fortify themselves against false teachers.

In verse 6, Paul departs from teaching and explaining and gives them an imperative. It is no longer just content; rather, it is something they must do with the content. This appeal is the heart of the epistle. The imperative is this: “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established

⁴¹ Vaughan, “Colossians,” 191.

⁴² Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 241.

in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving” (6-7). “The first clause succinctly restates the key theological argument of the letter to this point: Jesus Christ is Lord, and we have entered into his Lordship. The second clause then summarizes the specific commands and warnings that follow: we are to *continue to live in him*, to work out just what it means in both our thinking and our acting to live under the Lordship of Christ.”⁴³ It would be wise to examine these clauses in order.

Paul emphasizes that the Colossians had received Christ. It must be clarified what Paul means by “received.” Moo is incredibly helpful here:

Paul’s choice of the verb “receive” in the first clause is significant. This verb (*paralambanō*) is usually used by Paul to refer to the “receiving” or “accepting” of tradition about Christ and his significance (1 Cor. 11:23; 15:1, 3; Gal. 1:9, 12; 1 Thess. 4:1; 2 Thess. 3:6; the verb occurs with other senses in Phil. 4:9; Col. 4:17; 1 Thess. 2:13). In keeping with the christological focus of this letter, however, Paul refers here not to the receiving of teaching, or tradition, or the word of God (cf. 1 Thess. 2:13), but of Christ himself (this is the only occurrence of *paralambanō* in Paul with a personal object). To “receive Christ”—in this verse at least—is not only a matter of believing “in” his person; it also involves a commitment to the apostolic teaching about Christ and his significance.⁴⁴

Paul’s instruction is for the Colossians to remember how they came to the person of Christ and then to remain in that. They came through hearing the message of the gospel, rooted in Scripture, and they believed the message they heard.

Wall explains that the second clause, “so walk in him,” “is stated in the imperative mood, asserting the behavior that logically and necessarily must result from the theological conviction that Jesus Christ is the Lord of all things.”⁴⁵ Paul finishes his instruction with the encouragement that by continually coming to the gospel, God is at work to establish them. O’Brien writes,

⁴³ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 177.

⁴⁴ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 177.

⁴⁵ Robert W. Wall, *Colossians & Philemon*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 103.

To encourage them in their Christian growth they are reminded that God has firmly *rooted* them in Christ, and that he is continuing to build them up in him . . . and strengthening them in *the faith* they *were taught* (note the passive verbs). God is even now mightily at work and so, as they live under Christ's lordship, they are to be *overflowing with thankfulness*.⁴⁶

To remember and to remain is Paul's solution to the false teachings that the believers in Colossae are facing. This is reminiscent of the instruction Paul gave to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:14-17 that was examined previously. Paul's instruction to Timothy was to continually return to the God-breathed Scriptures because that is how he would be made spiritually mature. So far, in this text, the instruction has been the same, for the Colossians to continue in the gospel (from the Scriptures) as God works in them to fortify (mature) them against the attack of false teachings.

Fortification: Colossians 2:8

The question at hand is: Why does there need to be an intentional continuation of emphasis on the message of the gospel? Put simply, it is because the gospel has enemies; therefore, believers have enemies.

Paul warns the Colossian believers to "see to it" that they are not taken captive.

Vaughan writes,

The word translated "takes captive" (*sylagōgōn*), which was regularly used of taking captives in war and leading them away as booty, depicts the false teachers as "men-stealers" wishing to entrap the Colossians and drag them away into spiritual enslavement.⁴⁷

Paul equates false teachers with kidnappers, but he acknowledges the sinister influence of evil spirits as the driving force behind these teachers. Melick explains it well:

Paul saw this influx of heresy as a planned, organized attack against Christian theology. He warned against anyone taking the church captive. The situation was real. The approach was both deceitful and ensnaring. It was not an attack from a misguided Christian. This was a purposeful attempt to draw Christians away from their moorings. Paul's metaphor implies that the church was unwillingly being taken

⁴⁶ Peter T. O'Brien, "Colossians," in Carson, *New Bible Commentary*, 1269-70, emphasis original.

⁴⁷ Vaughan, *Colossians*, 197-98.

(“captured”) by these intruders. This does not suggest that they did not choose to follow the false teachers. The term accentuates the spiritual warfare involved.⁴⁸

Paul explains further the plan of the false teachers as the evil spirits carried them along. Moo words are helpful in understanding Paul’s meaning:

The method these false teachers would use is their brand of philosophy which was seductive and misleading. As *tradition* it had the appearance of dignity, authority and revelation, but Paul rejects any suggestion of divine origin: it is simply human. . . . Worst of all, this teaching stood opposed to Christ.⁴⁹

The reason these “hollow philosophies” were working is because they did not directly contradict the gospel at first glance. It seems as if the false teachers were adding to the gospel. Moo states,

The false teachers were apparently suggesting that Christians needed to go “beyond” the gospel that Epaphras had taught the Colossians in order to experience spiritual “fullness.” And so it is often the case with false teachers, who err not always in subtracting from the gospel but in seeking to add to it. The gospel can be perverted through addition just as easily as through subtraction.⁵⁰

Following his explanation of the deceitful tactics of the false teachers, Paul does exactly what he is commending to the Colossians—he contradicts their method with the truths of the gospel. Moo writes, “In direct contrast to these descriptions stands the gospel: where the ‘philosophy’ deceives people, the gospel is ‘true,’ ‘reliable’ (1:5); where the ‘philosophy’ is ‘empty,’ ‘devoid of spiritual value,’ the gospel is powerful and transforming (1:6, 23).”⁵¹ Dockery explains that Paul, in his teaching and in his example, shows that “The right antidote for false teaching is right teaching about Christ, in whom ‘all the fullness of Deity lives in bodily form.’ In Christ, believers have received all they have and all they need.”⁵² Paul goes on to expound the glories that Christians have in

⁴⁸ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 252.

⁴⁹ O’Brien, “Colossians,” in Carson, *The New Bible Commentary*, 1270.

⁵⁰ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 67.

⁵¹ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 186.

⁵² David S. Dockery, *The Pauline Letters*, Holman Concise Bible Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 591.

Christ. His method is to refresh their understanding and affection of the God-given means of salvation testified to in Scripture and passed on through the work of the ministry. His aim is for them to be so fortified in the truth that false teachings are exposed and rejected. No doubt, this takes constant remembrance.

The answer to the question of why a constant returning and remaining in the gospel is necessary, is that it fortifies Christians against plausible, but hollow, philosophies that can ensnare and carry the Colossian believers away into captivity. This undergirds the message of 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and Colossians 2:6-7. Christians are to constantly return and remain in the gospel for spiritual formation to maturity. By remaining in the gospel, Christians are fortified against being taken captive by real enemies (false teachings) with real consequences (spiritual captivity) and being found unwittingly against Christ. Seeing this, the table is now set to answer the second question: Why does constantly comprehending the person and work of Christ in all the Bible cause spiritual growth? Paul's letter to the church at Corinth provides one possible answer.

Incremental Growth in Glory: 2 Corinthians 3:18

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul compares the glory of the old covenant with that of the new covenant. Kruse explains that he “uses Ex. 34:29-32 (7-11) and 33-35 (12-18) to . . . contrast the ministries of the new and old covenants so as to demonstrate the superiority of the former.”⁵³ The new covenant outshines the old in three ways. In verses 7-11, Paul describes the difference in degree of glory. Paul identifies that old covenant as the “ministry of death” (v. 7) or the “ministry of condemnation” (v. 9). He says that this ministry came with glory and he references Moses' face shining after beholding the glory of God. However, that ministry is ending (v. 7) and will be as if it had no glory at all compared to what is replacing it (v. 11). By way of contrast, Paul calls the new covenant the “ministry of the Spirit,” or the “ministry of righteousness.” This new ministry is said

⁵³ Colin G. Kruse, “2 Corinthians,” in Carson, *New Bible Commentary*, 1195.

to “far exceed” the old ministry in glory (v. 9). Paul stresses that this new ministry, of which he is representative, is of such superior glory that it has stripped the old ministry of all the glory it once had (v. 10).

The second way that the new ministry outshines the other is in permanence. Paul points out in verse 7 that the glory of the old covenant is coming to an end. In verse 11, he says the new covenant that is replacing it is permanent. Dockery writes,

Paul followed the Jewish interpretation of Exodus 34:29–35, which taught that Moses put a veil over his face so the people would not see the glory fade. The new covenant does not veil the presence of God; it is permanent, and through the Spirit of God it reveals God.⁵⁴

The old covenant was intended to fade. It was put in place to point to the greater fulfillment found in Christ. When the new covenant was established in the death and resurrection of Christ, the old covenant was no longer glorious or viable. The fulfillment had come.

The third way the new covenant outshines the old covenant is in number of people effected. In the old covenant, only one beheld the glory of God and was transformed: Moses. In the new covenant, more people have that privilege. There is some debate among scholars as to who gets to behold and reflect the glory in the new covenant. On one side, there is Belleville, who claims that Paul is referring to the ministers of the gospel who reflect God’s glory:

Transfiguration through beholding God’s glory is an attractive idea that a number of translators have opted for (KJV, NKJV, RSV, REB). Yet if Paul is continuing his commentary on the Exodus 34 narrative—with verse 35 being next in line—then he is thinking of how Moses habitually veiled his face on leaving the tent of meeting until his next encounter with Yahweh. New covenant ministers, by contrast, leave their face *unveiled* and in so doing *reflect* God’s glory.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Dockery, *The Pauline Letters*, 563.

⁵⁵ Linda L. Belleville, *Second Corinthians*, IVP New Testament Commentary, vol. 8 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 112.

On the other side, there is Garland, along with many other scholars, who understand Paul to be referring to all Christians having the privilege of beholding the glory of God in Christ and being changed. Garland writes,

It is . . . “all” in contrast to the one, Moses. All Christians may approach the Lord as Moses did when he went up Mount Sinai into the presence of the Lord. The results are similar. Beholding with an unveiled face the glory of the Lord causes us to be transformed into the same image.⁵⁶

The logical flow of the passage dictates the latter view. Paul does begin the paragraph in verse 12 by contrasting his ministry with that of Moses, but he then moves from Moses to the outcome of Moses’ ministry among the Jewish people. Their minds are hardened and the veil that only Christ can take away remains over their eyes. Verse 16 declares that when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. The Spirit does this, just as it was promised in the giving of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (cf. Ezek 36:22-27). Harris explains,

As [Paul] draws his conclusion concerning the superiority of the new covenant against the background of his commentary on Exodus 34, he refers to Christian experience in general. Under the new covenant, not one man alone, but all Christians behold and then reflect the glory of the Lord.⁵⁷

In verse 18, what Christians behold with unveiled faces is the “glory of the Lord.” It is important to understand what this means. Harris notes, “What Christians observe as though (reflected) in a mirror is ‘the glory of the Lord’ (τὴν δόξαν κυρίου). As in the parallel expression τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου in v. 17, κύριος probably refers to Yahweh, not Jesus.”⁵⁸ How can Christians see the glory of the Lord, especially when there seems to be a repetitive nature to the beholding? Harris again is helpful: “The glory of the

⁵⁶ David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 29 (Nashville: Holman, 1999), 199.

⁵⁷ Murray J. Harris, *2 Corinthians*, in vol. 10 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 338.

⁵⁸ Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, bilingual ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 314.

Lord' is God's glory as it is revealed in his image, Christ."⁵⁹ This fact is proven by verse 4:6, which says, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." It is in Christ that Christians see the glory of God.

The question now becomes: How do Christians see the face of Christ? Harris clarifies: "The vision of God's glory accorded Christians is indirect, for it is mediated through the gospel, but it is clear, for the Christ who is proclaimed through the gospel is the exact representation (εἰκὼν) of God (4:4)."⁶⁰ Confirmation is found in the first paragraph of chapter 4. In verses 2-6, Paul takes back up the nature of his ministry by saying that he conducts his ministry "by a plain statement of the truth." He defines the "plain statement of the truth" as the gospel in verse 3. The way Christians can see "the glory of God in the face of Christ" is by being exposed to the gospel. As that happens, Christians are changed from "one degree of glory to another" (3:18). Garland points out a way that this beholding and being transformed happens:

It is a moral axiom that we become like the gods we serve (see Rom 1:18–32). In beholding the true glory of the Lord reflected in Christ, our minds become transformed (Rom 12:2) so that we are not conformed to this world and its perceptions and values but conformed to Christ and the paradoxical pattern of his suffering and resurrection (Rom 8:29; Phil 3:10, 21).⁶¹

The work of God seems to be incremental here. A degree is a small amount. There is a sense that repeated exposure to the gospel is what is prescribed to grow to maturity, which lines up with progressive sanctification. Over the life of a Christian, they will constantly grow into Christlikeness as the Spirit works in them and the Spirit works through the gospel.

⁵⁹ Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 315.

⁶⁰ Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 315.

⁶¹ Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 200.

The question that heads this section can now be answered. The question is: Why does constantly comprehending the person and work of Christ in all the Bible cause spiritual growth? The answer is that God causes his glory to shine into the hearts of Christians through the gospel of Jesus Christ found in all Scripture. As Christians behold the glory of God in Christ, they are transformed incrementally from one degree of glory to another. This is not only a transformation of knowledge; it is that and more. Christians are taught and rebuked in the gospel. It is also a transformation of the inner character as the gospel corrects and trains in righteousness.

Personal spiritual formation happens in the ways previously outlined. Constantly returning to the Scripture where Christians are made wise for salvation in Christ Jesus (2 Tim 3:14-17), through applying a Christo-centric or gospel-centric hermeneutic (Luke 24:13-49), Christians are fortified against false teachings that seek to capture and enslave by remaining in the gospel (Col 2:6-8). This all occurs while they are being transformed by beholding Christ in the gospel from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18) until they are complete, equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:17). Clearly, the work of the Spirit of God is illuminating and applying the revelation of the Father concerning the Son so that God's children will be conformed to the image of Christ—the example of complete spiritual maturity.

One additional step needs to be made to prove that the Bible encourages a gospel-shaped liturgy in corporate worship. This step is logical and a matter of wisdom—not a command. Given the fact that individual Christians grow through beholding Christ in the gospel, does it not seem wise that the church employ those same means in both the content and structure of the corporate gatherings? A close look at Hebrews 10:19-25 will guide this thought.

Gospel-Focused Worship: Hebrews 10:19-25

This passage is located at a critical section in the book of Hebrews. The author has just finished a major section of theology and, as Morris explains, “As Paul often does,

the writer of Hebrews exhorts his readers on the basis of the doctrine he has made so clear. Because the great teachings he has set forth are true, it follows that those who profess them should live in a manner befitting them.”⁶² The author of Hebrews opens this section with a summary of the gospel and then moves to application. Stedman writes, “Twice in verses 19-21 the writer uses the phrase *we have*. Following these, there is thrice repeated the words *let us*. The *we have*s mark provision; *let us* indicates privilege.”⁶³ The two provisions that believers have in Christ are confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Christ, and a great High Priest over the house of God. These are summary statements of the gospel. The death of Christ has granted confident access to the most holy places (v. 19); the resurrection and ascension provides a great high priest over God’s house (v. 21). The gospel leads to the ability and necessity of the three exhortations that follow.

The first exhortation is to “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (v. 22). There are two things to note in this verse. The first is the action of drawing near as a continual practice. The second is the corporate nature indicated by “let us.” Allen is helpful here:

The idea is that of “approach” and the present tense of the verb implies continuous or repeated approaching. There is a clear parallel here with Heb 4:16 where the identical verb form is used. There the focus is specifically on prayer, and this is included in the meaning of 10:22. However, given the overall context, it would appear the author has in mind all aspects of worship individually and corporately, with the focus here on corporate worship.⁶⁴

The author of Hebrews calls Christians to draw near to God regularly in corporate worship because Jesus has opened the way. He then strikes the chord of the gospel again by

⁶² Leon Morris, *Hebrews*, in vol. 12 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 103.

⁶³ Ray C. Stedman, *Hebrews*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 107.

⁶⁴ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary, vol. 35 (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 514.

saying, “In full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” Corporate worship is an exercise of faith—trusting that Jesus has cleansed and made believers fit for God’s presence. Christians are summoned to God by the gospel and assured of their fitness to worship God by the gospel. The gospel initiates and undergirds corporate worship.

The second exhortation in this passage is found in verse 23: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.” O’Brien writes, “[This] second exhortation also recalls the repeated summons ‘to hold fast’ to what the listeners already have (3:6, 14; 4:14).”⁶⁵ Again, the emphasis is on the continual nature of holding on. The object that Christians are to continually and corporately cling to is the confession of their hope. O’Brien clarifies both confession and hope:

The word rendered “confession” is probably not a technical term for an objective, traditional confession of faith (as in 4:14), but a more general profession of the hope that is set before us (see 6:18). “Hope” in Hebrews describes the objective content of hope (rather than the act of hoping), and it relates to both present and future salvation.⁶⁶

Holding fast to hope, then, means holding on to the present and future salvation in Christ. Faith in the gospel produces this kind of hope.

In the first exhortation, the gospel summons Christians to draw near. The gospel is also what makes the Christian fit for God’s presence through the cleansing found in Christ. In the second exhortation, the gospel is the groundwork for the confession of hope. In this way, the gospel is the basis and foundation for corporate worship. The gospel is also what sustains and then propels Christians forward as they exercise their trust in God—who made the promises contained in the gospel. Corporate worship is full of the gospel.

⁶⁵ Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 368.

⁶⁶ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 368.

The third exhortation is “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together” (vv. 24-25). Ellingworth explains, “The author passes from the vertical to the horizontal dimension of Christian living. The implied setting, as explicitly in vv. 22, 25 and by implication in v. 23, is the believing community, especially as gathered for worship.”⁶⁷ When believers gather, it is not to be an exercise in individuality that takes place in a group. Allen writes, “The verb ‘let us consider’ conveys the concept of careful consideration, thoughtful attention and deep concern [for one another].”⁶⁸ It benefits the whole when individuals are eager to spur one another on to love and good deeds. O’Brien points out,

Our author recommends, as he had done earlier (3:13), that their mutual concern to stimulate loving service should be expressed in exhortation, which includes the notions of warning and reproof as well as encouragement. The best form of exhortation is based on Scripture, following our author’s own example in his “word of exhortation” (13:22).⁶⁹

Believers are not to neglect meeting so that all three of these exhortations can be rehearsed, ingrained, and celebrated together. As Scripture is preached with a view to seeing the gospel in Christ and sharing among those gathered, believers are fortified and formed into Christlikeness by beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus. This happens because God has summoned Christians together to repeatedly draw close to him in the gospel, he has made them fit to be in his presence through the gospel, and he propels them on in hope through the gospel.

One must consider not just hearing the gospel but rehearsing it—participating in it through the structure of the corporate gathering. This rehearsing is at the heart of the pattern of revelation and response seen in 2 Timothy 3:14-17. The goal of the structure, or liturgy, of the worship service is to lead the worshiper through the path of grace in the

⁶⁷ Paul Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 526.

⁶⁸ Allen, *Hebrews*, 517.

⁶⁹ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 371.

life of the believer. It would look something like this: As the congregation is summoned by God to draw near to him (a call to worship), they respond with their mind's attention and heart's affection. They realize that they have no right to be in God's presence as his holiness is revealed from Scripture, and they respond in confession and repentance. The congregation recalls the gospel and are assured of their pardon through Christ. They then respond by being malleable before the Word preached. They behold the glory of God in the face of Christ as he is proclaimed and they are sent out with a blessing to respond with a life of worship. Given the nature of spiritual formation discussed here, it appears the Bible encourages this kind of worship.

CHAPTER 3

THE SHAPE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Every church has a pattern of worship. The one exception is perhaps a church that is meeting for the first time. However, as soon as a church meets for a second week, there will likely be a discernable pattern to their worship. In most Baptist churches, it seems that the structure of worship is derived from a mixture of tradition, comfort, and practicality. In any case, the results are the same; a regular pattern for the worship event is established. Scott Connell writes, “It really is not a matter of whether or not corporate worship is in a pattern or shape, but rather what pattern or shape is it in.”¹ The goal of this chapter is to marshal biblical and scholarly resources to solidify a pattern of corporate worship that best facilitates sanctification in the members of Crossroads Church. To accomplish this goal, several models of corporate worship were evaluated, and one was chosen to reform the corporate worship of Crossroads Church.

The previous chapter showed that a consistent return to the Scriptures (Divine revelation), in community with a Christo-centric hermeneutic, both fortified and formed Christians into Christ-likeness. That is, as the church gathers to worship it remembers God’s great act of salvation in the gospel and grows in hope and sanctification. The question now is: What pattern of worship best facilitates this kind of spiritual formation by remembering the gospel?

¹ Richard Scott Connell, “The Impact of Gospel Content on the Shape of Corporate Worship in Select Baptist Churches in North America circa 1650–1910” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 142.

How the Bible Tells the Story of the Gospel: Biblical Theology

The pattern of worship that best facilitates spiritual formation can be found, in part, by examining how the Bible tells the story of the gospel. The field of study that explores how the Bible tells the story of the gospel is biblical theology. Graeme Goldsworthy, lecturer in biblical theology at Moore Theological College in Sydney, defines *biblical theology* as “the study of how every text in the Bible relates to every other text in the Bible. It is the study of the matrix of divine revelation in the Bible as a whole.”² Nick Roark and Robert Cline explain further:

Biblical theology is a way of reading the Bible as one story by one divine author that culminates in who Jesus Christ is and what he has done, so that every part of Scripture is understood in relation to him. Biblical theology helps us understand the Bible as one big book with lots of little books that tell one big story.³

God has revealed himself in gospel themes throughout the Bible. These themes are tied together when the fullness of that gospel comes in Jesus Christ. However, the Bible does not begin with Matthew for good reason. God reveals himself in a story. The story undergirds and accentuates the beauty of the gospel like the band holding the diamond on an engagement ring. Three methods of hermeneutics belong to the field of biblical theology that help bring this story to light—metanarrative, typology, and progressive revelation.

Metanarrative

The Bible is not a collection of sixty-six individual, unrelated books. It is one cohesive book declaring God’s salvation for his people culminating in the gospel. The metanarrative seen in the Bible is summed up as creation, fall, redemption, and

² Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 40.

³ Nick Roark and Robert Cline, *Biblical Theology: How the Church Faithfully Teaches the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 26.

consummation.⁴ Genesis 1 and 2 reveal God’s creative work. Genesis 3 depicts the fall. Genesis 4 through Revelation 20 tell the story of redemption culminating in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. Revelation 21 displays the consummation of all things. Mike Cospers exclaims, “That’s the story of worship: God creates, sin corrupts, but Christ redeems.”⁵ In this way, the entire Bible reveals who God is, who man is in light of God, what Christ has done to bring his people back to God, and what his people should do about it.

This structure—God, man, Christ, response—has been identified by Greg Gilbert in *What Is the Gospel* as a great way to summarize the gospel because it responds to “four crucial questions” that must be answered by everyone:

1. Who made us, and to whom are we accountable?
2. What is our problem? In other words, are we in trouble and why?
3. What is God’s solution to that problem? How has he acted to save us from it?
4. How do I—myself, right here, right now—how do *I* come to be included in that salvation? What makes this good news for me and not just for someone else?⁶

The metanarrative answers the crucial questions of the gospel. God is the creator, man is a sinner, Christ is the redeemer, and man must respond in order to enter into the consummation. The Bible is the great story of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Typology

The second hermeneutical principle that reveals how the Bible tells the story is typology. Richard Lints defines *typology* in this way: “Typology is simply symbolism with a prospective reference to fulfillment in a later epoch of biblical history. It involves a fundamentally organic relation between events, persons, and institutions (type) in one

⁴ Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 105.

⁵ Mike Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church’s Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 72.

⁶ Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?*, 31.

epoch and their counterparts (antitype) in later epochs.”⁷ Jesus showed in Luke 24 that the Bible is to be read typologically. Following Jesus’ instructions, the apostles consistently unified the Old and New Testaments through this hermeneutical method. Keller provides a good example of typology using various themes to show how they all lead to Christ. Justin Taylor records it on his blog. Keller explains,

Jesus is the true and better Adam who passed the test in the garden and whose obedience is imputed to us.

Jesus is the true and better Abel who, though innocently slain, has blood now that cries out, not for our condemnation, but for acquittal.

Jesus is the true and better Abraham who answered the call of God to leave all the comfortable and familiar and go out into the void not knowing wither he went to create a new people of God.

Jesus is the true and better Isaac who was not just offered up by his father on the mount but was truly sacrificed for us. And when God said to Abraham, “Now I know you love me because you did not withhold your son, your only son whom you love from me,” now we can look at God taking his son up the mountain and sacrificing him and say, “Now we know that you love us because you did not withhold your son, your only son, whom you love from us.”

Jesus is the true and better Jacob who wrestled and took the blow of justice we deserved, so we, like Jacob, only receive the wounds of grace to wake us up and discipline us.

Jesus is the true and better Joseph who, at the right hand of the king, forgives those who betrayed and sold him and uses his new power to save them.

Jesus is the true and better Moses who stands in the gap between the people and the Lord and who mediates a new covenant.

Jesus is the true and better Rock of Moses who, struck with the rod of God’s justice, now gives us water in the desert.

Jesus is the true and better Job, the truly innocent sufferer, who then intercedes for and saves his stupid friends.

Jesus is the true and better David whose victory becomes his people’s victory, though they never lifted a stone to accomplish it themselves.

Jesus is the true and better Esther who didn’t just risk leaving an earthly palace but lost the ultimate and heavenly one, who didn’t just risk his life, but gave his life to save his people.

Jesus is the true and better Jonah who was cast out into the storm so that we could be brought in.

⁷ Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 304.

Jesus is the real Rock of Moses, the real Passover Lamb, innocent, perfect, helpless, slain so the angel of death will pass over us. He's the true temple, the true prophet, the true priest, the true king, the true sacrifice, the true lamb, the true light, the true bread.

The Bible's really not about you—it's about him.⁸

Typology is key in reading the Bible in a way that keeps the gospel of Jesus central to the understanding of the entire Bible

Progressive Revelation

The third hermeneutical principle in biblical theology used to uncover how the Bible tells the story of the gospel is progressive revelation. According to Millard Erickson, *progressive revelation* is “a reference to the doctrine that later revelation is built upon earlier revelation. Thus, it contains truths that were not known before.”⁹ The covenants God made with man are an example of progressive revelation. God makes various promises in the covenants. Each one focuses God's activity more specifically until the reality comes. A brief overview will demonstrate the point. In the Adamic Covenant,¹⁰ God promises that there will be one from the seed of the woman who will bruise the serpent's (Satan) head (Gen 3:15). This is a vague promise. There will be “one” someday who will completely undo Satan's work. In the Noahic Covenant, God extends the line of the woman by choosing Noah and his family to survive the flood. God also promises never to destroy the world in that manner again (Gen 9:11). This promise guarantees that the line of the woman will continue. In the Abrahamic Covenant, God shows that among all the people of the world, the seed of the woman will come through Abraham's line. God promises to create a nation from Abraham's seed that will bless all people (Gen 12:2).

⁸ Justin Taylor, “Keller: Gospel-Centered Ministry,” *The Gospel Coalition* (blog), accessed February 23, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/keller-gospel-centered-ministry/>.

⁹ Millard J. Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 171.

¹⁰ Some argue that there is no Adamic Covenant because it is not called a covenant in the Bible. O. Palmer Robertson makes a good case for why it should be considered a covenant in O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 18-25.

The picture becomes clearer. The one who will undo Satan's work will be a Hebrew. Next is the Mosaic Covenant. In this covenant, God reveals through the law what it is to be his people. This law is summed up in love for God and love for neighbor (Matt 22:37-40). If someone is going to undo Satan's work, he will be righteous. He will not partake in Satan's work and then overthrow him. This one will be holy. Later, in the Davidic Covenant, God promises to give David an heir to his throne who will rule God's people forever (2 Sam 7:12-17). Now the story is getting really specific. He will be a Hebrew in the line of David who will be perfectly holy. In the Prophets, more details are given about this anointed one, or Messiah, from David's line. The sexual purity of this mother (Isa 7:14), where he will be born (Mic 5:2), what will happen when he comes as well as other details are given.

Finally, in the New Covenant, the Bible tells that God is going to make a new covenant with his people not like the old covenant, but clearly in line with them (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26-27). God is going to exchange His people's rebellious hearts with ones that love what he loves and hates what he hates. He is going to change them from the inside out. When Jesus comes, he fulfills all the promises God made to his people—down to the smallest detail. His death and resurrection fulfilled the promises of the New Covenant (Matt 26:27). This overview of the covenants shows how God has made his salvation known by progressively revealing more about his plan until he fulfilled it in Christ.

These three methods for understanding God's self-revelation—typology, progressive revelation and metanarrative—illuminate how God has given both the content of the gospel and the shape of the gospel. This content and shape should then inform the corporate worship of God. Any model used to plan corporate worship events should include an understanding of how the Bible tells the story of the gospel.

Worship as Dialogue

The application of these hermeneutical principles of biblical theology adds weight to one key tenet of worship; namely, worship is a dialogue. Biblical theology uncovers this truth by highlighting it in two ways. First, biblical theology demonstrates that God initiates the dialogue. Second, biblical theology shows that worship consists of God's revelation and man's response. What follows is a brief review of the beginning of the story to show how applying metanarrative, typology, and progressive revelation unveils the dialogical nature of worship.

God Initiates

Worship begins with Creation. God created the world, then he created Adam and placed him in the garden as priest and viceroy over God's world to exercise dominion over the world under God's authority. By doing this God initiated worship. Cospers helpfully describes worship during this time:

God, in the Trinity, creates the world. It's not part of him, but he nonetheless fills it with his presence and paints it with a vast panorama of beauty and brilliance, commissioning human kind to rule over it, nurture it, and enjoy it in his presence. Worship as an activity that's somehow separate from the rest of life appears nonexistent and frankly, unnecessary. In the seamless perfection of that virgin world, it is all worship—a constant reflection of God's love, glory, and brilliance. When we think about the story of worship with this as our point of origin, we see that worship starts with God.¹¹

Soon after God created Eve, she rejected him by eating of the tree she and Adam were told not to eat of. Adam acquiesced and also ate after her. God said that if they ate of the tree they would die (Gen 2:17). However, God does something surprising. While he is laying down the consequences for their sin, He makes a promise (Gen 3:14-19). He tells them that one will come from the seed of the woman who will undo the works of Satan (Gen 3:15). They are then banned from the presence of God and sent into the wilderness to continue their work of representing God in a sin-torn world. It is here

¹¹ Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 30.

that man, being created to worship, miscarriages in idol worship.¹² After the disastrous rejection of God in Eden, worship still takes place, but it is not the same. Worship is no longer an existence of unbroken fellowship with God. Existence is now marked by separation from God that is only overcome by God's initiative and instructions. Cospers writes, "After the fall, true worship is always participation in God's redemptive work."¹³ Constance Cherry, author of *The Worship Architect*, seems to agree: "Worship is fundamentally the result of, and response to, great saving events performed by God."¹⁴ After the Fall, God's presence becomes unbearable. If there is not a way for sins to be dealt with, then sinful worshipers have no access to God without fear of being consumed by his holiness. Unless God approaches man or provides a way for man to approach him, man cannot worship God.

Sin separating man from God underscores the importance of God initiating worship. Cherry writes, "God initiates worship. This in full keeping with God's character, for God is a person who acts first."¹⁵ Sin necessitates that God act first, and the Bible tells the story of how God has done this. It is seen in Noah—God came to him to give the details of how to avoid the wrath coming in the form of a flood, and Noah responded in faith and built the Ark (Gen 6). Noah survived God's wrath, but then fell and sin continued (Gen 9:18-25).

Then, God initiates a relationship with Abraham. God appears to Abram (later Abraham) and makes great promises if he would trust and follow him (Gen 12:1-3).

Cospers describes God's encounter with Abraham well:

¹² Cospers is again helpful here. Chap. 2 of *Rhythms of Grace* describes Adam and Eve as well as Cain and Able in the wilderness. Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 34-42.

¹³ Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 56.

¹⁴ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 5.

¹⁵ Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 5.

There's not much to say about Abram before God shows up. We know he was a semi-nomadic herdsman. Many believe he was a pagan—a star worshiper, to be precise. We know he was old, and we know that by all appearances, he and his wife were sterile. The story that unfolds. Shows him to be quick to lose heart, willing to prostitute his wife, and all too eager to jump into bed with one of his slave girls, eventually abandoning her and the son he fathered through her. Yet this is the man God chooses to use for the next phase of his plan.¹⁶

The point is that nothing in Abram caused God to choose him. He was not particularly righteous. He did not even seek God. He was an idol worshiper. God makes the first move. It is merciful that God would engage Abram.

One of the promises God made to Abraham was to make him into a nation (Gen 12:2). The rest of Genesis tells how God fulfilled that promise. Genesis ends with a vast number of people from Abraham's line living peacefully in Egypt. In Exodus, life in Egypt becomes hostile as a new Pharaoh fears the people of God and enslaves them for 400 years, until God acts to free them from their oppressors through miraculous acts. Again, God initiates and frees his people.

Revelation/Response

From this brief overview of the beginning of the biblical story, a clear pattern can be seen that continues through the entire Bible. God acts first to reveal himself. Every time he reveals himself, God's people respond. Jared Wilson summarizes this point in *Gospel Wakefulness*:

Christ Jesus is both the author and finisher of our faith. It is God who commands the land to separate from the sea. It is God who calls out to Adam and Eve as they cower in the bushes. It is God who summons Abraham and marks him out. It is God who interrupts Moses with fire. It is God who gives dreams and visions, God who anoints, God who declares, God who spans, God who commands, God who reigns. We do not summon the king; the king summons us. He breathes life into us. It is God who speaks light into the darkness; it is God who commands into the tunnel, 'Lazarus, come forth!' And it is we who respond.¹⁷

¹⁶ Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 43.

¹⁷ Jared C. Wilson, *Gospel Wakefulness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 89.

Wilson uncovers a key component in worship: God reveals, we respond. The idea of revelation and response forms the fabric of man's relationship with God. Wilson writes, "All of the Christian life is worship, whether the Christian be in prayer, study, work, meals and conversation, love and romance, or even sleep."¹⁸ These activities of life are a response to God's revelation in the Bible that defines and calls people to him. Therefore, these actions are responses to God's revelation. However, it appears that when it comes to corporate worship many today take on a different view. Wilson elaborates,

Yet much of evangelical worship implicitly assumes we are the ones in control, the we are bringing the best of ourselves and our holy desire to worship, when the reality is that worship does not begin with the worshiper. It begins with God. It is a response to God's calling upon us.¹⁹

According to this understanding of the common practice of evangelical corporate worship, there needs to be a change in the basic understanding of relationship with God and the purpose for gathering. The Bible does not reveal a dispassionate God who must be summoned by particular acts at specific times in order to gain his attention so that he will bless his people. Wilson explains that this kind of "people-initiated worship presumes that God is not free and that he needs us to enable him to bless us."²⁰ The Bible does, however, reveal a passionate God who initiates relationship with his people to which they must respond. In his mercy, he reveals how sinful people can be in relationship with him. His people respond and are changed. This is not a God who is conjured; rather, he is one that pursues. Wilson exhorts the church: "Let's stop trying to conjure up God . . . and let us marvel and enjoy that he cannot be conjured."²¹

¹⁸ Wilson, *Gospel Wakefulness*, 89.

¹⁹ Wilson, *Gospel Wakefulness*, 88.

²⁰ Wilson, *Gospel Wakefulness*, 89.

²¹ Wilson, *Gospel Wakefulness*, 89.

The use of biblical theology has made it clear that God initiates worship among his people by revealing who he is and what he has done. It is also clear that worship necessarily includes the response of God's people to his revelation. This realization means that corporate worship, if it is to be biblical, must contain the dialogical nature that marks worship throughout the Bible. Connell says, "Worship is a dialogical encounter in which God and humanity are active participants through Christ and in which transformation occurs. The nature of this transformation is specifically Christlikeness—becoming like the one who is held in view in worship."²² Any model that is used to plan a worship event needs this dialogical element.

The question posed at the beginning of this chapter can now be re-addressed. The question is: *What pattern of worship best facilitates spiritual transformation by remembering the gospel?* At least part of the answer has been found by looking at how God has revealed himself through the story of the Bible. Modern corporate worship should reflect how God has told his story. As has been made evident, following God's pattern in revelation highlights his presence with his people by reminding them that he has summoned them to worship and is among them revealing himself in a dialogue with them. There is enough in applying biblical theology to worship services to reform many contemporary worship practices, but there is more to be done. Not only should the worship event be informed by how God has revealed himself, but it should also be shaped by what he has revealed. The pinnacle and purpose of all that God has revealed is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Worship in the Shape of the Gospel

When a person comes to faith in Jesus, he hears the content of the gospel and experiences the contours of the gospel. That person recognizes that he is a sinner and an enemy of his Creator. This truth is revealed by the Spirit. The natural response is

²²Connell, "The Impact of Gospel Content," 10.

recognition of his state and repentance toward God. The person comprehends the content of Christ's saving death and resurrection and responds in faith in the finished work, receiving the hope of glory. The person's recognition that he is irrevocably God's, causes him to respond with a life of worship. He receives the content of the gospel, which leads him through the contours of the gospel. As God reveals, he responds.

If this pattern is the way into the gospel, then it is also the way to remain in the gospel (Col 2:6-7).²³ When Christians gather together to worship God, the gospel should inform both the content and shape of corporate worship. Chapell explains this well:

Christian worship is a "re-presentation" of the gospel. By our worship we extol, embrace, and share the story of the progress of the gospel in our lives. We begin with adoration so that all will recognize the greatness and goodness of God. In the light of his glory, we also recognize our sin and confess our need of his grace. Assurance of his pardon produces thanksgiving. With sincere thanksgiving, we also become aware that all we have is from him and that we depend on his goodness for everything precious in our lives. Thus, we are compelled to seek him in prayer for our needs and his kingdom's advance. His loving intercession makes us desire to walk with him and further his purposes, so our hearts are open to his instruction and long to commune with him and those he loves. This progress of the gospel in our lives is the cause of our worship and the natural course of it. We conclude a service of such worship with a Charge and Benediction because the progress of the gospel is God's benediction on our lives.²⁴

The gospel is the focus of Christian worship. Because this is true, worship is going to take a particular shape—a gospel shape. It is not surprising, then, that a look back at Christian worship throughout church history reveals that the church has historically worshiped in that same shape. Connell notes, "Though the New Testament does not give a prescribed order for worship, the earliest indications of worship are built around the same pattern. When liturgy has been based upon the Word of God, it has filled out the shape of the gospel."²⁵

²³ See chap. 2, pp. 13-19, for a detailed discussion of these verses. "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving."

²⁴ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 116.

²⁵ Connell, "The Impact of Gospel Content," 142.

Chapell has done valuable research on liturgies from different denominations over a 500-year period. He finds this gospel shape consistently in Christian worship. He writes with the hope that readers will have a moment of realization when they discover

that their worship pattern unites them with multiple centuries of fellow Christians who have worshiped similarly—[they] will also be delighted to find how their worship can unite them in mission with those fellow believers. In every age, we worship God to further the cause of his gospel. We know the ‘good news’ of that gospel as we recognize the holiness of our Creator, confess our sin, seek his grace, are assured of his mercy, give him thanks, petition his aid, seek his instruction, and, in loving response to all his mercies, live for him.²⁶

Order Matters

It is clear through historical analysis and scholarly attention that the message of the gospel shapes Christian worship, which, in turn, shapes worshipers. The formation of worshipers is not just about getting the right information, although that is paramount. The *way* worship is conducted also declares the belief of the church and is another means of shaping the worshiper.

The form that worship takes is called a *liturgy*. Many from the Baptist tradition may be unfamiliar with the word *liturgy*. If they are familiar with the term, it is usually connected with Catholicism or some other High-Church tradition. But the truth is, whenever a church gathers together to worship, what they do is a liturgy. Cospers is helpful in defining *liturgy*: “The word itself comes from two Greek words meaning ‘public work.’ Or (as it’s often described) ‘the work of the people.’ To talk about liturgy in its most basic sense is to talk about what the congregation is gathering to do.”²⁷ Writing of *liturgy*, Chapell says it “simply describes the public way a church honors God in its times of gathered praise, prayer, instruction, and commitment.”²⁸

²⁶ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 19-20.

²⁷ Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 117.

²⁸ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 18.

The church, over its history, has been intentional about what it is declaring through its liturgical actions, evidenced in the way they built their buildings and structured their worship.²⁹ Architecture is outside of the scope of this work, but the structure of the service, or liturgy, is important in understanding both how the gospel shapes worshipers, and how the church's worship displays its beliefs.

Christopher J. Ellis, in *Gathering*, uses the study of liturgical theology to observe the worship practices of a community and then draw from them what we perceive to be their theological meaning. . . . Worship is embodied theology. We can observe what is done and listen to what is said and build a picture of what a particular worshipping community believes.³⁰

How a church worships reveals what that church believes. Chapell explains how this works:

Whether one intends it or not, our worship patterns always communicate something. Even if one simply goes along with what is either historically accepted or currently preferred, an understanding of the gospel inevitably unfolds. If a leader sets aside time for Confession of Sin (whether by prayer, or by song. Or by Scripture reading), then something about the gospel gets communicated. If there is no Confession in the course of the service, then something else is communicated—even though the message conveyed may not have been intended.³¹

Liturgy seems to work in two ways. First, as Chapell and Cherry have shown, liturgy is shaped by the gospel. The consistency among liturgies in history proves this point. Second, a particular church's liturgy reveals what that church believes. It is crucial that churches evaluate their liturgy to be sure they are representing what they believe in the way they worship. A powerful dynamic of spiritual formation happens when the gospel shapes the worship and the worship proclaims the gospel. The truths of the gospel are remembered and enjoyed in a way that forms the worshipers into Christlikeness.

²⁹ The first chapter of Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, has a fascinating discussion on church buildings and arrangement of furniture as a way to express the values of a church. This leads into the discussion about the liturgy. Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 15-25.

³⁰ Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Spirituality and Theology of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 14.

³¹ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 18.

Planning a worship service, then, should include making sure that the gospel is proclaimed and experienced through the structure of the event.

Spiritual Transformation through Habit

The spiritual formation that comes from worshipping where the gospel is proclaimed and also shapes the event is one way that Christians grow. Another way Christians grow is that the same dynamic is repeated over and over, week after week. In *You Are What You Love*, James Smith shows that the liturgy also forms the worshiper through the development of habits that shape the deepest longings of the worshipers. To prove his point, he begins by attacking a mistaken belief about what humans are:

We imagine human beings as giant bobblehead dolls with humungous heads and itty-bitty, unimportant bodies. It's the mind that we picture as "mission control" of the human person; it's thinking that defines who we are. "You are what you think" is a motto that reduces human beings to brains-on-a-stick. Ironically, such thinking-thingism assumes that the "heart" of the person is the mind.³²

Smith rejects the idea that the mind is the driver of one's existence. He follows Augustine, and says, "The center of gravity of the human person is located not in the intellect but in the heart. Why? Because the heart is the existential chamber of our *love*, and it is our loves that orient us toward some ultimate end or *telos*."³³

Smith argues that spiritual formation is more of a retraining of loves than it is information exchange. He writes,

The place we unconsciously strive toward is what ancient philosophers of habit called our *telos*—our goal, our end. But the *telos* we live toward is not something that we primarily know or believe or think about; rather, our *telos* is what we *want*, what we long for, what we crave.³⁴

³²James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 3.

³³ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 9.

³⁴ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 11.

The way to affect the deep longings that drive one's life is through the formation of habits that train affections on the things of God. Smith posits that this happens through liturgies: "Liturgies, then, are calibration technologies. They train our loves by aiming them toward a certain *telos*."³⁵ Cospers also affirms that spiritual formation is not merely proclaiming information: "Beliefs are both taught explicitly (through sermons and teaching) and caught implicitly (as congregations participate in the prayers and song of the church, which are themselves loaded with affirmations and denials of beliefs)."³⁶

Many pastors spend a great deal of time on the content shared at the gathering of their churches—rightfully so. However, for many the form or shape of the liturgy is not of great concern. Smith helpfully points out, "When we realize that worship is also about *formation*, we will begin to appreciate why *form* matters."³⁷ He goes on to explain that the "form" of worship involves two things: "(1) The overall narrative arc of a service of Christian worship and (2) the concrete, received practices that constitute elements of that enacted narrative."³⁸

Smith elaborates on the elements that create the form of worship. The first element is the narrative arc and he defines it as the gospel: "If our loves are liturgically formed—if learning to love takes practice—then we need to be sure that the practices of Christian worship reflect the plot of the gospel, that the lineaments of Christian worship rehearse the story line of Scripture."³⁹

For the second element he argues that the repetition of these received practices is what shapes the worshipers as habits are formed that recalibrate their loves:

³⁵ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 57.

³⁶ Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 118.

³⁷ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 78.

³⁸ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 78.

³⁹ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 90.

But when you see worship as an invitation to a top-down encounter with which God is refashioning your deepest habits, then repetition looks very different: it's how God rehabituates us. In a formation paradigm, repetition isn't insincere, because you're now showing, you are submitting. This is crucial because there is no formation without repetition. Virtue formation takes practice, and there is no practice that isn't repetitive.⁴⁰

Smith's first element of "form" is well documented above. The shape of the gospel should inform the shape of the worship service. His second point, however, pushes for what he calls "concrete" and "received" practices. Smith moves beyond biblical warrant in defense of tradition. There is disagreement over this point even among those who agree to the first point and who argue for intentional liturgy.

Kauflin affirms Smith's first point—that the narrative arc is important—but separates faithful worship from a "concrete," "received" liturgy. He is correct when he writes,

Forms and practices are significant when we meet as God's people to worship him. Our gatherings both reflect and shape our beliefs. But there is no "liturgical perfectionism" we can achieve that will ever make our worship more acceptable to God than it already is in Jesus. Our goal is to do in faith what magnifies God's glory in Christ most effectively and scripturally. We can and should use biblical elements and proportions in corporate worship. But liturgies should serve us, not rule us. Since God has seen fit to allow freedom in form, so should we.⁴¹

Chapell also argues for worship that is not constrained by a particular liturgy by rooting worship in a love relationship to Christ, which necessarily takes a certain pattern. The contours of worship do not change because they are an expression of one's relationship with God in Christ, but there is freedom within those contours. Chapell states,

We do not have to insist on a particular order of worship elements or a particular style of expression to create authentic Christian worship. But what we cannot avoid, if we are to worship God rightly, are the dynamics of the gospel. . . . Christian liturgy has a gospel pattern, not because someone's rulebook demands it, but because believers express their love to God by responding to the way that he has expressed his for them. He expresses his love for us not by mandating rituals to constrain us, but by sending his Son to redeem us. Worship is a response to our Redeemer. The heart of Christian worship is love for Christ. We cannot love him without extolling

⁴⁰ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 80.

⁴¹ Bob Kauflin, "Idolatry in Corporate Worship," *Desiring God*, March 16, 2014, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/idolatry-in-corporate-worship>.

his greatness, confessing our weakness, seeking his goodness, thanking him for his grace, and living for his glory. So, out of love for him, we worship him in these ways. Our worship has a gospel pattern not because we are coerced into such ritual but because our hearts are so compelled to love Jesus.⁴²

Both Kauflin and Chapell affirm Smith's first point of the narrative arc in Christian worship, but they reject that a particular liturgy is necessary. To be clear, neither Kauflin nor Chapell deny that liturgy is helpful; rather, they argue for a measure of freedom in the liturgy. Why then does Smith hold so tightly to the necessity of a particular liturgy whereas these and many other authors do not? The answer lies in where they think the power for transformation comes.

Smith places the weight of the transformative power of worship on the "concrete" and "received" practices of historic liturgy.⁴³ Kauflin, Chapell, Connell, and others believe the power for transformation comes from another source. Connell articulates the source of transformation best: "From start to finish, the unveiling of God's glory to the worshiper through the work of the gospel results in transforming the beholder to a follower of Christ, and therefore to the image of Christ himself."⁴⁴ The power for change according to Connell is the glory of God in Christ. Connell goes on to explain how this happens:

Those who are in Christ can look upon the glory of God because of Christ. And not only can they enter the cloud of God's glory, but when they gaze upon the glory of the Lord in the face of Christ, they are transformed (or transfigured) into that same glory. They are conformed to the image of Christ who is the exact representation of the invisible God (Heb 1:3). In worship, when God's glory is revealed in Christ, worshipers are transformed into this same image. Christ-centered worship is transforming worship. One cannot look upon the glory of God and remain the same.⁴⁵

Surely, Smith would not disagree, but still he places his emphasis on historic liturgy received from church history as the mechanism for transformation. Connell, on the

⁴² Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 112.

⁴³ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 80.

⁴⁴ Connell, "The Impact of Gospel Content," 144.

⁴⁵ Connell, "The Impact of Gospel Content," 124.

other hand, looks under the surface of the “received” liturgy to the power of transformation from a higher “received” source—the Word of God. The Scripture says that worshipers are transformed by beholding the Glory of God in Christ (1 Cor 3:12-18).

Liturgical Essentials

Even though one may disagree with the emphasis Smith places on a particular liturgy, it is hard to disagree with the power of forming gospel habits in corporate worship for spiritual transformation. Therefore, that leads back to the original question of this chapter: What pattern of worship best facilitates spiritual formation by remembering the gospel? Many have offered models for planning and evaluating worship services, but Mark Dever and Bryan Chapell have helpfully summarized two essential elements of Christian worship—Word-centeredness and gospel-shaped

Word-Centered

In *Deliberate Church*, Mark Dever provides the broadest answer to the question of what should happen during a worship event. He says that a church should “read the Word, preach the Word, pray the Word, sing the Word, see the Word (in the ordinances).⁴⁶ Dever sticks to his Baptist roots. He does not offer a particular liturgy that would restrict Free Church worship. What he does offer is a Word-centered approach to worship while allowing for much freedom in the service. Whatever else is added to the worship service may be helpful, but if the service is not derived from the Bible and does not teach the content of the Bible, then it ceases to be Christian worship.

Gospel-Shaped

Chapell offers a second essential for structuring corporate worship. He has done a great service to the cause of worship service planning by comparing liturgies over

⁴⁶ Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 81.

a five-hundred-year period. He discovered, “Despite their obvious differences, all these liturgies of the Word have a sequence in common: Adoration, Confession, Assurance, Thanksgiving, Petition, Instruction, Charge, and Blessing.”⁴⁷ He also writes, “Worship cannot simply be a matter of arbitrary choice, church tradition, personal preference, or cultural appeal. There are foundational truths in the gospel of Christ’s redeeming work that do not change if the gospel is to remain the gospel.”⁴⁸ His depiction of the shape of a gospel-centered corporate gathering is seen in figure 1.

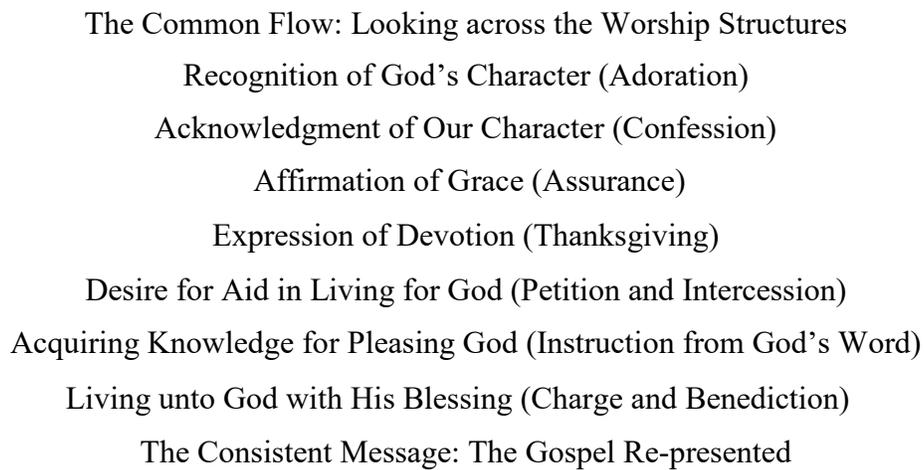


Figure 1. Bryan Chapell’s consistent gospel elements of historic liturgies

The gospel shape presented here is what Chapell refers to as the path of grace in the life of the believer.⁴⁹ This path of grace takes the form of the gospel and reflects the basis of one’s relationship with God. In this way, worship services that follow this pattern are repeated instances of God’s people relating to him as he has directed them.

⁴⁷ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 99. For a more detailed explanation of the common sequence among historic liturgies, see figure 1.

⁴⁸ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 85. Figure 1 is taken from Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 100.

⁴⁹ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 118.

These two essentials—Word-centeredness and gospel-shaped—ought to be present in every worship service. Beyond these essentials, there are three other criteria by which other models will be evaluated for use in reforming the worship of Crossroads Church.

Finding the Right Model

What follows is an evaluation of four models for planning the liturgy of the church. Each of the models are rooted in the Bible and reflect the gospel shape in some way. The purpose here is to find the one that would work best for reforming the worship of Crossroads Church.

Connell’s Model

Connell offers a model for corporate worship that reflects both Word-centeredness and the gospel shape. Connell uses broad categories for God’s actions in worship—revelation, mediation, and exhortation. These categories allow for a simplicity of worship design while leading the congregation through the contours of the revelatory portions of the gospel.

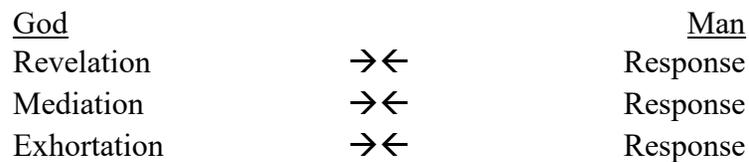


Figure 2. Connell’s Baptist model for corporate worship

Connell, like Dever, upholds a Free Church distinctive by allowing freedom in the liturgy; but unlike Dever, Connell at least shows the need for response during a worship event. He leaves the responses vague so people can respond as they are led by the Spirit. He says of his model:

By adding man’s responses to the pattern, the rhythm of revelation and response can be clearly seen. . . . However, it seems freer to allow room for the worshiper to respond to God’s actions in worship as each is prompted to do. Worship is

dynamic—one worshiper may be responding with adoration while another with confession to the same element of worship. Still another may be compelled to give thanks while yet another turns to supplication. By simply listing “response,” the pattern seems to better represent the dynamic element of worship and is less rigidly scripted for worship planning and design.⁵⁰

Using the criteria for evaluating worship liturgy models, Connell’s model takes into account biblical theology, at least in its conception, because it follows a pattern of revelation seen first in Mount Sinai and then again on the Mount of Transfiguration. Although biblical theology is not presented in the model itself. It is a result of biblical theology. The dialogical nature is evident in the expected but unguided response of the worshipers. This model also provides a broad gospel shape so that the elements of the gospel are revealed in the structure of the worship event. This model grazes the ability to form habits that form the worshiper in responding to God. The fact that it has a gospel structure means it can form the worshippers’ habits, but because of the openness in response this model may or may not lead the worshiper down what Chapell refers to as the path of grace in the life of the believer.

Connell’s model is a useful model in planning and evaluating corporate worship because it does incorporate the dialogical nature of worship. The difficulty this model faces is that it does not lead the congregation through gospel responses to God’s revelation as set out in Chapell’s work. It is understandable to not want to be too ridged in liturgy. But there should be a way to allow for a guided response to show the proper reaction to the gospel without being too restrictive in a Free Church setting.

The Fourfold Model

A second model for structuring the worship event is represented by a Constance Cherry, Robert Webber, and James Smith. Connell reports, “This model has been embraced as the historical model of worship in the early church and has continued in

⁵⁰ Connell, “The Impact of Gospel Content,” 155.

many traditions until today.”⁵¹ This model has four movements: The Gathering, Word, Sacrament and the Sending. Connell helpfully summarizes the movements of this model.

The gathering aspect was to demonstrate that when God’s people worship, they do so by gathering in a local church around traditional Christian symbols and liturgy. This is true wherever the gospel has gone. The revelation and response aspects of their model are found in the Word and Sacraments portions of the four movements. The Word is a revelation of God’s character and work and the Table is man’s response to that revelation. The Sending is a reminder that believers are to go and live differently in the world because of what they have experienced in worship, demonstrating the transformation that should occur in worship.⁵²

Smith uses the same fourfold idea but modifies the language of the movements (see figure 3).

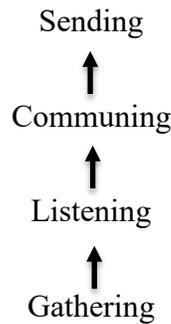


Figure 3. James K. A. Smith’s fourfold model of worship

The focus of this model is what the gathered church does during the worship event. Applying the criteria for evaluating worship models, it becomes evident that this model is rooted in Scripture. It reflects the interaction between Jesus and his disciples in Luke 24. There is a place to hear the Word preached, but the model itself does not take its shape from biblical theology. This model does represent a dialogue between God and the worshipers, but it is different from other models. Connell points out that the dialogical nature of worship is evident in revelation through the Word (“Listening” in

⁵¹ Connell, “The Impact of Gospel Content,” 147. Constance Cherry and James Smith are cited in Connell’s work, as well as others, such as Robert Webber and Gregory Dix.

⁵² Connell, “The Impact of Gospel Content,” 146-47.

Smith's model) and the Table ("Communing" in Smith's model). Other models, like Connell's, have multiple interactions of revelation and response; whereas, this model has only one. This model does have discernable though not explicit gospel shape. Chapell's work in finding a gospel pattern in historic worship practices came largely from churches that applied this model. The final criteria of a repeatable, habit forming practice is present. In fact, Smith's entire argument is for churches to adopt this model as a way to form worshipers. However, Connell points out some problems in his work:

(1) Many churches today do not celebrate the Table every week . . . which leaves one to wonder where and how the worshipers' response should be in this model; (2) An increased emphasis on the worship elements that precede the Word seems to be weightier than simply gathering for worship.⁵³

This Fourfold model is unique among the models represented in this work. The closest model is Dever's ideal, which focuses on what the church does in the worship event, but his model has a bend toward revelation. The Fourfold model does not lean toward revelation or response. It simply presents movements that the church moves through leaving both revelation and response to be assumed. Having said that, this model is helpful for providing structure in moving through a worship event in an orderly way. In light of Connell's critique concerning the frequency of observing the Lord's Supper, this model will not work for reforming the worship of Crossroads because the Lord's Supper is not observed weekly.

The Isaiah 6 Model

Leafblad presents a fifth model patterned after Isaiah's experience of beholding God in Isaiah 6:1-11. It is designed to highlight the dialogue taking place in worship (see figure 4).⁵⁴ This model does a good job of depicting the interplay of revelation and

⁵³ Connell, "The Impact of Gospel Content," 148.

⁵⁴ Bruce Leafblad, "Evangelical Worship: A Biblical Model for the Twenty-First Century," in *Experience God in Worship*, ed. Michael D. Warden (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2000), 96.

response that takes place in worship. It sets itself apart from the other models in its specificity in both what God is doing and what man is doing in the worship event.

Dever’s idea focuses is on what God is revealing through the Word—revelation. Chapell focuses on the response of the worshiper. The Fourfold model primarily focuses on the structure. Connell’s model is the closest to the Leafblad’s model because they both are explicit that there is flow of revelation and response taking place as the worship event unfolds. The main difference between Leafblad’s model and Connell’s model is specificity. Leafblad is more specific about the desired response of the worshiper in response to the revelation received.

<u>Acts of God</u>		<u>Acts of Man</u>
Revelation	Scene 1: Isaiah 6:1-4	Adoration
Expiation	Scene 2: Isaiah 6:5-7	Confession
Proclamation	Scene 3: Isaiah 6:8	Dedication
Commission	Scene 4: The Gospels 1 Corinthians 11 Communion (When observed) Scene 5: Isaiah 6:9-11a	Supplication

Figure 4. Bruce Leafblad’s Isaiah 6 pattern of worship

This model meets almost all the criteria for reforming worship at Crossroads Church. It is designed to highlight the dialogical nature of worship—it reveals the gospel in both revelation and response. It also presents a repeatable pattern that can shape the habits of worshipers as they engage in worship week after week. The only place this model

fails to meet the criteria is in representing how God tells the story of the gospel. This model is based on Isaiah’s vision of God in Isaiah 6. It does not consider any other aspect of the Bible. This lack of consideration of biblical theology does not render the model useless, but one model fits all the desired criteria better.

Cosper’s Model

Cosper has also produced a model that fits all the criteria (see table 1).⁵⁵ It reflects the story of the Bible, is distinctly gospel shaped, dialogical, and repeatable. This model incorporates the best features of the all the previous models. It is deeply rooted in the Word. It captures the dialogical nature of worship, like Connell and Leafblad’s model. It provides a broad structure that allows for some measure of freedom in worship planning, like both Connell’s model and The Fourfold structure. And it leads the congregation through the gospel shape in a repeatable, habit-forming fashion. In addition, it has the added bonus of reproducing the narrative arc of Scripture, further undergirding the gospel.

Table 1. Cosper’s model of corporate worship

Experiencing the Gospel	Remembering the Story	Actions in Liturgy
God is holy.	Creation	Adoration
We are sinners.	Fall	Confession (and/or) Lament
Jesus saves us.	Redemption	Assurance The Peace Prayers of Thanksgiving and Petition Instruction
Jesus sends us.	Consummation	Communion Commitment/Charge Blessing

Cosper’s model will be the model used for reforming the worship at Crossroads Church. This model fits the ethos of Crossroads church for three reasons: (1) The people

⁵⁵Cosper, *Rhythms of Grace*, 123.

of Crossroads are regularly confronted with the metanarrative of the Bible through the preaching. There is a familiarity with reading the Bible through this lens, so the concept will be easy for the congregation to grasp. (2) This model is most explicitly structured by the gospel. Again, there will be familiarity with the God-Man-Christ-Response model. Gilbert's definition of the gospel is used in the Crossroads Discovery class to make sure everyone understands and can articulate the gospel.⁵⁶ (3) Finally, the actions of the liturgy are detailed enough to teach people the proper response to the truths of the gospel, which will help form their loves to the rhythms of the gospel. It is also good, considering Colossians 2:6, to remain in the gospel in the same way Christians came to it. The hope for applying this model is that the gospel will be taught both explicitly and implicitly—that it will reach head and heart in ways that deeply shape the congregation by seeing the glory of God in Christ through the gospel week after week.

⁵⁶Crossroads Discovery is a class all potential members must attend before they become members at Crossroads Church. This first session is a detailed explanation of the gospel following Gilbert, *What is the Gospel?*.

CHAPTER 4
THE ELEMENTS OF THE MINISTRY
RESEARCH PROJECT

The ministry research project consisted of a five-week sermons series on corporate worship drawn from various biblical passages. The elements used in the project were a pre-test and post-test questionnaire, small group discussions, weekly sermon evaluation forms, and a restructuring of the Sunday morning liturgy to conform more to this project's understanding of Scripture. These elements were based on the four goals of the project: (1) assess the congregation's current understanding of worship; (2) write a five-week sermon series explaining biblical corporate worship; (3) increase the congregation's understanding of biblical corporate worship; and (4) restructure the corporate worship of CRC as needed to conform to biblical corporate worship. Each of the elements were used to gauge the effectiveness of the project in attaining these goals.

Scheduling of the Elements

The sermon series began on September 30, 2018 and ended on October 28, 2018. A timeline of the various elements of the project is provided below:

1. September 9–Began recruiting for the small groups¹
2. September 10–Enlisted three people to review the sermons
3. September 24–Gave the pre-test questionnaire to small group 1.
4. September 25–Wrote sermon 1 and sent it for review

¹ The initial plan was to have one small group; however, due to scheduling I decided to have two small groups to better represent a broader spectrum of our membership. The first small group was diverse in terms of age and race, but it did not have any college students. Almost a third of the congregation is college students, many of whom are in leadership at the Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM). The BCM had their leadership meetings on Monday night, the same night as the first small group. So, I recruited college students for a second small group that met Thursdays at 11:00 a.m.

5. September 27–Gave the pre-test questionnaire to small group 2
6. September 28–Made necessary corrections to sermon 1
7. September 30–Preached sermon 1 and introduced new liturgy
8. October 1–Conducted small group 1 on sermon 1
9. October 2–Wrote sermon 2 and sent it for review
10. October 4–Conducted small group 2 on sermon 1
11. October 5–Made necessary corrections to sermon 2
12. October 7–Preached sermon 2 and continued with new liturgy
13. October 8–Conducted small group 1 on sermon 2
14. October 9–Wrote sermon 3 and sent it for review
15. October 11–Conducted small group 2 on sermon 2
16. October 14–Preached sermon 3 and continued with new liturgy
17. October 15–Unable to conduct small group 1 on sermon 3²
18. October 18–Conducted small group 2 on sermon 3
19. October 19–Wrote sermon 4 and sent it for review
20. October 20–Made necessary corrections to sermon 4
21. October 21–Preached sermon 4 and continued new liturgy
22. October 22–Conducted small group 1 on sermons 3 and 4
23. October 23–Wrote sermon 5 and sent it for review
24. October 25–Conducted small group 2 on sermon 4
25. October 26–Made necessary corrections to sermon 5
26. October 28–Preached sermon 5 and conducted a lab through the new liturgy³

² I conducted the second small group meeting for group 1 due to Hurricane Michael. I helped my family in Georgia remove trees from their homes and properties. I made up the small group meeting on October 22 by discussing two sermons at once.

³ In the first four weeks of the sermon series, I made changes to the liturgy and asked the congregation to consider what the changes were and why they were made. On the last Sunday of the project I called it a “lab” because I took time to explain every aspect of the new liturgy and why we were doing it.

27. October 29—Conducted small group 1 through sermon 5 and administered post-test questionnaire

28. November 1—Conducted small group 2 on sermon 5 and administered post-test questionnaire

The total duration of the project was nine weeks.

Recruitment of Small Group Participants

Recruitment for the small group participants for this project was done in the ordinary method for small group recruitment at CRC. We announced the groups three weeks in advance of the beginning of the group on Sunday mornings. The leaders of the groups give a brief synopsis of what the group will be studying as well as where and when the group will be meeting. I announced the small group, making it known that the participants would be taking part in my doctoral project. I also made known the attendance requirements for the group. Each participant would need to be present or listen to a recording of every sermon and attend four of the five small group sessions. Those who wanted to participate would sign up by placing their name and contact information on the bulletin insert indicating which group they would attend.

The ordinary method of recruitment did not produce a good cross-section of the congregation because a large portion of the congregation consists of college students. Most of the students were involved in leadership in the Baptist Colligate Ministries (BCM). Their meetings were scheduled at the same time as the small group I was leading. To solve this problem, I texted six college students to see if they would be interested in participating in the project by meeting at another time. All six agreed to participate.

The recruitment process produced twenty-two participants. Of those participants, eight were between 20—29; three were between 30—39; one was between 40—49; four were between 50—59; and six were 60 or over.

Over the course of the project, 4 people were unable to meet the requirements for participation. The total number of those who completed the project was 19: 6

participants in their 20s, 2 in their 30s, 1 in their 40s, 4 in their 50s, and 5 that are 60 or over.

Enlistment of Sermon Reviewers

I enlisted three people to review the sermons and give feedback before the sermon was preached: one other elder of the church, the Director of Missions for our Baptist Association, and an editor of our local newspaper. Each person agreed to review the sermons. Each reviewer was given the same rubric (see appendix 2), but each was selected because of the different emphasis he would give in feedback. From my fellow elder I wanted to receive feedback about how our congregation would grasp the sermon. From the Director of Missions, I was looking for a theological voice from outside of CRC. I was looking for grammar, syntax, and readability feedback from the newspaper editor. Each of the reviewers was helpful and improved the sermons.

The sermons were written, reviewed, and edited in the same week that I preached them. The typical timeline was that the sermon was written and sent to the reviewer on Tuesday, the reviewers had until Thursday to make comments and return the sermons to me, and on Friday I would revise the sermons based on their comments and preach them on Sunday. This schedule was altered on the third week of the project due to Hurricane Michael (October 10-17, 2018). That week I completed writing the sermon on Friday and the reviewers got them back to me on Saturday. I made the necessary corrections Saturday evening and preached the sermon on Sunday.

Pre-Test Questionnaire

The pre-test questionnaire was given to the first small group on the Monday before the sermon series began (see appendix 2). As people arrived, they drew numbers from a cup and then reported their numbers to my wife. The process allowed for the participants to remain anonymous so that they did not feel anxious about giving a “wrong answer.” The group took the survey at the same time and turned them in. The same process

was repeated for the second group on the Thursday before the sermon series began. The group drew numbers from those numbers remaining from group 1 to ensure that there were no duplicate numbers on the surveys.

The CWAS survey was composed of twenty questions to be answered using a six-point Likert scale (see appendix 1). The survey was designed to measure the congregation's understanding of the theological and practical aspects of corporate worship; as well as the role of Scripture in shaping corporate worship. There were eight questions regarding the theology behind corporate worship, eight questions aimed at the practice of worship, and four questions concerning Scripture and worship.

Synopsis of Sermons Preached

The sermons series was called "Recreated for Worship." The theme of the series was that the whole Bible tells the story of worship through the gospel; therefore, the gospel should also be the controlling pattern of ongoing corporate worship of the church. In the series, various passages were used to show that the proper worship of God all through the Bible contained gospel elements. For instance, worship begins with recognizing God for who he is. Seeing God for who he is inevitably leads to a recognition of one's sinfulness and repentance. We are then assured of our pardon by accepting God's means for atonement and submit to his rule over our lives. The point of the sermon series was, if this is the way all good examples of worship happened in the Bible, then it should be how we worship today. The following are summaries of each of the five sermons. The full manuscripts are available in appendix 3.

Sermon 1

The title of the first sermon was "Foundational Principles of Worship," drawn from Isaiah 66:1-6. This passage was written to Israel before their return from Babylon. God addresses his people as they are returning to their land to reestablish their life and, most importantly, their worship. In a word of warning, God refocuses their attitudes about

true worship. He gives them three foundational principles: (1) they need to remember who it is they are worshipping; (2) right actions with the wrong attitude do not constitute true worship; and (3) corrupted worship brings the judgment of God. These three principles were important then, and they are important now.

My goal for this sermon was to communicate to the congregation the theological underpinnings of worship. I wanted them to understand: (1) we worship God who is immense, uncontainable and who has no needs; (2) our worship is a response to his revelation; and (3) our worship is to be humble and contrite with reverence for his revelation. The rest of the sermon series built on this foundation.

Sermon 2

The title of the second sermon was “The Bible and Worship.” It was taken from two passages: 2 Timothy 3:10-17 and Luke 24:13-24; 44-49. The sermon answered two questions: How do we hear from God? and How do we know what we hear is correct? The first question was answered from 2 Timothy 3:10—17. In this passage, Paul instructs his young protégé to remain in the gospel that he has taught and the Scriptures he had learned since childhood. In the Scriptures a man might find God’s breathed out word for every situation so that he can be sanctified. The second question was answered from Luke 24. In this passage Jesus instructs his disciples regarding how to properly understand the Scriptures. They all speak about Him.

My goal in this sermon was to root the congregation in the sufficiency of Scripture. I wanted to reaffirm among them that the Bible was the sole repository of God’s wisdom for his people. I also intended to build off the previous week’s sermon to show that if one is going to worship properly, then one needs to ascertain what Scripture says about worship. Another goal of this sermon was to give the congregation a way of understanding Scripture that assured they were hearing God in the Bible and not whatever they wanted to hear.

Sermon 3

Sermon 3 was entitled “Corporate Worship through the Bible.” This sermon carries the bulk of my reasoning for wanting to reform the gathered worship at CRC. The sermon did not have one particular passage that it drew from; instead, the sermon was a systematic and biblical-theological walk through the Bible to show common elements of worship throughout the Bible. The sermon began by looking systematically at worship in the New Testament after Pentecost to see what worship looked like after the birth of the church. We looked at Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 5:18-21; Colossians 3:15-17 and Hebrews 10:19-25. After seeing the common elements, we looked through the biblical-theological lens to see what was consistent throughout Scripture. We looked at Leviticus 16 and Revelation 21-22. The outcome of combining these two approaches to Scripture is that we saw that the elements of the gospel were always present in corporate worship, even before the gospel was fully revealed.

My goal for this sermon was to instill in the congregation a sense of connection with the entire Bible by showing that worshiping God through the gospel has always been the way God intends his people to worship. I also wanted to press the importance of worshipping God according to his Word and deepen the importance of what we do on Sundays when we gather. This sermon was the main argument of the project.

Sermon 4

The fourth sermon was entitled “Transformed by the Gospel.” It was taken from 2 Corinthians 3:1-18. This passage taught that the New Covenant ministry, like that of Paul’s, came with a glory that surpasses the glory of the Old Covenant. The reason for the increase in glory is that the Old Covenant only told the people how to honor God; whereas the New Covenant enables us to worship God. It is the activity of God through his Spirit that brings us to the fullest display of the glory of God in the face of Christ. When Moses came into contact with the glory of God in the Old Covenant his face would shine, but it

was fading. In the New Covenant, as God's people encounter the Glory of God in Christ, they are positively and permanently changed from one degree of glory to another.

My goal for this sermon was to help the congregation understand that coming to worship God through the gospel weekly brings regular contact with the glory of God. As we do that, we are continually changed. My hope was that the members of CRC would be expectant when they came to worship. My hope was that they expect to see Christ and be changed every week.

Sermon 5

The fifth sermon was entitled "Fortified in the Gospel." It was taken from Colossians 2:6-15. The main idea of this sermon was that remaining in the gospel fortifies the Christian against worldly wisdom. Paul begins his exhortation by telling the Colossians that the way they came to Christ was also the way that they would remain in him. This led to two questions: How did we come to Christ? and How do we remain in him? We came to Christ through the gospel, so that is the way we remain in him. Paul's concern for the church in Colossae is that they could be led away from the gospel by arguments that sound very close to the truth but divert from it. Paul wants his readers to be continually fortified in the gospel to keep them from being deceived.

My goal for this sermon was to provide further reasoning for shaping the Sunday morning liturgy around the gospel. This passage taught that we are to remain in the gospel to be fortified against being taken captive by hollow philosophies. My hope was that the congregation would be convinced that the best, most biblical way to conduct a worship gathering was to not only center the content on the gospel, but also walk through the elements of the gospel in the liturgy.

Refining the Corporate Liturgy

In the weeks leading up to the beginning of the sermon series I announced the beginning of the sermon series and asked the congregation to be prepared to be in their

seats and ready for worship promptly at 10:30. On September 30, the first day of the sermon series, I adjusted the liturgy to reflect the changes I would be arguing for in the sermon series. At the beginning of this service, I asked the congregation to try to figure out what was different and why it might be different. My hope in doing this was to get them thinking about why we conduct worship gatherings the way we do. Prior to making project informed changes, the liturgy at CRC was as follows.

Opening song

Welcome and pastoral prayer

Three song set

Offertory prayer

Offering

Sermon

Response/song

Announcements

This liturgy was largely pragmatic. It is what the church had always done. It served its purpose in that the church would sing, pray, give, hear from God's Word and respond. but it was missing a few important aspect of corporate worship that serve as reminders of what God has done in the gospel. The liturgy was amended to better lead the congregation into gospel reflection and action (see appendix 5). The revised liturgy was as follows:

Gathering Song

Welcome

Frame God (a short statement to draw our attention to God)

Call to Worship (Scripture to draw us into the worship of God)

Song (reflecting the truth about God from the preceding Scripture)

Frame Man (short statement that led us to consider who we are in light of God and repent of sins)

Repentance/Lament (a song or moment of silence to repent of sin)

Frame Christ (assurance of pardon through the retelling of the gospel)

Song

Offering

Congregational Prayer

Sermon

Response Song

Prayer

Announcements

Sending/Blessing

The revised liturgy incorporated an intentional gospel shape by following the God is holy, We are sinners, Jesus saves us, Jesus sends us model proposed by Cospers.⁴ The main differences in this liturgy and the previous one are the call to worship, the repentance/lament, and the sending/blessing.

There is a variation to this liturgy once a month when CRC observes the Lord's Supper. On those Sundays there are three changes: (1) the announcements are moved to be part of the welcome; (2) the Lord's Supper is placed after the sermon; and (3) the one leading the Lord's Supper prays and sends the congregation out with a blessing/charge.

On the final Sunday of the sermon series, I conducted an explanatory lab. As the liturgy progressed, I took time to explain each movement and why we did it. The goal in doing the lab was to bring together all the changes to the liturgy and the teaching from the sermon series to show why I made the changes that I made.

Small Groups Conducted

Small groups were conducted each week on the Monday and Thursday following the sermon given on Sunday. The Monday group met at my house at 6:30 for a

⁴ See Mike Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church's Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 123. Although I do not use his specific language, the liturgy is patterned after Cospers's model.

meal and fellowship. From 7:00-7:15 we moved from the meal to a discussion of the sermon. I began with prayer and someone would read the passage(s) that the sermon covered. Then, I began the discussion by asking questions I had prepared (see appendix 9). The first set of questions focused on understanding the passage(s) and sermon points. Next, we moved to questions for application. Following the discussion, I took prayer requests and we prayed for one another to conclude the night. The Thursday group was similar to the Monday group except there was no meal and we met in my office.

The discussions in the groups were not intended to cover every question on the study guide. The questions were there in case of a lull in the conversation. Each question was meant to facilitate a conversation so that the group would think through the application of the sermon. I lightly steered the conversation if needed to make sure the group thought through the relevant topics. Typically, once the conversation started the groups fully discussed the topics.

The Post-Sermon Series Questionnaire

The post-sermon series questionnaire was administered on October 29, 2018, for the Monday group, and November 1, 2018, for the Thursday group. The questionnaire was the CWAS—the same questionnaire given prior to the sermon series. The purpose of administering the CWAS before and after the sermon series was to measure the effectiveness of the sermon series in achieving the goals of the project by comparing the results from both surveys. Each participant wrote down the number that they drew the week prior to the beginning of the sermon series and small groups discussions. After completing the questionnaire, they turned it in for evaluation.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Completing this project was another step in the short history of CRC as we seek to be a church that continually reforms our practices under the authority of the Bible. CRC has taken steps to be a healthier church by learning, evaluating, and changing our worship liturgy to better reflect biblical priorities. This chapter is an evaluation of the project.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of the project was to promote trust in the sufficiency of Scripture by refining the corporate worship of Crossroads Church according to Scripture. Evaluating a change in trust in the sufficiency of Scripture is difficult to measure. Trust is something that is built over a long period of time. This project spanned only ten weeks. In this short amount of time, it is unlikely that there would be a significant enough change in trust to measure. It is also a challenging proposition to measure trust. The ultimate longed-for effects will be evident over time. There is, however, a benefit of being the pastor of CRC for more than a decade. I am able to see long-term changes within the congregation. The church approached the restructuring of the worship liturgy in the same manner it handled many other things in its past—they heard what the Bible said, investigated it, and submitted to it. The trajectory of the church in trusting the sufficiency of Scripture held true. The church did evaluate and change their corporate worship as they were convinced from Scripture. Therefore, the project must be considered a success. What follows is an evaluation of the process starting with the goals of the project.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Four goals were determined at the beginning of the project: (1) assess CRC members' understanding of how Scripture informs corporate worship; (2) develop a five-week sermon series and corresponding guided discussion on worship according to Scripture; (3) increase the knowledge of Scripture's teaching on corporate worship; and (4) assess and make any needed changes to the patterns, practices and elements of corporate worship at CRC.

Goal 1: Assess Understanding

The first goal was to assess the current knowledge of corporate worship according to Scriptures. The goal was measured by administering the CWAS to small group of the members of CRC. This goal was considered successfully met when eighteen members completed the CWAS and the results were analyzed, yielding a clearer picture of the congregation's understanding of how Scripture informs corporate worship.¹

After analyzing the data, the initial findings indicated the church had a good grasp of the main ideas of the importance of worshipping according to Scripture, but they were unclear on the details. I came to this conclusion by looking at the statements indicating the most agreement. For example, statement 2 had the strongest average agreement. The statement was, "meeting regularly for corporate worship is vital in the life of a believer." Statement 20 had the second strongest agreement: "God cares about how we worship." Followed with statement 19: "The Bible gives us everything we need to know God and obey him." When viewed together, it was encouraging to see that the church felt strongly that God cares about how we worship when we meet together and that the church can find information about worship that is pleasing to God in the Bible.

In the same way, I analyzed the data for places indicating the strongest disagreement. Statement 14 had the strongest average disagreement: "Worship should be

¹ See appendix 7 for results.

evaluated based on my feelings.” This statement was followed closely by statement 8: “The gospel is only for the unbelieving.” Again, the results were encouraging. It was good to see that CRC understands that the gospel has ongoing utility in the life of the believer. It was also encouraging to see an understanding that worship is less about how we feel and more about the worthiness of God. It was clear from the initial data that the church had main ideas of biblical worship in place, they just needed some guidance on how the Bible informs our corporate liturgy.

Goal 2: Develop a Sermon Series

The second goal was to develop a five-week sermon series and corresponding guided discussion on corporate worship according to Scripture. This goal was measured by an elder of CRC, The Director of Missions of the Northshore Baptist Association, and a newspaper editor, who used a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the sermon series and discussion guide.² The sermon series and guided discussion covered the sufficiency of Scripture, the Christocentric hermeneutic in the use of Scripture, and the elements of corporate worship. The table below shows the average score from each of the evaluators on each sermon.

Table 2. Sermon evaluation scores

	Sermon 1	Sermon 2	Sermon 3	Sermon 4	Sermon 5
Evaluator 1	100%	100%	100%	96.88%	100%
Evaluator 2	100%	100%	100%	100%	96.88%
Evaluator 3	96.88%	96.88%	96.88%	96.88%	96.88%
Total	98.96%	98.96%	98.96%	97.92%	97.92%

The goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level. The percentages were derived from the rubrics filled out by the evaluators each week.

² See appendix 2.

Goal 3: Increase Knowledge

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of Scripture's teaching on corporate worship among the members of CRC through the preaching of the sermon series and corresponding life group discussions. This goal was measured by administering the CWAS survey a second time to the same members of the small group of CRC who committed to listen to all five sermons and attend four of the five corresponding life group discussions. The CWAS was then used to measure the change in knowledge of corporate worship according to Scripture.³

The data from the pre- and post-surveys was tested using a two-tailed paired t-test. Each response was given a number so the mean of the data could be measured. The numbers were assigned as follows: Strongly Disagree-1; Disagree-2, Disagree Somewhat-3; Agree Somewhat-4; Agree-5; Strongly Agree-6. The data was entered into Excel for each participant with their pre- and post-test responses. The data analysis toolpack feature of Microsoft Excel was used to conduct the t-test and attain p-values. With an alpha level of .05, the null hypothesis of no difference in pre- and post-survey response was tested. If the p-score was less than alpha of .05, then the t-test was significant, and the null hypothesis was rejected, meaning that there was significant change in the pre- and post-survey response by the group of participants.⁴

When the data from the t-test was analyzed, seven statements indicated that significant learning had taken place. Compared with the data from the first survey, the results were encouraging. From the initial survey it was concluded that the church had the main ideas about biblical worship but needed guidance in how the Bible informs corporate liturgy. The t-test results show that the necessary learning took place. Of the twenty statements on the survey, seven showed a statistically significant change in agreement. In six of those statements the agreement moved in a way that was desired. One of the

³ See appendix 1.

⁴ See appendix 7.

statements, surprisingly, showed further agreement in an unexpected and undesirable direction.

The statement that showed further agreement in an undesirable direction was statement 4: “The sufficiency of Scripture means that the Bible tells us exactly how to handle every situation in life.” The hope was for the participants to understand that the Bible does not speak directly about many things in life, but the Bible does give principles and trajectories that inform those situations. In other words, even if the Bible does not speak to everything specifically, it does give categories to understand everything. The expectation, then, was for there to be less agreement to this statement. Upon further reflection, the statement is worded in a confusing way. If the statement were worded more clearly, I assume the answer would be more favorable.

The other six statements where statistically significant learning took place indicated the participants understood more clearly how the Bible informs corporate worship. The growth in learning from statement 20: “God cares about how we worship,” and statement 17: “The way a worship service is structured is important to worship,” shows that the participants grew in their conviction that how we conduct our worship gatherings is itself an act of worship. The growth in learning from statement 15: “Worship services are for the believer,” and statement 6: “Worship is a dialogue between God and his people,” indicate that the participants grew in their awareness of the worship service as a gathering of God’s people to hear from God and respond to his revelation. Finally, the growth in learning from statement 18: “The gospel makes us fit for worship,” and statement 10: “Corporate worship should include confession of sin,” indicate that the participants grew in their understanding that biblical worship should be initiated and shaped by the gospel.

The areas of growth indicated by the t-test results showed that the participants gained greater knowledge of corporate worship according to Scripture. This goal was successfully met.

Goal 4: Make Necessary Changes

The fourth goal was to assess and make needed changes to the patterns of corporate worship at CRC. Originally, this goal was to be measured for effectiveness by using the rubric in appendix 3. As the project began, it became evident that the rubric created very early in the project did not evaluate the things most important to the project. Instead of using this rubric, the elders and staff gave feedback on the worship service each week. We discussed the new liturgy for effectiveness and flow. We were able to complete the heart of the goal, which was to change the liturgy so that it emphasized the gospel in a way agreed upon by the elders, staff, and members of the church. The new worship structure has helped the church facilitate gospel-centered liturgy. We are continuing to use the new paradigm.

Strengths of the Project

Four strengths stood out as the project progressed. Three of the strengths came from the sermon series and small group discussions and one was a byproduct of doing the project. The first strength to emerge from the sermon series was the benefit of an intense focus on worship. For many in the congregation, worship is something they knew was important, but not something they had given much attention. As Christians go to church services, they generally accept what is going on—there is not much teaching on how they are to worship. Generally, that is the state in which most Christians remain. Much of the cultural noise surrounding worship lends itself to self-actualization and fulfillment. It has become less about worshipping God and more about fulfilling felt needs. That idea hovers in the background for many Christians and the act of worship subtly shifts away from awe and ascribing worth to God. It was good for the congregation to focus on what the Bible says about worship. It was also good for them to consider that God initiates worship and we respond to him. This shift from self-focus to a Godward-focus in worship was a particular strength of the project that has had an enlightening impact on the congregation.

The second strength connected with the sermon series was the structure of the series. The sermon series was designed to not only teach the information but also demonstrate how to use the Bible to discover how to find principles about topics not directly addressed in the Bible. The tendency in culture is to think that if the Bible does not have specific instructions on a topic, then it has nothing to say at all. The problem is that many Christians do not know how to apply biblical trajectories and patterns to current problems.

The sermon series walked the congregation through the process of finding biblical patterns and trajectories for worship structure. Since no particular passage delineates New Testament worship, sermons 2 and 3 were used to show the congregation how to find and apply biblical wisdom to worship. Sermon 2, from 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and Luke 24, demonstrated the usefulness of Scripture for sanctification in every way when read with a Christo-centric hermeneutic. Sermon 3 showed how to use both systematic theology and biblical theology to unearth biblical trajectories and patterns that speak to every area of life by using corporate worship as an example. The congregation not only learned about corporate worship, they also learned how to better use their Bibles. This was helpful for meeting the overall purpose of the project, which was to promote trust in the sufficiency of Scripture through refining worship. Hopefully, this aspect of the project will have a long-term positive impact on the congregation's trust in the sufficiency of Scripture and their ability to use biblical wisdom in their lives.

A third strength of the project was the lab conducted on the last Sunday of the sermon series. On this Sunday, the liturgy proceeded as normal, but I gave brief explanations of each part as we came to it. Through this method, the congregation came to understand not just what we do in worship but why we do it. This is the one part of the project where I received more feedback from people who were not part of the small groups. The majority of the feedback was an expression of greater clarity in certain aspects of the liturgy. For many, it helped them understand that every aspect of the liturgy

was a part of worship to God. It is interesting that after the lab fewer people were coming in late or lingering in the lobby until the music started. They now appear to value the entire liturgy more highly.

The fifth strength of the project was not a result of the project itself, but a byproduct of doing the project. There is now better collaboration between me and the song leader. The weekly planning meetings and review sessions have had two positive side effects. First, the liturgies are more cohesive, and the themes are clearer. We are able to draw attention to elements of the gospel in both word and song that make them more prominent and accessible throughout the liturgy. The second positive side effect is that we were able to grow together in our worship leading capabilities. He became a good sounding board for me as I was processing all that I was learning. At the same time, he was able to glean from what I was learning. We had always had the same basic convictions about worship, but we were able to hone our shared convictions in a way that benefitted both us and the church. This increased collaboration will serve our church well in the future as we continue to grow in leading the congregation of CRC in worship.

Weaknesses of the Project

As the project progressed, three weaknesses emerged. The first weakness was the time restraint placed on the project. The purpose of the project—to promote trust in the sufficiency of Scripture by refining the corporate worship of CRC according to the Scriptures—could have been better assessed if more time was allowed. Time is needed for changes in structure to effect trust. Changes in liturgy can occur quickly but measuring changes in trust requires time and is fraught with difficulty. One way this weakness became evident is that for the duration of the project the structure of worship was elevated. There was a hyper-focus on what we were doing. The hope is that as the structure sinks back into the ordinary, the object of worship will be worshipped more faithfully than with the previous structure. There simply was not enough time to observe what would happen when the newness of the liturgy wore off.

A second weakness in the project became evident as the project progressed. The weekly schedule was too busy for adequate reflection and evaluation. I structured the project so that I wrote the sermons, had them evaluated, made necessary changes, met with others to plan the liturgy, wrote small group curriculum, and ran two small groups all in the course of a week. I am the only full-time staff member of our church and there are other pastoral duties to be attended to during the week. Another contributing factor to the tight schedule is that a hurricane hit my home town during the project. I was called by my parents to help with tree removal and clean up. With this schedule, I found myself with little time for reflection and evaluation during the project. Although the project was successful, it could have benefitted from more evaluation while it was being conducted.

A third weakness that emerged during the project was a failure to communicate expectations, leading to frustration. After gathering a small group, I decided I would start a second group to get a better sample of our congregation. It was a last-minute decision and I failed to communicate clearly the expectations for participating in the group. There was an assumption on my part that hearing the sermons and attending most of the small groups was necessary. Within the first two weeks of the project, half of the small group failed to meet the requirements. When I asked them about their participation, they said they were not aware of the requirements and would not have agreed to participate if they had known them. This problem could have been easily avoided if I had communicated more clearly.

What I Would Do Differently

In relation to the weaknesses of the project, I would do two things differently. The first two weaknesses involved scheduling. Extending the project by ten weeks may have remedied these two weaknesses. Adding five weeks to the beginning of the project would have helped with the tightness of the schedule. I would use the first five weeks for writing all the curriculum, having them evaluated and making the necessary changes. Then, I would preach the sermon series and conduct the small groups in the second five-

week period. This change would allow time to evaluate the project more effectively while the project was conducted. Finally, I would add five more weeks after the sermon series to allow for the changes in the liturgy to be conducted when the topic of the sermons was not corporate worship. This would allow me to evaluate the impact of the changes when the congregation was not so focused on the worship structure. Although the addition of the five weeks at the end of the project may not have allowed enough time for the liturgy to cease being the focus, it would allow some time to evaluate its effectiveness when it was not the main focus. The extension of time would have strengthened the first two weaknesses identified with this project.

I would make one other change to this project related to the third identified weakness. I would communicate the expectations for participating in the project more clearly. In the first small group, I told everyone that agreement to participate would require them to listen to each sermon, either in person or a recording, and to participate in four of the five small groups. When I recruited the second small group, I did not state those requirements. A better way to communicate the requirements for participation in the project would be to write them down. This could have been done effectively by adding the requirements to the “agreement to participate” section of the CWAS. Therefore, everyone who filled out the survey would have seen the requirements in writing. Addressing this simple oversight would have solved this weakness.

Theological Reflections

When I decided to do my project on corporate worship I did not know much about the topic. I knew what I had experienced through “the worship wars” that marked most of my formative years. I had some convictions about the goal and audience of worship, but only a few of my convictions were biblically informed. I had read about the Regulative Principle and the Normative Principle and decided that my convictions fell on the Regulative Principle side of the debate. Even then, liturgy is not something I had given much attention. I had a vague notion that the Bible had much to say about worship, but I

assumed that the way I had always experienced corporate worship was biblical. I did not know enough to evaluate what I was leading our church to do in corporate worship. Through this project I have been exposed to theologically-rich, biblically-faithful scholarship that shaped, corrected, and redirected my convictions about corporate worship. Three theological truths stand out as the most significant.

The first theological truth that I learned is the dialogical nature of worship. Prior to this project I knew that Christians hear from God in worship through preaching. My view on how Christians hear from God in worship expanded significantly. I have come to see that the entire worship service is a dialogue between God and his people. He reveals himself through Scripture in every part of the liturgy. For example, the scriptural call to worship is a revelation from God to his people about who they have come to worship. God's people then respond to that revelation in awe, thankfulness, or repentance. This revelation/response dialogue continues throughout the entire liturgy and highlights the relationship that exists between God and his people. This understanding helped me realize that corporate worship is far more than a time for individual expression of my thoughts and emotions. Corporate worship is an engagement with God. It is more about waiting on God and responding to him as he initiates worship in his people. It elevates him to the center of worship and relegates the individual appropriately. This is exactly as it should be.

The second theological truth I learned is that the Christian life has a rhythm of being gathered and sent. The Christian life is both corporate and individual and the expression of both of those aspects creates a rhythm that benefits the worshiper. Believers are called by God to gather regularly to worship together—to hear from God corporately and respond to him corporately. Believers are also called to live individual lives of worship as they respond to God's revelation in every aspect of their lives. Believers gather corporately to hear and respond and then are sent individually to live out the kingdom values before the world. The gathered aspect of worship is fueled by the individual lives

submitted to the authority of Christ; and individual lives of worship are informed by the corporate worship of God. Every Christian needs to understand biblically both kinds of worship to honor God.

Finally, I became more convinced that the gospel is the way Christians relate to God—not only initially, but continually. Seeing God’s glory, becoming aware of each individual’s sinfulness, receiving God’s appointed remedy, and responding in joy and submission is the way that all believers came to Christ and it is the way they grow in him. Worshiping in this way is the consistent teaching of Scripture. In the Old Testament, worship had these elements. Consider the day of atonement, the highest day of worship for the Israelites. The need for a sacrifice to atone for sins reminded the people that God is holy, and they are sinful. God provided a way for their sins to be atoned for through the sacrifice of a spotless lamb. The people would respond in submission to God by offering the sacrifice as they joyfully received God’s mercy to them. The worship of heaven has the same elements. Believers will worship Christ as the Lamb that was slain. The vision of Christ as the one who was slain will be a reminder of God’s holiness and the past sinfulness of every believer. Seeing Christ as the one who was slain will increase the believer’s joy in response to God’s love and mercy in saving his people. If these elements governed the worship of God in the past and will govern worship in the future; it should certainly govern worship now. I have become convinced that corporate worship must always be gospel-shaped.

These theological reflections have sharpened my understanding of worship. I have become more confident in leading our church in corporate worship that biblically-informs and benefits the congregation of CRC.

Personal Reflections

Aside from those theological reflections, I also have grown personally through the course of the project. Three areas stand out: a deeper love for the gospel, a greater love for the church, and a better understanding of leadership within the church.

The first area that I grew in through the project is a deeper love for the gospel. The gospel is the gift that keeps on giving. It is applicable to every part of life. Every time I learn of a new way that the gospel applies it opens up a new appreciation for all that God has done in Christ. Perhaps the most impactful aspect of the gospel is that fact that it not only saves but also transforms the church. This truth was freshly applied to me as I studied 2 Corinthians 3:18. In this passage, the New Covenant gospel causes God's people to see Christ. As believers gaze on him, they are being transformed from one degree of glory to another. This idea gave me hope, knowing that God was transforming me and my church to be more like Christ as we worshiped through the gospel. It caused me to trust more fully in this common means of grace to accomplish God's work.

My increased love for the gospel led to a greater love for gospel people—the church. As I began to see more clearly that God was at work changing the people he loves, it freed me to leave the results to him, and to view the members of my congregation as recipients of his grace that are still in progress. I began to need them less for my feelings of success, so I was able to love them more. Viewing the members of CRC in this way had two profound effects on me. First, my faith in God to complete his people grew. The second effect is that I now eagerly look forward to our weekly Sunday gatherings. I know that the gospel will be spoken and experienced through the liturgy. I also know that the gospel changes God's people. As we begin to worship, I know that God is going to sanctify his people—maybe in imperceptible ways, but I know he is changing them. Gathering with the saints has taken on a whole new meaning for me.

A third way that this project stretched me personally is that it produced in me a better understanding of leadership within the church. The way that this project was organized helped reaffirm my leadership convictions. This project began with identifying the primary areas that needed change, followed by building biblical convictions about corporate worship. The next step was to seek current scholarship in the area of change. All of this took place before presenting the project to the church. Too often change is

desired in the church simply for the sake of change. But if the church is to be a people of the Book, then the type of change they should pursue is a reforming change. By that I mean, to evaluate what is done by the Bible and lead the church through change informed by Scripture. Leading the church in this way expresses trust in God's wisdom and keeps the leadership out of cultural battles. If pastors lead the church to be more biblical, it will be a better display of the glory of God among his people.

Conclusion

This project has made CRC a healthier church simply by redirecting its concept of worship back to a dialogue with God. This project could impact the congregation at CRC in the future in many ways. My hope is that one of the benefits of a revised liturgy is that the congregation deepens their relationship with God through consistently practicing the gospel. I am also anticipating that the congregation will grow in their trust in the sufficiency of Scripture because we have reformed the liturgy using biblical principles. Only time will reveal if the changes made will have these desired effects, but the process has already changed the church. For that, I am thankful.

I am thankful for the opportunity to participate in the doctoral program at Southern Seminary and for this project. I have grown in ways both expected and unexpected. I grew in expected ways from the top tier professors teaching me in their fields of study. I also grew in unexpected ways through collateral growth. God used this process to sanctify me and make me a better pastor. It is my prayer that my church will also benefit both from the work God has done in me and through the refinement of our worship practices. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

APPENDIX 1

CORPORATE WORSHIP ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE SURVEY

The following instrument is the Corporate Worship according to Scripture Survey (CWAS). Included are questions regarding the understanding of the biblical definition, elements, and practice of corporate worship. The survey begins with some general questions followed by a twenty-question survey with a six-point Likert scale.

CORPORATE WORSHIP ACCORDING TO
SCRIPTURE SURVEY (CWAS)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding of corporate worship according to Scripture of the participant. This research is being conducted by Asah Hudgins for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project, and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Write down your personal ID# _____. This will be used to match this survey with the survey given at the end of the five-week sermon series so that they may be compared. Remember your ID# so that in five weeks you can put the same number on the post-series survey.

Directions: Answer the following questions by placing a check next to the correct answer.

Part 1

1. Are you a Christian?
___ A. Yes ___ B. No
2. Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation?
___ A. Yes ___ B. No
3. Are you a member of Crossroads Church?
___ A. Yes ___ B. No
4. Do you attend a weekly Life Group through Crossroads?
___ A. Yes ___ B. No

Directions: Circle your age range.

12-19	20-29
30-39	40-49
50-59	60 or over

Part 2

Directions: The following questions ask you to give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. All worship is an individual act between a person and God. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. Meeting regularly for corporate worship is vital in the life of a believer. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. Scripture explicitly tells us how to conduct a worship service. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. The sufficiency of Scripture means that the Bible tells us exactly how to handle every situation in life. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. Preaching is central to the worship service. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. Worship is a dialogue between God and his people. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. Worship only happens when the church is gathered for a worship service. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. The gospel is only for the unbelieving. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. All of the Old Testament is about Jesus | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. Corporate worship should include confession of sin. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. The church worships outside of the gathering of believers. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. The worship services are for God. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 13. Worship is the singing portion of a service. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 14. Worship should be evaluated based on my feelings. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 15. Worship services are for the believer. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 16. Worship services are for the lost. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 17. The way a worship service is structured is important to worship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 18. The gospel makes us fit for worship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 19. The Bible gives us everything we need to know God and obey him | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 20. God cares about how we worship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

APPENDIX 2

SERMON EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following research instrument was a sermon evaluation rubric used by an expert panel to evaluate each sermon in the “Biblical Foundations for Worship” sermon series. This rubric was used to assure biblical fidelity, theological accuracy, proper scope, and sufficient clarity of the sermons.

SERMON EVALUATION RUBRIC

Worship according to Scripture Sermon: Evaluation Tool					
Sermon One Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on corporate worship.					
The material is theologically sound.					
The sermon is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					
The aim of the sermon is clearly stated.					
The points of the sermon support the thesis.					
The sermon is relevant to the issue of worship according to Scripture.					
The sermon contains points of practical application.					
The sermon is structured clearly.					

APPENDIX 3

CORPORATE WORSHIP EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following instrument is a corporate worship service evaluation rubric that was used by an expert panel to evaluate the worship services at Crossroads Church. This rubric was used to assure proper adherence to the biblically prescribed elements of worship.

CURRENT CORPORATE WORSHIP
EVALUATION RUBRIC

Current Corporate Worship: Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Reading Scripture					
The Scriptures read are appropriate to the theme of the service.					
The Scripture is read skillfully.					
There is an adequate amount of Scripture read.					
Preaching					
The preaching is exegetically sound.					
The preaching takes the context of the passage into account.					
The sermons are well organized.					
The preaching is central to the service.					
The preaching includes practical application.					
Praying					
There are varied kinds of prayers offered.					
There was space in the service for the congregation to pray.					
There was a prayer offered concerning the needs in the congregation.					
There was a prayer that addressed God's work in other parts of the world.					
The prayers are doctrinally sound.					

Singing					
The lyrics are theologically sound.					
The songs are conducive to congregational singing.					
The instrumentation aides the congregation in singing.					
The instrumentation overpowers the congregation.					
The congregation participates in the singing.					
The songs draw out appropriate emotions.					
Giving					
Thanksgiving is stated as a primary reason for giving financially through the offering.					
Trust in God's faithfulness is stated as a primary reason for giving financially through the offering.					
Obedience is stated as a primary reason for giving financially through the offering.					
The Lord's Supper					
The Lord's Supper is adequately explained.					
An explanation of who may take the Lord's Supper is given.					
The Lord's Supper is done in an orderly manner.					
Time is given for reconciliation and repentance before the Lord's supper.					

APPENDIX 4

SERMON SERIES: RECREATED FOR WORSHIP

The following manuscript is the first sermon in the “Recreated for Worship” sermon series preached at CRC to instruct the church on the foundational principles of worship.

SERMON 1: FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF WORSHIP

Today I want to lay down the foundational principles of true worship. To do that let's look at Isaiah 66:1-6.

*Thus says the LORD:
“Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool;
what is the house that you would build for me,
and what is the place of my rest?
2 All these things my hand has made,
and so all these things came to be,
declares the LORD.
But this is the one to whom I will look:
he who is humble and contrite in spirit
and trembles at my word.
3 “He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man;
he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck;
he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig's blood;
he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol.
These have chosen their own ways,
and their soul delights in their abominations;
4 I also will choose harsh treatment for them
and bring their fears upon them,
because when I called, no one answered,
when I spoke, they did not listen;
but they did what was evil in my eyes
and chose that in which I did not delight.”
5 Hear the word of the LORD,
you who tremble at his word:
“Your brothers who hate you
and cast you out for my name's sake
have said, ‘Let the LORD be glorified,
that we may see your joy’;
but it is they who shall be put to shame.
6 “The sound of an uproar from the city!
A sound from the temple!
The sound of the LORD,
rendering recompense to his enemies!*

This passage was written to the people of Israel coming out of the exile in Babylon. The context of this passage is the rebuilding of the temple for the worship of God. In these six verses God is confronting his people about a distorted view of worship. The first two verses God confronts his people about their misunderstanding of who he is. In verses three and four he confronts them about their misunderstanding of worship. In

the last two verses, five and six, he addresses the importance of proper worship. We will look at these each in turn. But first let's look at the importance of getting worship right in the context of the entire chapter.

This chapter is easily broken up into three sections: vs. 1-6, 7-21 and 22-24. Each section deals with the worship of God in different epochs of God's people. Each section reveals what worship looks like for God's people in their particular epoch and the warning of judgement for refusing to worship God. Verses 1-6 deal with God's people returning from exile in Babylon and rebuilding the temple. This section lays down foundational principles that are true of God's people in every age. The second section, which we looked at last week, deals with worship in the church age, after Pentecost - our present time. And the last section deals with the worship of God in eternity either in Heaven or Hell.

My purpose this morning is for us to see the foundational principles of worship that are true of every age but may be applied differently in response to God's unveiling of his plan in salvation history. To do this we are going to look at verses 1-6 in depth.

The Immense God

In the first verse and first half of the second verse God orients his people to the proper object of their worship. Remember these people at this time in salvation history are eager to reestablish the temple and resume worshipping God but it seems by the way that God speaks to them that their motive for reestablishing that worship missed the mark. So, God begins by refocusing their attention on who they were worshipping. He does this by several statements and questions that sharpens their thinking about God.

The first verse begins with "Thus says the Lord". Whenever you see those words it draws sharp attention to what comes next. It sets off what is about to be said as of particular importance because it comes from the Lord. This is not the thoughts of the prophet here, but the thoughts of God given through the prophet. What God reveals

through his prophet is a statement of the immensity of God. He says: *“Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my foot stool”*.

God reveals this to his people to remind them who they are worshiping. When he says that heaven is his throne, he uses the plural in Hebrew which expresses either, from our perspective, all that can be seen or imagined in the sky and space; or it can mean the highest heavens. In either case, what is being expressed is that God is reigning. It would be appropriate for us to think of Isaiah 6 here - where Isaiah gets a vision of God, high and exalted and seated on a throne. It is a picture of kingly majesty.

Often, we think of God’s dwelling place as in heaven, that is not wrong, but that is not what is being communicated here. God is not saying my throne is *in* heaven; he is saying my throne *is* heaven. God is communicating that he cannot be contained by time or space or place.

The next thing he says is: *“and the earth is my footstool.”* This continues the theme of God’s immensity. Usually when we get the picture of a footstool it means subjection. For something to be made a footstool or to put something under the foot is to rule over it. Paul uses this language in several places. 1 Corinthians 15:25 says: *“For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.”*; 1 Corinthians 15:27 *“For God has put all things in subjection under his feet.”*; Ephesians 1:22 *“And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.”* The writer of Hebrews also uses this language. In Hebrews 2:8 he says: *“putting everything in subjection under his feet. Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.”*. Or my favorite, Hebrews 10:12-13 *“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.”* The thing communicated to his people here is that the earth is fully subjected to him and he rules over all of it. When these two statements are combined, heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool, it

communicates the vastness and uncontainableness of God.

God then follows that statement with a question that drives the point home. He asks: "*what is the place that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?*" The question is a good one. What kind of place could we possibly build for God who's immensity fills the heavens and the earth. And Do you think that God needs rest. If he did could you provide it for him.

Then he sates bluntly: "*All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD.*" Anything that these people would use to make God a house and a resting place was made by him. Everything came to be by him.

These people returning from exile in Babylon are desiring to reestablish who they are as a people. They want to rebuild their city, and their temple; they want to rebuild their nation and their identity and their worship. All of these things are good things. God has even said that they should do it and that he would provide for them to do it. He would send Cyrus to conquer Babylon and to free God's people to go back to their land and rebuild their lives. Cyrus would even fund the project. This was all a part of God showing his power and providing for his people.

Can you imagine how confusing this might be for these people. After hearing you could imagine them saying "Well which is it? Should we reestablish all of this stuff or not. You said you wanted us to do this, now you are saying 'what is this house that you would build for me?' What do you want?"

The question we need to deal with is: Is God against temple building at this stage of salvation history? His words seem to indicate that he is, but the answer is no. God is not against temple building in this passage. What God is doing here is correcting a misunderstanding of worship that is common among God's people in every age. And that is that God's people tend to shrink God down into something manageable, containable and able to be manipulated.

We can see this at Mount Sinai right after God had freed his people from Egypt

by a display of his command over all things. By God's power Moses freed God's people and lead them to Mount Sinai. It is there that God was going to give his people his law. When God showed up the mountain trembled, there was a loud trumpet blast, there was smoke and loud thunder and the people were afraid. Here is the account in Exodus 20:18-21:

"Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off 19 and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." 20 Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin." 21 The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was (Exodus 20:18-21).

Moses went up to the mountain and stayed longer than the people were comfortable with. So, they decided to make a manageable representation of God and worship that instead. Read how it happened in Exodus 32.

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." 2 So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in *their* ears and brought them to Aaron. 4 And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" 5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD." 6 And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

God scared them, so they made an idol that did not scare them. They said these are the gods who brought you out of Egypt. And when they worshiped the idol, they meant by it to worship YWYH. They wanted to shrink God down to something they could comfortably worship - something they could control. God will have none of this.

This same sort of thing happened with David in the building of the first Temple. David's motivation for building the temple was that he lived in a nice house, but God's house was a tent. God sent the prophet Nathan to tell David that God did not need

David or any man to build him a house. God then recounts all that he did to establish both David and Israel. God redirected David's thinking. David saw God's house and wanted to provide God a nicer place. God answers by recalling for David all that God had done to that point to establish David's house. Then God goes on to say that he will establish his house further by promising a king who would rule over God's people forever, from David's line.

God did, however, allow the temple to be built by Solomon. The temple is important in salvation history to convey important truths about God to his people and the world. What God was correcting was David's misunderstanding that God needed David to provide something for God. God doesn't need anything from us. He is the provider. His resources and ability are unlimited.

This kind of thing happens still today. How many pleas to missions have you heard that stated that God needs us to go? He doesn't. Sure, he commanded us to go. He uses us to accomplish his purposes, but God is not limited in some way that he needs us to do his work for him. He allows us to be a part of what he is doing to make his glory known in all the earth, but he doesn't need us to fill holes in his ability.

Also, today we see many trying to make God more manageable - to shrink him down. Some churches don't preach about sin and sacrifice. They want everything to be positive. They preach a Christ-less Christianity where God helps us fulfill our own desires as we decide to make our own destiny through our own will power. This is not true Christianity where we repent of sin and submit to Christ's authority in our lives to fulfill his destiny for us - where we die to ourselves to live for him.

So back in Isaiah 66. God reveals himself to his people as they are going back to rebuild the temple, which he told them to do and provided for them to do it, He reveals himself as immense that they would not think that God is contained in that building, or that they could provide for God something that he could not provide for himself. Rather, the immense God who cannot be contained has provided a way for his people to meet

with him. This holy, immense God could not be grasped by his people, so he gave them a way to meet with him to understand things about him - to know him truly if not fully. He wants them to get worship right!

In this first verse and a half, God is clearing up who he is and who we are and the nature of our relationship to one another. This is absolutely foundational for proper worship.

When we worship God, we are interacting with the God who created the universe; including us. The God who has no needs. The God who is so unlike us that we could not grasp him except for the fact that he has revealed himself to us. We don't get to conscript him into our own designs. And we don't get to approach him on our own terms. That is why what he says in the second half of verse two is so important.

Word-Centered Worship

He says: *"But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word."* This sentence perfectly sums up how we are to approach God in worship. There are three characteristics of the one to whom God will look: one who is humble, one who is contrite, and one who trembles at his word.

First, the one to whom God will look is the one that humbles himself before who God is. To humble yourself, here, means to set aside pride and submit to who God is and who you are. The one who is humble is described in what we have just looked at in verses 1-2. It is the one who receives the truth about God. Not the one trying to soften God, or lessen God, or change God, or contain God; but the one who is humble enough to submit to who God is and what he has revealed about himself.

The second characteristic of the one on whom God will look is that they are contrite. This word means broken by our sin, or repentant. That means that there is a recognition that something is wrong. A person who is contrite cannot be arrogant or dismissive of their sin.

Finally, the one on whom God will look is one who trembles at his word. This is one who intently listens to what God says. This is a person who obeys God from the heart. They not only do what his word says, they tremble at it. They receive his word with such reverence that they obediently follow it.

These three characteristics describe a true worshiper. This is important because in the next verse it shows what it is like for someone to be obedient, but not humble and contrite. Look at verse 3. *"He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig's blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol."*

In this verse Isaiah compares doing something right with something horrible. Sacrificing an Ox is considered a peace offering and an act of worship in Levitical law. But here it is compared to killing a man, which is breaking the law. There is a right action viewed by God as an unrighteous action.

The same is true for the lamb. Sacrificing the lamb is a lawful act of worship usually associated with the most holy day in Israel - Passover. It is compared to breaking a dog's neck. Sacrificing the lamb was to purify the worshiper; but breaking a dog's neck was unclean and would defile the worshiper. Shockingly Isaiah equates the two.

Then, for the third time Isaiah uses a lawful act of worship of bringing a memorial offering of frankincense with something unlawful and repugnant to God, blessing an idol. The point is clear. There is a way to do the right things that makes them detestable to God. Worship can never be reduced to mere actions - even right actions.

Going through the motions with no heart is not humble. It is arrogant in that it spends a little time doing what they are supposed to do so they can get God off their back and get back to their lives. It is trying to appease God rather than please God. Mere formal religion is as detestable to God as paganism.

Does this mean that we ought to get rid of religious actions? Should we not do

what God has told us to do? Some people make that argument but that simply won't do. As we continue reading in verses 3, we see why. It says: "*These have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations*".

It is clear that what we do matters. That is why the accusation from the Lord is that they have chosen their own ways. They have no regard for God's word. At true worshiper trembles at God's word. They obey it.

The rest of the accusation clarifies further. Their soul delights in their abominations. They love them. They want to worship God in their own way and give a passing effort for the way that God has said to worship him. Their hearts are alive when they do what they want and dead when they do what God wants. They have no love for God's Word or what pleases him.

Verses 4-6 tell us of God's judgment on those who are hypocritical. Remember, the people Isaiah is addressing are the people of God. Those that pretend to worship God, but actually choose their own way are the object of God's anger. It is not enough to do the right things, worship must be sincere. Neither is it ok to be sincere but ignore God's Word. True worship must be both.

Verse 4 speaks to those who will not listen to God's word. It says: "*I also will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears upon them, because when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my eyes and chose that in which I did not delight.*" These people simply refuse to listen to God. They are pictured here as a rebellious teen who gives their parents the silent treatment when their parents call them. Or who are too distracted to pay attention when their parents speak.

Today, these people are the vaguely spiritual ones who want to appear spiritual, but they do not know God because they will not listen to him. They can be found in churches. They associate with the people of the church and claim to be a part of them, but they know nothing of the Bible. This is the height of being a hypocrite. They want the

blessings of God, but on their terms. They talk about Jesus and use some spiritual language, but his word has no impact on their lives. His warnings go unheeded and they do what they want. Sometimes without even knowing they are doing what God does not delight in.

God reserves his fiercest judgment on hypocrites like this. Look at the life of Jesus. It was the Pharisees that got his harshest words. The Pharisees were the ones who most people would acknowledge as the religious ones. Yet Jesus regularly chides them for not knowing or understanding the Scriptures.

In this verse God says he will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears upon them. Refusal to listen to God demeans God and deserves his judgement.

If verse 4 speaks of those who will not listen; verse 5 addresses those who do the right things without sincerity.

Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: “Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name’s sake have said, ‘Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy’; but it is they who shall be put to shame.

In this verse God addresses those who truly worship him. He speaks to them about those who hate them because of their sincerity of heart in worship. These people are saying the right things - “Let the Lord be glorified that we may see your joy” - yet they hate those who love God and seek to cast them out of the assembly.

Today, these would be the people who love comfort and control more than God. These people have been the death of many a church. They are happy with their formalism but they don’t actually want to what Gods says. They will nod along with the sermon, but not move an inch to apply it. This is the theologian who knows all the right words and creeds, but their hearts are stone cold towards God. They have the appearance of Godliness and know the word, but they are dead towards God.

God says to those who are word tremblers, who are being shamed for their fervent love for God, that those who are shaming them will be put to shame by God.

Verse 6 underscores that the judgment of God starts with the people of God.

Look at how it is stated.

“The sound of an uproar from the city! A sound from the temple! The sound of the LORD, rendering recompense to his enemies!

This verse reads like scattered phrases. Indeed, it is meant to communicate surprise. The prophet hears a sound in the city and is startled. What is that uproar in the city? Where is it coming from? A sound from the temple! What is going on in the temple. The Lord is rendering recompense to his enemies. His enemies among his people.

There are three important questions we have to ask ourselves as a church in light of this passage. The first question is: Who do we worship? Is it God who is there, or is it one we have made up, that we can control, that doesn't push us, that we can manipulate? This is foundational. It directs our worship.

The second question is: How do we worship this God? Worship is a dialogue that God initiates. He reveals himself to us and we respond in obedience and faithfulness. Worship is not about us. It is not about our preferences. It is not about our comfort. It is about God and he reveals himself in his Word.

The third question is: Why do we worship God? Do we sincerely love God and his Word? Are we committed to his plan to save and sanctify his people for his own glory?

Over the next couple of weeks, we are going to continue to look into God's word to see what he has to say about our corporate worship. We are going to make some changes to line our worship more closely with Scripture. But that will only get us so far. If we are going to worship truly, we need to do the right things with a genuine love for God.

I don't want us to think that if we change our worship, we will automatically worship God better. It is up to you to come humbly and with a contrite heart, trembling at his word for worship to be true. I believe that changes we make to our gathered worship will help facilitate true worship, but our hearts must be engaged.

On our own, we cannot make our hearts love God and his Word. But one beautiful truth of the gospel is that Jesus came for those who were spiritually dead to God. By taking on our sin and defeating it at the cross, he killed the cause of our deadness. Then he sent his Spirit to revive our dead hearts so that we can worship God in Spirit and Truth. The good news is that we have been given what we need to truly worship God. With his Word and his Spirit this church - we can truly worship God.

SERMON 2: THE BIBLE AND WORSHIP

Last week, we began our emphasis on worship by looking at Isaiah 66:1-6. From this passage we established three foundational principles of worship that apply to our individual lives of worship as well as our gathered, corporate worship. They are: 1. We worship God immense, uncontainable and who has no needs. 2. Our worship is a response to his revelation. 3. Our worship is to be humble and contrite with reverence to his revelation.

This week, I want to expand on these principles by answering two questions. 1. How do we hear from God? 2. How do we know what we hear is correct? To answer these questions, we are going to look at two passages of Scripture. So, if you will turn to Luke 24. Put your bulletin there and then turn to 2 Timothy 3. We will look at the whole chapter for context, but we will focus our attention on verses 10-17.

The context of this passage is that Paul is instructing his young disciple, Timothy, on how to live a godly life. In 3:1-9 he tells Timothy the kind of people to avoid. He says:

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. 2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, 4 treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. 6 For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, 7 always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. 8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. 9 But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

There is much that could be said here, but for now I want you to focus on two things. First, look at verse 5. These men have the appearance of godliness. In other words they are claiming to be godly and hypocritically playing the part, but their lives lack the power of God. The second thing I want you to see about these men is in verse 7 and 8. These men lack the power of God because they are always learning but never able to arrive at

the truth because they oppose the truth. They have become corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. Paul tells Timothy to avoid men like this.

Paul then contrasts these wicked men's lives with his own. He tells Timothy to consider his way of life. Look at verses 10-13.

You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, 11 my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. 12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Paul says “you, Timothy, have followed me. You have heard my teaching, seen my conduct, observed all of my godly conduct, my aim. You have observed how I have suffered for the faith and the Lord has rescued me.” Then he tells Timothy that this is normal for a Christian. In contrast to the wicked men, Paul is saying that Timothy can affirm that Paul has not been a hypocrite. Timothy has witnessed the power of God in Paul because Paul knows the truth and stands on it.

Having laid out these two ways of life, Paul points Timothy to the truth that can produce the kind of life Paul wants for Timothy - a life built on truth and integrity, full of godly wisdom and power. In verse 14 he says:

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

The first thing Paul tells Timothy to continue in is what he has learned and believed from Paul's teaching. In this verse it is not all that clear what Timothy had learned and believed, but earlier in the letter Paul makes it clear. In 2:18 Paul says: *"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel"*. Here Paul names what Timothy has learned from him and had believed. It is the gospel. This is important because Paul connects the gospel he preaches, that Timothy has believed, with the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul is declaring that his gospel is not some new theory

that has popped up out of thin air, but that it is firmly connected with the way that God has revealed himself in what was considered the Word of God in that day. Paul wants Timothy to remain in the gospel

In verse 15, Paul introduces the second thing that Timothy should continue in - that is the sacred writings he has been acquainted with since childhood. Here, Paul is now instructing Timothy to remain in the Old Testament Scriptures as well as the gospel that Paul preached. Paul does not consider the Old Testament useless now that Christ has come as some do today. These Scriptures are able to make him wise for salvation in Jesus Christ. Paul puts the gospel he preached on the same level of authority as the Old Testament. The gospel is the continuation and fulfillment of the Old Testament; and the Old Testament is the context through which the gospel is understood.

In verse 16, Paul does something amazing. He says: *"All Scripture is breathed out by God"*. Paul seems to be collapsing his gospel and the Old Testament together here. He has been talking about the two. Then he stops and says: "All Scripture is breathed out by God."

Let me make a little excursus here and show you what the apostles understood about their commission. First, they understood that Jesus was the Son of God and that he was ultimately authoritative. Jesus has told them this after his resurrection in Matthew 28:18 where he declared that all authority in heaven and earth had been given to him. The apostles know that Jesus was the way that God spoke now: Hebrew 1:1-3 *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."* They knew that they had been empowered by the Spirit to recall and teach the things of Christ: John 14:25-26 *"25 'These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.'*" They knew that their teachings were the foundation of the

church Ephesians 2:19-20 "19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone," The apostles knew, as does the church, that their teaching was just as authoritative as the Old Testament.

Now, back in 2 Timothy 3:16. When Paul says All Scripture is God breathed, he fully intended for Timothy and for us to understand that as The Old Testament plus the apostles teaching - now known as the New Testament. So what he says from here on out about Scripture he means **All Scripture** - the Bible as we have it.

The first thing Paul reveals about the Bible is its origin.

The Nature of Scripture

To make his point about the origin of the Scriptures, Paul invents a word. He says it is θεόπνευστος, which literally means God-breathed. "The idea the term presents is that God has breathed his character into Scripture so that it is inherently inspired. Paul was not asserting that the Scriptures are inspiring in that they breathe information about God into us, even though the statement is true. The Scriptures owe their origin and distinctiveness to God himself. This is the abiding character of Scripture."¹ The Scriptures are a God-given gift to his people that adequately and accurately communicate the exact will of God for his people to know and obey.

The Usefulness of Scripture

Paul then shows the usefulness of Scripture building on its divine origin. Because the Scriptures are inspired by God, they are useful or profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. These four uses of Scripture can

¹ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, 1, 2 *Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 236.

be split into two categories - Faith and practice. The first category is faith - dealing with what to believe. Scripture is profitable for teaching truth - what we must believe. It is also profitable for pointing out errors that we believe but shouldn't – that is the meaning of reproof. Scripture, then, is useful for letting us know what God says we ought to believe and what we ought to reject. The second pair of words deal with the practice of the Christian life. "Correction" has to do with changing our actions from wrong actions to right ones. And "training in righteousness" is concerning a positive growth in what is right.

By using these four words Paul is affirming that Scripture is God's desires for us about what we should believe and do. It is comprehensive. Where can you find what is true of God, of man, salvation, holiness, nature, or any other thing? The God given Scriptures. Where do you go to find out what pleases God, what is right for man to do, What the will of God is for your life? The God-given Scriptures. That is what the Scriptures are for. Paul does not want Timothy to be swept away by cunning or deviant doctrines, so he pleads with Timothy to continue in the faith by constantly returning to the Scriptures. The same is true for us. If we want to avoid being blown by every wind of doctrine, we must root ourselves in the Bible. If we don't want to plateau in our faith, but we want to press on and grow, we must not neglect our Bibles. God speaks through his Word.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

Paul adds this last clause in verse 17 to clarify. He doesn't want there to be any confusion. He is not saying that Bible is a good source for some teaching, some reproof, some correction and some training in righteousness. He is saying that what is found in the Scriptures is sufficient for complete sanctification. Notice his words: *"that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work"* (2 Tim 3:17). If you want to be godly, master this book. It has everything you need. It is the sole repository of what is

necessary to be complete and equipped for every good work.

Look at how Paul describes the comprehensiveness of the Bible in our lives. He says that the man of God may be **complete** by the Scriptures and that he may be equipped for **every** good work.

Paul's claim here is the Bible is completely sufficient. Wayne Grudem in his book "Systematic Theology", defines the sufficiency of Scripture well. He says: *"The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly."*²

One of the ways that we are to apply the sufficiency of Scripture to our lives is to constantly evaluate what we do in our personal lives and our corporate life by the Scriptures. We are to constantly reform our lives according to Scripture. But to do that well, we need to ask a very important question: Is there a particular way we are to understand the scriptures so that they can be applied correctly?

This is an important question. In a book the size of the Bible with as many words as it has in it, it is easy to find what you want to find, not necessarily what is intended. It is easy to prove this fact. There are many people who take verses out of context and find approval for whatever they want. If you take a look at most of the heresies that have plagued the church throughout history, most of them have some scriptural support. Even Hitler used Romans 13 to support his ideals.

What we need is some way to know if we are understanding the Bible as it is intended by both the human author and the divine author. We are not just looking for a way to validate our own opinions but to ascertain God's thoughts. Thankfully Jesus gives

² Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 127.

us a hermeneutical key. A way of understanding Scripture that helps keep us from error.

It is found in Luke 24. Please turn there and we will begin in verse 13.

13 That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. 16 But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17 And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. 18 Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" 19 And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. 22 Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." 25 And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Verses 13-24 set the scene for us. There are two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus from Jerusalem. They were dismayed because of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. They thought he was the one who would restore Israel, but his death was something they did not foresee. Then they heard that he had risen from the dead, but they had not seen him. The whole time they were talking to Jesus, but they were kept from recognizing him.

I think they were kept from recognizing Jesus so that he could teach them to rely on the Scriptures. In verse 25 Jesus chides these two disciples for not believing what the prophets had spoken. (Jesus did this often with the Pharisees who continually rejected Jesus). Then Jesus gives them the key to understanding all of the Bible. He began with Moses, who wrote the first five books of the Bible, and all the Prophets, and he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. Jesus makes the same point to the full company of the disciples in verse 44-49:

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

Jesus demonstrated that he, himself, is the key to properly understanding all the Scriptures. More specifically, verses 26 and 46-47 show us that it is not just Jesus the man, but Jesus and his work on the cross that is the key to understanding the Scriptures. So, to put it plainly, to understand Scripture we must read them with eye to the gospel - we must have a gospel hermeneutic. All of Old Testament Scripture speaks to the coming of the gospel of Jesus; and all of the New Testament Scripture displays and applies the gospel of Jesus. You cannot properly understand any scripture without viewing it through the gospel of Jesus.

These two approaches to Scripture help us to understand how the Bible affects our lives. We know the Bible is the source of all that we need to know for salvation and sanctification; and we know that to understand it rightly we need to view it through Christ and his gospel. If we are going to grow in knowledge and righteousness, we need to apply the scriptures, rightly understood, to every aspect of our lives. As we do this we will grow more and more like Christ.

I am thankful to be in a church that is committed to continually reforming ourselves according to Scripture. I have been a part of the church for eleven years and I have seen a desire to follow the Scriptures like I have not witnessed before. Here are some of the things that I have seen. I have seen our church embrace expository preaching. When Chip and Barry started the church back in 2002 and since the church publicly launched in 2004 the Bible has been faithfully taught here.

When I became the pastor, the church embraced an approach to preaching through books of the Bible alternating between Old and New Testaments so that we could

hear all of the whole council of God - even the difficult parts. This kind of change can sometimes be rejected as boring, but you guys embraced it.

I have seen our church embrace a Biblical view of church membership and church discipline. Most churches don't practice church discipline because it is hard. But here, when the need arose, we taught on church discipline from Matthew 16, 18 and I Corinthians 5 and did what we saw there. It was hard but the church grew in wisdom and maturity through the process. There was a strong commitment to doing what the Bible said.

As the church grew, we began to see that our polity was not as biblical as it could be. As we read the Bible, we saw that Elders were always spoken of in the plural, and deacons were servants for the benefit of the church. So, we moved from a single pastor/elder to multiple pastors/elders and we established the office of deacon. There has been this strong desire to follow the teachings of the Bible and to change what we do if we are convinced by Scripture that it should be done differently. It is a joy to be a part of a church like this. It is a joy to be a pastor in a church like this. I pray that this will always be true of us.

In all the areas mentioned above we have been malleable before the word. One area that we have not evaluated before is our corporate worship. Over the next couple of weeks, we are going to look at what the Bible has to say about how we worship. My hope in doing this we will understand why we worship the way we do and to do it more biblically. Both the understanding and the practice are important. We have warnings all over the Bible of the hypocrisy of practicing worship forms with no heart behind them. There is a part of worship that we cannot control. We cannot make your heart truly worship. But with understanding and best practices we can set the table for genuine worship to take place. So, join me as we search the Bible for how we ought to worship our God.

SERMON 3: CORPORATE WORSHIP THROUGH THE BIBLE

For the past two weeks we have been laying down foundations so that we could see how we ought to worship. We saw in Isaiah 66:1-6, two bedrock truths about worship. First, we saw the object of our worship. We worship God. He is over all things. He rules all things. Everything finds its meaning and purpose in Him. Worship begins by acknowledging him for who he is. The second bedrock of worship is that this God cares how and why we worship. We are to worship by his word, humbly and with a contrite heart. That means that we must look to God for how we ought to worship.

Last week, building on these truths, we determined how we are to hear God's Word so that we can worship him rightly. From 2 Timothy 3, we said that the Bible, containing the Old and New Testament, is the all sufficient source for hearing God's Word in every area of life. But in saying that, we also recognized that there are many examples of people using the Bible in wrong ways. So, we asked: "Is there a right way to understand the Bible?" We found that Jesus gave us the key to understanding all of Scripture. In Luke 24 Jesus says that he, himself, and his work on the cross is the key to understanding all of Scripture.

Two Approaches the Scripture

These two passages, 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and Luke 24, give us two ways to approach Scripture to know what God's Word is saying to us.

The Systematic Approach

The passage in 2 Timothy 3 encourages us to look to the Bible topically. The context, at least, nudges us this way. Paul is encouraging Timothy to follow his way of life as opposed to being like some others who claim to be godly but clearly lack the power of godliness. His instruction to Timothy is to remain in the Scriptures so that he can be complete for every good work - lacking nothing.

Basically, Paul tells Timothy that to find out how to live and be godly, look to the Bible. If Timothy does not know what to do in a certain situation, he should go to the Bible. If he is confused about who he is, or who God is, he should go to the Bible. This is a good and right way to approach the Bible. It is systematic. This way of understanding Scripture is how we get systematic theology. People have looked in the Bible to see what is says about who God is, who man is, what salvation is, what about angles or heaven and hell. We know these things because we have looked at what the whole Bible says about these things and have formulated a Biblical understanding of the topic.

The Biblical Theological Approach

The second passage we looked at last week was Luke 24. In this passage we are encouraged to look at the Bible to see how everything points to Christ. This way of approaching the Bible is called Biblical Theology. It is concerned with how the biblical story is told. It looks for themes that run through the Bible and tie it together. It looks at the “Meta-narrative” – the over-arching story of the Bible. It follows the story of God’s working in the world as it unfolds through the pages of Scripture, culminating in Christ and all that he has done in the gospel.

The disciples were confused, discouraged and sad over the events of Jesus death. Even though they had heard that Jesus has risen from the dead. They did not yet believe it because they had not seen him. In two instances Jesus comes to his disciples and helps them to understand what is going on. To do this Jesus enlightens them about how all the Scriptures speak of him. In doing this, Jesus gives them the key to understanding any passage of Scripture.

Let me explain this in more detail. When you read the Bible, you are reading a story of God’s involvement in the world. the Bible has a story line. It is this: in Genesis 1 & 2 we have creation. In Genesis 3, we have the record of the fall of man. From Genesis 3:15 all the way to Revelation 21, we have the story of redemption - How God is

redeeming his people and creation from the Fall. Finally, in Revelation 21 & 22 we have the consummation - the end of the story. In this way, any passage in the Bible cannot be properly understood apart from this meta-narrative.

Let's zoom in a little closer. In the largest part of the story - the story of redemption. The story is progressed through a series of promises that God makes to his people. These are the covenants. There are themes that run through the covenants that tie the whole story together. All of these themes are fulfilled in Jesus. The theme of God's people, God's place, God's word, God's presence with his people, atonement...all these things and more unfold through the story and are completed in Jesus. If you are going to properly understand any passage, you need to know where you are in the story and how what you are reading relates to Jesus or the gospel.

Combining the two approaches

Both of these approaches to Scripture are helpful, but the real power comes when you combine them. If you have searched the Bible for a topic and have a good understanding of how it is used; then combine that with the knowledge of how the topic fits into the story of the Bible and points to Jesus. When you have done this, you can be pretty sure that you know what God has communicated and what he desires for you to know or do.

Applying the Two approaches

Today, I would like for us to walk through this together as we seek to understand how we ought to worship as a gathered body of believers. We are looking specifically for what was usually done when the church was gathered. That means that we can eliminate unique or occasional things.

To start we need to determine where we are in the story line of the Bible. We are under the New Covenant; that puts us in the New Testament. Our topic is about worship in our time. That means it is after Christ and after the advent of the church in

Acts 2; so we need to begin looking for instances of, or instruction in, corporate worship in the church age. That puts us in the epistles and the book of Acts after Pentecost. These sections of the Bible are addressing the time in salvation history that we occupy. We are starting in Acts 2 and the epistles, but remember, we will be expanding our view once we look at the most relevant sections to us.

Survey of Worship Passages

For the sake of time, I have gone thorough Acts and the epistles to find passages that deal with corporate worship. Some of them are descriptive - meaning they tell us what happened; and some of them are prescriptive - they tell us what to do. There are five passages that deal with what is normative in worship in the church age. There are a few other passages that deal with worship, but with unusual things that might occur. I have limited the search to only what is normative because we want to know how we should worship generally. Now, if something unusual were to happen, we would go to the other passages with how to handle it. But for now, we will stick with what regularly happens in worship.

There are four passages we will look at briefly. They are: Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 5:18-21; Colossians 3:15-17. Then we are going to slow down and dig into Hebrews 10:19-25.

Acts 2:42: And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

This is the earliest account of the church worshipping. It developed from here, but these things did not change. We have four elements that consistently appear in worship, both in the Bible and in church history. Preaching/teaching, gathering or fellowship, breaking bread (probably the Lord's Supper), and prayers.

1 Corinthians 14:26, 40: What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be

done for building up... 40 But all things should be done decently and in order.

This passage is interesting in that it has some common elements of worship as well as some uncommon elements. There is hymn singing and teaching that are common; and then revelation, tongue and interpretation that are unusual or rare. The whole passage is about how to handle the uncommon things when they happen. But there is one abiding principle that sums up Paul's teaching on the whole section - that is that everything should be done in an orderly way.

The next two passages are similar, so I will read them together.

Ephesians 5:18-21: And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Colossians 3:15-17: 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

In these passages you see gathering together, teaching and singing; all while being thankful to God through Christ by the Spirit.

When you combine these passages together, you see that worship in the church age focused on Christ and was empowered by the Spirit. When they gathered together they would pray, sing, preach, and observe the Lord's Supper.

This is helpful because now we know what we ought to do. But now I would like to spend some time looking at Hebrews 10:19-25. This passage about worship is different. In the other passages we found what we should do in worship, but this passage gives us the grounds for worship that then shapes our worship.

Hebrews 10:19-25

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us

draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Heb 10:19-25)

This passage is located at a critical section in the book of Hebrews. The author has just finished a major section of theology and, as is common in Paul's letters, the writer of Hebrews instructs them on what to do on the basis of the theology he has made so clear. The truths of the gospel become the foundation for the actions.

The author opens this section with a summary of the gospel and then moves to application. Notice, twice in verses 19–21 the writer uses the phrase “we have”. Then in verses 22-25 the phrase “let us” is used three times. “The “we have” mark provision; “let us” indicates privilege.”¹ The two provisions that believers have in Christ are confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Christ, and a great High Priest over the house of God. These are summary statements of the gospel. The death of Christ has granted confident access to the most holy places (v. 19); the resurrection and ascension provides a great high priest over God's house (v. 21). The gospel leads to the ability and necessity of the three exhortations that follow.

Let us # 1.

The first call to action is to “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (v. 22). There are two things to note about this call. The first is the corporate nature that is present in the phrase “let us”. This call is less about individuals approaching, although that is true, the call here is a clarion call to approach together. The second is the action of drawing near as a continual practice. The verb for drawing near is in the present tense and means a continuous or repeated approaching.

¹ Ray C. Stedman, *Hebrews*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 107.

The author of Hebrews calls Christians to draw near to God together - regularly in corporate worship because Jesus has opened the way. Then he strikes the chord of the gospel again by saying, “In full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” Corporate worship is an exercise of faith—trusting that Jesus has cleansed and made believers fit for God’s presence. Christians are summoned to God by the gospel and assured of their fitness to worship God by the gospel. Can you see that the gospel initiates and undergirds corporate worship? Drawing near to God is the right response to us being cleansed by Christ.

So, the first reason in this passage that we gather together repeatedly is to exercise, by faith, our blood-bought privilege to approach God and fellowship with him. This is an unspeakable privilege. We get to come into the presence of the Holy God and enjoy his company. God has done a mighty work through the gospel. The Bible is clear that because of our sin, God’s presence was unbearable to us, now we have the inestimable privilege of being in, and enjoying his presence. This is what we do when we gather together for worship. We draw near to God with joy, confidence and praise because we are accepted and never rejected.

Let us # 2

The second exhortation in this passage is found in verse 23: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.” Again, the emphasis is on the continual and corporate nature of holding on. The object that Christians are to continually and corporately cling to is the confession of their hope. Now, to understand what is being said here, we need to understand what the author means by hope. “‘Hope’ in Hebrews describes the objective content of hope (rather than the act of hoping).”² This

² Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 368.

understanding of hope is seen clearly in chapter 6:13-20: *"We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."* (Heb 6:19-20).

In this passage our hope is described as having gone behind the curtain where Jesus has gone. This is a hope anchored in the work of Christ as high priest in offering a sacrifice for his people. Our hope then is a deep seeded trust in the work of Christ for present and future salvation along with all the benefits that come with that salvation. Again, this is not the "wishful thinking" kind of hope. It is longing rooted in the character of God and the work of Christ. He who promised is faithful, he who obtains it has accomplished it.

The church has been exhorted to continually meet together to come into the presence of God holding tightly to the salvation that is ours and will be ours in Christ. The gathering is filled with gospel truth and gospel hope. When we gather together in the presence of God, we are fortified in the hope that is ours.

Let us # 3

The third exhortation is found in verse 24. It is: *"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together"* (vv. 24-25). When believers gather, it is not to be an exercise in individuality that just so happens to take place in a group. "The verb 'let us consider' conveys the concept of careful consideration, thoughtful attention and deep concern [for one another]."³ It benefits the whole when individuals are eager to spur one another on to love and good deeds.

The gospel truth that are now adopted into the family of God undergirds the call to meet regularly to encourage one another as we anticipate the return of our king.

³ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary, vol. 35 (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 517.

We are all his people. Our goal is to glorify him. And we are family. It is in responding to the great truths of the gospel that directs and even dictates what we do when we gather together. The reason I say dictates is because we can only draw near because of the gospel. God reveals himself in the gospel and we respond to what he reveals by practicing the privileges afforded to us through the gospel.

Systematic recap

Now, when you put together what we have found, you can begin to a Biblical vision of worship in the church age. There is no liturgical outline given to us in the Bible; but when you put the elements together with the underlying gospel rhythm, you see more clearly how the church should worship.

We gather to draw near to God because Christ has opened the way. In the presence of his holiness we recognize our sin and repent; knowing we have been sprinkled clean through Jesus' shed blood. We hold tight to our confession as are assured of our salvation in Christ. We sing his praises. We exercise our privileged access through prayer; and we preach the Word so that we can honor Christ as we eagerly await his return. Then we are sent back out into the world to worship God through our individual lives.

If a good summary of the gospel is: God is holy, man is sinful, Christ saves us through his death on the cross, and we respond in repentance and faith, then you can see that biblical worship is gospel-centered worship. As we remember and practice the privileges we have in the gospel, the gospel shapes our worship.

Applying Biblical Theology

Now that we have a systemic formulation of worship. We want to see if what we have is in line with what God has been revealing throughout salvation history. Again, for the sake of time I will not walk you through every passage that speaks of God's holiness, man's sinfulness, God's sacrifice to atone for man's sin. But I will tell you that

you find it in every covenant and at every stage in salvation history. A few examples will suffice.

Take the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16. This was the most important day of worship in Israel. The way that God set up what was to happen showed threads of the gospel. First the people were to draw near to the tabernacle. They gathered in the presence of the Holy God. There were reminded of his holiness and their sinfulness in the fact that sacrifices had to be made to cleanse the tabernacle, the priests and the people. They had very specific rules to follow in choosing the sacrifice and how to sacrifice it. The reason for the specificity was to remind the people that this was not their idea - God had provided the way for them to draw near to him in worship. Because God had given them this way to come to him, they had to exercise trust in his revelation and rejoice in his provision. At the center of this day of worship was a sacrifice that granted them privileged access to God as his people.

That is exactly what we have in Hebrews 10:19-25. The only difference is that we rest in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus instead of sacrificing bulls and goats or lambs repeatedly.

My point is that God has always intended for his people to rehearse in their worship who he is, who they are and what he has done to bring them back to him. Worship has always been an exercise in the gospel - even before the gospel was fully revealed. The reason why is because leads to humility, contrition, and trembling at his Word. This is exactly what we discovered that pleased God in Isaiah 66:1-6.

Now I want us to consider one more example of worship, but this time it is not worship in the past, or even the present. I want us to look at worship in eternity when we are gathered to God in Heaven. Turn to Revelation 5:11-14.

Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" 13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth

and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” 14 And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

The scene here is worship in heaven around the throne. The worship is centered on the one who sits on the throne and the lamb. Even in heaven when we are sinless, we will remember what Christ has done to grant us the access we enjoy. We will be humbled and rejoice over God’s provision - we will rejoice in the lamb that was slain.

When you put all of the biblical data together, it is clear that worship has always been and will always be gospel infused and gospel shaped as we respond to what God has done for us in Christ.

That is why we have made some changes to the way we worship. We wanted to infuse our worship with the gospel. Next week, I am going to show you what worshiping in the shape of the gospel does to and for the believer. Then the following week, we are going to walk through the elements of our worship service to explain how the things we do highlight the gospel.

SERMON 4: TRANSFORMED BY THE GOSPEL

Over the past couple of weeks, we have been looking at corporate worship. We are on a quest to find out what the Bible says we ought to do as a gathered body of believers to worship God. Last week we brought together the biblical teaching and found that our corporate worship ought to be shaped by the gospel. This week I want us to see why this is a good idea. I want us to see the outcome of coming together week after week to practice the privileges that we have in the gospel.

To do this, please turn with me to 2 Corinthians 3:1-18. What you are going to see in this passage is the realities of Paul's New Covenant ministry. You may ask: "What does this have to do with corporate worship?" Well, that is a good question. We are New Covenant believers. What that means is that we relate to God on the basis of the work of Christ on the Cross. This is to say that: the gospel is the means by which we can come to God. It is how we are able to worship him. So then, what is true of the new covenant ministry of Paul informs how we worship. I hope that this will become clearer as we work through the passage.

We are going to take this passage in three sections. In verses 1-6, we are going to see that the Spirit enables true worship. In verses 7-11, we are going to see that Spirit-enabled worship comes with surpassing glory. Then, we are going to see in verses 12-18 that we are transformed by the glory of God in Christ.

The Spirit Enables True Worship

Let's begin then with verses 1-6. Look at them with me.

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? 2 You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. 3 And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

4 Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

In the first two verses Paul mentions commending himself and needing a letter of recommendation. In the context of 2 Corinthians Paul is battling for the legitimacy of his ministry. Paul started the church in Corinth and stayed there for 18 months ministering and building up the people who came to Christ. Then, as was his custom he left to continue his missionary and church planting work. When he left some other teachers came in and began to teach different things from Paul, but they still called it Christianity. They tried to discredit Paul so that the people of Corinth would listen to them and not Paul. One of the ways that they did this was to produce papers, letters of recommendation, to add legitimacy to their ministry. They tried to get the Corinthians to take their attention off of the evident power of God in Paul's ministry, and shift their attention to these letters of recommendation.

Paul responds to this news by reminding the Corinthians that he does not need to commend himself nor does he need letters of recommendation because they themselves were living letters of recommendation. Paul's gospel ministry came with the power of God and it transformed the lives of those in Corinth who believed on Jesus. Everyone could see the validity and veracity of Paul's ministry by looking at their changed lives.

In verse 3, Paul shifts his argument. He says: *And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.* He says that they are letters from Christ delivered by Paul and his missionary associates. This letter from Christ is more valuable than a letter written with ink on something inanimate like stone tablets because this letter was written by the Spirit of the living God on human hearts.

The interesting thing that Paul does here, is that he mentions stone tablets and human hearts. Now, the fake apostles who were carrying around letters of recommendation, were not carrying around stone tablets. That would be absurd and heavy. Their letters would have been written on papyrus. Neither was Paul carrying

around human hearts with letters written on them. What Paul is doing here is drawing attention to a set of very well-known stone tablets; and a very well-known promise of something being written on the hearts of God's people.

By using stone tablets and human hearts, Paul draws their attention to the differences between the Old and New Covenants. Every person who knew the scriptures, when they heard stone tablets, thought of the giving of the law in Exodus 20-34. In Exodus 34:1-4, we have the story of Moses coming off of Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments.

The LORD said to Moses, "Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. 2 Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain. 3 No one shall come up with you, and let no one be seen throughout all the mountain. Let no flocks or herds graze opposite that mountain." 4 So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first. And he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone.

In the same way, everyone who knew the Scriptures also knew what Paul was referring to when he mentioned something being written on human hearts. They know he was referring to the New Covenant. Their minds would immediately go to a passage like Jeremiah 31:31-35.

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Now, we have to ask: Why would Paul argue against letters of recommendation by pointing to the differences between the Old and New Covenants. The answer is that the New Covenant was a promise that God himself would do something that no man could do. He would write his law on the hearts of his people. In other words,

He would cause his people to love what he loves and hate what he hates. If what Paul had brought to the people resulted in God doing what only God can do, then Paul's ministry needed no other recommendation because it had the indelible mark of the power of God.

Paul wanted the people of Corinth to know that the fruit of his ministry was not owing to anything particularly special in him, but that it was the power of God through his ministry that set him apart. He says as much in verses 4-6.

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Paul wraps up his point in verses 4 and 5 and the first half of 6. He does not need any letters of recommendation because his new covenant ministry is marked by the power of God that has resulted in transformed hearts of the people in Corinth. They have become his living letter of recommendation by the power of the Spirit in changing their lives. It is the Spirit of God that has enabled Paul's ministry and therefore legitimizes it as well.

The end of verse 6 takes Paul's line of thought in a new direction. He says that his ministry is "*not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life*." When he says "letter" here, he is no longer talking about letters of recommendation. He has left that argument now. Now, by "letter" he means the written law. He is saying that his ministry is no longer dealing with the law, but with the Spirit. The reason, he says, is that the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

In saying this Paul is setting up to show why the New Covenant ministry is superior to the Old Covenant ministry. So, he says the letter kills. By this he means the written law that was given by God, so it is good. But it could only point out where man has failed. It didn't come with the power to enable man to keep the law. The law condemned man and showed that he deserved death. Then he compares the New Covenant with the Old. He says the Spirit gives life. The promise of the New Covenant is

that the Spirit would write the laws on our hearts and cause us to walk in his ways (Ezekiel 36:27). This New Covenant would come with cleansing and freedom from sin and the power by the Spirit to live righteously. The New Covenant gives life because it has the power to remove the condemnation that we deserve; and it has the power to cause us to walk according to God's ways. Paul teaches this in other places, most notably in Romans 8:1-4.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

How does all this relate to worship? The central principle of the New Covenant is that the Spirit of God has been poured out on God's people to enable them to live and worship in a way that pleases God. If you will remember from Isaiah 66:1-6, worship that was done just because the law required it was an abomination to God. Even if worship was done to the letter of the law, it did not please God if the people were not humble, contrite and trembling at his word. The problem is that the peoples' hearts were not empowered to love God and his Word as they ought to be. In the New Covenant our hearts have been made new. They have been made to love the things of God. The Spirit now enables true worship. The question we have to answer now is: Why is that important? Paul sets out to answer that question in the next section.

Spirit-enabled Worship Comes with Surpassing Glory

Now that Paul has set up the main difference between the Old and New Covenants, he compares them. Look at what he says in verses 7-11.

Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, 8 will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? 9 For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. 10 Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to

have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. 11 For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

Paul begins by saying that the Old Covenant, that was carved in letters on stone, had glory; so much so that Moses' face shone after receiving it. Paul is referencing Exodus 34:29-33. It will do us good to read that passages to see what Paul is talking about.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. 30 Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them. 32 Afterward all the people of Israel came near, and he commanded them all that the LORD had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. 33 And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.

When God gave Moses the Law, it came with glory. The form of Glory was outward and visible. Moses' face glowed. It actually frightened the Israelites. This visible glory brought weight and validity to what Moses said to the people. The outcome of that glorious covenant is death. Paul contrasts the glory of the ministry of death with that of the New Covenant ministry of the Spirit which brings life. He says that the New, life-giving covenant has even more glory than the old, death-bringing, covenant. This makes sense. Life is better than death.

In verse 9, the glory of the covenant that brings righteousness must far exceed the glory of the ministry of condemnation. Again, Paul compares the results of the covenants. There is a glory in the ministry of condemnation. This is important for us to understand. Just because the Old Covenant brought condemnation doesn't mean it was a bad thing. The Old Covenant is glorious because it helped us to understand that we could not save ourselves. To save ourselves we would have to do everything right. We simply cannot keep God's law. If we fail at one point in the law, we have broken the whole law. The law was there to help us know that the end of self-righteousness is condemnation and death. That is helpful and good.

But the glory of the ministry of righteousness far exceeds the glory of the covenant that tells us that we cannot save ourselves; because the ministry of righteousness tells us that there is salvation for us that does not depend on us doing everything right. The ministry of righteousness tells us that God makes us righteous. That is glory upon glory! Indeed, verse 10 tells us, there is so much more glory in the New Covenant of the Spirit and life that the Old Covenant of condemnation and death is stripped of all glory and is no longer glorious at all.

Paul has one more thing to say about the surpassing glory of the new covenant. In verse 11, he contrasts the two covenants once again. This time he looks at the permanence of the covenants. He says that the Old covenant had an end point. It was a guardian, a place holder until the New, more glorious, Covenant came. The Old Covenant had obsolescence built into it. It was there to show that we cannot save ourselves and cause us to long for salvation from God. Then the New Covenant came with salvation from God and the Old Covenant ended. The New Covenant is more glorious because it has no end. Salvation in Christ and life in the Spirit is how we will relate to God for eternity. This is the gospel and it is the epicenter of the glory of God.

Earlier we said that the Spirit enables this New Covenant life. We related that to worship in the New Covenant era and said that the Spirit enables true worship. The question we needed was: Why is this important? The answer is: It is important because the Spirit enabling us to live in the New Covenant and to engage in true worship brings us to the epicenter of the glory of God. Now I have one more question we need to answer. What does that do to us? To find out, let's look at verses 12-18.

Transformed by the Glory of God in the Gospel

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, 13 not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. 14 But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. 15 Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. 16 But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17 Now the

Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Paul now compares his New Covenant ministry with that of Moses' Old Covenant ministry. Paul's ministry is filled with hope because it is of far surpassing, permanent glory. That hope leads to a ministry marked by boldness. What does he mean by boldness? We can find out by looking at what he says about Moses's ministry.

In verse 13, Paul says that Moses' ministry was not marked by the same kind of boldness because Moses would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites could not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. Paul is referencing the rest of the Exodus 34 passage that we looked at earlier; particularly verses 34 and 35. They say: *"34 Whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he would remove the veil, until he came out. And when he came out and told the people of Israel what he was commanded, 35 the people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him.* Now the question we have to ask is why would Moses veil his face? Why did Moses not want the Israelites to see his face? Some people interpret what Paul says about Moses ministry to mean that Moses was maybe embarrassed that the glory of his face was fading so, he would hide his face. He did not want them to see that the glory was fading. But that does not seem like Moses, the great prophet of the people of Israel.

More likely, the reason that Moses hid his face was to protect the people. Think about Exodus 19 where Moses had to put up a barricade around the mountain so that the people would not come up to God. If they did, they would die. When Paul speaks of that which is passing away, he is using shorthand for the Old Covenant. There was glory there, but the people could not handle the glory of God because they were sinful. The Old covenant made them aware of sin but could not do anything about it. So, Moses covered his face to keep the people from the radiance of the glory of God because they

could not handle it. Moses did not want the people to gaze at the glory of God in the Old Covenant for their protection.

Paul then says that as a result of the need to shield the glory of God from the people their minds became hardened. He goes on to say that the veil still remains. In his day he is referencing Jews who rejected Christ. Their minds are still hardened because it is only through Christ that it can be taken away. The Jews of Paul's day still could not see the glory of God because they did not acknowledge Christ or the truths of the gospel. Indeed, it is still true today. To read the Bible and not see Christ means that you do not see the glory of God. That is why Jesus told his disciples how to read the Scriptures in Luke 24. All of it points to him. To see him is to see the glory of God, to miss him is to be veiled from the glory of God.

In verse 16, Paul says that when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. What does he mean here by Lord? Well, everywhere in 2 Corinthians where Lord is used. It refers to Christ. This makes sense with verse 14 that says only through Christ can the veil be removed. What Paul is saying here is that: when anyone turns to Christ, the veil that shields God's glory is removed.

Now we come to a historically difficult verse. It is difficult because when he says the "Lord is the Spirit", it causes problems with the doctrine of the Trinity. In the doctrine of the Trinity we have one God who is three distinct persons. That means that the Father is not the Son, The Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father. But the Father is God, The Son is God, and the Spirit is God. They are distinct persons, but they are one God. So, what does Paul mean when he says that the Lord is the Spirit?

If you follow the logic of this passage, Paul helps us understand what he means. When Paul is defending his ministry to the people of Corinth, he appeals to the work of the Spirit in them as proof of God blessing. Then he says in verse 14, that Jesus is the one who removes the veil that keeps people from seeing the glory of God. Paul doesn't mean that the Spirit and Jesus are the same in being, but that they are the same in

that they share in the same redemptive activity. When Paul thinks of Jesus working, he thinks of the Spirit working. So, when people are turning to Christ the Spirit is working. When the Spirit is working people are turning to Christ. Paul is equating them in this one way - in redemptive activity.

So, Paul says the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom. Paul does not mean here that the Spirit gives us freedom to do whatever we want. He is saying that the Spirit of the Lord makes it possible to do what we ought. We were made for the glory of God, but because of sin we cannot handle it. But by Christ and the work of the Spirit we are again free to live in, and for, the glory of God.

Now, Paul sums up his argument in verse 18. He has said that the Spirit enables and validates his ministry. He has said that his ministry is full of the glory of God such that it surpasses even the glory of God revealed in the Old Covenant. And he has said that his ministry is marked by boldness in that he does not have to hide the work of his ministry. The reason for not having to hide is because we all, who have the Spirit and have come to know Christ can with unveiled face behold the glory of God. When we do this, we become like what we behold. We are transformed into the same image, that is the image of Christ, from one degree of glory to another. Paul is saying that his ministry comes with power. The power will work. It may be slow - one degree at a time, but over time we will be transformed into the image of Christ.

I think we only need to answer one more question. How do we behold the glory of God? Paul answers that for us in Chapter 4 verse 6. It says: *"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* Whenever we contemplate Jesus or his work through the gospel, we behold the glory of God.

Let's apply that to our corporate worship. When we gather together in the name of Christ to exalt Christ for all that he has done for us in the gospel; we, collectively, behold the glory of God. And though you may not feel different, you are

being transformed degree by degree into the image of Christ. This is why we want to shape our worship to amplify the gospel of Jesus. As we behold him, he transforms us.

SERMON 5: FORTIFIED IN THE GOSPEL

If you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Colossians 2. We will be looking at verses 6-15.

Over the past four weeks, we have been looking at what the Bible says about corporate worship. Along the way, we have seen that biblical corporate worship is going to be shaped by the gospel in such a way that the congregation is moved through the elements of the way that God has revealed himself to us. Worship happens as we see what God has revealed about himself and we respond appropriately.

Also, while we have been looking at biblical corporate worship, we have seen two benefits of worshiping in the shape of the gospel. The first way was in Hebrews 10:24-25. It says: *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*” The benefit in this passage of worshiping through the gospel is encouragement. As we practice the privileges of the gospel together, we are encouraged in our faith as we await the return of Christ.

The second benefit we have looked at so far was found in 2 Corinthians 3:18. It says: *“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* The second benefit is that when we gather in Christ through the gospel we are looking directly at the glory of God in the face of Christ. When we do that, we are transformed from one degree of glory to another. We are sanctified through the gospel.

Today, we are going to see one more benefit to worshiping in the shape of the gospel. Hopefully you have already turned to Colossians 2:6-15. If not, please do so now. It says:

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. 8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty

deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

This passage can be broken into two main sections. In verses 6-8, Paul instructs the Colossians on what they are to do to keep from being deceived and pulled away from the faith. The second section is found in verses 9-15 where Paul recounts the truths of the gospel for them to remember and apply. We are going to spend the majority of our time today on the first section.

Before we look at these two sections, it will be helpful to get an idea of the context of this passage. “The letter makes no explicit claim about its purpose. But the warnings about not being “deceived by fine-sounding arguments” (2:4) and about those who would take others “captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy” (2:8), who are “judging” others (2:16) and “disqualifying” them (2:18), make clear that one of its purposes is to encourage the Colossians to resist some kind of erroneous teaching.”⁴

To combat the false teaching, Paul writes to ground them in the truth of the gospel. To do this he reminds them of the truth they have believed. The entire first chapter and first five verses of chapter 2 are dripping with gospel truth. The Father has qualified the Colossians to share in the inheritance of the saints in light (1:12). He has transferred them from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of his beloved son (1:13). It is in Jesus that they have redemption and forgiveness of sins (1:14). God is reconciling all things to himself through Jesus by making peace through the blood of the cross (1:19-20). Though

⁴ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 46-47.

they were hostile toward God and morally evil, Jesus reconciled them to God through his body of flesh by death so that he could present them holy and blameless and above reproach before God.

What Paul is doing in the first part of the letter is akin to how detectives are trained to spot counterfeit money. The detectives that are trained to spot fake money are not given a lot of examples of the counterfeits. The reason for this is because the counterfeiters adapt. They change the way they counterfeit the money once someone figures out there are fakes out there. If that were the way the detectives were trained, they would always be a step behind the counterfeiters. Instead, the detectives are trained to know what a real dollar looks like. They become so familiar with the real thing that a fake, of any kind, is easier to spot. Paul is doing the same thing. He is reminding the Colossian Christians of the real gospel. That way it is easier for them to spot a false gospel.

Now that Paul has reminded them of the true gospel, he then turns, in verse 6, to instruct them on what to do with it. He says: "*Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him*". Paul tells the Colossians that the same way they came to Christ is the way that they will continue to walk in him. This begs two questions. How did they receive Christ Jesus the Lord? And, how do we walk in him? We will take these questions in turn.

How Do We Come to Christ?

How does someone receive Christ? Repentance and Faith. These two things constitute what it takes for a person to respond appropriately to the message of the gospel. But these are two words that are often misunderstood; so, let's make sure we understand them. Put simply, repentance means to turn from sin; and faith means to trust in Jesus. But let's be more specific. Too often, we are fuzzy on what these two words mean.

Repentance

As I was growing up, I was taught repentance in this way. The teacher would say: “Repentance is a military term that means to make a 180-degree turn. So, you are walking in one direction then you repent and begin to walk the opposite direction.” That is true. Repentance is a military turn that means a 180-degree turn. And for a child it is helpful to give a physical example to help them understand, in a concrete way, what it is like to repent. But we need to be careful that we don’t root our repentance only to our actions. Here is why. If we only think of repentance as stopping wrong actions, then you are only repentant as you are holy. Since repentance is one thing that we must do to receive Christ, it ties in our works with our salvation. In other words, if I don’t stop doing wrong actions, I am not saved.

It is better for us to understand repentance as a change of mind and heart which will lead to a change of actions. If we root repentance in the mind and heart, then it is part of what God changes in us when he calls us to be his own. And even though I may struggle to rid my life of a particularly difficult sin, I can be assured that I am saved because I agree with God about what is right and what is wrong. I hate my sin. That is where repentance starts. It starts in a changed heart that now sees the wisdom of God and agrees with it.

Faith

In a similar way, we often misunderstand biblical faith. Sometimes we view faith more like wishful thinking. We think that if we believe in something hard enough it will happen. It is like viewing faith as currency. If we have enough, we can purchase what we want - health, wealth, love...whatever. This is not biblical faith.

Another way we misunderstand Biblical faith is by thinking it is believing the impossible against all odds. This understanding of faith usually pops up when there is something that we don’t understand. Take, for example, dinosaurs. If we can’t figure out how they fit into the biblical story then just say: “Well, you just got to have faith”, when,

really what we need is to study more. It is common to use the concept of blind faith to cover ignorance. But faith in the Bible is not blind faith. It is not belief in something for belief's sake.

Biblical faith is reliance. It is always rooted in something real. Biblical faith is rooted in God's promises to us. If God has said that something is going to happen. It will happen. Since he has said that belief in the death, burial and resurrection of his son will cleanse us from all sin, make us right with God and guarantee our inheritance; then we can take that to the bank. God asks us to rely on his character and his word. That is biblical faith.

We can see that turning from sin and placing trust in Jesus are similar things. They are really two sides of the same coin. Repentance and faith are an exchange of our trust and hope. We take our trust and hope from sin to place that trust and hope in Jesus. That is how we receive Christ.

How Do We Walk in Christ?

Now that we know how we came to Christ, we also know how to walk in him. Although much of the Christian life is an instantaneous gift, it is also a continuation - a living out of those truths. That is the point of verse 7. Paul continues his thought by employing three metaphors to detail what it is that Christians believe and what sustains them in their walks with Christ. He says: *"rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.* Let's explore these metaphors to see what Paul is saying is the hope that Christians believe in and walk in.

The first metaphor Paul uses is from horticulture. He says that Christians are rooted. The idea here is that of a plant being secured into the life-giving soil that feeds it and sustains it. Paul uses the perfect tense here to communicate a once-for-all experience of rootedness. When a person becomes a Christian, part of the process of placing your faith in Christ is trusting that you are planted into God's plan to save a people for himself.

Once rooted in Christ, a Christian remains in him. Our rootedness in Christ keeps us secure in God.

The second metaphor comes from the construction world. Paul says we are built up. The idea is that there is a building being built and it constantly making progress. He uses the present tense to communicate an ongoing experience. When a Christian places their faith in Christ, they trust that Christ is going to continually work in and through them to make them holy. We are not planted securely and then left alone, but Christ continues to build us up in him.

The third metaphor is that we are established in him. Your translation may say strengthened. That is a fine translation, but I think it misses an important point Paul is making. Straightening and building up are almost the same thing. Paul is clearly saying something different. The word he uses for “established” is from the legal world. It was used commonly in the marketplace used to denote the formal or legal guarantee required in the transfer of property or goods.⁵ When Christians place their faith in Christ, they trust that the legal requirements for our transfer from the kingdom of death to the kingdom of God has taken place. We are now guaranteed a future.

The point of all these metaphors is to reveal the sufficiency of Christ in our salvation. If you will notice “rooted” is a past event with ongoing effects, “built up” is a present active reality, and “established” is a guarantee for the future. Paul is highlighting that we have all we need in Christ. If that is what Christians place their faith in, it is also what sustains them. In the gospel, we have all we need.

Don't Be Deceived

After establishing that Christ's work on the cross is sufficient for salvation from our past, in our present and for our future. He then encourages them to remain there.

⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), 142.

Don't be tricked into believing something else. He writes: *"See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ."*

Paul's concern is for Christians that may be taken captive like a prisoner of war and led off in chains. There are fine sounding arguments, tricky lies that sound right. They are a good counterfeit. They are very close to the real thing. They use some of the same language. They emphasize the wrong things or de-emphasize the right things. But at the end of these arguments is human wisdom, or things of this world. Their desire is to capture Christians and lead them away from Christ to mere worldly wisdom. Worldly wisdom can do nothing about the sin in your past. It ultimately does not build you up, because its end is destruction. This is what it means to have a form of godliness, but not have the power of God behind it.

To be clear, Paul's greatest concern is with those false gospels that are really close to the true gospel. Most people know, and can easily reject the wild, blatant lies; but the ones that are close to the truth can do the most damage. There are false gospels out there that want to deform our hearts and take them captive. What is Paul's remedy against these tricky false gospels? "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him." Know the gospel and keep yourself acquainted with it so that you walk in it and not in a false gospel.

This is precisely why we are reforming our corporate worship to highlight the gospel more. We want to reform our hearts to the things of God. In our worship services we want to go through the gospel both implicitly and explicitly. We want to hear and know the content of the gospel; and we want to walk through the realities of the gospel so that we feel them over and over again. I want us to know the real thing so well that a fake doesn't stand a chance of taking us captive. I want us to be fortified in the gospel

Now, Let's look briefly at the second section, verses 9-15. Paul does with these verses what he has instructed the Colossians to do. He encourages them in the gospel. He

even follows the past, present and future outline that he explained in the three metaphors. Paul emphasizes that all these things are true “in Him” - that is in Christ. Those who have repented and trusted in Christ have all these wonderful promises. Let’s go through this reflecting on the grand realities that are ours in the gospel.

In verses 9 and 10, he shows how Jesus roots us into God’s salvation. He says: *“For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.* The whole fullness of deity dwells in Christ and since we are in him, we are filled with him. This is God’s plan to save a people for himself. He did it through Christ. The one who came and died for his people. Who rose from the grave, ascended into heaven and now reigns over all things. We are rooted and continually filled in him.

In verses 11-12 Paul then expounds how Christ’s work in the past gives us present power. He says: *“In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.”* Paul reaches back to the Old Testament here to make his point. Circumcision was an external cutting away of an unclean part of the male sexual organ. It was also the sign of the covenant - membership of God’s people. Now in the New Covenant circumcision is done without hands and it is internal rather than external. This is a common way of alluding to the promise of a new heart in the New Covenant. Now what is cut away is the hard, stony, rebellious heart. It is unclean. Now, we have been given a new heart and new loves. We are empowered now to love God in a way that was not possible before Christ.

In the Old Covenant circumcision was also the sign of the covenant. In the New Testament the sign is now baptism. What was purely external in the Old Covenant, is now accomplished internally in the giving of a new heart. And now the sign of membership into the covenant is baptism. The reason for this is because God’s love for

his people has been displayed in the death and resurrection of Christ. Through this the New Covenant was established. Paul argues, in verse 12, that when Christ died, we who are in Him also died with him. When he rose from the grave, we also rose with him. We are so joined to Christ that his death was our death and his life is our life, so we display that union we have with Christ through being baptized to make what has happened internally known externally.

More importantly, the power of God displayed in his death and resurrection are now operative in us. This means we have the power to overcome this sin and death is active in us now. We are being built up in Christ now.

To close his reflection on the gospel, Paul underscores the legal ramifications of the death of Christ that guarantees our future with him. He says:

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

There hardly needs to be any comment on these verses. We were dead because of sin. God, the offended party, took the initiative to make us alive by canceling our debt. He did not ignore our debt. He canceled it by placing it on Christ. In Him, God nailed our debt to the cross and it was fully paid in the death of Christ. In doing this he disarmed everyone and everything that had a claim on us. Satan, Sin, death and Hell were all disarmed - left to wonder how they lost something so sure. They lost because of the triumph of God's plan in Christ. We are now out of reach of those powers and authorities. Our futures are secure. The legal debt was paid and there is no double jeopardy.

Ladies and gentlemen, when you know these things, you realize that nothing else will do. These truths fortify us against false gospels. If you don't have these wonderful promises that are only gained in Him - In Christ, but you want them; it really is as simple as repenting of hoping or trusting in anything else and placing your hope and trust in Christ. Would you repent and believe even now? For the rest of us who have

trusted in Christ. Be fortified in the gospel today. Be so filled and acquainted with the true gospel that no imposter could take you away. Keep yourself in the gospel constantly remembering it and walking in its truths.

APPENDIX 5

SAMPLE OF REVISED LITURGY

The following instrument is a sample of the revised liturgy for Crossroads Church. It incorporates as gospel shape to the worship gathering.

REVISED LITURGY

Gathering song: Because He Lives (Amen) by Matt Maher

Welcome (Asah) - Welcome

Frame God: Today we are gathered together to worship God. There is no god like him.

Call to worship: Psalm 95:1-3 - Oh come, let us sing to the Lord;

let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

² Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;

let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

³ For the Lord is a great God,

and a great King above all gods.

Song: You are God Alone by Phillip, Craig, and Dean

Frame Man/sin: In this next song, there is a repeated refrain that says: Be enthroned upon the praises of a thousand generations. You are worthy Lord of all. Let's sing this as a song of confession. Let's remind ourselves of the worthiness of God to receive all our praises and repent from not praising him.

Repentance/Lament: Song- Be Enthroned by Shane and Shane

Frame Christ/the Gospel: One of the many reasons that God is worthy of our praise is because he saved us. We sinned and rebelled against him; yet he saved us by sending his Son...

Song-The Lord is my Salvation by Shane and Shane

Frame Offering: We have just sung about the Lord saving us. He is worthy of our trust. The Bible says, in Romans 8:32, that: "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? As we give today, we do so knowing that everything we have is from God. So, we give acknowledging that we trust in him not his gifts.

Offering song: Nothing but the Blood by Matt Redman

Congregational prayer:

Sermon - Asah

Response Song: Be Thou my Vision (Hymn)

Prayer: Ben

Sending/Blessing: Patrick: 2 Thes 3:16: Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.

APPENDIX 6

SAMPLE SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

This instrument is an example of the small group discussion guide that was used to lead the small groups in this project. This instrument is designed as a guide to facilitate discussion; therefore, there may be questions that are not asked.

LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Scripture: Isaiah 66:1-6

Topic: True worship

Brief: God reminds his people about what true worship is about.

Main points:

1. God is the object of Worship
2. God is not pleased with forms without sincerity, or sincerity without forms
3. False worship brings God's judgement.

Grasping the passage:

1. Is there anything in the passage that is unclear?
2. Is there anything that you saw in a fresh light?
3. What in this passage challenges you?
4. How is the gospel displayed in this passage?

Applying the passage:

1. How do we avoid shrinking God down to something manageable and comfortable?
2. What are the problems that arise in a church when there is right forms without sincerity? What about churches with sincerity with incorrect forms?
3. Why does God bring his judgement on false worship?
4. How do we listen to God in corporate worship?

APPENDIX 7
PROJECT RESULTS

What follows are the results of the t-tests that were used to measure the difference in learning from the pre-test and post-test surveys. On the left is the number representing each participant. To the right of the participant number are the responses to the pre-test and post-test surveys. To the right of the data are the results of the t-test for each question.

RESULTS

Table A1. Results of question 1

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
1	4	2			
4	4	1		Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
5	1	1	Mean	3	2.777777778
9	2	2	Variance	2.235294118	3.241830065
10	4	2	Observations	18	18
12	4	2	Pearson Correlation	0.677407986	
13	2	2	Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
14	6	6	df	17	
15	1	2	t Stat	0.696932052	
17	2	3	P(T<=t) one-tail	0.247633045	
18	2	1	t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
19	5	6	P(T<=t) two-tail	0.495266091	
20	1	1	t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	
22	3	2			
24	3	5			
25	5	6			
27	3	4			
28	2	2			
Mean	3	2.78			

Table A2. Results of question 2

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
1	6	6			
4	6	6		Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
5	6	6	Mean	5.722222222	5.777777778
9	5	5	Variance	0.447712418	0.300653595
10	4	4	Observations	18	18
12	6	6	Pearson Correlation	0.944173198	
13	6	6	Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
14	6	6	df	17	
15	6	6	t Stat	-1	
17	6	6	P(T<=t) one-tail	0.165666381	
18	6	6	t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
19	6	6	P(T<=t) two-tail	0.331332762	
20	6	6	t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	
22	6	6			
24	4	5			
25	6	6			
27	6	6			
28	6	6			
Mean	5.722	5.778			

Table A3. Results of question 3

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
1	4	2
4	4	1
5	2	1
9	5	4
10	5	5
12	4	2
13	3	6
14	6	6
15	4	6
17	2	2
18	4	6
19	3	1
20	6	6
22	4	1
24	3	4
25	4	5
27	4	5
28	5	5
Mean	4.000	3.778

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
Mean	4	3.777777778
Variance	1.294117647	4.183006536
Observations	18	18
Pearson Correlation	0.530932392	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	17	
t Stat	0.543739068	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.296840424	
t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.593680847	
t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

Table A4. Results of question 4

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
1	6	6			
4	1	1			
5	2	1			
9	5	5			
10	6	6			
12	2	2			
13	6	6			
14	6	6			
15	1	2			
17	3	5			
18	3	6			
19	5	6			
20	4	6			
22	2	2			
24	3	4			
25	5	6			
27	5	5			
28	5	6			
Mean	3.889	4.500	Mean	3.888888889	Post-Test Answer 4.5
			Variance	3.163398693	3.794117647
			Observations	18	18
			Pearson Correlation	0.865942176	
			Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
			df	17	
			t Stat	-2.649618428	
			P(T<=t) one-tail	0.008426996	
			t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
			P(T<=t) two-tail	0.016853993	
			t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

Table A5. Results of question 5

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
1	2	5			
4	6	6		Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
5	5	6	Mean	4.555555556	4.888888889
9	2	3	Variance	2.379084967	1.986928105
10	4	6	Observations	18	18
12	6	6	Pearson Correlation	0.544115492	
13	6	5	Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
14	6	3	df	17	
15	3	4	t Stat	-1	
17	5	5	P(T<=t) one-tail	0.165666381	
18	6	6	t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
19	6	6	P(T<=t) two-tail	0.331332762	
20	2	1	t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	
22	5	4			
24	3	5			
25	4	6			
27	6	6			
28	5	5			
Mean	4.556	4.889			

Table A6. Results of question 6

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means	
1	1	2		
4	4	6		
5	5	6		
9	4	5		
10	4	6		
12	5	5		
13	6	5		
14	6	6		
15	3	6		
17	5	6		
18	5	6		
19	6	6		
20	5	6		
22	2	2		
24	3	4		
25	5	6		
27	5	5		
28	4	5		
Mean	4.333	5.167	Mean	4.333333333
			Variance	1.882352941
			Observations	18
			Pearson Correlation	0.761606105
			Hypothesized Mean Difference	0
			df	17
			t Stat	-3.828207467
			P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000672929
			t Critical one-tail	1.739606726
			P(T<=t) two-tail	0.001345858
			t Critical two-tail	2.109815578

Table A7. Results of question 7

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means	
1	1	1		
4	1	1		
5	1	1		
9	2	3		
10	3	2		
12	2	2		
13	1	2		
14	1	1		
15	1	1		
17	1	1		
18	1	1		
19	1	1		
20	1	1		
22	1	1		
24	1	4		
25	2	1		
27	3	3		
28	1	1		
Mean	1.389	1.556	Mean	1.388888889
			Variance	0.486928105
			Observations	18
			Pearson Correlation	0.467420784
			Hypothesized Mean Difference	0
			df	17
			t Stat	-0.824621125
			P(T<=t) one-tail	0.210503551
			t Critical one-tail	1.739606726
			P(T<=t) two-tail	0.421007102
			t Critical two-tail	2.109815578

Table A8. Results of question 8

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
1	1	2			
4	1	1		Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
5	1	1	Mean	1.388888889	1.333333333
9	2	3	Variance	0.369281046	0.352941176
10	3	2	Observations	18	18
12	1	2	Pearson Correlation	0.434500357	
13	2	1	Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
14	1	1	df	17	
15	1	1	t Stat	0.368781778	
17	1	1	P(T<=t) one-tail	0.358421508	
18	1	1	t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
19	1	1	P(T<=t) two-tail	0.716843015	
20	1	1	t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	
22	1	1			
24	2	2			
25	2	1			
27	2	1			
28	1	1			
Mean	1.389	1.333			

Table A9. Results of question 9

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
1	5	5			
4	6	6			
5	5	6			
9	2	4			
10	6	6			
12	4	4			
13	4	2			
14	4	6			
15	3	6			
17	6	6			
18	6	6			
19	6	6			
20	4	6			
22	5	5			
24	3	4			
25	2	2			
27	6	6			
28	6	5			
Mean	4.611	5.056	Mean	4.611111111	5.055555556
			Variance	2.016339869	1.820261438
			Observations	18	18
			Pearson Correlation	0.626031065	
			Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
			df	17	
			t Stat	-1.572490786	
			P(T<=t) one-tail	0.067131057	
			t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
			P(T<=t) two-tail	0.134262113	
			t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

Table A10. Results of question 10

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means	
1	5	6		
4	6	6		
5	4	6		
9	5	6		
10	5	6		
12	4	5		
13	3	4		
14	6	6		
15	6	6		
17	4	6		
18	4	6		
19	6	6		
20	2	6		
22	5	5		
24	2	3		
25	5	6		
27	6	6		
28	5	5		
Mean	4.611	5.556	Mean	5.55555556
			Variance	0.732026144
			Observations	18
			Pearson Correlation	0.580461168
			Hypothesized Mean Difference	0
			df	17
			t Stat	-3.795737693
			P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000722074
			t Critical one-tail	1.739606726
			P(T<=t) two-tail	0.001444148
			t Critical two-tail	2.109815578

Table A11. Results of question 11

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
1	5	5			
4	6	5		Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
5	5	6	Mean	5.055555556	5
9	4	5	Variance	0.761437908	1.411764706
10	5	5	Observations	18	18
12	5	5	Pearson Correlation	0.397146474	
13	6	5	Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
14	6	6	df	17	
15	6	6	t Stat	0.202884764	
17	5	6	P(T<=t) one-tail	0.420816767	
18	4	5	t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
19	6	6	P(T<=t) two-tail	0.841633535	
20	5	1	t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	
22	5	5			
24	3	4			
25	5	5			
27	4	4			
28	6	6			
Mean	5.056	5.000			

Table A12. Results of question 12

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
1	6	6			
4	6	6			
5	5	5			
9	3.5	4			
10	3	3			
12	3	2			
13	6	6			
14	6	6			
15	1	1			
17	5	6			
18	6	6			
19	6	6			
20	1	1			
22	5	5			
24	5	5			
25	4	6			
27	6	5			
28	6	6			
Mean	4.639	4.722	Mean	4.638888889	4.722222222
			Variance	2.876633987	3.153594771
			Observations	18	18
			Pearson Correlation	0.931480196	
			Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
			df	17	
			t Stat	-0.546118681	
			P(T<=t) one-tail	0.296039947	
			t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
			P(T<=t) two-tail	0.592079895	
			t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

Table A13. Results of question 13

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
1	2	1
4	1	1
5	2	2
9	3.5	2
10	3	4
12	1	2
13	5	3
14	1	2
15	1	1
17	1	1
18	3	1
19	1	1
20	1	1
22	2	2
24	4	4
25	1	1
27	2	1
28	4	2
Mean	2.139	1.778

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
Mean	2.138888889	1.777777778
Variance	1.700163399	1.006535948
Observations	18	18
Pearson Correlation	0.654515429	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	17	
t Stat	1.536464477	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.071413592	
t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.142827185	
t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

Table A14. Results of question 14

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
1	1	1
4	1	1
5	2	1
9	1	1
10	1	1
12	1	2
13	2	2
14	1	2
15	1	1
17	1	1
18	2	1
19	1	1
20	1	1
22	3	1
24	1	2
25	1	1
27	1	1
28	2	1
Mean	1.333	1.222

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
Mean	1.333333333	1.222222222
Variance	0.352941176	0.183006536
Observations	18	18
Pearson Correlation	-0.077151675	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	17	
t Stat	0.621581561	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.27123174	
t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.542463479	
t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

Table A15. Results of question 15

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
1	5	5			
4	6	6		Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
5	5	6	Mean	4.444444444	5.333333333
9	6	6	Variance	2.261437908	0.823529412
10	6	4	Observations	18	18
12	3	6	Pearson Correlation	0.316097174	
13	3	3	Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
14	1	5	df	17	
15	4	5	t Stat	-2.529822128	
17	5	6	P(T<=t) one-tail	0.010793442	
18	5	6	t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
19	6	6	P(T<=t) two-tail	0.021586885	
20	3	6	t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	
22	4	6			
24	2	4			
25	5	6			
27	6	5			
28	5	5			
Mean	4.444	5.333			

Table A16. Results of question 16

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
1	2	1			
4	6	6		Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
5	2	2	Mean	3.055555556	2.888888889
9	1	2	Variance	3.114379085	3.281045752
10	1	4	Observations	18	18
12	3	2	Pearson Correlation	0.627704243	
13	5	5	Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
14	6	2	df	17	
15	2	2	t Stat	0.458122847	
17	5	6	P(T<=t) one-tail	0.326332967	
18	4	1	t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
19	5	6	P(T<=t) two-tail	0.652665935	
20	1	1	t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	
22	2	2			
24	3	4			
25	1	1			
27	4	3			
28	2	2			
Mean	3.056	2.889			

Table A17. Results of question 17

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
1	6	6
4	5	6
5	5	5
9	5	5
10	3	5
12	4	5
13	4	6
14	2	5
15	6	6
17	5	6
18	5	6
19	5	6
20	4	6
22	6	5
24	3	4
25	4	6
27	5	6
28	1	4
Mean	4.333	5.444

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
Mean	4.333333333	5.444444444
Variance	1.882352941	0.496732026
Observations	18	18
Pearson Correlation	0.628608007	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	17	
t Stat	-4.370483222	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000208388	
t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000416776	
t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

Table A18. Results of question 18

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means	
1	4	5		
4	6	6		
5	5	5		
9	5	6		
10	3	6		
12	4	5		
13	5	5		
14	2	5		
15	6	6		
17	5	6		
18	5	6		
19	6	6		
20	5	6		
22	5	5		
24	3	4		
25	4	6		
27	6	6		
28	3	5		
Mean	4.556	5.500	Mean	4.555555556
			Variance	1.437908497
			Observations	18
			Pearson Correlation	0.55533018
			Hypothesized Mean Difference	0
			df	17
			t Stat	-4.013501803
			P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000450238
			t Critical one-tail	1.739606726
			P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000900477
			t Critical two-tail	2.109815578

Table A19. Results of question 19

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
1	3	6			
4	6	6		Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
5	6	6	Mean	5.5	5.888888889
9	6	6	Variance	0.735294118	0.104575163
10	6	6	Observations	18	18
12	5	6	Pearson Correlation	0.212132034	
13	6	6	Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
14	6	5	df	17	
15	6	6	t Stat	-1.941450687	
17	5	6	P(T<=t) one-tail	0.034483041	
18	6	6	t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
19	6	6	P(T<=t) two-tail	0.068966081	
20	5	6	t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	
22	5	6			
24	4	5			
25	6	6			
27	6	6			
28	6	6			
Mean	5.500	5.889			

Table A20. Results of question 20

Participant	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
1	5	6
4	6	6
5	6	6
9	6	6
10	6	6
12	5	6
13	5	6
14	6	6
15	6	6
17	6	6
18	6	6
19	6	6
20	6	6
22	5	6
24	3	4
25	6	6
27	6	6
28	6	6
Mean	5.611	5.889

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Pre-Test Answer	Post-Test Answer
Mean	5.611111111	5.888888889
Variance	0.604575163	0.222222222
Observations	18	18
Pearson Correlation	0.838083968	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	17	
t Stat	-2.55704156	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.010205907	
t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.020411814	
t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

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ABSTRACT

REFINING THE CORPORATE WORSHIP OF CROSSROADS CHURCH IN HAMMOND, LOUISIANA, ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019
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The purpose of the project was to promote trust in the sufficiency of Scripture by refining the corporate worship of Crossroads Church, Hammond, Louisiana, according to Scripture. Chapter 1 introduces Crossroads Church and provides the reasoning for conducting this project. Chapter 2 establishes a biblical and theological basis for the project. This chapter offers a biblical defense for applying a gospel-shaped liturgy to corporate worship using 1 Timothy 3:14-17, Luke 24:13-49, Colossians 2:6-8, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and Hebrews 10:19-25. Chapter 3 is an examination of current scholarship in the area of corporate worship and an examination of six models of liturgical worship. Chapter 4 explains the process of implementing the project. Chapter 5 analyzes and evaluates the results of the project.

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