



## 1. My life as I worship God

*Christians show  
what God is worth to them*

### Introduction

#### *Worship*

The English word *worship* originally carried the connotation of being worthy. It came to mean the act of showing reverence for a divine being (because that divine being is worthy).

What insight does this give about our public worship services?

*In a sense, gathering for worship shows what we think God is worth.*

### The Scriptures Say

1. It may surprise many to learn that the Bible seldom uses the word *worship* in connection with public gatherings of people to revere God. *Worship* almost always is referring to private expressions of reverence for God. In the New Testament church, God doesn't **prescribe** how we are to worship him in our public gatherings. To help us understand what worship is, we will look at what the people in the Bible did when they gathered publicly in reverence for God. How do the following passages demonstrate that the proclamation of law and gospel was the foundation of public worship?

**Genesis 4:26** **At that time** people began to **call on** the **name** of the Lord.

*What does that sound like they did? (Prayed). What if I told you that call on could also be translated "proclaimed." What does that mean? What is the "Name" of the Lord? (Everything God reveals about himself. They publicly talked about who God was and the things he did.*

**Leviticus 5:17,18** If anyone sins and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord's commands, even though they do not know it, they are guilty and will be held responsible. They are to bring to the priest as a guilt offering a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value. In this way the priest will make atonement for them for the wrong they have committed unintentionally, and they will be forgiven. **Law or Gospel? Law: sin demands death; Gospel: via a substitute, forgiveness is given.**

**Hebrews 9:22** Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. **Same.**



**Colossians 2:17** These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

The sacrifices pointed ahead to the blood of Jesus' sacrifice that would take away the guilt of our sins.

2. The Psalter was the hymnal of the Old Testament people. What insights do those psalms give into the content and character of the services when the people gathered to worship God? Below are just a few samples.

**Psalm 103:1,2** Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits. **Praise, i.e. give him credit, glory, acclaim.**

**Psalm 119:105** Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. **Law as guide**

**Psalm 51:4** Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. **Confession of sin to God**

**Psalm 40:11-13** Do not withhold your mercy from me, Lord; may your love and faithfulness always protect me. For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me. Be pleased to save me, Lord; come quickly, Lord, to help me. **Petition for mercy and help in trouble.**

3. In what way are all of those elements expressions of faith? (i.e. why would a believer want to include each element in worship?) **1 God is the giver; we want to acknowledge that. 2. God speaks to us through his Word. We trust it. 3. I am accountable to God. I need a place to go with my guilt; I trust God's grace. 4. I have needs, requests to bring to the one who I trust will hear/answer.**

4. What makes Christian worship different than the worship practiced by other religions?

(e.g. does a Buddhist temple offer prayers, praise, confession, instruction?) They are built on the natural knowledge of God and are work-righteous, and directed to a self-created god. (cf. Cain and Abel both offered sacrifices to God; one was properly motivated; one was not) Gratitude for Grace is the only proper motivation.

5. What was the foundation of the New Testament worship gatherings?

**Acts 2:42** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

The Word, sacraments, expressions of common faith, and prayer.

6. Martin Luther wrote, "Among Christians the whole service should center on Word and sacrament" (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 53, p. 90). Why would he suggest such a thing?

**1 Corinthians 2:4,5** My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a **demonstration of the Spirit's power**, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power. **The message of the gospel is what has the power to work in our hearts.**

**John 20:31** These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. **God's work works faith and salvation.**

**Titus 3:5** He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through **the washing of rebirth** and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Our worship centers on Word and sacrament because the gospel comes to us through them.

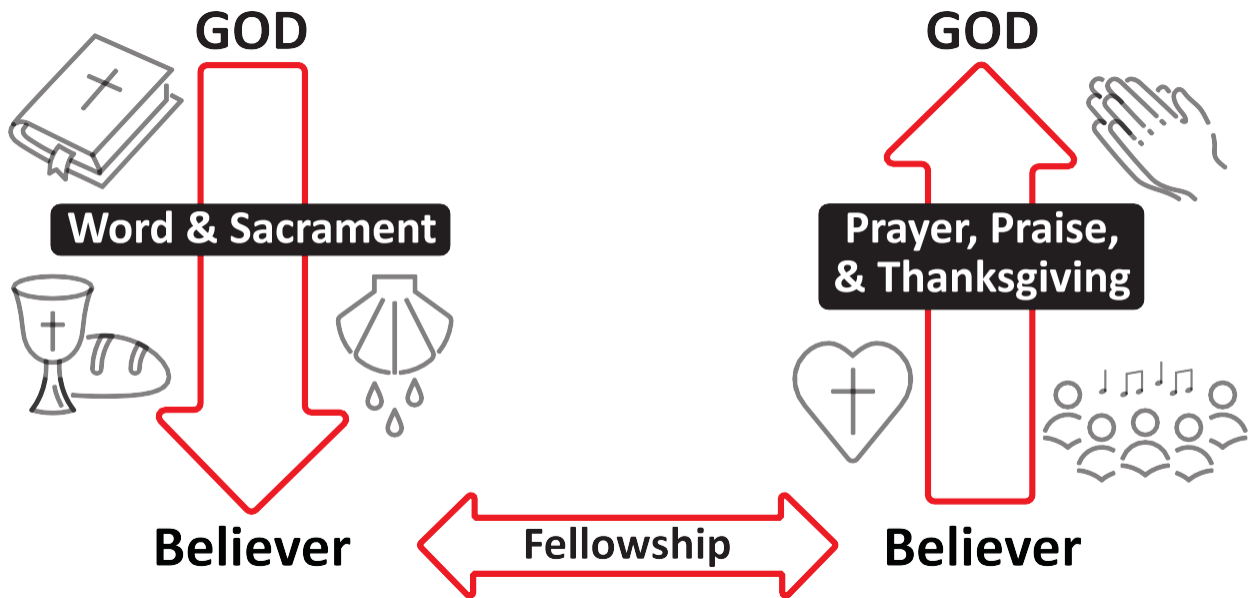
## The Principles

Because the Bible clearly teaches the following truths . . .

1. I believe that worship is an expression of faith in which law and gospel are proclaimed.
2. I believe worship centers first on the action of God (gospel) and then on a believer's response (third use of the law).
3. I believe true worship centers on the gospel in Word and sacrament.

## Focus

The Main Emphases of Worship



Two main points in our worship that fulfill our various needs:

- Word and sacrament, by which the Holy Spirit comes to us and strengthens our faith. This is the most important part of worship (arrow from God to believer).
- Prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, by which we express our faith in God's worth in our lives.

This takes many different forms in worship and is of secondary importance (arrow from believer to God). Fellowship is the unity we share with those who believe the truth. In our worship, we express the blessed unity we have in Christ (arrow from believer to believer).

Luther's Principles of Worship: 1. Gospel Predominance (vs. law, emotions) 2. The Historical Voice of the Church. 3. Let the people participate. 4. God's gift of music and the arts.

## What Does This Mean?

1. Our weekly services are clearly times when these worship principles will guide what we do. Imagine that you are planning a wedding service or you are meeting with the pastor to plan the funeral of a loved one. How would these principles guide such events as weddings, funerals, children’s services, etc.? Explain your answer.

*They’re WORSHIP services, not pep rallies for the bride, deceased. Give God the glory. Room for subjective praise, but let the object of our praise predominate. Have you planned your funeral service?*

2. The Lutheran church has chosen to follow a church year calendar. Through the festival half of the year, we look at the main events in the life of Christ. During the non-festival half of the year, the emphasis is on Jesus as the motivation for our Christian life. Why is this of ongoing value to us? How can this help us in our worship during the week?

*The pattern helps us keep a balanced focus in our worship life.*

### Christian Church Year

Festival Half	December – June	Nonfestival Half	22-28 Sundays, June – November
<b>ADVENT</b>	4 Sundays	<b>CHRIST THE KING</b>	Last Sunday of the Church Year
<b>CHRISTMAS</b>	After Advent before Epiphany		
<b>EPIPHANY</b>	January 6 and 4 to 9 Sundays after		
<b>LENT</b>	6 Sundays and Holy Week		
<b>EASTER</b>	7 Sundays		
<b>ASCENSION</b>	40 days after Easter		
<b>PENTECOST</b>	50 days after Easter		

3. The Lutheran church has chosen to follow an ongoing series of readings called the lectionary. Why is this of ongoing value today? How can this help us during the week?

*a systematic approach to cover as much of the Bible as possible throughout the year. It guards against the tendency to focus on favorite topics. Can allow us to read lessons ahead of time. Provides a unified focus for all the other elements of the service, such as the sermon, hymns, choir selections, etc.*

#### What This Means for Me

- Take a few moments to write a short statement expressing the way these truths shape what you believe and how you live.