

Study Guide

by Carol Van Klompenburg

to be used with

Discerning the Spirits

A Guide to Thinking about Christian Worship Today

by Cornelius Plantinga Jr. and Sue A. Rozeboom

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Note to Readers

Traveling back to Iowa from a Michigan worship conference, I started reading *Discerning the Spirits*, which my husband Marlo had purchased on impulse at a book table. In 10 minutes I was reading paragraphs aloud to him, prefacing them with “Marlo, this is really good stuff!”

The “good stuff” I discovered in the book and shared with him as we traveled I-80 included:

- This book is the collaboration of 17 church leaders in different leadership roles in a variety of denominations.
- It is masterfully collated and written with both a strong sequence of thought and pullout excerpts that allow multiple voices to express differing points of view on a topic.
- It doesn't make black-and-white judgments about good and bad worship but leads readers to understand the nature of worship and the appropriate attitudes and questions, both for creating worship services and for participation in them.
- It offers hope and vision for worship that recognizes the body of believers of all times and places.

When we pulled into our driveway, I had finished the book.

But God was not finished with me. He nudged me to teach a worship class at my church, using *Discerning the Spirits* as the textbook. However, “teach” is the wrong word for what happened. I led a group of eight people in conversation with each other and with the book. That conversation enlarged our worlds and softened our hearts. It showed us our biases. It gave us new questions to ask about worship.

We met for 90 minutes each Sunday, and the primary basis for our free-wheeling discussion was our response to the text—our questions, excitement, disagreements with, and need to understand the passages we had marked. To help people mark passages, I created a bookmark with response options to pencil in the margins while reading.

When we concluded eight weeks later, group members recommended that the class be offered again. They also said, “This book was not easy reading. Could you make it more accessible by creating a study guide with notes? That would make us more comfortable recommending the course to others.” I agreed and led a second group, which met for 16 weeks in 45-minute sessions. For this group I provided notes, questions, and study materials.

When I asked John Witvliet at Calvin Institute of Christian Worship about collaborating with the Institute in publishing the study materials for a wider audience, he graciously encouraged me. This study guide is the result. It is designed to assist both groups and individuals with their reading of *Discerning the Spirits*.

A few commitments are crucial if you are reading the book with a group:

- A commitment to read the assigned pages before meeting and to note your responses

- A commitment to listen well
- A commitment to speak the truth in love

May God bless you as you read *Discerning the Spirits*. I have read it several times, and it continues to bless me.

I encourage you in your journey with the same words I said to my husband, "This is really good stuff!"

Carol Van Klompenburg
July 2005

Session 1: Preface and Introduction (pages vii through xv)

Worship Preference Survey and Questions

Before you start reading *Discerning the Spirits*, please complete the chart on the next page and answer the questions that follow. When you finish reading the book, you will have an opportunity to complete the same chart, answer the same questions, and compare your answers.

On the chart below, place a check mark in the box that most accurately reflects how important the listed elements of worship are to you.

	1 Very important to me in worship	2 Important to me in worship	3 I am neutral	4 I prefer not to have this in worship	5 I strongly prefer not to have this in worship
Classical music elements: organ, piano, choral music					
Contemporary music elements: guitar, band, drums, keyboard, praise team					
Leadership by clergy					
Participation in leadership by members of congregation					
Frequent communion: 1= weekly, 3= monthly, 5=quarterly					
Time for exuberant praise					
Time for silence, contemplation, reflection					
Experience of intimacy, closeness, encounter with God					
Experience of community, relational space, hospitality					
An emotional experience					
A sensory experience					
An intellectual experience					
Intellectually challenging preaching					
Relevant, applicable, and inspirational preaching					
Preaching that includes story and metaphor					
Scripted, ancient, and/or liturgical prayer					
Spontaneous prayer					

Questions

1. What is worship?
2. How is worship different from the rest of your life?
3. How is worship the same as the rest of your life?
4. What do you see as the relationship between your personal, individual worship and communal (group) worship? How is your experience of the two similar? How is your experience of them different?
5. When an element in a worship service is outside of your comfort zone or preferred style, how do you respond? How do you feel about this response?
6. What are your personal goals for studying *Discerning the Spirits*? (If studying with a group, you may include your reasons for being part of the study group.)

Bookmark

The bookmark provided on the next page can be an important part of your conversation with this book and with the members of your study group. It is not only for you to mark your reading location; it also contains symbols to pencil into the margins of your book to indicate your responses as you are reading. Penciling in your responses can help you clarify your own thinking, and your responses will provide a basis for part of your group's discussion. Please cut out the bookmark, place it in your book, and use it to aid in your reading.

Discerning the Spirits

Margin Notes

!

"This surprises me! I
hadn't thought of it this
way before."

?

"I don't understand this."

🙄

"My view is different
from this."

😊

"I like this idea and find
it enlightening, help-
ful...."

+

"I'd like to add a thought
here."

Underline

To outline key points of
the chapter and the flow
of thought (optional)

Reading Notes

Use of these reading notes is optional. Use the reading notes, or parts of them, in any way that you find useful in assisting your understanding of the book and in carrying on a conversation with it—before you read, while you read, after you read, or not at all.

Preview

The Preface describes the role of Calvin Institute of Christian Worship in the creation of the book. The Introduction explores the wisdom needed to write a book about worship, to read it, and to carry on a conversation with it and with others. It also describes the group process by which the book was created.

Major points

1. Wisdom is

- A knowledge of God's world, an ability to discern it
- A knack for fitting yourself into it

2. Ways to gain wisdom

- Foremost: pray
- Effort—reading, discussion, dialog, a meeting of the minds

3. How the wisdom for *Discerning the Spirits* was nurtured

- Gathering a team of 17 (Names and biographies are listed at the end of the book)
- Researching, absorbing, praying, worshipping, praying, discussing, arguing...
- Collating and drafting by two team members

4. Book goals

- Discuss worship
- Present thoughts in the right tone (to argue but not to quarrel)
 - Seek to learn from each other, care about each other, and live in peace.
 - Use good manners: listen before we speak; put the best face on each other's motives; express our ideas with minimum necessary force.
 - Seek to be conversation partners, not disputants; to learn and not to win; to understand with both our hearts and our minds; and to adorn ourselves with humility, kindness, patience, and forbearance.

Glossary

If you find the vocabulary of the book a bit challenging, you may wish to refer to the glossary provided for each session when you come across an unfamiliar word.

Collaborative: to work with another person, often on an intellectual project

Connoisseur: a person with expert knowledge or of informed taste

Disputants: person engaged in an argument

Genre: class or type

Interdisciplinary: combination of two or more academic disciplines usually considered separate

Session 2: Chapter 1 (pages 1-12)

Reading Notes

Use the reading notes in whatever way benefits you—before you read, while you read, after you have read, or not at all.

Preview

This chapter explores the importance of Holy Spirit's gifts of discernment and godly piety in considering worship. It includes a preview of the remaining chapters in the book.

Major points

1. The Holy Spirit competes with other spirits that mimic it (personal ambition, aesthetic pleasure, envy).
 - Embracing these other spirits is idolatry.
 - We need the gift of discerning the spirits from the Holy Spirit.

2. We have especially needed the gift of discerning the spirits in North America in the past 25 years in response to changes known as "Contemporary Worship."
 - There are widely varying and passionately held evaluations of it. The pages include highlights of advocates' viewpoints and highlights of opponents' viewpoints.
 - Some people opt for a compromise: blended worship.

3. Worship is important enough for a good argument (but not a quarrel) because it stands at the intersection of Christ and culture.
 - We have more hope of moving toward convergence than non-Christians on university campuses who are skeptical of the quest for truth and start from opposing philosophies.
 - Christians believe there is a reality, a truth, a "way things are" and that disciplined study of God's revelation can produce wisdom, especially if we counterbalance each others' biases with discussion. The cluster of truths Christians confess include: a Triune God, one holy catholic church across the world and across time, the story of redemption, a world created and redeemed by God, and Christians' calling to live for God's praise.

4. How do we live for God's praise?
 - We live lives of godliness, piety, and good works. The Biblical guideline of Colossians 3: 15-17 is especially important for acting with wisdom and love in worship.
 - The guidelines for good works are not first to tidy up our moral innards but to enable a community to thrive. We need both straight talk tempered with grace and grace with a core of truth.
 - Paul devotes significant space to this community spirit, telling us to put away factions, fighting, name-calling, and more. We need at least five virtues to live godly lives:
 - Humility: remaining teachable and reachable
 - Candor: verbal straightforwardness
 - Readiness to make room for others and their interests (Note: their differences enrich us!)

- Forbearance: willingness to put up with people who make us crazy
 - LOVE: a desire to see your neighbor flourish as God intended
 - To practice these virtues is to act like God and to represent Christ. Therefore, it's awesome to consider that when ordinary Christians struggle to deal patiently with a worship style that we find stale or obnoxious, we are imaging God! We are expressing and strengthening our union with Christ! The holy living sections are part of the gospel, a recipe for how to flourish. When we refuse God's commands, we refuse grace.
5. The purpose of *Discerning the Spirits* is to set a context and to recommend a tone for healthy discussion.
- Healthy discussion neither rejects nor uncritically accepts every novelty of contemporary worship.
 - To help make discerning choices we need to consider the complex answers to the question, "What is contemporary worship?"
6. Outline of upcoming chapters
- Chapter 2: A survey of worship practices in North America
 - Chapter 3: Christ and culture in worship: How can we be in the world but not of it?
 - Chapter 4: The diversity and unity in the body of Christ, the model of our triune God
 - Chapter 5: How the church is diverse and unified, many and one as it worships; the nature of worship; the drama it enacts; the hope it manifests

Glossary

Confluence: meeting together at one stage or point

Denouement: result of a sequence of events; the final resolution

Ethos: the character or fundamental values unique to a specific person, culture, or movement

Formulaic: a way of doing something that relies on a customary, uncontroversial approach

Hortatives: strong urging

Imperative: vital

Incongruous: inappropriate or inconsistent, as with certain standards

Indicative: helping to indicate

Jeremiad: literary work or speech communicating a bitter lament or a righteous prediction of disaster

JumboTron Screens: large display screens often seen at professional athletic events

Nietzsche: philosopher who believed that Christianity's emphasis on the afterlife makes its followers less able to manage earthly life

Parenesis: hortatory moralizing

Preeminent: outstanding or notable above all others

Rancor: bitterness or animosity

Utopian: idealistic but impossible

Venerable: worthy of respect or reverence, often as a result of age or religious association

Check your retention

1. Why can Christians have more hope of arriving at agreement than secular scholars?
2. What are the five virtues needed for Christian community?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

It is important to jot your notes in the book margins and to answer the questions below before the group meets.

1. Note the page numbers of two places where you made one of the bookmark notations. Summarize your response to these two points.
2. Reread the paragraphs on page 3 and following that describe the two kinds of responses to Contemporary Worship. Which response is most similar to yours? What did you learn by reading the description of the opposite viewpoint?
3. What are the two most important things you learned in this chapter?
4. What were some of your feelings as you read this chapter?
5. Reread the Scripture verses on page 7 aloud three times, slowly. What strikes you as you listen to these verses?

Options for Further Exploration

Meet members of Christ's body. Investigate (either in print or on-line) one or more of the following people whose names appear in this chapter. (Tip: several of them are listed at the end of *Discerning the Spirits*.)

Justo L. Gonzalez

John Wimber

N.T. Wright

Richard Baxter

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Henry Ward Beecher

Karl Barth

Otto Weber

Session 3: Chapter 2A (pages 13-27)

Reading Notes

Use the reading notes in whatever way benefits you—before you read, while you read, after you have read, or not at all.

Preview

Chapter 2A takes snapshots of worship services across the country and then surveys the movements that have shaped worship in North America.

Major points

1. Any given Sunday--Seven examples of worship choices:

- Ginghamburg (Ohio): giant screen, multimedia modules resembling a talk show, network comedy, or rock radio
- Shepherd of the Valley Presbyterian (New Mexico): Opening varies (worship band, children's choir, organ prelude), a printed order of service, sermon theme based on the Liturgical year, and drama and music based on the sermon. Sometimes elements are in English, and sometimes they are in Spanish.
- St. Augustine Roman Catholic (Washington, D.C.): Drums, bass guitar, electric organ with black gospel groove while a white-robed choir dances, claps, and sings, accompanied by ripping trumpet or sax improvisation.
- Willow Creek (Illinois): Contemporary, semiprofessional band, drama, message with many illustrations and perhaps a video clip, all geared for "seekers." Wednesday service is geared for believers/members.
- Mission San Jose (Texas): Mariachi Mass with syncopated rhythms and Spanish instruments.
- Solomon's Porch (Minnesota): Storefront sanctuary with a "worship gathering." Low ceiling, low lighting, candles, couches, armchairs, coffee tables around a braided rug, artwork on the walls, songs all original to the band, ancient and extemporaneous prayer, Scripture reading and pastoral reflection, personal narrative, silent contemplation, communion.
- Churches established more than 100 years ago (throughout the country): Choral introit, hymns, responsive reading, silent prayer of confession, assurance of pardon, lectionary texts, sermon, Apostle's Creed, Lord's Supper. Twenty-five years ago this used to be the format for three-fourths of North American churches. Today this number is smaller.

2. Worship is diversifying at a rate even greater than during the Reformation. Why are there so many changes?

- Church growth movement (began in mid 1970s and early 1980—e.g. Ginghamburg and Willow Creek)
 - Seeks to make its worship accessible to those not yet Christian, affecting the content and style of worship
 - Uses "homogenous unit principle"—targets particular audiences, classifying by faith status, age group, and/or cultural background

- Charismatic movement (the revivals of the 1960s)
 - Associated with words like “authentic” and “experience”
 - A movement of “radiant heat”—swaying bodies, closed eyes, raised hands, audible response to prayers, and preaching
- Praise and worship movement (second generation, direct descendent of the Charismatic Movement)
 - Distinctive worship pattern—vigorous praise preparing hearts for contemplative intimacy, fast paced rhythms settling down to soulful melody
 - Has generated a thriving music industry

These three movements account for the styles of Ginghamburg and Willow Creek. They also influence St. Augustine and Shepherd of the Valley. Yet, these are also impacted by another movement:

- Vatican II (early 1960s): The Pope opened a window to a draft of fresh air.
 - What did it aim for? Noble simplicity, native language instead of Latin, and the use of appropriate liturgy for the race and nation worshipping (local color)
 - Its impact has affected Protestant denominations.
 - It has contributed globally to use one’s own culture and to enrich the cultures of others.
 - It has inspired a liturgical movement among Protestant churches: lectionary, sung prayers, Advent candles.

These four movements with overlapping influence help account for the current diversity in worship. All worship that happens today is current, is contemporary. But a distinct form called “Contemporary Worship” has emerged as a prominent form, although not the only form.

Glossary

Bishopric: the group of churches under the authority of a bishop

choral introit: a hymn or psalm sung when the ministers enter at the opening of a service

du jour: prepared for a specific day; the most recent or current

ecclesial: relating to a church, especially as an organized institution

epitomize: embody the essential characteristics of

esoteric: intended for or understood by only a particular group: an esoteric cult

Guitarron: a six-string bass instrument used in Mariachi music

homogenous: all of the same or similar kind or nature; a close-knit homogeneous group

insidious: working or spreading harmfully in a subtle or stealthy manner

Mariachi: musical style performed by a street band in Mexico

milieu: an environment or a setting

progeny: descendants

R & B: a combination of blues and jazz that was developed in the United States by Black musicians

Options for Further Exploration

1. Worship with a congregation whose worship style is significantly different than that of your congregation. Withhold evaluation until sometime after the worship service. Then reflect on the value of that worship experience for you and share your reflections with your group.
2. Do further reading about one of the congregations described in this section and share with your group what you learned.

Session 4: Chapter 2B (pages 27-46)

Reading Notes

Use the reading notes in whatever way benefits you—before you read, while you read, after you have read, or not at all.

Preview

The first half of Chapter 2 looked at the four movements that gave rise to Contemporary Worship. (Can you name them? If not, take a moment to review them.)

The second half of this chapter looks at:

- the development of Contemporary Worship itself (through historical events and influential personalities)
- the different features of Contemporary Worship
- the reasons for undertaking Contemporary Worship

Major points

1. A Backward Glance: The History of Contemporary Worship.

- **1940s and 1950s:** Para-church youth ministries
 - Billy Graham: large-scale rallies
 - Jim Rayburn: friendships and household gatherings of Young Life
 - Both of these used popular music, sketches, and winsome presentations of a winsome Christ.
- **1960s:** A growing repertoire of songs set to pop tunes
 - Piano gave way to guitar
 - The Gaithers with Southern Gospel tunes and testimonial lyrics
 - The African-American voice with jazz riffs and blues notes
- **1970s:** Jesus People.
 - Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, California. The beginning of Maranatha Music
 - Sounds of the Jesus Movement run the gamut from praise and worship genre to Christian Contemporary Music.
 - Some achieved crossover status in secular market; others produced songs intended for worship.
- **1970s and early 1980s:** Third wave of charismatic movements
 - Vineyard Christian Fellowship (John Wimber) produced Vineyard Music Group
 - Another charismatic group: Integrity Music
 - This music is made accessible through CCLI (Christian Copyright Licensing Incorporated).
 - These publishing houses now produce a magazine, workshops, and degree programs in worship studies.

- **1980s:** Willow Creek (Bill Hybels)
 - Began with a high school rock band that used Calvary Chapel (Costa Mesa) tunes
 - Willow Creek incorporated as a church in 1975 and became nationally known in 1989 with lots of national press coverage.
 - In 1992 it formed the Willow Creek Association which serves 7,200 member churches with conferences, worship resources, etc.
- **1990s:** More diversification
 - Hillsongs Music: new possibilities for choral ensembles
 - Generation X postmodern niche with edgy industrial drum loops, melancholic ballads, and alternative rock)
- **1990s and beyond**
 - Postmodern churches also incorporate art, incense, dance, candles and the use of the all the senses
 - Video venue model: give worshipers choices on the same church campus. Different style worship services with the same live sermon via video feed
 - North Coast Live: Full worship team and live teaching
 - Traditions: Coffee and pastries with intimate, nostalgic worship
 - Video Café: Starbucks atmosphere with acoustic band
 - The Edge: plugged-in band, high energy worship with cutting edge sound
 - Satellite congregations; Willow Creek has regional ministry at remote site with live worship and video message

Summary: Contemporary Worship is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon that has grown phenomenally for the last half century.

- Looking further back, however, this changing face of worship is a recurring phenomenon.
 - Roots of gospel hymns of 1900s: the North American revivals of 1800s, related to John Wesley's influence in the 1700s, anticipated by the Pietist Movement on European continent in 1600s, which was a response to "dead orthodoxy."
 - Each group that advocated reform wanted to move the people's hearts and gain the attention of the world to religion. With these familiar themes throughout history, Contemporary Worship seems almost inevitable.

2. Features of Contemporary Worship (CW)

- Use of technology (visual elements)
 - Large screens and video projections from movies, TV, news
 - PowerPoint projection for singing, text, graphics, photos
 - Theatrical stage lights, state-of-the-art speaker
- Contemporary auditory elements
 - Worship team or praise band replaces cantor, organist, choir
 - Often a drummer, pianist, guitarist, vocalists, and more
 - Worship team does both music for listening and music for singing.

- Ceremonial minimalism
 - Eliminate dead time—fill it with spoken transitions, prayers, often with instrumental background
 - Colloquial language
 - Avoid using biblical-theological terms
 - Sacraments reserved for believer’s service instead of seeker’s service
 - Theater appearance instead of a church appearance so usually the baptismal fonts, pulpits, crosses, communion tables are not part of the space
 - First names and business casual apparel
 - Projected order of service: Vigorous praise songs leading to contemplative songs of worship, a message, a final song of praise. (Rare: responsive reading, prayer of confession, words of benediction.)
 - Reasons for minimizing ceremony: to make worship accessible and authentic
 - Contemporary Worship has several species, and these species have been crossbreeding!

3. Reasons for undertaking contemporary worship

- Evangelism
 - Led by the mega-churches, followed by churches of every size and kind
 - Characterized by a longing to make the gospel accessible to the nonreligious by making worship accessible—through personally relevant topic in culturally relevant setting
 - Address the “felt needs” of target congregation
 - Futile to address felt needs in culturally irrelevant setting. Usher out traditional elements and usher in contemporary media. Make worship safe for the uninitiated.
 - But different people have different barriers and needs. So: there is a propagation of churches designed for different people: Boomers, Busters, Xers.
 - Basic attitude: “Worship happens when the presence of God is bridged with people’s felt needs in their life context.
- Authentic encounter with God
 - Service is crafted to address God, to generate an encounter with him.
 - Such worship will be evangelistic because while revealing God, it reveals good news. A sort of evangelism by accident.
 - The main feature—direct supernatural interaction with God. Through a simple route of approach: praise and worship instead of intellectual and artistic demands of religious duty. (The same characteristic as found in seeker-oriented services.)

4. Chapter Conclusion

- Worship takes place in many ways. Some worshiping bodies have found their niche. Others are still conflicted.
- Some are beginning to wonder what is next, asking new questions about the influence of culture, nature of the church and essence of worship.

Glossary

accoutrements: identifying and often superficial characteristics

burgeon: to grow and expand rapidly

genre: a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content

JumboTron: a huge display device

pastiche: a literary, artistic, musical, or architectural work that imitates the style of previous work

postmodern: relating to reactions against the philosophy and practices of modern movements, typically marked by revival of traditional elements and techniques

repertoire: the complete list or supply of skills or ingredients for a particular occupation

revamp: remake, revise

vamp: to piece something old with a new part

winsome: pleasing, having childlike charm

Check your retention

1. Name seven influences within the Contemporary Worship movement that have shaped it as it developed, and assign a decade to each of them.

Shaping Influence	Decade(s)
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	

2. Explain these three basic elements of Contemporary Worship with examples or a description.

- Use of technology (visual elements)

- Auditory Elements

- Ceremonial minimalism

3. List two reasons congregations undertake Contemporary Worship

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Before the group meets, please note your responses in the margins in the book and answer the questions below.

1. What do you think are the differences between Praise and Worship songs (for congregational singing) and Contemporary Christian Music (for performance)? Is it useful for worship planners to know and understand the difference?
2. This chapter says that some worshiping bodies have found their niche, others are still conflicted, and still others are asking what is next. Where do you think your congregation fits among these descriptions?
3. After reading the sidebar on page 37-38, what guidelines for language would you suggest for your congregation?
4. What's your response to Frederick Buechner's opinion about the risks of jokes in a worship message (p. 40)?

Options for Further Exploration

1. Below is a list of people mentioned in Chapter 2B. You may wish to learn more about one or two of them. Perhaps you can share what you learn about one of them, or what you already know about one of them with the members of your group.

- Torrey Johnson
- Billy Graham
- Jim Rayburn
- Bill Bright
- Bill and Gloria Gaither
- Elvis Presley
- Thomas Dorsey
- James Cleveland
- Edwin Hawkins
- Tommy Coomes
- Karen Lafferty
- Larry Norman

- Amy Grant
- Michael W. Smith
- Keith Green
- Rich Mullins
- Michael Card
- Twila Paris
- C. Peter Wagner
- John Wimber
- Chuck Fromm
- Michael Omortian
- Chuck Girard
- Lee Strobel
- Darlene Zschech
- Carol Cymbala
- Matt Redman
- John Wesley
- Frances Asbury
- Charles Grandison Finney
- Mike Slaughter
- Rick Warren
- Timothy Wright
- Sally Morgenthaler
- Judson Cornwall
- Jack Hayford
- Bob Sorge
- Ron Kenoly
- LaMar Boschman

2. Perhaps your group wants to consider scheduling an additional meeting to which each person brings a recording of a worship song (from any era or in any style) that he or she especially enjoys. Each person can share why a song especially touches him or her and then play that song for the group. Questions and response can follow.

Session 5: Chapter 3A (pages 47-69)

Reading Notes

Use the reading notes in whatever way benefits you—before you read, while you read, after you have read, or not at all.

Review and preview

Looking back, we see that Chapter 1 examined the importance of the Holy Spirit's gifts of discernment and of godly piety to the Christian community. Chapter 2 took a whirlwind tour of the origins, features, and variations in Contemporary Worship.

Chapter 3 begins by stating that the basic question facing us is, "How should Christians worship when they are resident aliens?" It then defines culture and says that cultural translation of worship is inevitable, desirable, and (in the second half of the chapter—the next lesson) risky. Regardless of our personal position on worship practices, we need the gift of discernment in what is fitting for Christian worship.

Major points

1. Introduction

- The previous chapter shows that believers are worshiping in ways that reflect their local setting and connect to their culture. For Contemporary Worship (CW) leaders, this means connecting with contemporary popular culture. This connection excites some Christians and offends others.
- What causes the difference in response?
 - On one hand, the values of Christian faith and the anti-values of some popular entertainment seem opposed. Some people are concerned that CW might use contemporary cultural forms that clash with the gospel, with reverence, or with respect for others.
 - On the other hand, if worship doesn't engage with the way people live today, churches risk losing potential and current believers.
- The issue is complex: How do we embody our worship in cultural forms that will reach our neighbors without distorting the gospel?
 - This is hotly debated, and the arguments matter. It is not merely difference in taste, but judgments of fittingness.
 - Translation (embodying the gospel in different forms) is hazardous. Every translation is an interpretation that can open up new understanding—or bring misunderstanding. The central questions: After translation, do we still have the gospel of Christ or a gospel of contemporary culture? How do we know?

2. Defining culture

- Culture is not all the same or static. It is complex—so complex Gordon Lathrop unearthed 164 definitions for it. Three of those definitions:
 - Clifford Geertz (anthropologist): Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. Culture is those webs. To study it is to be in search of meaning.
 - H. Richard Niebuhr (theologian): Culture is the total process of human activity and the total result of such activity. It is an artificial secondary environment which we superimpose on the natural environment. It cannot be escaped. We are inevitably subject to it.

- Clifford Orwin (political theorist): For any people-group, culture is the totality of its social practices.
- What we infer about culture from these definitions:
 - Culture is inevitable to human existence.
 - It touches every aspect of our common life.
 - It extends into every aspect of our personal lives.
 - People groups differ, even within a single society. In North America we are a multiplicity of co-cultures (groups of people within the society but outside the dominant culture, such as ethnic minorities, recent immigrants, deaf, elderly, homeless, incarcerated, and gang members). These co-cultures overlap and interact.
 - Culture is changing—because of the passing of time and the interaction of co-cultures.

In planning and leading worship, church leaders are constantly answering questions about culture, consciously or unconsciously—even in their leadership style and their clothing.

3. Cultural adaptation of worship is inevitable.

- Cultural adaptation has been a feature of the gospel ever since it was received in the first century A.D.
 - The four gospels were targeted toward different cultures. Through the ages the gospel has been translated into hundreds of languages.
 - Worship, too, has been translated and culturally adapted through the centuries.
 - Cultural adaptation of worship is inevitable: Scripture gives little guidance about the “how” of worship.
 - Old Testament has details for ritual, but Christ fulfilled these laws. He redefined two of them: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper as successors of circumcision and Passover. Even for these, we don’t have detailed instructions.
 - We only get glimpses of the worship of New Testament believers. They gathered for preaching, breaking of bread, praying, singing, and sharing all things in common. The New Testament encourages believers to do what is fitting and orderly and not to give up meeting together.
- If worship isn’t adapted to this culture, it is adapted to some other one.

4. Cultural adaptation of worship is desirable.

- Adaptation is useful for evangelism; it prevents unnecessary obstacles for worshippers.
- Adaptation in culturally enriched forms reflects God’s glory and displays the complexion of his world.
- There are many cultures, but one spirit. God’s common grace reaches even non-Christian cultures. So, no culture is without grace or without sin. Because of sin, cultural adaptation is risky.

Glossary

anthropologist: one who studies the science of human beings, especially in races, physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture

Batik: a fabric printed by an Indonesian method of hand-printing textiles by coating with wax the parts not to be dyed

consonant with: being in agreement or harmony

devoid: being without a typical or expected attribute

dogma: a doctrine or body of doctrines concerning faith or morals formally stated and authoritatively proclaimed by a church

dynamic: marked by continuous and productive activity or change

ethnographer: one who studies and systematically records human cultures

immanent: remaining or operating within a domain of reality

incoherencies: lacking clarity or intelligibility

indigenous: having originated in or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment

infer: to derive as a conclusion from facts or premises

monolithic: having a massive, undifferentiated, and often rigid whole

oikoumene: the future kingdom of Christ, the world to come

pervasive: diffused throughout every part of.

render: to produce a copy or version of

Semiotic: a general philosophical theory of signs and symbols that deals especially with their function in languages

transcendent: prior to, beyond, and above the universe or material existence

typology: a doctrine of theological types, holding that things in Christian belief are prefigured or symbolized by things in the Old Testament

Check your retention

1. According to this chapter, what is the fundamental challenge in developing or choosing a style of worship?

2. In each pair, underline the statement about culture that is most true.

Culture changes and evolves.

Culture remains the same.

Culture is simple.

Culture is complex.

Culture is inevitable.

Culture is optional.

Cultures are separate and independent.

Cultures overlap and interact.

All cultures are imperfect.

Some cultures are perfect.

Grace is absent from some cultures

Grace is present to some degree in all cultures.

3. Label each state True (T) or False (F).

___ In each era new forms of worship are viewed as secular at first.

___ The Bible tells us in detail the proper way to worship.

Session 6: Chapter 3B (pages 69-73)

Reading Notes

Use the reading notes in whatever way benefits you—before you read, while you read, after you have read, or not at all.

Review and preview

The first half of Chapter 3 examined the complexity and pervasive character of culture. It explored why cultural adaptation of worship is inevitable and desirable. The last half of the chapter examines the risks of cultural adaptation of worship, seeks wisdom from God's Word and his Word made flesh, and concludes with a statement about the messiness of cultural adaptation.

Major points

1. Cultural adaptation of worship is risky. Translation or adaptation of culture can by itself mislead us.
 - History of reflection on music
 - Plato: harmony used well can settle one's soul, but used wrongly can unsettle a society.
 - Aristotle: appreciates music's entertainments more than Plato, says there's a right time and place for right harmony.
 - Early church had similar themes.
 - Augustine: singing is sometimes more moving than its truth. Then he would prefer not to have heard the singer.
 - Reformers: glad for music's power, also expressed caution. Luther said it may incline us to goodness or to evil. Calvin echoed the thought.
 - We need to discern if we are singing the Lord's song or the Babylonian national anthem.
 - Same question could be asked of lights, dance, inclusive language, and visual arts.
 - All the questions distil to: Are we being faithful to the gospel, or are we betraying it by adding or subtracting something?
2. Cultural adaptation: seeking wisdom of the Word
 - At Pentecost people spoke in languages of the whole earth, signaling the church's mission to "all who are far away" geographically and spiritually. From Pentecost on, the idea is to enable peoples of the whole earth to hear the word of the Lord and render thanks to God in a form suited to their own culture.
 - In creation God developed human culture—not only animals and plants, but marriage, family, language, tent-making, musicianship.
 - Sin damages all creation, including culture. Good and evil are intertwined. So Christians should approach culture with both a yes and a no.
 - New creation (re-creation) Isaiah 60 and Revelation 21 show us dignitaries from every nation in a huge procession bringing their treasures, but nothing unclean. Dross will be consumed, and chaff sifted out.
 - At the center of the biblical story is the incarnation of Jesus and in that mystery are the model and the mandate for contextualization of Christian worship.

- Nairobi Statement: Jesus was born into a specific culture, and his life assumed a cultural context. Christ is more of a model for acculturation in worship than for critique of culture.
- Tex Sample carries Nairobi statement further, recommending aggressive forms of acculturation through making worship a spectacle with choreography, lights, sound, staging, and screens.
Critique of Tex Sample: Is accommodation to the world explicit in Jesus' incarnation and his judgment of the world only implicit?
- Michael Slaughter in his book *Out on the Edge* says that the incarnation is primarily a means for God to let us get to know him, and the church should follow suit. We should have a good time in worshipping God.
A question for Slaughter: Is everything produced by humankind good? No. Christ came to reconcile all things to God.
- The above discussions bring us back at the same question: How do we be in the world, but not of it? If the church is too removed from culture, the church cannot communicate with culture. If the church is too close, it may be seduced or polluted by culture.
- We need to broaden our understanding of the incarnation to include both viewpoints.
 - Jesus became human not just to get close to us, but to put right what had been put wrong by sin.
 - Although Jesus was a friend of sinners, God also instructs us to fear and reverence him.
 - The incarnation brings both grace and judgment. Christ was partly maladjusted to his culture. In the cross we find God's "Yes" (his gracious covenant) and his "No" (his righteous judgment on humanity).
- Conclusion about the incarnation: Instead of settling our dilemma about enculturation of worship, the incarnation sharpens it! Grace and judgment exist together and are exercised within the context of each other.

3. Cultural adaptation is messy.

- Worship should be culturally connected, not for the sake of culture but for the sake of worship.
- There is no neat authoritarian answer about what to accept and what to reject in culture. Only a messy one, requiring humility.
 - Some will say "no" to Super Bowl extravaganzas, aggressive rock music, casual preaching. They will see these as breaching the integrity of worship.
 - Others will say "yes" to folk music, drama troupes, and prayers of lament inspired by newspaper headlines. They will see this as a legitimate contextualization.
 - Cultural adaptation will have a "both and" feel. Grace and judgment.
- The discernment is a gift of the Spirit given to a community—and the community includes people from the whole world and all of history. Contextualizing the faith extends from Pentecost to the return of Christ.
- Cultural adaptation removes unnecessary obstacles for newcomers. We still must ask if there are any necessary obstacles, e.g. Confessing our sins, preaching the Word, celebrating the sacraments, singing, praying, reciting beliefs. HOW these are taken up in worship is a matter of discernment.
- Hospitality is a two-way street: It takes both a good host and a good guest.

Glossary

contextualize: to place in a context

esoteric: designed for or understood only by the specially initiated, limited to a small circle

indigenous: having originated in or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment

irony: the use of words to express something other than or the opposite of the literal meaning

subvert:: to pervert or corrupt by an undermining of morals, allegiance, or faith

Check your retention

1. What can we learn about worship from Pentecost?

2. What can we learn about worship from creation and re-creation?

3. What can we learn about worship from Christ's becoming human?

4. Below are pairs of statements. Underline the one which is most true.

Worship should connect with culture for the sake of the culture.

Worship should connect with culture for the sake of worship.

Deciding what cultural elements to incorporate into worship is clear cut.

Deciding what cultural elements to incorporate into worship is messy.

The Spirit's gift of discernment comes to individual Christians.

The Spirit's gift of discernment comes to communities of Christians.

Our cultural context for worship began in 1990.

Our cultural context for worship began at Pentecost.

As Christians we are identified with the predominant culture.

As Christians we are a co-culture within a predominant culture.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Before the group meets, please note your responses in the margins in the book and answer the questions below.

1. Chapter 3B says that our worship needs to find the balance of being in the world but not of it, engaging the world of secular culture without being seduced by it. In which concrete ways does your congregation balance being in the world but not of it?

In which ways, if any, is your congregation's worship seduced by the world of secular culture?

2. Page 89 states, "Culture should be culturally connected, not for the sake of culture, but for the sake of worship." Explain in your own words what you think this statement means.

Can you think of an example of a worship element that might be used for the sake of culture and one that might be used for the sake of worship?

Options for Further Exploration

1. Learn more about one of the people who is quoted in this section, or read more of this person's writings and share what you learn with your group.

Duane Kelderman

Robb Redman

Ted Gibboney

2. Meet with or interview a person whose worship preferences are different from yours with a goal of respecting how that worship style ministers to that person.

Session 7: Chapter 4A (pages 95-109)

Reading Notes

Use the reading notes in whatever way benefits you—before you read, while you read, after you have read, or not at all.

Preview

The first half of Chapter 4 analyzes the weaknesses of the secular view of “unity in diversity” and “multiculturalism.” It shows how similar weaknesses exist in the church’s approach to these issues and begins to offer an alternative based on union with Christ and the nature of the Trinity.

Major points

1. Introduction: A look at secular culture

- Unity in Diversity and multiculturalism have become catch phrases.
 - Both have been coined only in the last several decades.
 - Multiculturalism has two levels of meaning:
 - Multiculturalism as fact: we are a continent of ethnic multiplicity.
 - Multiculturalism as policy:
 - How to integrate differing cultural backgrounds, recognize the integrity, and shore up the dignity of each kind.
 - The policy of multiculturalism began with impulse toward hospitality; the same impulse as the call to unity in diversity.
 - The healthy impulse has now hardened into an ideology: every culture and every cultural practice must be validated. Truth is relative to persons and cultures.
 - Accompanying this ideological relativism are politics of identity.
 - This involves dividing the co-cultures into hostile units.
 - A single characteristic becomes one’s personal ID.
 - Niche marketing adds its influence by focusing on the single characteristics or particular items.
 - Each group deserves its place at the round table. If participants are passionate, it becomes a power struggle.
 - Neither live-and-let-live, nor power struggles look much like unity.
- What about the church? Politics of identity also appear here.
 - Church officers try a round table strategy with equal recognition of all. They try to keep everybody happy, but this tends to reinforce differences.
 - Worship planners target identity groupings.
 - Marketing is not the problem, rather the way it is done and how it is received.
 - Examples: keeping track of balance of songs, dismissing other denomination’s worship styles, adding a differing style of worship, developing an eclectic

(blended) worship, communication breaks down, intimidation occurs, planners assume criticism shows they are following Christ.

- The above strategies are actually importing into the church the troubled ideology of current secularism.
- An alternative way of thinking: union with Christ
 - We grow into one body with Christ; both our individual union with Christ and our corporate union with the Christian church.
 - We are not free agents. We are members of a worldwide and a local body.
 - Classic events of attaching to Christ are corporate: preaching, baptism, and Lord's Supper.
 - The Spirit is the living contact between the victorious Jesus and all who are united with him.
- Unity and diversity in Trinitarian perspective.
 - The three in one character of God with the *koinonia* in that divine life is the model for unity of persons within the Christian church.
 - None is an independent contractor, yet each is distinct.
 - Father and Son (and sometimes Spirit) are one in word and work and will. They know, love and glory in each other. In knowledge, love, glory, action and essence, they belong to each other.
 - So what is the oneness of the church?
 - It is only a pale reflection of the Trinity. Just as no divine person can be God without the other two, so too no Christian can be the church without the rest of the body.
 - What binds us together is some semblance of the shared word, work, will, knowledge, love, and glory that fills heaven. Self-giving love is the currency of the Trinity and of the church. Persons within God show each other divine hospitality—harboring the other at the center of his being. This hospitality spreads to his creatures.
 - So it is more than an equal place at the table: we enter the lives of people we love and invite them to enter ours. Special interests become mutual interests. We enter the lives of others in order to give their joys, sorrows, and welfare a place in our heart. We no longer compete to prevail.

Glossary

Balkanize: to break up into smaller, hostile units

Koinonia: a Greek word for the community or fellowship produced by the Holy Spirit

machismo: an exaggerated or exhilarating sense of power or strength, a strong sense of masculine pride

Perichoresis: All three persons of the Trinity mutually share in the life of the others, so that none is isolated or detached from the actions of the others

Check your retention

1. What is the difference between multiculturalism as fact and as policy?
2. What are some of the results in secular society of multiculturalism as a policy?
3. What happens when the church takes a multicultural/marketing approach?
4. Describe the alternative this book presents to secular unity in diversity and multiculturalism as policy.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Before the group meets, please note your responses in the margins in the book and answer the questions below.

1. In your own words, summarize how you see the difference(s) between the secular approach to unity in diversity and the Christian approach to it.
2. In practical terms, what does this self-giving love, this holding others at the center of our being, mean for your role in your congregation?
3. How can we increase our hospitality (self-giving love)? What are signs that we are increasing our hospitality?

4. What commitment can you make to moving in the direction of self-giving love? Is there one first step that you might take toward hospitality and away from hostility?

5. _____ Fill in this blank with one question you would like the class to discuss.

Options for Further Exploration

1. On pages 106 & 107, Marva Dawn listed reasons for being at worship. Create your own list of your reasons for being at worship.

2. Pages 99-100 contain a list of examples of party spirit within a congregation. Think of one or two additional examples of a party spirit.

3. Meet with someone whose worship preferences are different from yours with a goal of self-giving love and divine hospitality for this brother or sister in Christ. Or, if you have already met with someone as suggested in the previous study session, prayerfully reflect on how you can embody God's self-giving love in your relationship with this brother or sister.

Session 8: Chapter 4B (pages 109-124)

Reading Notes

Use the reading notes in whatever way benefits you—before you read, while you read, after you have read, or not at all.

Review and preview

Chapter 4A examined the pitfalls of approaching worship with a secular unity-in-diversity approach and began to examine a Christian alternative. Chapter 4B continues to examine this Christian alternative and focuses on how this is expressed in Christian worship.

Major points

1. *Koinonia* Community

- *Koinonia*
 - It is more than a password for talking about religious experiences.
 - It is the mind of Christ, looking to the well-being of others in humility and self-giving love. It is not an add-on to the gospel, but an integral part of it.
- The bad news is that *Koinonia* is hard to practice. Paul said, “Keep doing it anyway.”
- We are not all alike. The church becomes a safe place for diversity. We are a body of diverse parts with Christ as HEAD.
- Christian *koinonia* is both a fact and a goal.
 - The quest for unity is identical with the quest for Christ. We should not only let each part of the body be itself but also delight in it and its contribution to the whole. We should die to our interests and rise to the interests of fellow believers across the aisle, across the world, across time.
 - We can think of worship as rehearsal for that great day when we will all worship together.
- Peace of mind, the image of God, and the church’s very mission is at stake. Church unity is a powerful model of the life of God to the world.

2. *Koinonia* is a characteristic of Christian worship.

- The number of distinct, non-repeating opportunities for hospitable worship is nearly infinite.
 - Worship leaders welcome the redeemed of different cultures, sexes, and ages.
 - They welcome the non-redeemed seekers: both those who are new to church and those who have been attending for 30 years.
 - They remind us that we are surrounded by an invisible cloud of witnesses from around the world and across time. We welcome worship from other cultures and pray for Christians around the world. We recognize that our traditions and beliefs are informed by many generations of Christians before us.
 - Christian worship is inter-ethnic, inter-generational, and inter-national. It opens us up to the beauty of God who loves all humans.

Glossary

Elamites: Inhabitants of an ancient country of southwest Asia in present-day southwest Iran

Fugue: A musical style in which a theme or themes are stated successively in all of the voices of a contrapuntal structure

Koinonia: Christian fellowship or communion with God or with fellow Christians

Medes: An Iranian people closely associated with Persians

Parthians: An ancient country of southwest Asia corresponding to modern northeast Iran. It was included in the Assyrian and Persian empires, the Macedonian empire of Alexander the Great, and the Syrian empire

Syncopations: shift of accent in a passage or composition that occurs when a normally weak beat is stressed

Check your retention

1. Explain in your own words the meaning of *koinonia* and its importance in the church.

2. What are the two dimensions of *koinonia* at worship that this section talks about?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Before the group meets, please note your responses in the margins in the book and answer the questions below.

1. What are two of your favorite examples of *koinonia* worship from the pages 122 and 123? Why?

2. How do you see this chapter helping to resolve the worship wars regarding contemporary versus traditional worship?

3. Is the concept of *koinonia* worship the same as the concept of blended worship? How? If not, how is it different?

4. How can we implement the concept of *koinonia* worship in our response to worship and in our discussion of worship services?

5. How can our church implement *koinonia* more in its worship than it currently does?

6. What is the meaning of this statement? “We are both vulnerable and secure when worship happens.” (page 111 quotation from Jorge Lockward.)

Options for Further Exploration

1. Meet the saints: Learn more about one of the following people mentioned in this chapter. Share with the group what you have learned.

Twila Paris

John Ferguson

Johann Sebastian Bach

Joachim Neander

Kirk Franklin

Gregory of Nyssa

Melva Wilson Costen

Don Skinner

Karl Barth

Jorge Lockward

Cindy Holtrop

2. Use the Bible verses from “Space for Grace” on pages 114 & 115 as a basis for your daily prayer and meditation this week:

- God’s priority list for hospitality: Exodus 23:9, Deuteronomy 10: 18-19.
- The Israelites’ experience of a gracious and hospitable God: Exodus 22:21-27.
- Our transformation from strangers to friends in Christ: Romans 5:6-11, Ephesians 2: 11-14, Colossians 1: 21-23.
- Practicing hospitality: Romans 12:13.
- Welcoming Christ who welcomed us: Romans 15:7.

Session 9: Chapter 5A (pages 125-149)

Reading Notes

Use the reading notes in whatever way benefits you—before you read, while you read, after you have read, or not at all.

Preview

This section defines worship as narrative engagement with the triune God and examines in depth the meaning of “worship” and “engagement.”

Major points

1. Introduction.

- A Latin American tradition on Easter Sunday is to call out the names of martyred saints and respond with “*presente!*” (Present!)
- We could do the same by calling out the name of Jesus and responding, “*presente!*” because we are all present in Christ. In Christ we share an indivisible communion with one another and with God.
- Definition of worship: Worship is narrative engagement with the triune God. This chapter will unpack the elements of this definition.

2. Worship: The term and the “why.”

- Differing uses of the term:
 - The noun use: the Sunday worship hour and what happens in it—song message, prayer, sacrament, etc.
 - The verb use—something we DO:
 - Call attention to God’s glory and humble ourselves before it or “ascribing worth to”
 - Celebrate God’s almightiness and grace, which are sometimes hard to tell apart. When the Psalmists celebrate creation, they celebrate God’s goodness to it and through it. In creation God extends the hospitality present within the Trinity to his creatures.
 - When we worship (“ascribe worth to”), we are merely acknowledging what is.
 - The all-inclusive use: All of life is lived before the face of God so all of life is worship. Whatever we do is our offering.
 - Why worship? If all of life belongs to God, and he has glory without us, what is the point of saying so? Because God requires our worship.
 - A problem: why does God require it? Is he a narcissist who needs to be pumped up?
 - What if he requires it not for his sake, but for ours? Compare it to a mother whose son has gotten involved with a drug dealer. She says, “Son, don’t neglect me. Remember I’m the one who loves you and always will.” She is laying out her resumé for his sake.
 - In similar emergencies, God does the same. He requires our worship so we will remember who is carrying whom. It is an antidote to idolatry. It straightens our

posture so we neither strut nor slouch. Only weak people need God's goodness. Only strong people are able to say so. In worship we remember who we are and whose we are.

3. Worship as engagement

- Worship when we gather on Sunday mornings is more than only "ascribing worth to." It is engagement. We meet God.
 - The appropriate tone would be exuberant praise tempered with reverence, a mix of enthusiasm and humility.
 - God summons us, not vice versa. We don't crank out the praise and wait for him to show up.
- Engagement is a coming together of disparate parties, a rendezvous in which all parties participate. What is our activity?
- Clues from Scripture suggest a dialog between God and the communion of believers (not individuals). If personal encounter is primary, then worship is merely a grouping of individuals who do it because it gets them a better personal buzz. **MORE IMPORTANT THAN OUR EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST IS THE CHRIST OF OUR EXPERIENCE.**
- In worship we present ourselves as a living sacrifice both to Christ and to his body. Sometimes we feel good about it. Sometimes we don't. In either case we have truly worshiped.
- God issues an invitation to worship. We respond. God longs for reconciliation. We confess our sin. He forgives. We renew our commitment to faithfulness. We ask the Spirit to illumine Scripture. God speaks through Scripture. He seals it with Communion. We pray and offer our gifts. God has the last word with a blessing. (It is actually more complicated than this. Sometimes the body addresses itself; it is a cast of more than two.)
- Worship also arouses several human emotions. We leave our daily lives to enter the sanctuary, but that experience accompanies us into the sanctuary. Worship has three dimensions that engage us with God and our life experience:
 - Praise: the gratitude as a fitting response to goodness. Praise is the soul's natural enthusiasm for God.
 - Repentance: Believers experience evil as not only a moral issue, but also as alienation from God, as sin, so we come to him bearing the ashes of repentance.
 - Lament: Genuine grief. Not all suffering is the direct fallout of our own sin. Worship needs to address social sin that God truly hates.

Conclusion: True worship should include the range of praise, penitence, lament, adoration, confession, intercession as well as all the emotions, gestures and postures that fit them.

- Gestures can both enhance and distract us from worship.
- We worship God with all of who we are: our bodies, our gifts and talents.
- The engagement of this dialog takes place in time and outside of it. Because it involves believers from all time and space, we may expect it to be as rich as anything believers do.

Glossary

Coals to Newcastle: To do something that is obviously superfluous (Newcastle is a city in northeast England where coal is mined)

Eschatological: of or relating to the end of the world

Kimberly mines: Diamond mines in South Africa

Narcissists: People who think primarily of themselves or who are interested primarily in their own bodies

Parlance: a manner of speech, especially formal debate

Presente: Spanish word for being present

Rendezvous: a place appointed for assembling or meeting.

Somnambulism: a condition of sleep in which acts such as walking are performed

Sublimity: the state of being—lofty, or outstanding worth, awe-inspiring, or transcendent

Check your retention

1. What is the working definition of worship with which this chapter begins?
2. This chapter looks at worship as a noun, as a verb, and as a life. Explain these three ways of looking at worship.
3. What does this chapter suggest as a possible reason that God requires us to worship him?
4. What balance does this chapter suggest for the tone/emotional flavor for worship?
5. Explain the three dimensions of engagement as listed in this chapter: praise, repentance, and lament.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Before the group meets, please note your responses in the margins in the book and answer the questions below.

1. Do the following statements from page 136 make sense to you? Do you agree with them or would you state your understanding differently?

“To focus our devotion on Christ is to present ourselves as a living sacrifice both to Christ and to the body of Christ.”

“People who present themselves in these ways sometimes feel good about it, and sometimes not, but in either case they have actually worshiped.”

2. What is your most important or most memorable take-away from this section?

3. Praise, penitence, lament. (Adoration, Confession, Intercession) Does your congregational worship leave space for these three kinds of engagement? Cite examples from recent worship services. Would your worship services be enhanced by increasing or including one of these elements?

Options for Further Exploration

From the list below, choose one or two people mentioned in this chapter and learn a bit about him or her to share with the group at your next meeting. Or if you are already familiar with several of them, share that information with the group.

Juan Tamayo

Annie Dillard

Antonio Oliviera

John Wilson

Oscar Romero

Nicholas Wolterstorff

Mother Teresa

Douglas Nelson

Martin Luther King, Jr.

John Calvin

James B. Torrance

Gary Furr

Robert Webber

Milburn Price

Jessye Norman

Michael S. Hamilton

Edward Farley

Pedreto U. Maynard-Reid

John Wilson

Richard Niebuhr

Marva Dawn

King George II

C.S. Lewis

Handel

Jack W. Hayford

Richard J. Foster

John Timmer

C. Michael Hawn

Charles Wesley

Session 10: Chapter 5B (pages 149-165)

Reading Notes

Use the reading notes in whatever way benefits you—before you read, while you read, after you have read, or not at all.

Review and preview

Chapter 5A defined worship as narrative engagement with the triune God and examined in depth the meaning of “worship” and “engagement.” Chapter 5B, which concludes the book, looks at how worship as narrative engagement renews our knowledge of who we are and whose we are, is centered in Christ, and recites the story from creation to re-creation.

Major points

1. Worship is narrative engagement. It is not just contemplation of God’s goodness, but the story of salvation. His goodness is not separable from his role in the story.
 - It is what the body of believers does before God’s throne. It is seeker-sensitive, but some elements such as confession of sin and the Lord’s Supper will remain strange to seekers.
 - There are three lenses through which we see the story: covenant renewal, the life of Christ, and the span of history from creation through re-creation.
2. The lens of covenant renewal:
 - A covenant is a royal agreement between a sovereign and subjects.
 - In renewing our covenant of grace through Christ, we are reminded of who we are and whose we are.
 - Because worship is covenant renewal, the sacraments belong in it.
3. The lens of Christ:
 - Worship is centered in Christ, who is the one we worship and through whom we worship, in the power of the Spirit.
 - Use of the Liturgical Year rehearses the life of Christ in worship, providing power to comprehend the extent of his love.
4. The lens of history from creation to re-creation:
 - This all-encompassing lens incorporates both covenant renewal and the life of Christ.
 - We looked at this all-encompassing lens in Chapter 3. Now we look at how this lens affects worship.
 - Creation has been corrupted, not destroyed. Therefore, much of it remains good, and we may say so in worship. Sermons on sin should have a sense of tragedy to them since sin is not how we are created.
 - Although not destroyed, creation has been corrupted. In worship, there is a place for confession of sin and lamentation.

- Re-creation through Christ: Lamentation and confession are followed by knowledge that creation is stronger and grace is stronger still. The center of Christian preaching is God's grace in Christ.
- We are reminded of God's acts and refreshed for our path ahead. Therefore, we adore God and figure out how to live lives that bless people and the rest of creation. In other words, we gather strength to obey God's gracious directions for covenant life. But we are still under construction—living at the hyphen between this world and the next.

Conclusion: These three lenses frame Christian worship in ways big enough to stretch us all beyond our personal preferences.

Glossary

Koinonia: Christian fellowship or communion with other Christians or God

Ostinato: a short melody that is continually repeated, often in the same voice part at the same pitch

Parochial: refers to location in or support by a parish; also a restricted outlook

Reiterated: restated or repeated

Check your retention

1. Below are pairs of statements. Underline the statement in each pair which is truer.

Worship is contemplation of God's goodness.

Worship is narrative engagement with God's goodness revealed in history.

Worship's primary purpose is reaching out to "seekers."

Worship is primarily what the body of believers does before God.

A good creation has been destroyed by the fall.

A good creation has been corrupted by the fall, but much of it remains good.

Worship is a time in which the church praises the Lord and gathers strength to obey his gracious direction for covenant life.

Worship is a time to praise the Lord.

2. List the three lenses of narrative engagement in worship.

3. Define covenant and explain how worship is covenant renewal.

4. Give examples of parts of the liturgical year that relate to the life of Christ.

5. What does the book mean when it says that Christians are “living on hyphen”?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Before the group meets, please note your responses in the margin in the book and answer the questions below.

1. After reading Michael Hawn’s article, “Sung Prayer” (pages 147-149), how do you think asking the question “How shall we pray?” instead of “How shall we sing?” affects your response to the selection of worship music?

2. How does your congregation’s current form of worship use the lenses of covenant renewal, the life of Christ, and history from creation through re-creation? Give some examples of each from recent worship services.

3. Would it be appropriate for your congregation to increase or decrease the usage of one of these lenses. (You may wish to look at the examples of each of these lenses in the textbook to assist you in responding to this question.)

Options for Further Exploration

In his article, “Communion in Prayer” (p 152), Philip W. Butin says, “As we pray, the Holy Spirit connects us interpersonally with other Christians of all times and places as members of Christ’s one body.” This week as you spend time in personal prayer, remind yourself of this and take this knowledge with you into your prayer.

Session 11: Looking Back and Looking Ahead

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Before the group meets, please answer the questions below.

1. Complete the survey below and answer the questions which follow it. This is the same survey you completed at the beginning of this course, but do not refer back to your previous answers until you have answered them this second time.

On the chart below, place a check mark in the box that most accurately reflects how important the listed elements of worship are to you.

	1 Very important to me in worship	2 Important to me in worship	3 I am neutral	4 I prefer not to have this in worship	5 I strongly prefer not to have this in worship
Classical music elements: organ, piano, choral music					
Contemporary music elements: guitar, band, drums, keyboard, praise team					
Leadership by clergy					
Participation in leadership by members of congregation					
Frequent communion: 1= weekly, 3= monthly, 5=quarterly					
Time for exuberant praise					
Time for silence, contemplation, reflection					
Experience of intimacy, closeness, encounter with God					
Experience of community, relational space, hospitality					
An emotional experience					
A sensory experience					
An intellectual experience					

Intellectually challenging preaching					
Relevant, applicable, and inspirational preaching					
Preaching that includes story and metaphor					
Scripted, ancient, and/or liturgical prayer					
Spontaneous prayer					

Questions

1. What is worship?
2. How is worship different from the rest of your life?
3. How is worship the same as the rest of your life?
4. What do you see as the relationship between your personal, individual worship and communal (group) worship? How is your experience of the two similar? How is your experience of them different?
5. When an element in a worship service is outside of your comfort zone or preferred style, how do you respond? How do you feel about this response?
6. How did you change and grow and learn during this study?

Compare your choices and answers now to your choices and answers on pages 4 and 5. Summarize similarities and differences in your responses then and now.

Looking ahead

Which next steps relating to worship do you plan to make individually?

Which next steps would you suggest for this study group?

Which next steps would you suggest for your congregation?

Is there anything else you would like to share with the group in this last session?