

What Elements Are Part of a Worship Service?

Scotty Williams

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Integration Question: *What are the necessary and optional elements in a worship service? How will you balance elements like singing, preaching, Lord's supper, prayer, Bible reading, community sharing, etc.?*

Theological Statement

Acts 2:37-47 preserves details of key practices and elements of the first formation of the church. After the good news of Jesus was preached by Peter (2:14-36), those who accepted Peter's responded by repenting, believing, and being baptized (2:41). It then details how those same people did not stop devoting themselves to: the leadership and teachings of the apostles, community with one another, the Lord's supper, being guided and experiencing Holy Spirit, giving to one another and providing for one another's needs, praising Jesus together through reading Scripture, praying singing songs, and eating meals together as a community (2:42-47). The narrative reveals vital practices of a worship service, or communal gathering of Jesus followers, that arise as foundational and necessary to a gathering, such as the reading and teaching of Scripture, singing songs of praise, communal prayer, partaking of the Lord's Supper, an opportunity for giving of time and resources, sharing a meal, and baptism when a person repents and believes in Jesus, with the guidance of Holy at the forefront of the gatherings.

Furthermore, letters to specific home churches throughout the Roman-Greco world reveal another foundational elements of worship gatherings- edifying one another through prophesy, revelation, hymns, tongues, and interpretation. In one of the last sections of Paul's letter to the churches in Corinth, 1 Cor. 8-14, Paul instructs them on appropriate and inappropriate practices for their gatherings. In chapter fourteen, Paul specifically explains that one of the ways Holy Spirit builds up the congregation during their worship service is through prophecy and tongues, saying "What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a

teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification” (1 Cor. 14:26). Paul also instructs the individuals in the city of Ephesus in a similar way (Eph. 5:18-19). Together, these support the practice that the edification of one another through a communal time of sharing, prophesying, revelation, or exhorting is also a necessary element of a worship service.

Ministry Application

Practically, there are two audiences that must heed the examples given in Scripture: those in leadership over a communal gathering (worship service) and the lay people that attend the worship services. For those in leadership, it is pertinent to usher people into the presence of God in a worship service. Two directing questions must always shape what practices and elements are part of a worship gathering: *Does this elevate Jesus above ourselves, and does this best foster the active participation of the priesthood of believers?* Generally, many worship services around America become a production, rather than an interactive experience that people partake in. For example, the gathering may consist too much of one person teaching, rather than the community exhorting and prophesying to one another. Or leadership may create a culture where songs of praise become a show that entertains from the stage, especially with added smoke and light effects, rather than the body of Christ being the bride of Christ’s voice. Although there is freedom in how to balance the different elements of a worship service, leadership should always error on the side of elevating Jesus too much (if that is even possible) and fostering too much of an active participation from of the community.

First and foremost, a lay person should always seek to being part of a community that invests in the different practices and elements laid in Scripture which were identified earlier in this paper. Although there is little biblical support to prove that one element was superior to

another, based off of Acts 2 all people should search for a community that prioritizing praising Jesus, teaching His Word, communal prayer, exhortations (through hymns, prophecy, revelations, tongues) to one another, partaking in the Lord's supper, giving (of time and resources), sharing a meal, and committed to sharing the good news of Jesus that leads people to repentance, faith, and baptism. Doing this every worship service may extend the average American worship service quite significantly. While the cultural rhythms around American churches and worship services are inherently good, they should not be the standard of what to expect, the Bible should. This means, if a gathering is not committed to making room for Holy Spirit to use His people to share, exhort, prophesy, and such, then there should be deeper investigation as to why. If one can enter into a worship service and have zero active participation, then there should also be a deeper investigation as to why that is permissible. The lay person should want to seek a community where people become the church, not do church.