

## 18. Creativity and the Worship of Christians

In Psalm 150:6, we read, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!” In this verse, we see that everything that has breath is to give praise to God. The word that is translated “breath” was first used in Genesis 2:7, where we read: “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” Here, we see that God breathed His breath into the nostrils of man, and man became a living being. Then, in Psalm 150:6, we see that it is the desire of God that all people who have breath will give praise to the Lord.

In order to give true praise to God, we must worship Him. In John 4:23-24, Christ told the Samaritan woman, “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” In these verses, we see that true worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. The word translated “spirit” here is talking about the human spirit. As a result, true worship must come from our human spirit as our human spirit is yielded to the Holy Spirit.

Second, we see that we must worship in truth or according to truth. Christ said, in John 14:6, that He is the Truth. Then, in John 17:17, as Christ prayed to the Father, Christ said that the Father’s Word is truth. Christ also promised several times, in John 14, 15, and 16, to send the Spirit of Truth (Holy Spirit). In order to have true worship then, we must have a right relationship with the One who is Truth (Christ and the Holy Spirit), and worship according to truth (the Word of the Father). In 1 Corinthians 14:24-25, we see that sharing the Word of God will cause those who are not Christians to worship, “But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.”

In this verse, we see that it says that if all prophesy, the unbeliever will be convinced of all and convicted of all. He will have the secrets of his heart revealed. To “prophesy” is to speak what is written down in the Word of God. The Word of God is living and powerful. The Holy Spirit uses the Word to convince the unbeliever of: the sin of unbelief (John 16:9), the fact that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One (John 16:10), and the fact that Satan has already been judged and that those who continue to follow him will share in his judgment (John 16:11). The Word of God is what cause an unbeliever to fall down before God in repentance and become a true worshiper of God.

The verses, in 1 Corinthians 14, show us that worship includes both the reading of the Word of God and the explaining of the Word of God. This passage explains what happened in the early church services. The phrase “but if all prophesy” shows that, in any service of the early church, there were several different individuals that read passages of Scripture. The context of this passage goes on to explain that there were also several individuals who explained passages of Scripture in each service. 1 Corinthians 14:31 says, “For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.” It was this reading and explaining of the Scriptures that caused unbelievers to fall on their face in true repentance and begin to worship God.

The early church shows us that it was very creative in the variety of ways it shared the Word of God as a part of their worship of God. 1 Corinthians 14:26 says, “How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.” The first thing we notice, about this creativity, is that each of the men got involved in the sharing of passages of Scripture. Notice the following phrases: verse 24 – “all prophesy”; verse 26 – “each of you”; verse 29 – “let two or three prophets speak”; verse 31 – “you can all prophesy one by one”.

In a worship service of the whole church, the service described in 1 Corinthians 14:23-40 is very different than the typical service in most churches today. Since John 4:23-24 says that we are to worship God in spirit and in truth, a worship service is to be God-centered, not man-centered. In a worship service: God is the audience, we are the participants. We worship God by reading and explaining the Scriptures, because this expresses His worth. The early church services were patterned after the synagogue services, where seven to nine men read the Word of God in each service. Each of the men who read or explained the Scripture was to come with his spirit yielded to the Holy Spirit. Each man was to share the Word of God, not his own words.

We also see that the early church allowed creativity in other ways in their worship services. 1 Corinthians 14:29-30 says, “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent.” The early church allowed other men to explain things more clearly when someone was having trouble making the Scripture clear. This allowed the early church to demonstrate humility as individuals invited others to correct their understanding of the Word of God, so it would be clearer both to them and to the whole congregation.

1 Corinthians 14:31-32 gives another purpose for this kind of worship service. That verse says, “For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” I often ask men, “who learns the most in a sermon?” The answer I always get is “the one who has spent all week preparing what he is going to say.” If two or three have spent all week preparing, several Christians have learned much. This is due to the fact that their spirits are to be subject to them, which requires careful study throughout the week.

These two verses mention another way a worship service provides opportunities for creativity. The Word of God encourages all of those who hear it. When several people share different passages of the Word of God, one passage will encourage some of the people, while a different passage will encourage others. However, the result will be that all will be encouraged because a number of different passages have been shared from the Word of God. One person may use his creativity to share a call to worship. Another may use his creativity to lead a responsive reading, where all have the opportunity to participate. Others may read different Scriptures throughout the service. The result is that the worship of God is centered on the Word of God, instead of the words of men.

There is also another result of such a worship service. Those who have learned to share the Word of God with other Christians are also being equipped to share the Word of God when they talk to those who are not Christians. 1 Peter 3:15 says, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” Every Christian is to become equipped to share the Word of God with those who are not Christians. One of the best ways to learn to do that is to learn to share the Word of God with Christians first, and then have them help you learn to clearly explain those things that you did not make clear.

Luke 4:16 says, “So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.” Here, we see that it was the custom of Christ to read and explain the Scriptures in the synagogue. In fact, that had been His custom at least from the age of twelve years old. Luke 2:46-47 says, “Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.” Actually, it was the custom of all the Jewish boys, and men, to learn to read the Scriptures in the synagogue services. As a result, all of the disciples of Christ had this background before they even followed Christ.

Just as one of the goals of the Jews was to equip every boy, and man, to read and explain the Scriptures publicly, that should also be one of the goals of every church. This is necessary in order to equip each Christian to be prepared to make a defense, from Scripture, of the hope we have within us. In Acts 8, we see that the Christians were all scattered by persecution. Acts 8:4 tells what happened, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” The entire church, not just the leaders of the church, got involved in ministry to the world.

This was true because the early Christians were also involved in Bible studies where they could ask questions and discuss the Scripture. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Christ had shown the disciples how to use the Old Testament to explain the resurrection, in Luke 24:45-48. “And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things.’” The new Christians were shown how to do these same things in the Bible studies mentioned in Acts 2:42. As a result, all of the Christians had become creative in sharing the Gospel.

Worship is explaining the worth of God both to Christians and to those who are not yet Christians. That happens as Christians learn to yield their spirit to the Holy Spirit and learn to explain the Word of God. Every Christian should be equipped for that kind of worship. May the Lord richly bless you as you help Christians learn to worship God in spirit and in truth.