



Getting Back to Church

Lesson 7: The Word of God in the Church

Introduction

The gathering of the church on Sundays for worship is different from any other concert, political rally, or sporting event. While there are people who gather together for those events, what sets the weekly worship service apart from those events the most is the pervasive presence of the Word of God. As we saw in the previous lesson, pastors should preach expositionally because the whole Bible is profitable for Christians and because God's Word is powerful to accomplish His purposes. Building on this theme, we are going to consider how God's Word should fill every aspect of the church's weekly gatherings. We will also consider how all Christians are called to minister the Word to each other.

God's Word in the Worship Service

A worship service is a gathering of believers for the purpose of honoring, praising, and glorifying God. It is a central aspect of Christian life and practice, reflecting the biblical mandate to worship God both individually and corporately. Worship services are typically held in churches, but they can also occur in homes, outdoor settings, or any place where believers gather in the name of Jesus Christ.¹

What makes a God-honoring worship service in the church? Some will say it is the mood that is established by the music. They will argue that the mood of the worship service must be established by the music so that the people can experience the presence of God. For example, one article states, "Worship music is often the heart of a service, setting the tone for the entire experience."² Others state that the perfect worship service happens when there is genuine hospitality. They will tell you that it begins with how friendly and welcoming the people of the church are. One pastor and author believes that one of the elements that makes the perfect worship service is humor. He states, "The perfect worship service has a sense of humor. Laughter is powerful. It can lower stress, build trust, and open people's hearts to hear truth."³ The mood of the music, the hospitality of the people, and humor from the stage are not the elements that make for a God-honoring worship service on Sunday mornings.

What the church needs as the center and focus of every aspect of the worship service is the word of God. The Bible is the only book that is living and active (Heb. 4:12), and as a living document, it is to be the source for all aspects of the worship service in the church. Ligon Duncan says, "God's Word itself must supply the principles and patterns and content of Christian worship. True Christian worship is by the book. It is according to Scripture. The Bible alone ultimately directs the form and content of Christian worship."⁴

The concept of worship is rooted in both the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament primarily centers worship around the tabernacle and temple, where sacrifices and offerings were made to God. The Psalms continually call God's people to worship Him. Psalm 95:6 says, "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!"

¹ *Worship Service*, https://biblehub.com/topical/w/worship_service.htm, accessed July 16, 2026.

² *5 Key Elements that Make a Worship Service Unforgettable* (<https://ocnjdaily.com/news/2024/dec/23/5-key-elements-that-make-a-worship-service-unforgettable/>, accessed July 13, 2026.)

³ Brandon Kelley, *The Perfect Worship Service? 10 Elements for an Amazing Sunday* (<https://www.preachandlead.com/blog/perfect-worship-service>, accessed July 13, 2026.)

⁴ Ligon Duncan, *Does God Care How We Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2020), 11.

In the New Testament, worship of God is reiterated by Jesus who emphasized true worship of God being done in spirit and truth. Jesus said, “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23–24). In Acts 2, after the birth of the church, a model for the worship service was given. Acts 2:42 says, “And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” This verse highlights some of the key elements that are to be done in a worship service. However, as we continue to study the New Testament, we see throughout it that there are other elements to a worship service. What are the elements that are given to us by the Word of God? The following seven elements are given in the Bible and are foundational to a God-honoring worship service.

1. Read the Bible

The public reading of the Bible must be done in the worship service. First Timothy 4:13 says, “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture.” God speaks to His people through His Word. Therefore, when the Bible is being read in the worship service, God is speaking. Sadly, there is little Scripture reading that is done in many modern evangelical worship services today. There ought to be more than just a sermon text that is read for the people. If we want to hear from God, His word must be read to His people.

2. Preach the Bible

Paul commanded Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2, “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.” As the pastor at the church of Ephesus, Timothy’s responsibility was to preach God’s Word to God’s people. He was to do it “in season and out of season.” This is another way of saying that Timothy was to do it all the time. Whenever the church gathers to worship God, His word must be preached to His people. The best way to do this is through expository, sequential, verse by verse preaching as the goal is to preach “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

3. Pray the Bible

Jesus said in Matthew 21:13 that the Father’s house “shall be called a house of prayer.” Jesus was upset with the religious leaders because prayer was to be the essence of worship, but they had turned the temple into a “den of robbers.” Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:8, “I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.” Prayer is to be a vital component of the worship service. It allows believers to communicate with God, express adoration, confess sins, give thanks, and present requests. In many churches, it follows the reading of the Bible so that the content of prayer is derived from the Bible itself. As Duncan states, “Our prayers ought to be permeated with the language and thought of Scripture.”⁵

4. Sing the Bible

We are commanded to sing all throughout the Bible. In fact, God gave a hymnal in the Bible that ought to inform our music. It is called the book of Psalms. Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Music that is doctrinally sound and biblically rich is a powerful expression of worship to God. Music not only allows us to express our praise and adoration to God, but it also teaches and reminds us about who our God is.

⁵ Ibid, 79.

5. See the Bible

God has given two ordinances that the church is to practice. Those ordinances are baptism and communion. Baptism is commanded in the Great Commission given in Matthew 28:19 where Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Baptism is an outward sign of an inward reality of a born-again believer in Christ. This is a public profession of faith that the new believer now belongs to the church of Christ. Communion is an ordinance instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper (Matt. 26:26–29) and was reiterated by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:24–25. Paul tells us in verse 26, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” Partaking of communion is a public proclamation and reminder of our Lord's death that accomplished our salvation.

6. Support the Bible

The people of God are commanded to give as an act of worship. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:6–7, “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” Giving to the Lord is an act of worship that reflects gratitude and trust in the Lord for His provision. There is no set percentage that the church is commanded to give. God loves to see His children give cheerfully and generously. In our giving, we are also partnering with one another in the gospel as God uses the resources to support the church and advance the gospel (Phil. 1:5–7; 4:15).

7. Fellowship around the Bible

There can be no worship service on Sundays if God's people do not come together to worship. Fellowship among believers is an integral part of worship, fostering unity and mutual edification. It was modeled in the early church as believers gathered to devote themselves to the “apostles' teaching and the fellowship” (Acts 2:42). Fellowship is the spiritual duty of believers to stimulate each other to holiness and faithfulness.⁶ In Hebrews 10:24–25, the author of Hebrews says, “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.” The act of stirring up one another to love and good works and encouraging one another ought to be centered upon the word of God.

The seven elements above are all derived from the Bible. God's word alone dictates what we do in a worship service as we gather on a weekly basis to worship our Lord and Savior. Man does not dictate the worship service; the word of God does.

Ministering the Word to One Another

Outside of the Sunday morning worship service, God's people ought to be speaking to and encouraging one another with the word of God. As Christians speak the Word to each other, they help each other grow to maturity in Christ. There are several examples in Scripture where this is illustrated.

Aquila and Priscilla with Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)

When Apollos arrived in Ephesus, he was an eloquent man who was competent in the Scriptures. He knew the ways of the Lord and even knew a lot of facts about Jesus and who He was. However, Apollos only knew about Jesus up to the point of the baptism of John. While Apollos believed that Jesus was the

⁶ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Acts 1-12* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1994), 84.

Messiah that John spoke about, he most likely did not understand the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos aside and began to explain to him more accurately the way of God. This was a teaching opportunity for Aquila and Priscilla that happened outside of the local gathering of the worship service. God used “regular” Christians like Aquila and Priscilla to edify Apollos and teach him more about God’s word. God continued to use Apollos as a missionary who would preach the gospel and assist other leaders in the church (Titus 3:13).

Speaking Truth to One Another (Ephesians 4:15)

In Ephesians 4, Paul explains that pastors are to equip the saints for the work of ministry so that the whole church would be built up to maturity in Christ. Paul was concerned about the church and did not want God’s people to be blown and tossed around by every wind of doctrine. The way that is combatted in the church is by speaking the truth of God’s word to one another. As the saints are equipped for the work of ministry and being edified, they are to speak the truth to one another. Paul says in Ephesians 4:15, “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.” The way the church continues to grow up is by growing in the knowledge of the truth (John 17:17). However, the responsibility to speak the truth does not fall on the pastors alone, but it is to be done by all the members of the church. This can happen through casual conversation, Bible studies, or through one-on-one discipleship as fellow believers meet together to discuss the truth of God’s word.

Men Teaching Men (2 Timothy 2:2)

Paul commands Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” Paul took Timothy along with him on his second missionary journey where he discipled Timothy and taught him the word of God. After Timothy’s training, Paul installed Timothy as the pastor at the church of Ephesus where Timothy was commanded to train other faithful men in the word of God. Once those faithful men were trained up in the word, they were to continue the training. They were to teach others and continue the cycle. Men are to disciple other men with the word of God so that the church continues to grow and be strengthened.

Older Women Teaching Younger Women (Titus 2:3–5)

Paul tells Titus in Titus 2:3–5 that the older women are to teach what is good and train the young women. This training consists of how to love their husbands and children, be self-controlled, be pure, be workers at home, be kind, and how to be submissive to their own husbands. The whole purpose of this is so that the word of God would not be reviled. This means that the word of God must be central to the teaching and training that the older women are to do. Not only are the older women to model this for the younger women, but they ought to be discipling the younger women to be the women God has designed for them to be.

Parents Teaching Children (Ephesians 6:4)

Paul says in Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” The “instruction of the Lord” refers to the verbal counsel that is given a child and includes exhortation towards proper behavior. This counsel is to be rooted in the word of God and comes directly from Him. Parents must teach their children the word of God.

Discipleship Resources:

- *Partners: 1on1 Discipleship* by Mike Fabarez
- *Becoming a Biblical Leader (Men and Women Studies)* by XL Ministries
- *The Gospel Made Clear to Children* by Jennifer Adams