

# ♪ Worship Notes ♪

Volume 1, Number 3 ♪ March 2006

**Theme: SOLI DEO GLORIA**

## TO GOD ALONE BE THE GLORY!

As children of God and citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20), our primary focus in all of life is to be on Him who created us and redeemed us and is committed to conforming us to His image. God has a unique claim on our allegiance and attention; His Lordship is to permeate, more and more, every corner of our lives. He is the center of our existence, the purpose of our existence, and the goal of our existence (Rom. 11:36). He is both the subject and the object of our worship.

When we speak of His “glory” we are speaking of the sum total of all His perfections, the uniqueness of his being, the totality of what distinguishes Him as Creator from His creation and His creatures. (Thus the concept is very close to that of God’s holiness, His complete “otherness.”) His glory is what in its ultimate sense He “will not give to another” (Isaiah 42:8, 48: 11), though He causes faint glimmers of reflected glory to show forth in His creation and especially in humanity, which bears His image (Gen. 1:26; 1 Corin. 11:7). God’s glory is also described in Scripture in terms of light (Isaiah 60:1,19; 2 Corin. 4:4,6; 1 Tim. 6:16; Revel. 21:23).

While we cannot add to the glory of God, which is perfect, yet the Scriptures maintain that in some mysterious way the created order (Psalm 19:1; 72:19), the course of history (Isaiah 66:18), and above all the Church of Jesus Christ (Ephes. 3:21) are all intended to reflect and manifest and display His glory. In fact, that ultimately is the sole reason for which the uncaused One caused everything else to come into

existence (as John Piper has put it, “The meaning of the universe is God going public for the glory of God”); God’s glory is the ultimate goal of every breath we take, everything we are allowed to do – and should, for us as believers, be our ultimate motivation in all of our endeavors (“Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God,” 1 Corin. 10:31). We must keep this goal before us consciously and seek to submit all of our activities (personal, family, vocational, spiritual) to that overarching design; that is what brings these activities value, meaning, and a divine orientation and significance, even with our most mundane involvements.

If this is true through all of life, it is if anything even more important to have this perspective be as we undertake the work of the Church.

Human theories, techniques, ideas, systems, tastes, structures all must be submitted to a compelling and overriding passion for the glory of God.

How quickly we forget Whose work, Whose church, Whose worship service we are involved in! How quickly we seek to supplement the revelation of Scripture with human ingenuity, demographic studies, and how-to seminars. How anxious we are to find gimmicks which will attract

people and keep them coming back! *Our single-minded focus, in worship and in all our activities, must be on recognizing, reflecting, declaring, and celebrating the glory of God!*

It is highly doubtful that He who authoritatively proclaimed, “I will build my Church” (Matt. 16:18) foresaw the need for church growth principles to guide Him in the task to which He had

### **Biblical Principles of Worship\***

**#1 God’s glory, and our joyful celebration of it in worship, should be the focus and goal of all life and ministry.**

committed Himself. And it is equally unlikely that He who proclaimed to the crowds that “no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father” (as the result of which many in His days withdrew, John 6:65-66), would see the comfort of the unchurched visitor to be of paramount importance (nor, we should hasten to add, is the comfort of the church!).

Systems of theology, even profoundly biblical ones which were formulated in order to bring to finite minds some grasp of the infinite scope of God and His ways, sometimes become entrenched to the point where the system may be revered almost as much as the One whom it seeks to honor. At the very least, we are tempted to find comfort in a system: because we desperately (though perhaps not consciously) hope that it might bring a certain predictability and manageability to God, and because our system (invariably the “true” one) helps us feel a little more “in control” – what folly! Having corralled mystery (so we think), we leave little room for God to act and move outside our carefully crafted paradigms.

God in His glory and majesty and holiness and mystery and providential inscrutability supercedes to an infinite degree all attempts to contain or define Him. We could more easily catalog snowflakes or classify grains of sand! God has revealed to us many deep and wonderful truths about Himself in His Word, and in redemption has allowed us to see deep into His heart. But let us never presume to have fathomed the wonder of

His person! Let us accept with humility that we are concerning ourselves with holy things which are far beyond us; and let us bow before Him who with incomprehensible condescension has called us to be His own. And let us live life, and do church, and approach worship, with a profound sense of awe and gratitude; may we in our earthbound scurrying never lose sight of the One who looks from the heavens in love – that One Whose glory is over all (Isaiah 6:3).

*“Let them praise the name of the Lord,  
for His name alone is exalted;  
His glory is above earth and heaven.”  
(Ps. 148:13)*

May His glory be all our hope and all our aim and all our comfort.

***To Him be glory in the Church!***  
*(Ephes. 3:21)*

from *Viewpoint*  
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*“Biblical Principles of Worship” (twelve principles, of which the first is dealt with here) may be downloaded [here](#).*

## QUOTABLES

### *God and His Glory: the Subject of Our Worship*

“The uniqueness at the heart of Christianity is the glory of God manifest in the freedom of grace. God is glorious because He does not need the nations to work for Him. He is free to work for them. ‘The Son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many’ (Mark 10:45).”

(John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 32)

“The meaning of the universe is God going public for the glory of God.”

(John Piper, taped message)

“His is the right of preeminence by virtue of being God--the Creator, the Redeemer, the All in

All. His glory has intrinsic worth and permanence. Through the prophet He announces, ‘My glory I give to no other’ (Isa. 42:8; 48:11). What is involved here is the divine uniqueness, the right to be acknowledged as supreme.”

(E. F. Harrison, “Glory” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*)

“The purpose of theology is doxology--we study in order to praise.”

(J. I. Packer)

“There is only one end for which God created and formed the world and made us, and that is for His own exclusive glory and honor. There is

only one end for which our Lord redeemed His people, and that was to bring Him a revenue of glory. And when you and I find this thirst that God implants within our souls, it is only going to be satisfied when our souls are set on the same longing that God Himself has: for His glory and honor.”

(Eric Alexander, “Thirsting for God (Psalm 63),” taped message)

“Thesis Five: *Soli Deo Gloria*

We reaffirm that because salvation is of God and has been accomplished by God, it is for God's glory and that we must glorify him always. We must live our entire lives before the face of God, under the authority of God and for his glory alone. We deny that we can properly glorify God if our worship is confused with entertainment, if we neglect either Law or Gospel in our preaching, or if self-improvement, self-esteem or self-fulfillment are allowed to become alternatives to the gospel.”

(*The Cambridge Declaration of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals*)

“The ultimate missionary compulsion is not simply that there are people who are dying without knowing Christ, nor is it that God has given us the Great Commission to go out into the world; it is that there are areas of the world, whether here or to the ends of the earth, where God is being robbed of His glory.”

(Eric Alexander, sermon tape)

“We magnify God's glory not by supplementing it with effort, but by savoring it with joy.”

(John Piper, “God Is Most Glorified in Us When We Are Most Satisfied in Him,” in *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Spiritual Formation*, 74)

“In the creature's knowing, esteeming, loving, rejoicing in and praising God, the glory of God is both exhibited and acknowledged; his fullness is received and returned.”

(Jonathan Edwards, “The End for Which God Created the World,” quoted in John Hannah, *To God Be the Glory*, 25)

“The aim of all music is the glory of God.”

(J. S. Bach)

“It is important to note from Romans 1-11 that theology (our belief about God) and

doxology (our worship of God) should never be separated. On the one hand, there can be no doxology without theology. It is not possible to worship an unknown god. All true worship is a response to the self-revelation of God in Christ and Scripture, and arises from our reflection on who he is and what he has done. It was the tremendous truths of Romans 1-11 which provoked Paul's outburst of praise in verses 33-36 of chapter 11. The worship of God is evoked, informed and inspired by the vision of God. Worship without theology is bound to degenerate into idolatry. Hence the indispensable place of Scripture in both public and private devotion. It is the Word of God which calls forth the worship of God.

“On the other hand, there should be no theology without doxology. There is something fundamentally flawed about a purely academic interest in God. God is not an appropriate object for cool, critical, detached, scientific observation and evaluation. No, the true knowledge of God will always lead us to worship, as it did Paul. Our place is on our faces before him in adoration.

“As I believe Bishop Handley Moule said at the end of the last century, we must ‘beware equally of an undevotional theology and of an untheological devotion.’

(John Stott, *Romans: God's Good News For The World*, 311-12)

“We are called to live in the light of the gospel a life that honors and glorifies God, a life in which theology (our belief in God) and doxology (our worship of God) are beautifully blended together.”

“**No doxology without theology.** That is, no worship of God is possible without a knowledge and an understanding and a doctrine of God. Worship is not a mindless exercise.” (John Stott, taped message)

See John Piper's collection of “Biblical Texts Showing God's Zeal for His Own Glory”:

[http://www.desiringgod.org/library/tbi/desiring\\_god.html](http://www.desiringgod.org/library/tbi/desiring_god.html) (section 4)

## GUEST ARTICLE

### It's Wrong to Be Seeker Sensitive, Right?

Mention that you are “seeker-sensitive” and some people automatically assume that you have abandoned biblical Christianity. So let me address a few of the misconceptions, and then offer an understanding with which it is hard to argue:

**1. It is NOT about focusing *exclusively* on seekers.**

Such an exclusive focus is characteristic of so-called “seeker services,” but this is not the same thing as “seeker-sensitivity.” Further, it is a misconception to think that seekers cannot be reached in gatherings that are primarily (but not exclusively) devoted to worshiping God and edifying believers. Rather, as one writer put it, “Seekers are invited to participate fully in order to examine the fellowship of Christians at close quarters as insiders.”

**2. It is NOT about ignoring the needs of growing believers.**

This, of course, is related to the above, but it is important to clarify that seeker-sensitivity does not require giving less attention to the needs of believers in your ministry setting. We are commanded by our Lord to “make disciples,” which involves both evangelism and edification. We cannot ignore either aspect of fulfilling the Great Commission if we want our churches to grow.

**3. It is NOT about keeping up with the latest cultural fads.**

There are certainly passing fads in popular culture that provide us with special opportunities to connect and dialogue with the unchurched in our community (*The DaVinci Code* is a good example). But seeker-sensitivity is not a matter of adapting or responding to every whim of popular culture. It is really more about maintaining a proper cultural relevancy over the long haul, while at the same time remaining biblically faithful.

**4. It is NOT about abandoning traditional elements of worship.**

Of course, some things in our traditions have probably outlived their usefulness and deserve being discarded. Other things deserve being retained, without any change (esp. when they are clearly biblical). Still others deserve being retained, but in a repackaged form (for example, older hymns are of particular interest to those in the emerging generations, but not necessarily accompanied by a pipe organ).

What must be remembered is that there is not one style of worship or ministry that is “seeker-sensitive.” True seeker-sensitivity will be applied differently in different cultural (or sub-cultural) contexts, as well as over time. It is far more a matter of lifestyle or mindset of the people than a particular style of worship.

**5. It is NOT about compromising the truth of God's Word.**

First of all, we cannot do so as followers of Christ. But second, seekers are not looking for us to do so! Note what Thom Rainer discovered in his research: “One important lesson that we learned from the formerly unchurched is that we should never dilute biblical teachings for the sake of the unchurched.” As one person in his study put it “What really frustrated me was that I had a deep desire to understand the Bible, to hear in-depth preaching and teaching, but most of the preaching was so watered down that it was insulting to my intelligence.”

As Rick Warren clarifies: “A worship service does not have to be shallow to be seeker sensitive. The message doesn't have to be compromised, just understandable.” And this brings us to the positive understanding of seeker-sensitivity:

**6. Seeker-sensitivity is, quite simply, being sensitive to the presence of seekers in Christian gatherings, with the intention of helping them to become fellow-worshippers.**

This is the thrust of the primary biblical passage that reveals the concept (1 Cor 14:23-26), and it has to do with at least the following two principles:

**Hospitality**

Think of all of the thoughtful adjustments you make when you have guests over for dinner. Warren comments: "Is this being hypocritical? No. By doing these things, you are being sensitive and showing respect to your guests. In the same way, the spiritual food is unchanged in a seeker-sensitive service, but the presentation is more thoughtful and considerate of the guests present."

### **Intelligibility**

As one Bible scholar has said, "It would certainly be unscriptural to say that since worship is directed toward God, it doesn't matter whether

the worshipers understand it or not. We do not glorify Go if we fail to communicate on the human level." Further, says another scholar, "Only speech that can be understood by others has the potential for building up or edifying the congregation [including the seekers present]."

Surely there is nothing wrong with this, right?!

*David Detwiler*

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## THE LIGHTER SIDE

*HONESTY IN WORSHIP: If we sang what we really felt*

"Take My Life but Let Me Be"

"I Surrender Some"

"Have My Own Way, Lord"

"He's Quite A Bit to Me"

"All Hail the Influence of Jesus' Name"

"I Need Thee Once In a While"

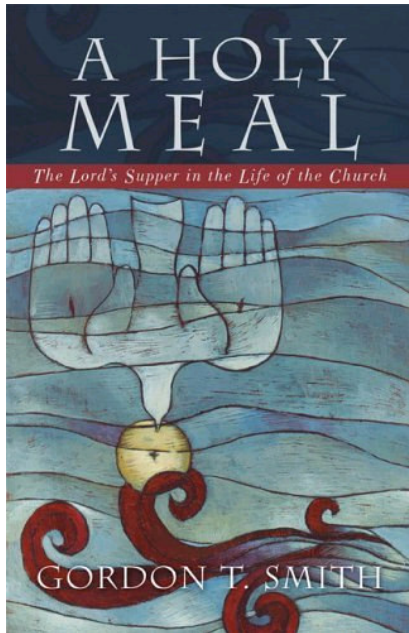
"We Give Thee but Still Think We Own"

"Pillow of Ages, Fluffed for Me"

"Sit Up, Sit Up for Jesus"

"Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like you"

## BOOK NOOK



Featured volume:

### *A Holy Meal: The Lord's Supper in the Life of the Church*

by Gordon T. Smith  
(Baker, 2005)

There is no doubt that the Lord's Supper suffers from serious neglect in much of the evangelical church. And when it is celebrated (if the somber tone it often takes may be considered a *celebration* at all!), it is all too often stuck at the end of the service and rushed through because little time has been left for it by the preacher.

Yet for most the Church's history a worship service would have been unthinkable without the Lord's Supper playing a prominent, if not predominant, part. Darrell Johnson tellingly points out in one of the endorsements on the back cover of the book: "Indeed, *eat* and *drink* are the only verbs of worship explicitly commanded by Jesus."

For this reason and many of others, we need to give serious attention

to the meaning and significance of the Lord's Supper.

Gordon T. Smith steps into this gap and in his brief volume explores the richness, depth and beauty of this "holy meal." His approach is thoroughly biblical, as he structures his book around seven themes tied to seven key New Testament passages relating to the Supper. His approach is irenic and utterly trans-denominational, encouraging us to look at our own traditions discriminatingly and others' traditions appreciatively. There is much to be learned both from Smith's content and from his warm pastoral approach to issues which have for so long divided God's people.

The themes and passages dealt with are:

1. Remembrance: The Lord's Supper as a Memorial (1 Corin. 11:24-26)
2. Communion: The Lord's Supper as Fellowship with Christ and with One Another (1 Corin. 10:14-17; 11:27-34)
3. Forgiveness: The Lord's Supper as a Table of Mercy (Matt. 26:26-28)
4. Covenant: The Lord's Supper as a Renewal of Baptismal Vows (Mark 14:22-25)
5. Nourishment: The Lord's Supper as Bread from Heaven (John 6:35-58)
6. Anticipation: The Lord's Supper as a Declaration of Hope (Luke 22:14-27)
7. Eucharist: The Lord's Supper as a Joyous Thanksgiving Celebration (Acts 2:46-47)

### EXCERPT FROM CHAPTER I

"We can so easily come to feel that we need no one. Our social context encourages us to make our own choices, live our own lives, and engage with others only when we think they have something to offer us. This is not a Christian spirituality. Further, it is an approach to life that does not foster true engagement with God or truly enable us to experience the full grace of being a Christian. The words of 1 John 1:3-4 remind us that joy is made complete when we are in fellowship with God and one another. Nothing so effectively mitigates against the propensity towards individual autonomy within our culture and within Western Christianity as the Lord's Supper. This meal is a means by which we see, feel, and taste that we are in this together. We need one another. We depend on one another. Together we will know God and grow in faith, hope, and love." (10-11)

## EVENTS



## Worthy is the Lamb

### Worship Conference

sponsored by Covenant Theological Seminary and the Saint Louis Worship Reformation Network of the Presbyterian Church in America  
speakers include Rev. Scotty Smith, Dr, Bryan Chapell, Dr, Mark Dalbey

March 13-15, 2006

Covenant Theological Seminary, Saint Louis

<http://www.covenantseminary.edu/news/WorshipConf06.asp>



March 17-18, 2006

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*A conference for those who prompt and facilitate an environment conducive to worship; namely, Pastors, Ministers of Music, Worship Leaders, Audio & Video Tech teams, Praise Band & Praise Team leaders & members, Worship Committees, Children's Worship leaders, Student (youth) leaders. Sponsored by the Worship & music Ministry of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.*

<http://www.tnbaptist.org/CalendarEvent.asp?eventid=533&cat=music&subcat=events04>



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## The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts

*15th Annual Wheaton Theology Conference, April 6-8, 2006*

*Keynote Speakers:*

*Jeremy Begbie (Cambridge) & Roger Lundin (Wheaton College)*

[http://www.wheaton.edu/Theology/conferences/theo\\_conf.html](http://www.wheaton.edu/Theology/conferences/theo_conf.html)



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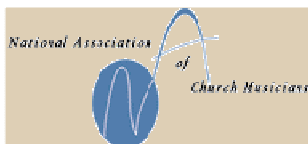
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