

1 Churches Worship God

Everything the church does is aimed in at least one of three directions: upward toward God in worship; inward toward itself in growing; or outward toward the world in sharing the good news.

A church building is sometimes called a “house of worship.” This is appropriate because its main function is to provide a place for people to worship the Lord together. People were made for worship. If they do not worship God, they will worship something else: money, fame, pleasure, nature, idols—or themselves! But they will never be satisfied until they learn to worship God.

Jesus taught us that our heavenly Father desires our worship. Though all the hosts of heaven are praising Him continually, He wants our worship because it brings us into fellowship with Him.

The Plan

- A. Worship Together
- B. Worship With Music
- C. Worship by Prayer
- D. Worship in Giving
- E. Worship Through the Holy Spirit

The Goals

- 1. Describe the basis of true worship.
- 2. Give biblical principles for using music in worship.
- 3. State truths concerning prayer as a form of worship.
- 4. Explain how giving is a part of worship.
- 5. State the ministry of the Holy Spirit in worship.

A. WORSHIP TOGETHER

Goal 1. Describe the basis of true worship.

It is Sunday morning. Mary, a new convert, has come with her fiancé, Timothy, for the first time to a worship service in his church. Timothy is a new convert too, but he has the advantage of a Christian background. Mary's questions arouse his interest.

"But where is God?" asks Mary looking around. "How can I worship when there is no image to kneel to?"

"You don't need an image to worship God, Mary," he answers. "You used to bow before images, but with no real love. God is a Spirit. We can't see Him with our natural eyes. But when we are born again and have His Spirit in us we can worship Him in spirit and in truth. That is what He wants. Love Him and praise Him in your heart while we sing, and in everything else that we do."

The people are now singing joyful songs about God's greatness and His love. Sometimes they clap their hands while they sing. Mary is not used to that, but soon she finds herself smiling and clapping too. Then the song leader tells the people to greet each other. Several shake hands and welcome Mary. She no longer feels like a stranger. She feels closer to the Lord and closer to the other people.

"It's like one big happy family!" she whispers to Timothy.

It is true that a believer can and should worship God at any time and in any place. It is needful, however, for people to worship together. People are not made to stand alone; we need each other. Believers meeting together, sharing and helping one another, grow strong together!

Hebrews 10:25 advises, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." The Lord has commanded that we meet together and He has also promised to bless those who obey Him in this. "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20).

Believers are called the "body of Christ," with Jesus as its head. The Lord wants His body to be in unity, with all the parts working harmoniously. One way to accomplish this is to meet at a set time and place for worship so His Holy Spirit can unite us.

Application

- 1** Circle the letter in front of each correct completion to the sentence. As believers we come together for worship because
- a)** we cannot worship alone.
 - b)** it helps us to grow spiritually.
 - c)** we want to obey God's commands.
 - d)** Jesus has promised to be with us.

Check your answers with those at the end of this lesson.



WORSHIP WITH MUSIC

Goal 2. Give biblical principles for using music in worship.

Congregational singing is good for the body of Christ because it relieves tension, brings healing, builds up faith, and helps bring about the togetherness or unity needed for true worship in the body of Christ. Another way to worship is for one or more persons, or a choir, to sing special songs. Listeners should glorify God rather than glorify the singers.

In the Old Testament the people of Israel sang the Psalms. The book of Psalms was their hymn-book. They considered singing to be a very important means of worship. Early Christian believers also sang Scripture. Then gradually hymns and other songs were added. The apostle Paul instructed the church to “speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19).

Our songs can be expressions of thankful praise to God, our testimonies put to music. The words, singers, and musicians should glorify God, for God’s Word says, “He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me” (Psalm 50:23).

Before Jesus came, people sacrificed animals; but since Christ died for us such sacrifices are not necessary. Instead, we offer the Lord the sacrifices of prayer and praise. (Read Hebrews 13:15.)

The congregational singing in the church that Mary and Timothy attend is accompanied by a piano and an organ. Members of an orchestra play a number of different instruments. The music thrills Mary, who exclaims, “I never knew an orchestra could be in a church!”


“They are playing and worshipping the Lord with their talents,” Timothy replies. “People of the Old Testament praised the Lord with all kinds of instruments. Read these words taken from the hymn-book of the Bible:

Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. (Psalm 150:3–6)

Music brings people together in worship. No wonder music has been called the universal language.

Application

Circle the letter in front of the correct sentence completions.

- 2** Our singing becomes worship when we
- a)** can sing choruses from memory.
 - b)** sing praises to God from our hearts.
 - c)** sing with others who are worshipping.
- 3** Songs of worship are songs about
- a)** what we purpose to do for God.
 - b)** nature and the world around us.
 - c)** the Lord's greatness and goodness.
- 4** Circle the letter in front of each true statement.
- a)** Musical instruments are used in church because they create a pleasant background for the service.
 - b)** God can only be worshipped with quiet, restful music.
 - c)** Musicians should be careful to glorify God and not themselves when they perform.
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WORSHIP BY PRAYER

Goal 3. State truths concerning prayer as a form of worship.

Soon the people begin praying together. “Why do they close their eyes?” whispers Mary.

“To block out their surroundings while they talk to God” answers Timothy. “They are worshipping in prayer.”

Mary hears people saying, “Praise the Lord!” “Thank you, Jesus!” Some people raise their hands in worship, and the sound of voices becomes louder. It seems strange to Mary.

“You will get used to it,” Timothy reassures her. “In a church like this people will often pray together as each person prays individually to the Lord. In prayer we worship Him by thanking and praising Him.”

After a while the pastor calls on a man to lead in prayer. Mary is surprised that he does not read the prayer—yet he prays beautifully. When he finishes, many people say “Amen!”

“What does that mean?” asks Mary.

“*Amen* is a Hebrew word meaning ‘may it be so.’ We say amen when we agree with what has been said,” explained Timothy.

Worshipping the Lord in prayer was common in the early church. Acts 2 records that “every day they continued to meet together . . . praising God” (vv. 46–47). The Bible also says that believers joined together in prayer to God (Acts 4:24).

Our love for the Lord finds fulfillment in worship and fellowship with Him. We should allow worship in prayer to be meaningful, living, and dynamic even as it was in the early church. Otherwise it becomes meaningless, lifeless, and empty. The church must continue to be a house of prayer.

Application

- 5** Circle the letter in front of each true statement.
- a)** Fellowship with God in prayer is a joyful experience because we love Him.
 - b)** We say “amen” after prayers because it means that we are finished talking.
 - c)** We usually close our eyes in prayer to help shut out our surroundings.
 - d)** Jesus called the place where believers met “a house of prayer.”
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WORSHIP IN GIVING

Goal 4. Explain how giving is a part of worship.

Mary is puzzled when the pastor announces, “We shall worship the Lord by our gifts: His tithes and our offerings.”

“How can we worship the Lord with money?” she asks.

“When we give because we love God and are thankful, that is a way of worship,” answers Timothy. “I’ll explain more later.”

While the ushers pass the offering bags, the orchestra plays a hymn in worship to the Lord. People praise the Lord softly. Mary sees that giving to the Lord can be a joyful experience and a means of worship.

Later she learned that in some churches people walk to the front of the church to give their gifts. But no matter what method is used, a tenth of all that we earn belongs to God. (See Leviticus 27:30, 32.) This is called the tithe. Whatever we give above that is our offering. It, too, should be an act of worship. (Read Proverbs 3:9–10 and 1 Corinthians 16:2.)

Application

6 Tell in your own words how giving can be an act of worship.

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WORSHIP THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Goal 5. State the ministry of the Holy Spirit in worship.

The congregation is singing softly and worshipfully, many with their hands raised. Mary notices some with tears rolling down their faces. Timothy explains that they are not unhappy, but moved with love for the Lord. Then Mary hears singing in words she does not understand. The voices blend in a different, yet beautiful, harmony.

“This is what Paul meant when he said, ‘I will sing with my spirit,’” whispered Timothy. It brought a strange feeling of peace and rest into Mary’s heart. It felt as if God was right there!

As the sounds fade away the pastor rises to speak. Worship and praise by the congregation prepares them for receiving God’s Word.

Augustine, a great church leader of the fifth century, wrote, “You have made us, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you.” One effect of worship through the Holy Spirit is that people feel God’s presence and find spiritual rest and satisfaction in Him. This satisfaction is felt throughout their lives—in work, play, and rest.

Another effect of worship in the Holy Spirit is true freedom or release. As we yield to the Holy Spirit He delivers us from fear, worry, resentment, selfishness, hate, and all emotional hurts. Jesus becomes more precious and real as people worship

Him in the Spirit. It also helps us have greater unity; for “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

A third wonderful effect of worship in the Spirit is healing for our bodies. This may be a gradual strengthening, or it could be quite dramatic. Evangelist Hattie Hammond tells of an unusual interruption in one of her meetings. A woman gasping for breath was brought in on a stretcher. A chemical container had exploded in her face, burning and blinding her, and friends had rushed her to the church for prayer. Ms. Hammond was about to pray for her, but then she stopped.

Turning to the congregation, she said, “The Lord is telling me to call on everyone to worship Him! Come on, everyone! Worship Him! Worship Jesus!”

What was she doing, telling people to worship instead of praying for the dying woman? But as people responded in praise to the Lord, a wave of worship swept over them. It was the moving of the Holy Spirit! Then suddenly, rising above the sounds of praise, came the sound of another voice—soaring in beautiful song in the Spirit. To her astonishment Hammond discovered it was coming from the woman on the stretcher! God had healed her completely while people worshipped in the Spirit!

You may never have seen anything quite as dramatic as this, but there is healing quality in true worship in the Spirit. The apostle Paul summarized worship through the Holy Spirit when he spoke of those “who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3).

As churches follow this teaching, they truly become houses of worship. The church building itself is not most important.

The main purpose for its existence should be for the worship of God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit.

Application

- 7** The place where Christians meet for worship should always be
 - a)** beautiful for worship.
 - b)** humble and plain.
 - c)** in a nice part of town.
 - d)** where people are free to worship.

8 List three effects of worship in the Spirit.

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Check Your Answers

- 1** **b)** it helps us to grow spiritually.
c) we want to obey God's commands.
d) Jesus has promised to be with us.
- 6** Your answer. We can show our love for God and for others by giving.
- 2** **b)** sing praises to God from our hearts.
- 3** **c)** the Lord's greatness and goodness.
- 7** **d)** where people are free to worship.
- 4** **c)** is true.
- 8** Spiritual rest and satisfaction, freedom, healing, unity, sense of God's presence.
- 5** **a), c), and d)** are true.

