

Worship

1.) Worship always has to do with the 3rd Commandment
- Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy, therefore, worship must always be focused on the true rest and holiness of God, not the flesh or entertainment.

2.) Worship is always the response of a Christian, not something that should cater to an unbeliever or dechurched or unchurched, etc. Worship is also spiritual and just like the first covenant, the new covenant also has specific regulations for worship, namely worshipping God acceptably with reverence and awe and not giving the slightest appearance that God is some how trivial, shallow, fleshly, entertaining or something the dechurched or unbelievers can come close to understanding. Catering to them is not worshipping in spirit and in truth, nor is it understanding the fact that they need faith in order to worship. A watered down service, waters down our Savior and does a disservice to everyone.

John 4:24 "God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Romans 12:1-2 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship."

Philippians 3:2-3 "For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh."

Hebrews 9:1 "Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary."

Hebrews 12:28-29 "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our 'God is a consuming fire.'"

3.) Every worship service should be for the edification of the believer, not to eliminate offenses for the dechurched or unbeliever, because the cross itself is an offense to them. Worship should never be for the lowest common denominator or to dummy things down, unless your entire audience happens to be children and even then you have to be very careful you're not insulting their intelligence or simply catering to their flesh or entertaining for the sake of entertaining. God is still a consuming fire and all of our worship should reflect that.

4.) The Sabbath was meant to be a day of rest and a focus on forgiveness, not a change of venue or form that emphasizes contemporary, man-made, forced "praise" music, rock music or any other type of music that appeals to the flesh and not the Spirit. [Just as a side note, I noticed my daughter's math book has changed things a lot since I was a child - not content, but form. They now have colorful pages, highlighted paragraphs, easily read graphs and charts, etc. One could argue that they have made a lot of progress with math books, since mine were mostly in black and white and not necessarily pleasing to the eye.

However, when you look at the statistics, they show that children do not know math better today than they did when

I was a child. In fact, they know it less. The same goes for reading. We now have a multitude of reading forms, especially including the computer, etc. However, the rate of illiteracy is still extremely high. What's my point? Changing the form does not always accomplish greater results and sometimes they even make things worse - especially when it comes to changing worship forms without a very Biblical and valid, legitimate reason.]

5.) Form is not always neutral nor adiaphora. Ours is a theology of the cross, not a theology of glory. Form is always determined by our theology, not by our culture or by the dechurched, especially since God calls us out of our culture and specifically tells us not to conform to the culture. For instance, without compromising, Daniel found a way to live by God's standards in a culture that did not honor God and he didn't cater to anyone. Pretty much every "contemporary" service I've seen today emphasizes the Reformed disdain for the sacraments and offers entertainment instead of edification. Hymns are pushed aside for contemporary fleshly music. Do we really want to worship like the Reformed? Do they really have something better to offer? True praise runs deep and flows freely, it's not forced by some kind of special "praise service."

Psalm 103:1 Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy Name."

6.) How does contemporary music move us to praise from the depth of our souls and with all our inmost being? Even little children recognize shallow music when they hear it.

You must always ask, "Is our worship leading us to and focusing on holiness, or God as a consuming fire?"

Romans 12:1-2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

1 Peter 1:14-16 "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

7.) Worship should always show reverence to God and emphasize holiness. When was the last time you encouraged people to bow down and worship, instead of tapping their feet or getting all giddy excited? For instance:

Exodus 4:31, "They bowed down and worshiped."

Exodus 12:27 "The people bowed down and worshiped."

Exodus 23:23-24 "Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces.

Exodus 23:33 "Do not let them live in your land, or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you."

Exodus 34:8-9 "Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped."

Deuteronomy 8:19 "If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them,

I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed."

Deuteronomy 11:16-17 "Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them."

Deuteronomy 12:4-5 "You must not worship the LORD your God in their way."

Deuteronomy 12:31 "You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates."

8.) Worship music should be Biblical, which generally means psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, not raucous bacchanal:

Acts 16:25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing **hymns** to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

Romans 15:9 So that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing **hymns** to Your Name."

Ephesians 5:19 Speak to one another with **psalms, hymns and spiritual songs**. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:16 Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you **sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs** with gratitude in your hearts to God.

9.) There is no Biblical evidence that a worship service should ever cater to or focus on anyone other than the believer. If having to explain why we use candles, gowns, paraments, altars, etc becomes a barrier to reaching out, then we must unhesitatingly quit using those hindrances in every single occasion, otherwise it becomes hypocritical at best. To create an occasional service to supposedly eliminate all hindrances is impossible, not to mention ludicrous. You will always have people that make excuses about not coming to church, simply because it's in a building and not out in nature; because there are pictures on the wall and that's idolatry; because there are hypocrites; because they don't like the color of the carpeting; because they don't like the color of the people; because there are not enough young people; because there are not enough old people; because the pastor is male and not female; because women can't vote; because the sermons are boring; because holding a hymnal and following directions are too difficult; because it's too far to drive; because it's the only day they have to sleep in; because church people are mean and nasty; blah, blah, blah... Instead of seeing what we do as a hindrance, we should see it as an opportunity to explain why we do what we do and how important our focus on God's holiness, truth, forgiveness and Word truly is. If it's too much trouble to explain these things, then either change them entirely or

quit. But don't fool yourself into thinking, that just because you change a few things once in a while, you are going to somehow erase hindrances, offenses, walls, etc. To be quite honest, the wall that needs to be broken down is not worldly, but unbelief. The dechurched need to be filled with faith, so they aren't so critical of what is going on inside of a church. Always remember, faith only comes from a strong emphasis on Law and Gospel and a worship service that reflects and focuses on that completely - not from dumbing anything down or catering to the lowest common denominator.

10.) Historically, worship within the Lutheran Church has always been liturgical, with an emphasis on hymns, and for a very good reason. It maintains a strong focus on Christ and the Word, plus maintains the reverence and awe that God demands. It is also a strong reflection on how the Christian Church throughout the ages has conducted worship services. Also, the church has historically been considered a hospital for the sin sick soul. That's enough to drive most anyone away who hates to see pain and suffering. Besides, how does catering to the dechurched bring the balm of Gilead to the very depths of the sin sick soul? When I'm worshipping, I want a serious minister surgeon who can do surgery on my soul, not some kind of clergy clown who can't do much more than make me smile. Just who are we trying to serve? You either have to have thought long and hard about changing the form of worship and have Biblical, valid and thoughtful reasons that can be written out and explained or be a complete fool, fooling around with God's medicine for the

soul and depicting it as discreditable. In my not always so humble opinion, if someone is that bored, frustrated or disdainful towards liturgical worship, they should start questioning their theology and focus. Worship is not neutral.

The following excerpts from the Lutheran Confessions will explain what I mean:

Your Imperial Majesty will undoubtedly discover that the forms of teaching and of ceremonies observed among us are not so intolerable as those ungodly and malicious men represent. It can readily be judged that nothing contributes so much to the maintenance of dignity in public worship and the cultivation of reverence and devotion among the people as the proper observance of ceremonies in the churches. *The Augsburg Confession, Articles in Which an Account is Given of the Abuses Which Have Been Corrected*

The people are also admonished concerning the value and use of the sacrament and the great consolation it offers to anxious consciences, that they may learn to believe in God and ask for and expect whatever is good from God. Such worship pleases God, and such use of the sacrament nourishes devotion to God. *The Augsburg Confession, Articles in Which an Account is Given of the Abuses Which Have Been Corrected, Article XXIV The Mass*

In former times there has been great controversy about the power of bishops, and some have improperly confused

the power of the church. From this confusion great wars and tumults have resulted, while the pontiffs, relying on the power of the keys, have instituted new forms of worship and burdened consciences. These wrongs have long since been rebuked in the church by devout and learned men. *The Augsburg Confession, Articles in Which an Account is Given of the Abuses Which Have Been Corrected, Article XXVII Ecclesiastical Power*

The first mode of justification, is that men merit grace by good works — first by the merit of congruity, then by the merit of condignity. This mode is a doctrine of reason. Being blind to the uncleanness of the heart, reason thinks that it pleases God if it does good, but when men are in great peril they add other forms of worship to get rid of the terrors of conscience. *Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article IV, Justification, Reply to the Opponents' Arguments*

Accordingly, even if the bishop of Rome did possess the primacy by divine right, he should not be obeyed inasmuch as he defends impious forms of worship and doctrines which are in conflict with the Gospel. On the contrary, it is necessary to resist him as Antichrist. *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, The Marks of the Antichrist*

On the other hand, those who agree with the pope and defend his doctrines and forms of worship defile themselves with idolatry and blasphemous opinions, make themselves guilty of the blood of the godly whom the pope persecutes, detract from the glory of God, and hinder the

welfare of the church by so strengthening errors and other crimes as to impose them on all posterity. *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, The Marks of the Antichrist*

And it is the wickedness and tyranny of the bishops that give occasion to schism and discord, for Paul commands that bishops who teach and defend impious doctrines and **impious forms of worship** should be regarded as anathema. *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, The Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops*

The following is always true:

The remembrance of Christ is not the vain celebration of a show or a celebration for the sake of example, the way plays celebrate the memory of Hercules or Ulysses. It is rather the remembrance of Christ's blessings and the acceptance of them by faith, so that they make us alive.

So the Psalm says (Ps. 111:4, 5), "He has caused his wonderful works to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and merciful. He provides food for those who fear him." This means that in the ceremony we should acknowledge the will and mercy of God. *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV, The Mass, Sacrifice and the Use of the Sacrament*

And if you still, honestly believe that forms of worship are ALL adiaphora, please blow the dust off from your Lutheran Confessions and show me where it says that.

We believe, teach, and confess that true adiaphora or things indifferent, are in and of themselves no worship of

God or even a part of it, but that we should duly distinguish between the two, as it is written, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the precepts of men" (Matt. 15:9). *Formula of Concord, Part II, Solid Declaration, The Ecclesiastical Rites That Are Called Adiaphora or Things Indifferent.*

But as the different length of day and night does not harm the unity of the church, so we believe that the true unity of the church is not harmed by differences in rites instituted by men, although **we like it** when universal rites are observed for the sake of tranquility. So in our churches we willingly observe the order of the Mass, the Lord's day, and the other more important feast days. **With a very thankful spirit we cherish the useful and ancient ordinances, especially when they contain a discipline that serves to educate and instruct the people and the inexperienced.** *Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Articles VII and VIII, The Church*

Do all of your celebrations and worship services contain a discipline that serves to educate and instruct the people and the inexperienced? DISCIPLINE is what serves to educate, not pushing adiaphora, clergy clowning or impious attempts at catering to the dechurched or unbeliever as a substitute for worship. Or can you explain Biblically, clearly and succinctly how you are not deliberately trying to harm the unity of the church?

[Return to my homepage](#)