

♪ Worship Notes ♪

Volume 3, Number 10 ♪ October 2008

THEME: Worship and the Pastor

PLEASE SHARE WITH YOUR PASTOR!

The Pastor and Worship Leadership

Virtually nothing is said in the New Testament about worship leadership as we know and practice it today. Indeed, it is *Christ's* ministry to lead his people into the Father's presence in worship (see Hebrews 2:12; also *Worship Notes* 1.8 [August 2006]). Christ in his present priestly role is also called a "minister [Greek *leitourgos*] in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle" (Heb 8:1-2). As the verbal form *leitourgeo* was a common designation for the tabernacle/temple ministry of the Jewish priesthood, this is one more indication in Hebrews of Christ's ministry superceding that of the Old Covenant and replacing it with its heavenly antitype. And so the pastor's role in the area of worship, as well as of proclamation and preaching, is one that may be extrapolated from the role of Christ whose ministry it in fact is.

Corporate worship is (or should be) another aspect of *the ministry of the Word*—it should be a two-way dialogue between God and his people, whereby they hear from God through Scripture and respond (as voiced or led by the pastor and other leaders) with their praises, confessions and petitions (see *Worship Notes* 1.5 [May 2006]). John Witvliet, Director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, has written:

Far too often, preaching and worship are segregated entities—in publications, in seminary curricula, and in the practice of preparing for worship in local congregations. For centuries, however, preaching and worship have been inextricably intertwined. Preaching needs worship as its context, and worship needs preaching as its anchor. Not infrequently, preachers sense that a thoughtful worship service has actually helped "preach" the sermon, or to make up for a poor one. And musicians, artists, and worship leaders regularly observe that unless their contributions function as complementary forms of gospel proclamation to the ser-

mon, they will end up feeling like second-rate liturgical interruptions rather than integral elements of Christian worship. Whatever liturgical style we adopt, preaching and liturgy need to be worked at together.¹

Allen Ross concurs: "Our congregations must be guided in the use of music in worship by properly trained spiritual leaders who can develop the theology of music and use it in the organization of the services."²

Yet, as Willimon laments, "Too often our 'Protestant freedom' in worship has left us free to wander aimlessly in the maze of our own liturgical ignorance and confusion."³ Ronald Byars insists:

Worship requires much more attention than most of us have been accustomed to give it. . . . The way we worship shapes the kind of church we shall become. It cannot be wise to leave what we shall become in the hands of those who have been trained to think that the way we worship is a matter of indifference. . . . Ministers, musicians, educators, and church officers will do well to spend more rather than less time learning, pondering, consulting, reflecting, studying, designing, experimenting in the interests of an authentic, biblical worship. . . . They will spend more time, rather than less, on this first priority, on which everything else in the church's life ultimately depends.⁴

The pastor needs to be actively involved in the church's ministry of corporate worship, as a

¹ John D. Witvliet, "Isaiah in Christian Liturgy: Recovering Textual Contrasts and Correcting Theological Astigmatism," *Calvin Theological Journal* 39 (2004): 135-56.

² Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 442.

³ William Willimon, *Worship as Pastoral Care*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), 19.

⁴ Ronald P. Byars, *The Future of Protestant Worship: Beyond the Worship Wars* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 7.

central if not the decisive defining activity for the people of God in his congregation. This involvement may include such functions as:

Student

Before all else, the pastor must be a student of worship. He must include this vital area in his ongoing program of biblical, theological and historical inquiry and enrichment. And as will be advocated below, this impetus should begin during his seminary training; and it should carry on into ministry as a central spiritual and ministerial focus. Overseer. The pastor is usually seen as the primary vision-caster for the church, and he should use his platform to promote a unified vision for worship. He should guide the discussion of the leadership and people concerning the why, as well as the how and what, of the church's worship. He should bring his professional expertise in Bible and theology and church dynamics and pastoral ministry to bear on the worship issues with which the church is engaged.

Champion

Worship has seen such a huge growth in importance and focus in recent decades, that it has been observed that sometimes a pastor may feel intimidated by the worship leader or his ministry. A far better route is for the pastor to nurture a relationship of trust and mutual ministry with the one immediately responsible for leading the corporate praises of the congregation (whether a paid staff member or a volunteer), with a view to presenting a united front to the church. The service should be seen and valued as worship, from beginning to end, and the false dichotomy between preaching and "worship" resisted at every turn.

Role model

The most enduring image of this writer's visit to First Evangelical Free Church in Fullerton, California many years ago, was to observe the level of engagement that then-pastor Church Swindoll showed during the time of corporate worship. There was no question as to the value he put on that part of the service (though probably many in the congregation were there primarily to hear him preach). A pastor can set a tremendous example for the congregation of the importance of corporate worship (or, conversely, can set a terrible ex-

ample through inattention or looking bored or focused only on his preaching spot to come).

Planner (or Co-planner)

This does not necessarily require musical knowledge. The time of corporate worship (in fact, much more than is usually the case in evangelical churches today) should revolve the reading, praying and singing of God's Word. The pastor can help immensely to see that there is a healthy balance of revelation and response in the worship service.

Co-leader (or Co-leader)

Another strong statement of a high view of corporate worship on the part of a pastor is when he takes an active role in the leading of that part of the service, complementing the worship leader's role (rather than sitting distractedly, waiting for the "main event" when he gets up to preach). This of course does not presume any musical ability; rather it can take the form of Scripture reading, leading in prayer or responsive readings, and making appropriate pastoral comments along the way.

Chief Evaluator

The pastor can play an important pastoral role in the life and ministry of the worship leader by giving careful, constructive feedback (positive as well as negative) on the previous Sunday's service. Instructor. The pastor needs to preach and teach on worship in the church. This is a critical lack in most evangelical churches today. Pastors need to be students of worship as well as of culture; and they need to proclaim a proper biblical perspective on the purpose, principles, and Object of worship. Most worship problems today are issues of discipleship and maturity, not of music styles. This is where the pastor is uniquely postured to challenge his flock to rise up their petty obsession with personal wants, preferences, and agendas—and to be the church, striving for unity (Ephes 4:1-3) by considering one another more important than oneself (Phil 1:3), by preferring one another in love (Rom 12:10), by making concessions to one another for the good of the whole. This will not just happen; pastors need to be actively and continually engaged in calling their people to rise up their inherent selfishness and to see what it means to function practically as the body of Christ—especially in this often heated area of worship.

QUOTABLES

The Pastor and Worship

“The most important thing a pastor does is stand in the pulpit every Sunday and say, ‘Let us worship God.’ If that ceases to be the primary thing I do in terms of my energy, my imagination, and the way I structure my life, then I no longer function as a pastor. I pick up some other identity.

“I cannot fail to call the congregation to worship God, to listen to his Word, to offer themselves to God. Worship becomes a place where we have our lives redefined for us.”

(Eugene Peterson, “The Business Of Making Saints,” *Leadership Spring* 1997, 22)

“The pastor explores the meaning of worship and its practice throughout the Church and guides the parish’s musicians and worship committee theologically and biblically to design the best, most integrated and congruent way to immerse the worshipers in the ‘glory and strength’ of the Lord revealed in the texts for the day.”

(Marva Dawn, *How Shall We Worship? Biblical Guidelines for the Worship Wars*, 148)

“What the pastor models or does not model in his personal worship among the congregation, what he teaches or does not teach on worship theology and expression, and what he validates or ignores during the service—all of these have enormous ramifications on how far the congregation will follow the designated worship leader.

(Ronald B. Allen, *The Wonder of Worship*, 237)

“An uninvolved or distracted pastor does not communicate that singing is unimportant, but that exalting God is unimportant.”

(Bob Kauflin, “Worship as Pastoral Care”)

“Worship music is part of the ministry of the Word.”

(Leonard Payton, “How Shall We Sing to God?” in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, 204)

“Liturgy is hugely dependent on the pastor’s pleasure in reading it.”

(Marva Dawn, *A Royal Waste of Time*)

“What is needed in congregations today [is] not so much another songbook, a new prayerbook, a fancier sound system, or better worship space, but discerning, nurturing leaders with the instincts to connect specific strategies and practices with a rich spiritual vision of worship and the imagination and persistence to enable congregations to practice them.”

(John D. Witvliet, “Asking Deeper Questions about Worship”

[http://www.cardiphonia.com/pdf/Eight Trends in Worship. Witvliet.pdf](http://www.cardiphonia.com/pdf/Eight_Trends_in_Worship_Witvliet.pdf))

“Some pastors want to turn the entire area of music and worship over to their worship leader. This is a serious mistake. God has given every pastor the ultimate responsibility of being the worship leader, or lead worshiper, for his church. A pastor may not be a musician, but his love for seeing God’s greatness proclaimed and responded to must be something others can learn from and follow. Therefore, a pastor must first be a worshiper of God. No one should be more passionate for God’s glory than the leaders of Christ’s church. A church’s experience of God will generally not go beyond the worship life of their pastor.”

(Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters* [online], Tuesday, October 25, 2005)

“A church will not grow as a worshipping body beyond the worship of the real worship leader—the senior pastor.”

(Ronald B. Allen, *The Wonder of Worship*, 237)

“The sermon, if it really is a sermon, is most certainly worship. For the faithful exposition of the Word of God is itself at the same time both Word of God (the divine action of worship) and also hearing of the Word of God (the primary human action of worship), the preacher leading the congregation in its work of hearing.”

C.E. B. Cranfield, “Divine and Human Action: The Biblical Concept of Worship,” *Interpretation* 12.4 [Oct 1958]: 393)

“Being the primary worship leader also means helping people understand what biblical worship entails. . . . That’s why pastors need to study the theology of worship. . . . If we want to serve our church, serve our worship leader, and please God, we’ll find the time to read [important books on worship] and to teach our church what we learn on this most important topic.”

(Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God*, 251-52)

“A church’s response to God’s greatness and grace rarely rises above the example of its pastor. Your congregation is watching and listening to you on Sunday, and not just when you preach. What are they learning? What kind of example do you provide for them?”

“If you fiddle with your sermon notes while everyone else in praising God, they may infer that singing is optional. If you look around anxiously make sure the technical details are being taken care of, they might conclude that the priority of Sunday morning is the performance, not their participation. If you sing halfheartedly, they may assume that passion for God isn’t that important. But know this: your church is watching you.”

(Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God*, 251)

Five Suggestions for Pastors:

1. Recognize your own role in leading worship.
2. Know what to look for in a worship leader: (a) humility; (b) godly character; (c) love for good theology; (d) leadership gifting; (e) musical skill.
3. Equip and encourage your worship leader.
4. Be faithful to plan and evaluate.
5. Resolve conflict biblically.

(Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God*, 250-58)

“God has called pastors to feed, lead, care for, and protect the members of the church. . . . Let’s not overlook how corporate worship—thoughtfully, passionately, and skillfully led—can be a means of fulfilling those goals.

As a pastor, you can feed the church by making your worship leader chooses songs for their theologically balanced lyrics, not for their popu-

larity. You can lead the church by directing their attention to what’s important and by explaining the role of music in worship. You exercise care when you highlight songs that remind the church of God’s promises and faithfulness in the midst of their trials, especially as he has revealed them to us in the gospel. You protect your church from the world by finding songs that remind them of God’s holiness and the infinitely superior joy that Christ offers us.”

(Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God*, 251)

“Preaching is not just expository, but expository exultation. . . . Christian preaching, as part of the corporate worship of Christ’s church, is an expository exultation over the glories of God in his word, designed to lure God’s people from the fleeting pleasures of sin into the sacrificial path of obedient satisfaction in him.”

(John Piper, *God’s Passion for His Glory*, 39)

“Preaching is not an interruption of worship but an integral part of the liturgy, the work of worship for both preacher and listener.”

(Robert Esbjornson, “Preaching As Worship,” *Worship* 48:3:167)

“Preaching is a congregational act of worship, not just a monologue from one individual. . . . Preaching facilitates dialogue between people and God as well as between the preacher and other members of a church. When sermons are delivered by preachers whose purposes are oriented to the glory of God, hearers of the sermons are engaged in a conversation with God.”

C. Welton Gaddy, *The Gift of Worship*, 72.

“Preaching is meant by God to catch people up into worship, not to be a practical human application after worship. The aim of preaching is to deal with divorce worshipfully, and to deal with teenagers worshipfully, and to deal with anger worshipfully. Preaching exalts the centrality of God in all of life or it is not Christian preaching. . . . Preaching is meant to be and to kindle God-exalting worship.”

(John Piper, “Preaching as Worship: Meditations on Expository Exultation”

<http://www.beginningwithmoses.org/bigger/preachpiper.htm>)

GLOBAL WORSHIP

A Look at the Work of an Ethnodoxologist

*Wendy Adkins is a missionary working
with Africa Inland Mission International
through the Africa Inland Church Missionary College
in Eldoret, Kenya.
Many thanks to her for permission
to reprint this fascinating report.*



Thanks for your prayers for me and the students at the AIC Missionary College, Eldoret, Kenya, during this last week as we spent time discovering what the Bible teaches about music and also composed some incredible songs in the traditional styles of five different people groups. The students were great and quickly grasped the idea of how they can effectively communicate the truths of the gospel in song.

The highlight of the week for me was when a Tanzanian couple from the Wasukuma people group, composed a song based on Matthew 6:24. The song addressed the traditional practice of seeking blessings for young children from witch doctors. In presenting the song, the couple acted out a scenario where a Christian couple took a cow's tail whisk that the mother had spit upon to the witch doctor. The witch doctor invited a demon to inhabit the whisk and gave a bracelet charm to the father to put on the baby's wrist. The whisk was hung on the wall of their house and the baby was decorated with the bracelet. All was going well until the church elder came for a visit! When the fetish and charm were discovered, the biblical truths were explained. The elder's wife then led in the song as she danced around the couple singing, "Is it possible to serve two masters? You can follow traditions (she held up a cow's tail whisk) or you can follow the Bible (she held up a Bible). But you can't follow two masters." It was great observing how quickly this couple had learned the power of communicating culturally relevant teaching through song.



Thursday 11 to Saturday 13
September 2008

CONFERENCE REPORT

This was a tremendous event. Those who planned it were greatly encouraged by the response of those attending, who were thrilled that a forum of this sort was made available. There was represented a wide breadth of traditions and practices among British evangelicals—from Anglicans of many different varieties to Baptists to those from a Christian community on the island of Iona (off the coast of Scotland)—and there was a wonderful sense of unity among this wide diversity.

A pre-conference seminar featured representatives of four widely divergent worship traditions in the evangelical tradition in the U.K. This panel shared their insights into current trends and future prospects in worship. The four were Graham Kendrick (free church/contemporary tradition), Mark Earey (liturgical Anglican tradition), Joel Edwards (Afro-Caribbean tradition), and Jonny Baker (alternative worship). It was a fascinating and encouraging time.

The main conference was a packed schedule that included contained plenary sessions (including musical worship and worship through preaching), dozens of different seminars, and evening worship times. I gave a seminar twice on Thematic Worship, with engaged and lively discussions; and twice formed part of a panel that addressed the topic of “Jesus Our Worship Leader.”



Thanks to the generosity of Crossway Books, I was able to bring with me 48 copies of Bob Kauflin’s new book *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (which is difficult to get over there). These were distributed to the presenters and others at the conference.

One of the most exciting moments for me was the last morning, when the brand-new (as of two weeks) Principal of LST, Simon Steer, not only gave a resounding endorsement of the centrality of worship in theological education, but chose to speak on Psalm 67 and the integral relationship of worship and missions! Amen to that!!

For a few photos of the event (as well as some from the continuation of my trip in the north of the country), please go [HERE](#).

COMING NEXT MONTH:

The Ministry of Song



WORSHIP NOTES is a free monthly online digest of reflections, views, news and reviews concerning biblical worship. It is produced by Ron Man as a publication of *Worship Resources*, a department of Greater Europe Mission devoted to “strengthening the body of Christ in the U.S., Europe and around the world by promoting the priority, understanding and practice of God-centered, Christ-exalting, Biblically-based worship.” To subscribe, please go to

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