

Heart of Worship

Kew Baptist Church

Principles for Making a Theology of Art and Worship (Biblical Spiritual-arty)

“We need to recognize both [worship and theology] as important activities in the Christian community. If worship is the heart’s love for God, theology is the mind’s love for God; both are responses to God.

In addition, there is a reciprocal relation between theology and worship. Our worship affects our theology, and our theology affects our worship. On the one hand, theology has its roots in worship. It rises out of our experience with God.” Webber, R. (1994). Vol. 2: Twenty centuries of Christian worship. The Complete Library of Christian Worship

1. God is the Creator and therefore God is creative. God creates out of nothing, but we create out of the gifts that God has given us. EVERYONE creates and is creative.

“The creative impulse, then, is one of the greatest natural gifts of God to humanity, and has everything to do with being created in the image of God. His power can be turned to the greatest possible good when, as heirs of Adam, human beings name their world in order to offer it back up to God in praise and adoration.”

“Art, as a human activity, is a reflection of the activity of the Creator. Worship is a response to the Creator’s revelation of himself. It is understandable that throughout history, and in all cultures and religious traditions, worship and the arts have been allied.” Larry Nyberg in: Webber, R. (1993). Vol. 1: The Biblical foundations of Christian worship

2. God creates beauty and God is the most beautiful being in the universe. Beauty, that is true beauty, always brings glory to God.

"Beauty is the harmony that still shines through the chaos in the world; by God's grace, beauty is observed, felt, translated by artists...[beauty] is prophecy and guarantee that this world is not destined for ruin but for glory." Herman Bavinck (1914)

Psalm 27:4 (NIV)

4 One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the **beauty of the LORD**
and to seek him in his temple.

Psalm 50:2 (NIV)

2 From Zion, **perfect in beauty**,
God shines forth.

“Biblical worship thus may incorporate artistic motifs drawn from a creation God pronounced to be “very good” (Gen. 1:31; the Hebrew word can have the sense of “beautiful”). The appropriate use of such imagery can be an affirmation of the supreme authority of God the Creator, in the conviction

that “the earth is the LORD’s and everything in it” (Ps. 24:1). On the other hand, when the motivation to glorify the Lord is lacking, such usage can be a worship and glorification of “the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25 NASB). Webber, R. (1993). Vol. 1: The Biblical foundations of Christian worship (1st ed.).

- 3. Works of art created for the sole glory of God, are an end in themselves. When we create beautiful things for God, they do not have to have any other purpose (as in functional or commercial). But we may also use art to reflect the fallen-ness of humanity and the blackness of sin, insofar as we are not glorifying it. That is, the arts can be employed to amplify and expound biblical truth in all of its dimensions.**

So what in fact are we doing as worshippers who lead? And this includes all those involved in leading a worship service: singers, preachers, tech team, musicians, prayers, readers, etc.

Discuss

- We are creating and providing a space in which the gathered people of God can together draw near to him through faith in Jesus Christ, and worship with all of their hearts. In order to do this, the people need to be invited and helped to lift their eyes and see a vision of the God that we're calling them to worship.
- We are retelling and proclaiming the great acts of God in history: Creation, Call, Redemption, Incarnation, Cross, Resurrection, Consummation. Are these themes in our songs regularly? We are also joining in and affirming the exaltation of Jesus Christ to the highest place and as the name above all names.
- When we gather worship as a church community the role of those leading worship is to be worshippers who lead. The main tools in the tall bag of the worshipper who leads, are: Scripture, Prayer, love for God, creativity, and skill.
- But remember, you are not responsible for people's responses in worship. You are responsible to set the banquet, to let people see it and to invite them to come and see and taste that the Lord is good.

1.

The vision and goals of lead worshippers are:

- To bring glory to God by faithfulness in expressing the Excellency of His character and deeds in creation and, most expressly through the good news of Jesus Christ, with artistic excellence.
- To enable the gathered people of God to lift their hearts and voices in unified songs of praise and adoration to God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
- To submit their craft, skills and gifts to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in humble service.
- To be empowered and depend on the Holy Spirit to anoint, guide and bless their service.
- To take seriously and to heart their role as leaders within the church and therefore, by the grace of God, to set an example by their conduct and devotion to God.

The unique role that music plays

“Music was closely associated with prophecy; the Israelite prophets were musicians (1 Sam. 10:5; Ezek. 33:32) who created songs, laments, and other poetic compositions (2 Chron. 35:25; Isa. 5:1–7; 26:1–6). Music in the sanctuary was also considered prophecy (1 Chron. 25:2), and the Psalms often serve as the vehicle for the prophetic word (Pss. 2; 50–81; 82; 91; 95; 110). The people of Israel and Judah were noted for their “songs of Zion,” even in exile (Ps. 137:3–4).

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul views the musical expression of thanksgiving as the outflow of being filled with the Holy Spirit and the word (Eph. 5:18–20; Col. 3:16). Luke includes several early Christian hymns in his narrative of the birth and infancy of Jesus (Luke 1–2). The importance of music for the new covenant celebration of God’s victory in Christ is evident from its place in the worship of the Revelation to John: the chorus frames the dramatic unfolding of divine judgments with majestic hymns and doxologies that, more powerfully than prosaic spoken words, convey the grandeur of the Creator and the Son. Webber, R. (1993). *Vol. 1: The Biblical foundations of Christian worship* (1st ed.). The Complete Library of Christian Worship

What are some of the things that can distract people from worshipping God?

Discuss

- 1. The powers of evil. It is the soul driven purpose of satanic spirits to steal the right and proper worship of the one true God and payment for themselves.**

Matthew 4:8–10 (NIV) ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “**Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’**”

Revelation 9:20 (NIV) ²⁰ The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk.

Revelation 13:4 (NIV) ⁴ People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?”

- 2. Our own flesh and sinfulness. Sinful nature does not, will not, and cannot worship God in spirit and truth.**

Romans 8:6–9 (NIV) ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.

We need to actively put to death our sinful nature. As Christians we still have a sinful nature, but we just don’t have to be ruled by it anymore. Christ’s death for our sins and the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling us has dealt a death-blow to this nature. We now walk in the Spirit and live by the Spirit and the truth of God’s Word (Gal 5 & 6)

3. The world and seduction's and promises of ultimate fulfilment and joy in everything other than God.

John 15:18–19 (NIV) ¹⁸ “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

1 John 2:15–17 (NIV) ¹⁵ Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. ¹⁶ For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷ The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

The World in the Bible is not the place we live or the physical realm, but the philosophical systems and attempts by humanity to live and construct life and meaning apart from God. Christ came into the world and took on flesh in order to redeem us and the crated world. But Jesus did not submit or take on its lies and alternative gods and systems of worship and meaning.

4. On a smaller yet still important scale, tardiness and lack of skill in the worshipper who leads. Being disorganised, unprepared, and on skills, can distract and inhibit others from worshipping God. There is nothing to fear in being excellent. And making out or ‘feigning’ disorganisation is not humility

How do we evaluate, or can we evaluate a good worship service?

Discuss

“Restoration of a Christ-centered focus (worship celebrates the living, dying, and rising of Christ in which the powers of evil are overthrown, a sacrifice for sin is made, and an example for living is set forth).”

- The ministry of people to one another in worship
- A growing concern and commitment to evangelism and social outreach
- A heightened spirituality, both personal and corporate
- The experience of Christian community
- Aliveness of the people through active participation
- An experience of joy, celebration, love, victory, and peace
- A rehearsal of one’s relationship to God
- The engagement of the whole person—mind, heart, will, body, and senses
- The experience of spontaneity
- A feeling of personal involvement and corporate relatedness

(Robbert Webber)

Nicholas Tuohy, May 2014