

**Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Leadership 1-Ecclesiology
Week 3 - Worship in the New Testament**

Introduction

(1 Corinthians 3:10) According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it.

Remind them of 1 Corinthians 3:10 - "be careful how you build." We have seen the importance of this the last two weeks as we discussed what part of the bible we can use and how we build structures. Review flow chart (biblical methodology for determining church structure) from last week.

Tonight we talk about another key area. Worship in the church. There is NO debate that worshipping God is the most important thing the church can do.

But *how we define* (wine) worship and *how we express* (wineskin) worship in the local church will greatly effect the church's ability to fulfill its mission as we shall see.

In the traditional view, worship has become synonymous with a large corporate meeting/service. Although Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant (including many evangelicals) differ in the details of their worship services, they all say that this is the main way the church worships. It is unquestioned dogma.

That is why this is one of the most bizarre things about XCF structure. Not that we don't reflect New Testament teaching on worship (we do to the best of our ability and understanding of Scripture), but that we don't follow the church's historical and traditional expression of it. We are often critiqued because we do not have a worship service. But we ARE INTO worship, we DO worship, and we are STRUCTURED FOR worship.

Some of you are bothered because we do not have this (normal traditionalist), others of you are comfortable with our model, but you are unable to defend it (XCF traditionalist).

But, where does this view come from? This is essentially captivity to an Old Testament theology of worship. Sadly the church went this direction very early.

We have retained an inherited concept of worship that is more Jewish than Christian. Clement of Rome, late in the first century, made a defense of the office of presbyter and of certain prescribed ordinances. He based this defense on a comparison with the Old Testament priesthood and its liturgical duties (1 Clem. 40ff). This prepared the way for a revival of Jewish concepts of worship in the following centuries. The *Didache*, a Christian document of the second century, shows evidence of the continuance of this same kind of thinking. It refers to the "prophets" of the church as its "high priests" (Did 14). Accompanying the continued expansion of these ideas in the second century, there was a thoroughgoing return to OT concepts of worship associated with the Temple and its sacrificial ceremony. The result of this transfer of Jewish ideas to Christianity is most evident today in the elaborate sanctuaries and ceremonies of the heirs of Catholic and Orthodox tradition...

As heirs of the Reformation and Restoration movements, we have made good progress in brushing aside much of this ecclesiastical and ceremonial tradition accumulated over hundreds of years, but our thinking has not yet been swept clean of the dusty concepts which lay beneath this tradition. These inherited concepts make it difficult for us to see the clear teaching of the New Testament. (Ervin Bishop, "The Christian Assembly")

We already discussed in week 2 why we may not use the Old Testament to construct the church. **Therefore, because we limit ourselves to the New Testament teaching on the church we find 3 things:**

- *No precept for such a meeting*
- *No example of any such meeting, instead*
- *We have a positive reinterpretation of Old Testament from a corporate, liturgical service to something radically different.*

Before we examine the New Testament material on this subject, let's look at a contemporary example of evangelical thinking on this subject.

Selections from: "Are Evangelicals Missing God at Church?" by Gary Burge (*Christianity Today* October 6, 1997) [Note: The following selections are on the student outline]

"In reading my semester exams, I discovered that one particularly insightful student, Amy, wrote about worship: "I think that much of modern society has lost a sense of divine, holy space. This becomes obvious to me in our church architecture. The splendor and holiness of cathedrals which created the ultimate feeling of divine space has been replaced by gymnasiums and impermanent buildings. A sanctuary should be a place that is completely separate—that radiates the holiness of God. Plastic cups and folding chairs aren't enough. There has to be an environment that communicates God's holiness to my senses and to my spirit."

"A new Greek Orthodox church opened in Wheaton just last year. Already a sizable number of our students are passionately committed members. Chrismation is a new word on campus. Some of us are predicting a small migration there, with icons soon to follow in Fischer dormitory."

"So what is worship? Worship, I believe, is a divine encounter that touches many dimensions of my personhood. It is an encounter in which God's glory, Word, and grace are unveiled, and we respond, in songs and prayers of celebration. Worshipers seek an encounter with the glory of God, the transcendent power and numinous mystery of the divine—and in so doing, they recognize a Lord whose majesty evokes strong praise, petition, and transformation."

"But my evangelical training has emptied Sunday's worship hour of God's majesty and mystery. Divine encounters seem few. Two factors have stood in our way."

"First, we have been taught that the sermon must exposit the biblical texts, and that immediate and timely application should follow every message. While all of this is true, nothing has been left to our imaginations. Little has been left to our hearts except postsermon feelings of conviction and exhortation. We leave the hour heavy, thinking more about what we must do than wondering about the mystery of God and his doings on our behalf. Therefore we have evolved an experience that is at best intellectual, a worship that studies the Bible. Homilies evolve into 30-minute teaching sessions. And when it touches our emotions, it weighs us down, convicting us of wrongdoing and inadequacy."

"There is a second barrier. Paul suggests that worship includes the mundane affairs of living, that we should "present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [our] spiritual

worship" (Rom. 12:1). Some of us have used this verse to distort the principal meaning of worship. Rather than encountering God, our worship has become ethical."

"I believe evangelicals are yearning to recapture worship that lifts us—as a medieval cathedral lifted the eyes of the fourteenth-century worshiper—to truly meet God."

"I tell this story only to suggest that many worshipers come looking for more than fellowship, exposition, and exhortation. They seek an experience of "the holy." They come looking for awe and reverence, mystery and transcendence. Furthermore, many of their sensory faculties need to be engaged: Their senses of sight, sound, touch, and smell are powerful avenues of communication. One glance at the Old Testament directions for orchestrating temple worship will remove all doubt that this is our task. Fire, incense, tapestry, and gold joined with ritual activities that reminded worshipers of the reverent awe demanded of them. Bells and breastplates provided a visual feast evoking images of God's presence. Even the temple's architecture did this. One climbed higher as steps led "up" to the Holy Place."

"Evangelicals need to reclaim their Old Testament heritage. We need to unburden ourselves of those reflexes forged during the Reformation and Enlightenment that shunned the pageantry and visual media of medieval Catholicism."

"My evangelical roots have reminded me in no uncertain terms that the pastor is "one" with the people. We uphold Luther's "priesthood of all believers." In Presbyterian parlance the pastor is one of the elders—a teaching elder—alongside so many other elders. And so our demeanor, our dress, our participatory leadership style have evolved to communicate that there is no hierarchy in our congregations."

"I now disagree with this model. I am not suggesting that pastors have privileges in the grace of God or the economy of the church unavailable to others. But I am suggesting that in worship, the pastor must become priest. The pastor plays a role—a significant role—in the divine encounter offered in worship. The pastor assumes the role of mediator, incarnating God to the people, forging an atmosphere and image that men and women will absorb when they contemplate divine things."

'Wine' - A New Testament Theology of Worship

New Testament Words ¹

A study of worship-related terminology in the NT is essential to a clear understanding of Christian worship. The NT writers used words that were already familiar to people of the first century. Words associated with worship were borrowed from both OT and pagan sources; but, in the NT, these words undergo striking changes in meaning. The old words are used in a new way to make them fit a totally new and different view of what worship is.

Leitourgia -- "Liturgy"

The word *leitourgia* ("liturgy) does occur in the NT, but infrequently and not in its traditional sense. For this reason, it is not found in most English translations. It means, basically, "service" and can refer to service of any kind (2 Cor. 9:12). **Most often, however, it refers to the Jewish Temple service (Luke 1:23; Heb. 10:11),** as in the Greek OT (LXX), where it is used almost exclusively of priestly service. In Hebrews, this sense is extended to Christ's work as high priest (Heb. 8:2,6). **Paul makes an extraordinary use of this term in reference to his own "service" of proclaiming the Good News. In Rom. 15:16 (cf Phil. 2:17) he pictures himself as a priest performing**

¹ Cited from Ervin Bishop, "Christian Assembly"

the "liturgy" of the Gospel, that his "offering" of the Gentiles might be acceptable. (This usage may be related to the terms of the Great Commission in Luke 24:47 and John 20:23. "Liturgy," in the sense here intended, has to do with remission of sins, whether it refers to the OT sacrificial system or the NT evangelistic work.)

It is of interest that this word played a role in the development of the Christian clergy and the sacramental concept of Christian worship. It is this term that Clement of Rome used to compare the work of bishops and presbyters to the priestly duties of the OT (see page 1 above). This usage became more and more common in the following centuries. M. Strathmann notes that "the final result was a thoroughgoing transfer of the OT concept of the priest to the Christian clergy." The terms *leitourgos* and *leitourgia* "are thus used to denote the cultic, and important cultic actions, especially the eucharist [Lord's supper]. OT cultic concepts celebrate their resurrection" (TDNT, vol. IV, pp 228,229).

***Eusebeia* -- "Godliness"**

This word is rare in the NT, and apparently unrelated to worship, but is of interest because of the way its usage contrasts with that in Greek literature. The popular Greek view was that religious piety consisted of honoring the gods, especially in worship paid to the gods in cultic acts. Paul's use of the verb in reference to the "worship" of the Athenians in Acts 17:23 was fitting. **When used in connection with the Christian faith, however, *eusebeia* does not "consist of cultic acts as in the Greek world, not even in acts of congregational worship" (W. Foerster, TDNT, vol VII, p 183).** It refers rather to a Christian's manner of life (1 Tim. 2:2,10; 4:7,8; 6:3,5,6; 2 Pet. 1:3).

***Threskeia* -- "Religion"**

The lexical definitions of this word relate it to the "external ceremonies of religious worship" (K.L. Schmidt, TDNT, vol III, p 157), "the worship of God, especially as it expresses itself in religious service or cult" (Arndt & Gingrich), and "denotes more specifically the ceremonial worship of religion" (Trench: *Synonyms of the NT*). **Its very scarcity in the NT supports the view that Christian worship is not expressed primarily in outward ceremonies.** Paul uses the word in the sense defined in Col. 2:18, referring to "the worship of angels." **But James defines it in terms more closely identified with real Christian worship:** "*The kind of worship (threskeia) that our God and Father considers to be pure and without fault is this: to take care of orphans and widows in their suffering, and to keep oneself from being corrupted by the world*" (James 1:27; cf Isa. 1:17).

***Proskuneo* -- "Worship"**

This is the usual term for worship in the LXX. **It is also the word most often translated "worship" in the English NT. It is a concrete expression that carries with it the idea of falling down before an object of devotion.** It "demands visible majesty before which the worshiper bows" (H. Greeven, TDNT, vol VI, p 765). **For this reason, its use in the NT is mainly limited to the Gospels, where Christ is visibly present among men, and to Revelation, where he is again visible to those who worship him as the exalted**

Lord. The word is not used however, in reference to Christian worship. An exception is its use in John 4:20ff, where Jesus' choice of words is governed by the context, in which the Samaritan woman had made reference to formal Temple worship. This reflects the use of the word as a technical term for the religious pilgrimage of Jews to Jerusalem (Greeven, TDNT, vol VI, cf John 12:20; Acts 8:27; 24:11). In Jesus' answer to the Samaritan woman, however, the word is used in a way that raises it to a new spiritual sphere. **Here it is applied to a revolutionary concept of worship that contrasts sharply with the kind of worship inherently implied by the word itself.**

Proskuneo is avoided in the Epistles, except for two OT quotations (Heb. 1:6; 11:21) and a verse in 1 Cor. 14:25, where the visible and audible Holy Spirit is the object of "outsider's" worship. Elsewhere, **its absence is conspicuous and indicates that, because of the concrete ideas associated with the word, it was not well suited for expressing the kind of all-encompassing spiritual worship intended for God's people under the new covenant.**

***Latreuo, Latreia* -- "Worship"**

The significance of this word group for Christian worship is obscured from the English reader because it is more often translated "service" than "worship." The difficulty translators have in deciding upon the proper English equivalent is compounded by the fact that, for most Christians today, "Christian service" and "Christian worship" represent two distinctly different ideas. In the NT, however, no such distinction exists. As A.B. MacDonald says in reference to the NT idea of worship, ". . . we are sensible of the absence of any clear line of demarcation between ritual worship proper and the service of God in practical things" (*Christian Worship in the Primitive Church*, p 18). **Although this word means, first of all, "to worship cultically," and "in the OT its primary reference is to the sacrificial cultus," in the NT its meaning is elevated "to a total view according to which the whole life of the Christian is fundamentally brought under the concept" of worship** (H. Strathmann, TDNT, vol IV, p 64).

OT usage appears again in those NT passages, when this word group is used to refer to Christian worship, it is given a spiritualized force that includes the believer's total relationship with and service to God (**Heb. 9:14; 12:28; Phil. 3:3**). See the unpacking of Hebrews 12:28 in chapter 13. ***Latreia*, in this sense, finds its highest expression in Rom. 12:1.** Although the truth in this verse is stated figuratively in the language of Temple ceremony, it serves as the NT's best definition of Christian worship: the offering of self as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God -- this is rational/mental/spiritual worship.

Jesus' teaching on worship (John 4:23, 24)

Jesus' discussion with the woman at the well in Samaria (John 4) is the customary beginning place for any study on the subject of Christian worship. It serves this purpose well, but when a person approaches the passage with a preconceived idea of what should be said on the subject, he misses the revolutionary character of what Jesus says. The full context of Jesus' statement

in vs. 23 & 24 should be carefully studied. Up to this point in the discussion, Jesus showed a very personal interest in the spiritual welfare of this Samaritan woman. He does not abandon his evangelistic concern when the subject suddenly changes to the proper place of worship. He uses the woman's mention of "worship" in much the same way that he treated the subject of "water" in v. 22. This is a reference to Jesus' own Messianic mission (cf. v. 25). The new kind of "worship" about which Jesus speaks pertains to this salvation, because it involves man's new relationship with God.

Jesus answers the woman's implied question regarding the God-ordained place of worship, but not in the way that she must have been expecting. He reveals to her that the time has come for the shadowy types of both Samaritan and Jewish temple worship to end. Worship in the new age is to be of an entirely different character -- not limited as to place or time, or to such formal acts as are bound by place and time. In vs. 23 & 24 the nature of this new worship is described: *"The true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth."*

At the mention of "worshippers," most Christians today, influenced by traditional views, probably imagine people inside a "church," performing certain "acts of worship." However, the context shows that Jesus is here contrasting "worshippers" in the new age with worshippers in the Temple. This demands consideration of the fact that what answers to the "Temple" in the NT is not the "church building," but the Church, the body of Christ (Jn. 2:21; 2 Cor. 6:16). What corresponds to the Temple ceremony is not a Christian "worship service," but first, the redemptive work of Christ (Heb. 9:11-14), and second, the new life in Christ (Heb. 10:19-25; Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:5). The worshippers in the Temple find their NT counterpart in those who have been "cleansed" and thus *"have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus"* (Heb. 10:14,19). Jesus characterizes them as the "true" or "genuine" worshippers, because they worship in the "true tabernacle" (Heb. 8:2; 9:11,24). Christians "worship" in this "heavenly tabernacle" in the same actual and potential sense that they are present in the "kingdom" (Heb. 12:28; Col. 1:13).

Worship in spirit and in truth

- **In spirit:** The worship that these "worshippers" of God perform in the new and genuine "temple" Jesus describes as taking place *"in spirit and truth."* In keeping with the context, *"in spirit" probably means "spiritually" or "in the spiritual realm"* (Rom. 1:9; 2:29; Phil. 3:3 KJV, RSV, NEV), *in contrast to the physical confinement of temple worship.* However, it must also include the relationship of God's spirit to his "worshippers" (Phil. 3:3 ASV, TEV; Rom. 8:9,26; Eph. 2:22; 5:18,19; 6:18). The main point of Phil. 3:3 is that "worshiping by the spirit of God entails a rejecting of all confidence in the flesh" (R.P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, p. 13). God's spirit lives in our bodies, making us temples where God is glorified or worshiped "in spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19,20; Eph. 2:21,22).
- **In truth:** The meaning of *"in truth,"* when compared with other passages where it occurs, seems most *probably to be either "in reality," as opposed to the symbolic nature of temple worship, or "in sincerity,"* in contrast to the formalistic and often pretentious character of Jewish observance. In Matt. 22:16 and Mark 12:14, the meaning of this phrase is

"honestly" or "sincerely." In Phil. 1:18, as the opposite of "in pretense," it is "in sincerity." In 1 John 3:18 (cf 2 Jn. 1 and 3 Jn. 1) it means "in reality" or "in sincerity."

John's reproach of verbal or feigned love and his exhortation to love "*in deed and truth*" are reminiscent of Jesus' frequent criticism of the Pharisee's hollow formalism (cf Matt. 23:22). He often echoes the rebuking words of the prophets against the substitution of ritual giving for right living: "*I desire mercy and not sacrifice*" (Matt. 9:10-13; 12:6,7; cf Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Isa. 1:10-17). He sees "*vain worship*" not as the performing of the wrong acts but rather as living in rebellion to God's moral law (Matt. 15:4-9; 5:23,24). Although Jesus shows respect for the temple as his "Father's house," he clearly recognizes its temporary nature. In general, his attitude toward the ceremonial worship of the Jews of his day was unsympathetic, and it is against the background of contemporary Jewish practice that Jesus sets the stage for a new era, when God's people will serve him, not with reverent ceremonies within elaborate buildings, but "*in spirit and truth.*"

The Apostles' teaching on worship

A Change in Priesthood & Sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5)

Read 1 Peter 2:5. This verse (along with vs. 9) teaches that all Christians are priests. Whereas in the Old Testament, only select Levites had this privilege, every Christian now has this privilege.

What do priests do?

In the Old Testament period, their main function was to carry out the worship of God through the offering of sacrifices. There were essentially two different kinds of sacrifices: *sin offerings*, which were offered for moral offenses, and *thank offerings*, which were offered to express gratitude for God's goodness and blessing.

The New Testament tells us that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament sin offerings through his death (Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:1-14); therefore, we need never make such sacrifices to God again. But as Christians who have benefited from his sacrifice, we have the privilege to express our gratitude to God for Christ's work in many ways.

Peter refers to this in 1 Peter 2:5 when he says that we "offer up spiritual sacrifices to God." Peter does not specify here what these sacrifices are, except that they are spiritual, not physical.

By studying other passages in the New Testament, however, we discover several different "sacrifices" by which the Christian may worship God. It is important to note that no one way is viewed as more spiritual than the others; all are important if we want to have full-orbed spiritual lives.

What are these spiritual sacrifices?

- **Offer God Your Whole Self (Romans 12:1)**

"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, well-pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."
(Romans 12:1)

When an Israelite had received a blessing from God, he could have a priest offer up an animal as a "whole burnt offering" to show God his gratitude. God was pleased by this costly sacrifice, and expressed this by calling it a "soothing aroma." (see Leviticus 3:5,16)

Paul says that as Christians, we have received the mercies of God through Christ's work - a gift so fantastic that he spent the previous eleven chapters of this letter describing it. How can we say "Thank you!" to God for such a fantastic gift? Not by offering an animal, but by presenting to God something much more precious--our very selves. We can "sign over the title deed" of our lives and say "God, I want the rest of my life and every part of my being to be one long expression of my gratitude for the gift that you have given me."

We may think that this sacrifice is not very great because we have so many problems and faults, but God says that it is "holy" and "well-pleasing" to him! Notice that according to Paul, this sacrifice is our "spiritual service of worship."

The Greek word for "service of worship" is the word from which we get the term liturgy. Paul is saying that the elaborate worship service enacted by the Old Testament priests no longer has a place in Christian worship; it is now replaced by this very personal sacrifice.

- **Offer God Your Praise & Thanksgiving (Hebrews 13:15)**

"Through Christ then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of the lips that give thanks to his name." (Hebrews 13:15)

Here is another spiritual sacrifice which pleases God--praising him and thanking him for all that he is and all that he does for us. The practice of thankfulness to God is stressed over and over again in the New Testament (see 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Colossians 3:15-17). Why is this? Does God need our gratitude so that he can feel good about himself?

Such a view obviously does not befit the God of the Bible--he is the only being in the universe who is completely self-existent and therefore needs nothing. We add nothing to God by praising and thanking him. God is indeed pleased by our gratitude, but the ones who benefit from this practice are us!

As we choose (often against our present feelings and circumstances) to recall God's blessings and then to thank him for these, we are keeping ourselves properly aligned with reality. Rather than buying into the lie that we are mistreated and unfortunate, we are by faith asserting the truth--that we are fantastically blessed beyond anything

that we could ever deserve! In spite of our rebellion against God which deserves his wrath, he has forgiven us, adopted us into his family, guaranteed us eternal life, given us a significant role in his purpose, indwelt us with his Spirit, provided us with Christian friends-- and the list goes on and on.

The author's emphasis here is that we should worship God in this way "continually." The idea that Christian worship takes place only (or especially) in a corporate worship meeting is utterly foreign to this verse. Because of Christ's payment for our sins, we have the privilege to draw near to God and communicate to him in this way at any time: in the morning when we wake up, on the way to work, during the busy day, when we are together with other Christians, alone in our room, etc.

It is wonderful to praise God with other Christians in song (Ephesians 5:19), but this should be only the "tip of the iceberg" of our thanks to God.

- **Offer God Your Service to Others (Hebrews 13:16; Ephesians 5:2; Romans 15:15,16; Philippians 2:17)**

"And let us not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."
(Hebrews 13:16)

The other sacrifice mentioned in this verse is "doing good." This phrase refers to ministry – investing in the lives of Christians and non-Christians to express Christ's love. What does this practically look like?

Eph. 5:2 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

To the non-Christian

Primarily it means to consistently invest our time in building friendships in order to show Christ's love and verbally express the gospel. These include friends, family members, work mates, neighbors, etc.

Also, in 1 Cor. 9:13,14, evangelistic work corresponds to the priest's service in the Temple [although the point of 1 Cor 9 is primarily deriving payment for full-time ministry, the example Paul uses is being paid to spread the gospel & is used synonymously with the OT work of the priest in the temple].

One aspect of "showing Christ's love" would include performing deeds of service as opportunities to do good come up. Too many Christians however define love EXCLUSIVELY in this manner and therefore omit a lifestyle where their comforts and agenda are replaced by Christ's agenda for their lives (Romans 12:2).

To the Christian

Again, primarily this means consistently investing our time in building friendships in order to show Christ's love. This would be a shepherding or

discipling relationship motivated by a desire to help a younger Christian grow (Col. 1:28,29; 2 Tim. 2:2).

Performing deeds of service to other members of the body of Christ would be a part of this love, but falls far short of the biblical mandate to “love one another” (John 13:34,35).

In Xenos, we too often see Christians who are willing to do deeds of service but are unwilling to do the long-term and consistent investing in the lives of others. The opportunistic response to needs is good, but usually does not require a total “makeover” of our perspective, priorities, and values. The lifestyle of investing into others lives requires a second decision such as Paul depicts in Romans 12:1,2.

We also have the special privilege of worshiping God through the exercise of our spiritual gifts.

After urging us to present our lives to God as an act of worship in Romans 12:1, Paul goes on to urge us to express that worship through the use of our spiritual gifts (vs. 6-8). As we discover our spiritual gifts and exercise them regularly in the service of others, and give God praise for the fruit of this ministry, we discover a form of worship that is uniquely satisfying!

Paul speaks of his own apostolic ministry in this way: ". . . because of the grace that was given to me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:15,16)

- **Offer God Your Material Resources (Hebrew 13:16; Philippians 4:18)**

"And let us not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." (Hebrews 13:16)

The author touches on two more ways in which we can worship God: doing good and sharing. "Sharing" probably refers to the generous giving of our material resources to God's people and God's work. This is explicitly identified by Paul as a sacrifice which pleases God: "But I have received (your money gift) in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God." (Philippians 4:18)

Many Christians regard giving financially to God in the same way that they pay their taxes to the I.R.S. - they have to do it, and they look for ways to give as little as possible. Paul's view is very different from this. He says that giving is a privilege (2 Corinthians 8:4) and something that we should do generously (2 Corinthians 9:6), as an expression of our commitment to God (2 Corinthians 8:5).

When we give our money to God in this way by supporting our local church, other Christian workers and ministries, and helping the needy, God regards this as an

expression of worship fully as spiritual as praising him. This is because giving of our money represents a giving of ourselves, since money represents the time and effort and creativity that we have invested in order to gain it. Such giving is also an expression of our trust in God's faithfulness to continue to meet our material needs-- which Paul tells us God will fully supply (Philippians 4:19).

Quotes from other scholars on New Testament Worship [quotes are on student outline]

"One of the most puzzling features of Paul's understanding of *ekklesia* for his contemporaries . . . must have been his failure to say that a person went to church primarily to 'worship.' Not once in all his writings does he suggest this is the case. Indeed it could not be so, for he held a view of 'worship' that prevented him from doing so. This is crystallized in his plea at the beginning of Rom. 12 . . . For Paul, worship is obedience rather than literal sacrifice and is rational or voluntary rather than ecstatic . . . The striking feature of Paul's statement, however, is his noncultic use of this language, that is, its metaphorical application to the sphere of everyday behavior. . . . In practice this means behaving in such a way that all their actions are determined by God's will, which is by definition good and perfect, rather than by the characteristics of the times in which they live. So worship involves the whole of one's life, every word and action, and knows no special place or time. The remainder of this section in Romans brings this out most forcibly . . . Since all places and times have now become the venue for worship, Paul cannot speak of Christians assembling in church *distinctively* for this purpose. They are already worshipping God, acceptably or unacceptably, in whatever they are doing. While this means that when they are in church they are worshipping as well, it is not worship *per se* but something else that marks off their coming together from everything else they are doing." Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998, pp. 88,89)

" . . . Jewish, pagan and even traditional Christian ideas of worship contrast sharply with the concept of worship in the New Testament. An examination of Jesus' teaching on this subject revealed that worship in the new age is not to be limited to special acts performed at any particular place or time. Instead, New Covenant worship consists of the 'true worshiper's' total relationship and service to God. This new and revolutionary concept of worship is taught consistently throughout the New Testament . . . These (New Testament) writers borrowed words for 'worship' from Jewish and pagan contexts of formal, ceremonial, Temple worship. However, whenever these words were applied to Christians, they referred not to a 'worship service' but rather to a life of service." Ervin Bishop, "The Christian Assembly"

"The presentation of ourselves 'as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God,' now means serving him in a whole range of relationships and responsibilities. When Christians become preoccupied with the notion of offering God acceptable worship in a congregational context and thus with the minutiae of church services, they need to be reminded that Paul's focus was on the service of everyday life . . . Obedience to apostolic teaching and apostolic ministry to nurture Christian faith and obedience are different aspects of worship by which Christians are to honor God and express the reality of their relationship with him through Jesus Christ. This means that evangelism and the strengthening of believers emerge again as a priority for those concerned to offer 'acceptable worship.'" David Peterson, *Engaging With God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), pp. 187,188.

Why is this so important?

It should be clear from this study that worship in the New Testament is a lifestyle made up of many kinds of activity, not necessarily a corporate meeting.

- **The traditional view of worship tends to hinder the mission of the church.**

EVANGELISM: Evangelism is difficult in this setting. Traditional expression of worship can make non-Christians very uncomfortable when we ask them to sing songs with words they don't believe, etc.. Our believers are hearing this is the most important thing the church can do, so you shouldn't be surprised if they see personal evangelism as unimportant and bringing outreach to a Christian-oriented meeting potentially alienating.

DISCIPLESHIP: Discipleship may be hindered by this view of worship. The traditional view of worship tends to hinder equipping of the saints. A large corporate worship approach will communicate that this is the center of what "doing church" actually is. It will be hard to maintain an *ethos* of Christians desiring to be equipped (taking classes, etc.) in order to do significant ministry if much of their energy and much of what they see the church focusing on is corporate worship.

COMMUNITY: If we say that large group worship is the number one priority of the church, then we automatically communicate that home group involvement is optional, or at least not as important. This would erode Christian community. I think this fits right in with the previous challenge concerning the time it takes to have quality community. If we give people this out, we should not be surprised when they opt for attendance at a large, weekly service instead of committing themselves to ongoing fellowship and ministry in the home group context.

If we accept this model, our people will tend to view the ministry roles at large worship meetings as more important than other ministry roles (like the "one anothers," follow-up, discipleship, etc.). But there are really relatively few roles for such a meeting—far fewer than there are Christians—whereas the Bible calls for every believer to be involved in ministry. It also tends to take money (for professional worship staff) away from more important priorities like equipping, home group oversight, etc.

The financial resources of all local churches are limited. A corporate worship approach to "doing church" will make it difficult to pour resources into equipping Christians to do the work of service.

- **The traditional view of worship tends to promote formalism.**

When Christians view corporate worship as the most important priority, the result is often a superficial and dichotomized Christian life. Such Christians are faithfully committed to attending the Sunday worship service, but because they view that as the essence of worship, fail to develop a lifestyle of whole-hearted commitment to God, thankfulness, financial stewardship and ministry. God is more pleased and we are more fulfilled when we develop lifestyles characterized by the full-orbed worship described in the New Testament.

- **The traditional view of corporate worship tends to promote a clergy/laity distinction, and (for the laity) a passive view of worship.**

There are scores, maybe hundreds of believers in the church gifted by the Holy Spirit in a multitude of areas (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12; Eph. 4) that will never be used in that setting. One

wonders what God thinks of that? No wonder the believers sit with little vision for Christian ministry as the Bible depicts it.

“Wineskins” – Xenos’ structures for New Testament Worship

What is the alternative to this? The New Testament church had large meetings as well as home groups, so we want to preserve the large meeting as a structure, but not as the center of the church. There are probably many ways to do this. Here is what we do.

- **We ground people in the New Testament theology of worship. *Why is this so important?***

We teach a theology of worship as a lifestyle that emphasizes the very priorities that are worked out in the context of home group involvement (see above). We do not do this first of all pragmatically (so we can emphasize home groups), but theologically (because we really believe the New Testament teaches this).

- **We do not have large corporate worship services. *What is the purpose of our large meetings?***

We use our large meetings to help the home groups in their outreach and teaching. We also communicate (regularly and in many ways) at our large meetings that the home groups—not the large meetings—are the heart of our church.

- **We move most of the elements of corporate worship into the home group settings. *Why do we do this?***

There is no description that the New Testament church had “corporate worship” in their large meetings—there were for teaching and preaching. Instead, they sang, prayed, etc. in home group settings (see 1 Cor. 14:26, also Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:18-21). People can of course sing in their home groups if they wish. And we should encourage people to find Christian music that they can enjoy and be edified by. It would be going too far to say that it must occur in a corporate setting.

We need to consider our culture (remember structure development last week). Our culture is not a singing culture in general, so incorporating into home group may be asking our outreach to be part of something foreign to them. However, we shouldn’t throw the baby out with the bath water and make no provision or encouragement to do this at least privately.

They can take communion in their (believer only) cell groups, which is much more personal. Corporate prayer in these smaller contexts is also much more personal and edifying and should include praise and thanksgiving.

Memory Verses

John 4:23,24*

Romans 12:1*

Assignment

Read Master Plan of Evangelism Chap 2 & 3 (“Association” & “Consecration”) and write a paragraph summary of content for each chapter and a paragraph of personal application.

Key Points to Know for Exam

1. Be able to show how the Old Testament worship service is replaced in the New Testament.
2. Discuss the danger of making an emotional experience of corporate worship the most important function of the church.