

Worshippers: Case Studies, Attitudes and Reactions

by Rev. Dale K. Dykema

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

We all approach the worship of God in a way that has been conditioned by our experiences, our rearing, and impressions that are important to us. All of us do worship. We bow to someone, to an idea, a revered person or even to ourselves. We serve either the true and living God of the Bible or our own minds and inner needs or anxieties.

Take time to read the following reactions. Choose the one that most appeals. You are invited to worship God with us. Each Lord's Day we gather to read the Scriptures, hear a text explained by our pastor, sing Psalms and hymns, eat the Lord's Supper together and enjoy one another's fellowship. It is our purpose to worship according to what the Bible says. We will welcome you as we bow before the throne of grace together.

The Evangelist

The Gospel had been preached. He had heard the Name of Christ honored and the call to faith and repentance made, but he hadn't felt as though people were reached. Somehow he sensed within himself an emotional void, a desire for response, some overt action. He had "gone forward" many times in various churches and religious meetings. He had even gotten himself re-baptized once. Nothing seemed to satisfy his yearning for doing a religious act for God, something to make him feel more safe.

He had liked the Communion service that had concluded the service. The pastor had said that the bread and wine "pictured" the Gospel, that our dependence on Jesus, our feeding on Him was not only portrayed, but actually attained in the Lord's Supper. He wanted to think about this. Having the sacrament every week, as John Calvin the Reformer had taught, sounded good and appropriate. Maybe that was God's purpose. Maybe coming to the table and "eating with Jesus" did provide the biblical response, the reply that would bring comfort and contentedness.

The Young Family Man

There was no question about what he wanted in a church. His children came first. They had been given by God and so they had to be his first interest. Their comfort level and satisfaction were the only measure that mattered. Having been turned off himself as a youth he wasn't going to allow his kids to lose out to a bunch of old fogies or stick-in-the-mud adults. Worship had to be fun. Children are happy naturally and they are attracted to happy people. Doctrine was important, but it had to be lived. There had to be joy. He seldom saw older people who evidenced a cheerful spirit.

It was easy to tell if a congregation loved and lived the Bible. Their real inner soul would come out in their treatment of the children. He thought that even the sermon should be geared to those under 10, then everyone would be able to understand.

The Social Bird

Her friends were like fellow birds on the wing. All of them had a sixth sense for one another's thoughts and desires. Their attitudes always synchronized immediately to process "information" and the latest tale. She felt unprepared, unable to cope, without the weekly meeting.

Fellowship to her meant her friends, no one else. New people sometimes were annoying. At times she vaguely realized that, perhaps, she was stuck in a social rut. The inner circle, after all, was made up of her high school friends. Why didn't she really want anyone new or different? Why did she resist intellectual growth?

Knowing that the church shouldn't be this way, that Christians were supposed to have a Christ-like concern and interest in others, caused her to wonder. Still, life was difficult enough and unpredictable. She needed the old faces. They were her main comfort.

The Young Adult

Her eyes swept the room with laser-like perception. Mild guilt feelings often followed, seeping into her consciousness when she entered God's house. She had trouble admitting it, even secretly, that her real interest was the boys. Were there any? How did they look? Were they with anybody?

Small congregations irritated her. There was no place to hide, no safe corner from which to analyze the male landscape. Attending small churches was like walking on stage. You felt like the new focus. Your performance consisted of answering the customary questions, and of acting pleasant and interested.

The Bible lesson and the sermon usually escaped her. A sense of emptiness made her uncomfortable. Knowing that things shouldn't be this way didn't help. The knowledge only made her feel more sour. Subconsciously she resolved to find a larger, more impersonal church. There she could try to deal with her private problem. There too she would find more boys.

The Senior

She could remember when going to church was pleasant, reassuring. Everyone entered and sat quietly. Grownups nodded their expected greetings. The elders and the preacher wore solemn, dark suits. The pipe organ was played majestically to reflect the awe and reverence of the occasion. By it all her heart was lifted up to think about God.

Going to church now seemed more like the theater or, perhaps, a talent show at school. She felt more reassured just with her memories or reading her Bible at home. God, she thought, wasn't pleased with chaos and rudeness. When the temple curtain was torn at Christ's death it wasn't to let in the destroyers. Her feelings, however, were only known to her. She couldn't admit her opinions to a soul because she was convinced that it was only her growing old that had made everything seem so different.

The "Simple Gospel" Advocate

The Bible study had been, to him, like a lecture in calculus. Interesting, even fascinating, but after five minutes he was lost. Others knew their Bibles, found references quickly and answered questions orally as though they were eager and prepared. The sermon was more intelligible for him. At first he saw the main ideas and that the Word of God was being explained. Then his attention wandered. Most of the people took notes while he tried, periodically, to remember the main points.

He thought that only the "simple gospel" should be preached in the church. He had heard someone say that too much deep study of the Scriptures would lead to doubt or confusion, but that seemed wrong to him too. If God's revelation was really true then how could a man get too much of it? These things were a bit puzzling, but it was a fact that when some people studied God's sovereignty and predestination, the Covenant promises and the extent of Christ's atonement, they would grow cold and confused. They sometimes grew self-confident and lost their way.

It was best when he just heard the same references, the old, old story again and again. He was most comfortable that way. He didn't feel a need to know any more, didn't like big words that he couldn't understand. With a twinge of satisfaction he decided to find something less strenuous, less dangerous.

The Critic

The preaching and the lesson were *okay*. The people were friendly and the temperature was comfortable, but the music and the hymns were terrible. He didn't know the tunes. The melodies were flat and boring. It was hard to follow the words and the preacher called for all stanzas to be sung. Music was important to him and he knew what he liked. He was looking for a church that sang the "old favorites." He thought it was important to sing songs that everyone knew, tunes that were easy and catchy. It was clear that many of the people hardly opened their mouths. It seemed as though they weren't even singing. This told him that the church was dead. He had a

theory that he applied to all the places he visited. It was that he could tell the vitality of a church by its choice of hymns and a congregation by its singing.

Listeners

The worshippers listened, their attention fixed on the pastor and the words he read from the Book. He droned on, but for some, uncertain thoughts bobbed up every few minutes. Strange and distracting notions would impose like cupie dolls at a carnival. A fair effort was required to get the gist of the verses under study.

Facts were clear enough, the context was explained and the doctrines outlined. The importance of these matters could be discerned from the grave and careful attitude of the speaker, but the worshippers waited for the application. They absently groped for a sign of how these elegant, but ancient truths would still apply to them personally.

Finally, without lilt or emotion, the preacher simply said, "Thou art the man", and the listening people saw God's light. They understood their need for confession of sin and for repentance. The absolute and awesome sovereignty of God came clear as the coming of the Messiah was described, as His righteous life, undeserved suffering and death were explained. As His physical resurrection and ascension to heaven were taught, along with His ruling at the Father's right hand, they all made ready to respond to the command and invitation to be seated at the table of the Lord for restored fellowship and holy communion.

The Invited and the Encouraged

Inquirers come.

The curious and interested turn in to sample the fare,
to see if anything can be learned and to find food for mind and heart.

They bring their own tastes, their expectations and their trials.

From the highways and hedges, so full of hungry and thirsty souls,
the seekers respond with cautious approach and measured gaze.

We, as God's people, extend a loving invitation, a call to those inquiring,
searching for a place of true worship and spiritual substance.

Our mission affirms a dual purpose.

First, to carry on biblical worship that honors the Triune God,
that exalts the Person and finished redeeming work of our Messiah, Jesus Christ and avows the
life-generating power of the Holy Spirit.

To accomplish this we primarily employ the preached Word, the Holy Scriptures, and as well,
the older, proven forms and liturgy of the Church;
not the fads that come and go with epidemic monotony.

Our secondary purpose and connected aim is Christian education.

This occasions a unique and challenging ministry benefiting adults as well as children,
accomplished, in part, by faithful use of the great documents that our Lord has provided His
people.

These are the historic **Westminster Confession of Faith**, the **Catechisms** and the **Canons of Dort**.

We find God's revealed Truth faithfully and thoroughly outlined there, we see His thoughts orderly
applied in these proven standards.

We trust that a significant blessing is prepared for you as well, and we hope you will unite

THE WORSHIPPER'S FAITH CHECKUP

Who or what did the people really worship?

their own demand for personal comfort

their friends, children, "boys", etc.

their past memories

all of the above

Why did the people come to church?

- out of habit
- to seek some inner fulfillment
- to satisfy a spiritual need
- all of the above

What is the true biblical reason for corporate worship?

- an imagined need
- a conditioned habit
- a cultural bent
- a created desire in us to be one with God and to glorify Him

Why did the person's comfort often come up?

- men want to feel safe
- men resist being challenged in spiritual matters
- being disturbed by Scripture isn't popular
- all of the above

Why do many churches opt for entertainment oriented ministries today?

- pastors want to please people so that they will return
- people often are attracted by man-centered activity, which is often mistaken for worship
- entertainment makes people feel good and doesn't offend
- all of the above

How are we able to know what kind of hymnody to use in the church?

- there is no standard other than someone's personal taste
- we should always sing the latest contemporary music and hymns
- hymns must be at least 100 years old before they make it into our Psalters
- God has given us a song book in the Bible. It is called the Book of the Psalms.

7. What is evangelism? What do we know of calling sinners to Christ?
Whenever the Person and Work of Christ is presented sinners are called to account.
The law of God, faithfully preached, is a tutor to bring men to Christ.
Emotionalism and psychology are often abused in modern revivalism.
- d) All of the above.

For an answer key please come to Trinity Presbyterian Church in Waukesha, Wisconsin. Here you will find a congregation dedicated to biblical worship, a church where the Scriptures are preached, Jesus Christ is exalted as our sovereign Savior and Lord, the Psalms are read and sung, the great creeds are recited, the Westminster Catechism is studied and the holy Law of the Lord is seen and understood as the only absolute by which we are to live and prosper.

At Trinity Presbyterian Church we pray together, using the Psalms as the pattern and driving force of seeking God's face. We pray for Christ's Kingdom to be built up, that we might have a part in that building and that His enemies will be rooted out and destroyed. We pray for His glory to be more and more revealed in the earth. We pray that God will make profitable all of our various personal trials and needs as well.

Trinity Presbyterian Church
224 N. Hine Ave.
Waukesha, WI 53188

Phone: 262-894-8768