

THE LOGIC OF BIBLICAL WORSHIP

↔ **WELCOME:** In our gathering as saints, we greet one another with a customary Christian salutation in God's name: "The Lord be with you!" *"And also with you!"* "Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!"

↓ **CALL TO WORSHIP:** Our service starts with a biblical Call to Worship to remind us that God is Initiator and Host. God *summons* us into His presence. We come only because of *His* call. We are honored guests in *His* house.

↑ **INVOCATION:** We praise God for gracious His call and ask God to help us worship Him rightly: "Open our lips, *and our mouths will declare your praise!*"

↑ **ADORATION:** After asking for God's help, we respond to God's call by entering into His presence with *joyful singing*. Everywhere Scripture encourages us to come before God *with a song*. God wants us to come boldly and joyfully with *loud voices!*

↑ **CONFESSION OF SIN:** When we come into God's presence, the first thing that we realize is that we don't belong there by right. We recognize that we are sinners. We then move from acknowledging our holy God to confessing our *unholiness* before Him. We humbly admit that we have fallen short of His glory in thought, word, and deed, and that we need His continual mercy and grace.

↓ **ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:** God responds to our confession by cleansing our conscience, reminding us that "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!" Our sins have been forgiven, and we can enter His presence more deeply and with full assurance of faith.

↔ **PASSING OF THE PEACE:** A traditional part of Christian worship is extending peace to our brothers and sisters with these words, "peace of Christ be with you." In the Assurance, we hear that *God* is at peace with us. Next we ensure that *we* are at peace with God's *people* as well.

↑ **THANKSGIVING & PRAISE:** At peace with *God and one another*, we respond again to God with thanksgiving and praise.

↓ **READING & PREACHING OF GOD'S WORD:** Having been cleansed and at peace, we are now ready to hear God's Word to us. We believe that when the Word of God is read and faithfully preached, God Himself is actually addressing us in order to teach and train us in righteousness. We are *consecrated* by God's Word for His service.

↑ **PRAYER AND SONG OF RESPONSE:** We respond to God's Word by dedicating ourselves in prayer and song.

↑ **COLLECTION OF OFFERING:** One of the ways we respond to God's Word is by giving of our income to support God's mission in the world through the ministry of His church. We *consecrate* a portion of our income as a sign of giving our *whole selves* to God's service.

↑ **CORPORATE PRAYER OF GOD'S PEOPLE:** Having heard God's Word to *us*, we speak our petitions *back to God* for ourselves and on behalf of the world.

↔ **CONFESSION OF FAITH:** As we respond to God's Word and as we approach His Table as one body, we confess our common faith together as Christians.

↓ **THE LORD'S TABLE:** Having *heard* the Word through preaching, we then get to *see* and *taste* the Word in the Supper. Having *heard* His covenant promises, God then *seals* those promises in a covenant *meal*. The Lord is the Host of this spiritual meal and thus as we eat and drink we fellowship with Him at His Table.

↓ **COMMISSION & BLESSING:** Having called us, cleansed us, consecrated us, and communed with us at His Table, the Lord then *commissions* us back into the world to be His witnesses. He gives us this task (commission), but not without His *promise* and *blessing* of victory (benediction). God's triune presence goes with us as we depart our corporate gathering.

THE PATTERN OF BIBLICAL WORSHIP

The order of the church's corporate worship is not haphazard, but follows a *biblical pattern* that has to do with the story of the world, covenants, as well as the gospel in the testimony of each Christian:

Order of Worship	Story of the World	OT Levitical Offerings
Call to Worship	Creation	entrance to the tabernacle/Temple (with song!)
Adoration		
Confession of Sin	Fall	<i>Sin</i> offering
Assurance of Forgiveness	Redemption	
Peace & Thanksgiving		
Reading & Preaching of the Word		<i>Ascension</i> ('whole burnt') offering
Prayer, Giving, Profession of Faith		<i>Tribute</i> offering
Lord's Supper	Consummation	<i>Peace</i> offering
Commission & Benediction		Aaronic blessing

Ancient Covenant Sequence	Individual Christian Testimony	Gospel Reminder
King announces <i>who He is</i>	<i>Called by God</i>	The <i>God</i> of the Gospel
King announces <i>what He has done</i> for His people	<i>Cleansed by God</i>	The <i>need</i> for the Gospel
		The <i>good news</i> of the Gospel
King gives His people <i>covenant laws</i>	<i>Consecrated by God</i>	The <i>response</i> of the Gospel
King <i>promises blessings</i> for covenant obedience (sealed in a meal)		The <i>renewing work</i> of the Gospel
King establishes provisions for perpetuation of the covenant (<i>covenant representatives</i>)	<i>Commissioned by God</i>	The <i>mission</i> of the Gospel

THE PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL WORSHIP

1. *Worship is a Covenant Dialogue between God and His People*

The only reason we can worship is because God has brought us into a covenant relationship with Himself. At the heart of the covenant is this statement: *“I will be your God and you will be my people.”* The covenant we have with God is intensely relational. This relational dynamic of the covenant is intentionally reflected in the order of our worship. In corporate worship there is a reoccurring interchange where God speaks to us (represented by the ↓) and we in turn respond to God (represented by the ↑). This dialogue highlights the fact that God is always the initiator, authoritatively addressing us through His Word. Our part is to listen intently and then respond appropriately.

2. *Worship is Participatory*

Because corporate worship is a dialogue and not a monologue, it is also therefore *participatory*. We have a part to play; we cannot remain passive. It is not a spectator sport. Worship is a drama, but it is not entertainment. It is a drama in which God calls us to be actors; we have a script to follow. That is why the church’s worship has traditionally had a liturgy in which there is a call and response, a back-and-forth pattern of speaking to each other (represented by the ↔). We a priesthood of *all* believers; it is not solely about what the pastor does. That is why we have corporate litanies and responsive Psalm readings. For example, here are some traditional responses in the interchange of worship:

Pastor: *“The Lord be with you!”*

People: *“And also with you!”*

Pastor: *“Our help is in the name of the Lord!”*

People: *“The Maker of heaven and earth!”*

Pastor: *“Blessed be God: Father, Son, & Holy Spirit!”*

People: *“And blessed be God’s kingdom, now and forever!”*

Pastor: *“O Lord, open our lips!”*

People: *“And our mouths will declare Your praise!”*

Pastor: *“Lord have mercy!”*

People: *“Christ have mercy!”*

Pastor: "Lift up your hearts!"

People: "*We lift them up to the Lord!*"

Pastor: "This is the Word of the Lord!"

People: "*Thanks be to God!*"

Pastor: "Lord, in your mercy ..."

People: "*Hear our prayer.*"

Pastor: "Christian, in whom do you believe?"

People: "*I believe in one God, the Father Almighty ...*"

3. Worship is Dramatic

In worship, we are rehearsing the great story and drama of redemption. We are memorializing God's great acts of salvation as a way to call on God to renew His covenant with us and be faithful to His covenant promises for us. When God renews His covenant, He acts on behalf of His people. This re-telling and re-enactment of our redemption also stirs us up to love and good deeds. When we worship in faith, God shakes the world! Mission starts here!

4. Worship is Gospel-Centered

"Just as preaching presents the gospel in *word*, singing presents the gospel through *song*, the sacraments present the gospel in *symbol*, so also the liturgy presents the gospel in *structure* and *shape*" (Bryan Chapell). Everything depends on the good news of redemption in Jesus Christ our King!

5. Worship is Transforming

True worship not only glorifies God, but it also transforms us. The stories we tell and the habits we do shape us, even if we are unaware of it. The rhythm and pattern of weekly worship forms us into people who live out the biblical story of the gospel. It becomes "second nature," so that we instinctually do the elements of our worship: praise God, sing joyfully, confess sin, receive forgiveness, heed God's Word, pray passionately, give generously, thank God, and go forth in faith. These things happen as we behold God's glory *together* and call each other to His grace.