

Remind students of “Worship as a means to releasing rulership,” from last week. **Today we’re going to focus on how worship is given to God, but how we also receive. Rulership is part of that, but we can go deeper.**

- Question worth asking: *What are church services supposed to be about?* More specifically:
 1. Why do we sing in church?
 2. Why are “services” called that?
 3. What are the scriptural grounds for the actions and activities that comprise our services
 4. What practices do we observe that have become mere formalism or dead habit? Why do you think they’re like that? How did they get that way?
- Something worth considering: “Any wearying habit or dead tradition which we note in our churches was probably good at the start.”

Let’s look at what a worship service is supposed to be.

- *A worship service is convened 1) to serve God with our praise and 2) to serve people’s need with His sufficiency.*
 - This breaks from the normal way of viewing services with a single purpose – “we gather to worship God.”
 - Adds second focus, without removing the first one: “man’s need and God’s ability to supply it.
 - **Worship is to God and for man.**
- Westminster Shorter Catechism: “The chief end of man is to *glorify God* and to *enjoy him* forever.” Dual emphasis has always been there, but may have gone unnoticed.
 - God is to be the focus of our worship
 - God always planned that in worship, we would find joy, blessing, fulfillment, and purpose.

Think back on earlier questions. Things that we “do” as part of worship fit in with this model of being *to* God and *for* man. They’re not all limited to the singing part, and really show that all of church service is worship, in that we *give and receive*. So, the things we do:

1. “Assemble yourselves together.” (Heb 10:24-25) “*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*” God calls us together, not because we can’t worship on our own, but because we are created with so much potential for fulfillment when we come together in the spirit of His love.
2. “Sing unto the Lord.” (Ps 96:1) “*Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!*” God calls his people to *sing* their worship to him, not because he wants to increase their musical skills, but because *singing* is a natural expression of human joy and love.
3. “Continuing in prayer, sharing, and the apostles’ doctrine.” The fellowship of Believers: “*And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*” Cluster of three worship-time practices, all of which fulfill us as we worship Him.
 - a. Prayer: His open doorway for us to raise a candid call for help.
 - b. Preaching (apostle’s teaching): The opening of his Word, designed to inspire, uplift, stir faith, and birth hope.
 - c. Presenting our offerings (the fellowship): man’s call to open his heart and his hand. Giving in church worship should be seen as *God’s plan given to us to release us from our selfishness* and allow our entry into *His covenant of material blessings*.

Important to remember that worship is not a God-built device to get man to stroke a heavenly ego. Nor is it a weekly call to demonstrate one’s expertise in prescribed rituals and actions. Rather, scripture consistently shows God calling His creatures to worship in His presence so that He might *release, redeem, renew, and restore* them.

- Israel was called forth from Egypt “that they may serve Me.” The deliverance was out of bondage was *into* worship, because through worshiping Him, they would come to know the heart and nature of Him who had promised them a land of milk and honey.

Summary: Our fellowship with God through worship is two-way: God desires to meet our needs and fulfill us as much as He desires our expressions of praise and thanksgiving. With God, we’re at the center of His concern, even while he is at the center of ours.