

Preparing a Worship Gathering

radiate

"Truth without emotion produces dead orthodoxy and a church full (or half-full) of artificial admirers (like people who write generic anniversary cards for a living). On the other hand, emotion without truth produces empty frenzy and cultivates shallow people who refuse the discipline of rigorous thought. But true worship comes from people who are deeply emotional and who love sound doctrine. Strong affections for God rooted in truth are the bone and marrow of biblical worship." – John Piper

Biblical examples of worship

- ❖ Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker, for he is our God. – Ps. 95.6-7
- ❖ The entire assembly worshiped the Lord as the singers sang and the trumpets blew, until all the burnt offerings were finished. 2 Chron. 29.28
- ❖ 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. Ps. 150.3-5
- ❖ And the 24 elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God. Rev. 11.16

Biblical worship is a kaleidoscope of images and postures

- ❖ Some dance (2 Sam 6.14), others bow (Job 1.20-21, Mt. 28.9).
- ❖ Some sing (Is. 6.1-4), others are awed into silence (Mt 9.8, Ps. 62.5).
- ❖ Some burn offerings (1 Kings 9.25), others create altars (Gen. 12.7).

Individuals throughout time have been seeking ways to worship God. Whether creative or simplistic, we have a spiritual heritage of people who worship God in "Spirit and in truth".

Is one worship style better than the others?

- ❖ Sincere worship that seeks to praise and glorify God comes in many different forms
- ❖ Historically, church tradition has determined the 'right' and 'wrong' ways to worship.
- ❖ However worship is deeper than stylistic interpretation or personal choice.

- ❖ Where some enjoy loud, exuberant singing with dance, others are drawn to silence, reflection, and serenity.
- ❖ Either way, we are called on by God to worship him with singing and songs as well as meditation and quiet gratitude.
- ❖ It is the pure in heart that God is looking for: *As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects a man. Ps. 27.19*
- ❖ Ultimately, worship is not about us – it is about God. Our worship gatherings should accomplish two goals: to teach us what God is like, and to give us an opportunity to praise and glorify God for who he is.

New Wine Skins

"Who would patch old clothing with new cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before. And no one puts new wine into old wine skins. For the old skins would burst from the pressure, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. New wine is stored in new wineskins so that both are preserved." Mt. 9.16-17

- ❖ Each generation will discover a unique way of worshiping God.
- ❖ None is more 'holy' than the next – it is simply a reflection of where they find themselves in church history and how they have been shaped culturally.
- ❖ Today's generation, or those shaped by postmodernism, tend to seek experiential, participatory, creative, and community-based expressions of worship.
- ❖ These character qualities don't necessarily require reinventing the wheel in worship. Some expressions can be mimicked from previous generations. However you can guarantee that the expression will be brand new.

Examples of multi-sensory worship gatherings

- ❖ A multi-sensory gathering contains all or some of the following:
 - **Word-based ingredients** – such as poems, prayers, meditations, song lyrics, incantations, chants, responses
 - **Symbol-based ingredients** – on video, in sculpture, on paper, in gesture, in dance, in artifacts
 - **Action-based ingredients** – creative activities, devotional acts (anointing, candle-lighting, etc), writing, praying aloud, singing, walking around, mime, body-sculpture
 - **Sound-based ingredients** – backing tracks, background music, sound FX, radio/TV clips, sound loops, live music, singing, speaking and quoting, praying, bible-reading, spoken thoughts and meditations, conversation
 - **Vision-based ingredients** – video and 35mm projections, sculptures, stations, pictures, installations
 - **Imagination-based ingredients** – guided fantasies, thinking, drawing, composing in real-time (words/music), meditations, praying
 - **Tactile-based ingredients** – anointing, laying-on of hands, incense, holding stones and other natural objects, molding clay, hand washing

- ❖ A pictorial gallery

Creating a multi-sensory worship gathering

“To worship God in truth is to recognize Him for being who He is, and to recognize ourselves for what we are.” - Brother Lawrence

- ❖ What is the Biblical theme that you want to communicate at your next worship gathering?
- ❖ Beyond being trendy, what are some creative ways that you can communicate your message to the community you are involved in?
- ❖ Keeping in mind that this gathering is supposed to be both a theological teaching as well as an experience with God through participatory worship, what do you want people to experience before the night is over? What will they smell, hear, see, taste, or touch?
- ❖ A worship gathering is not created alone – it requires a team. Who are the members of your team and what is each contributing to the whole?

Final thoughts

- ❖ John Piper says that we need worshipers “*who are deeply emotional and who love sound doctrine*”.
- ❖ Each generation creates a new way to worship their Creator.
- ❖ However you choose to glorify God, remember to keep your worship gatherings:
 - Biblically based
 - Easily accessible
 - Participatory
 - And relevant to the culture you are trying to reach

All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name.” - Ps. 86.9

Resources

- ❖ Kimball, Dan. *Emerging Worship: Creating Worship Gatherings for New Generations*, (Zondervan, 2004)
- ❖ www.alternativeworship.org
- ❖ www.freshworship.org
- ❖ www.smallfire.org (examples of worship gatherings around England)
- ❖ www.osbd.org