

North Center Baptist Church  
*The Gathering in Worship (Part 2)*  
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## 1. Why does the local church gather together week after week?

Three reasons:

1. It's what Jesus *created* the church to do.
2. It's what Jesus *commands* the church to do.
3. It's what Jesus *causes* the church to do.

## 2. Why do we do what we do every Sunday morning?

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do,  
do **all** to the glory of God.”  
~ *1 Cor. 10:31*

That means that there are literally an infinite number of ways that a church can worship God together: *eating, playing, serving, celebrating, working, laughing, crying, traveling...*

- One of the most meaningful worship experiences for me in 2019 was sitting in a **hydroseed truck** with a seminary brother.

So if we are called to worship God with all of life, how do we determine what we are going to do together on a Sunday morning?

- *Why don't we incorporate drama?*
- *Why don't we have special music?*
- *Why don't we wave flags or use interpretive dancing?*
- *Why don't we watch inspirational movies?*

Answer: if **Jesus** is building His church (He creates this gathering; He commands this gathering; and He is causing this gathering), then **He** ought to be the One who determines what happens when we gather. That means that faithful churches should be looking to His inspired Word to tell us what our worship ought to look like.<sup>1</sup>

If Jesus *designs* the church, then **He** *defines* its worship.<sup>2</sup>

The NT gives us at least six essential elements that are to take place in the regular gathering of God's people:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jesus said that the Father is seeking people who will worship Him in spirit and in truth (**John 4:24**). What that means is that there is a way that God wants His people to worship Him. He hasn't left corporate worship up to our imagination.

<sup>2</sup> It was this kind of thinking that caused the Protestant Reformation.

<sup>3</sup> Preaching, Praise, Praying, Pockets, Presence, Practicing the Ordinances.

1. Worship through reading the Word together
2. Worship through the preaching the Word
3. Worship through singing the Word together
4. *Worship through praying the Word together*
5. *Worship through giving our offerings together*
6. *Worship through celebrating the ordinances together*
7. *Worship through fellowshipping together.*

## 1. Worship through reading the Word together

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable  
 For doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,  
 That the man of God may be complete,  
 Thoroughly equipped for every good work.”  
 ~ 2 Tim. 3:16–17

Nothing else on earth is given that kind of description! Our doctrine, our discipleship, our sanctification, our being equipped to serve God...all of these are dependent on the Bible.

Not only did the NT writers exhort the local churches to read Scripture out loud in their public gatherings,<sup>4</sup> but the first time we see Jesus in the gathered assembly during His earthly ministry, that is exactly what He is doing: *reading the Bible out loud*.

“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.”<sup>5</sup>  
 ~ Luke 4:16

So we read from the Bible – out loud – together – because:

- i. *It's the only source of divine inspiration;*
- ii. *It's what Jesus did in the local gathering.*

## 2. Worship through the preaching of Scripture

At the end of Paul's final letter to Timothy, he writes:

“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ,  
 Who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:  
 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season.  
 Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”  
 ~ 2 Timothy 4:1–2

<sup>4</sup> See Col 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27; Rev 1:3.

<sup>5</sup> He read from Isaiah 61:1–2.

**Q.** So, why does preaching have a primary place in our church gatherings?

**A.** Because it stands as one of the most solemn charges in God's Word (**4:1**)

And it is important to note that the preacher is not the only one actively engaging in worship during this part of the service.

- The **preacher** has the opportunity of worshiping God as he humbly and boldly and clearly proclaims the glories of God revealed in the Word.
- The **congregation** has the opportunity of worshiping God by humbly and attentively listening to the Word of God and by the various ways that we respond to the preaching of the Word.

I was raised as missionary-pastor's kid, and I grew up hearing the Word preached every Sunday. And my dad is a gifted preacher. Sunday after Sunday, he would preach the Word, and the congregation listened...and then **Bill Hoppe** joined the church, and everything changed! 😊

- Bill was sitting there in the sanctuary along with his wife and their seven children as Dad began to preach, and it wasn't long into the sermon that Dad declared some truth from God's Word, and Bill said, "**Amen!**"
  - I remember thinking, "Is he allowed to say that during the sermon?" To the best of my recollection, I don't remember anybody ever saying something out loud like that during a sermon.
  - And it wasn't just a one-time thing for Bill. Sunday after Sunday, sermon after sermon, Dad would say something true from the Bible, and Bill would say, "Amen!"
- Over time I began to learn something about Bill's preaching...
  - Not only was he worshiping God by actively listening to the preaching of His Word,
  - But he was also participating in the worship through his verbal affirmations.
    - So many good things were happening in his "amens"
      - he was verbally participating in the message;
      - he was encouraging the preacher;
      - he was giving more weight to the truths being proclaimed by adding his voice of affirmation;
      - And he was indirectly encouraging the rest of us to listen.
  - And then, at some point, I realized that Bill's "amens" actually had a biblical precedent. This wasn't just his creative way of participating in the worship service; it was his way of participating according to the Bible.

**"...How will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "**Amen**"  
At your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?  
~ 1 Corinthians 14:16**

In other words, according to Paul, one of the reasons it is important to make sure that the message is clear and understandable is so that people can say "Amen!"

- I don't think this passage is saying that we have to say "Amen!" during the sermon.

- I'm saying, if you have a desire to participate in the preaching by saying "Amen," that's a biblically appropriate way to engage in corporate worship!

**I think we should practice!** (we practice our music; we practice our preaching...benediction)  
 - - - \_\_\_\_\_ *let's hear what an "Amen" sounds like on this side of the sanctuary!* - - -

And there are other ways of participating in worship as the Word is being preached:

- Opening your Bibles so that you can see the truths for yourselves.
- Some people find it helpful to take notes during the sermon...
- Nodding your head in agreement when a biblical truth is clear to you...

**Scrolling through my phone** – probably checking the Vikings score and then seeing if anybody had liked my most recent Facebook post...

- Not only was I missing out on the Word that God had for our church family that day,
- But I was missing out on an opportunity worship during the sermon,
- And I was setting a horrible example for those around me.

So we worship through the preaching of the Word because God's Word solemnly charges us to, but we do this as an act of worship together.

### 3. Worship through singing the Word together

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,  
 teaching and admonishing one another  
 in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,  
singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."  
 ~ Col 3:16<sup>6</sup>

Notice a couple things about the church's singing:

1. **The source of our singing: the Word.**
  - Jesus doesn't *just* want our songs and our voices.
    - He wants voices that are connected with hearts that love His Word.
    - He wants songs that are rooted in the precious truths of His Word.
  - The first thing we see in this passage is that there is a profound connection between our singing & this book.
2. **The audience of our singing: the Lord and one another.**
  - Not only is our singing a means of *worship* to the Lord Jesus,
  - But it is also a means of *teaching* and *encouraging* one another.

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<sup>6</sup> See also Eph 5:18–21.

- When I hear and see my church family sing...

*“Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love.  
Here’s my heart, Lord, take and seal it,  
Seal it for Thy courts above”*

- I can’t describe the encouragement that takes place in my soul.
  - You remind me that I am not alone in my struggles.
  - As I confess this struggle, you are right there with me.
  - As I ask God to seal my heart for His glory, you are there with me – asking Him to do the same thing.

- When I hear and see my church family sing...

*“In Christ alone my hope is found.”*

- You are teaching your church family of the supremacy of Christ.
- You are encouraging your church family – many of whom are tired, weary, anxious, frustrated, feeling lonely or hopeless – that there is hope in Christ!
  - Oh the power of being surrounded by Christians singing, “There is hope in Christ!”
- If our singing is a form of teaching, then how we sing is nearly as important as what we sing.
  - Example: if you stand like a mannequin and mumble your way through *“How Great is Our God”* – what are you communicating about the greatness of our God?
    - My hunch is that the reason so many young people walk away from the church after they leave home is because the message they heard with their eyes (Sunday after Sunday) is that God really is not great.
- When you...
  - see a congregation standing together to sing,
  - see people raising their hands,
  - see someone smiling or weeping during a song,
  - hear people cheering or clapping after a particularly powerful lyric,
  - hear people singing with all their heart...
- ...they are teaching you something of the glory of Christ!

Not only that, but we also sing together because that’s what Jesus did when He was together with His church. Jesus says

“I will declare Your name to My brethren;  
*In the midst of the assembly I will sing* praise to You.”  
~ *Heb 2:12*

### **Closing**

This is why we read the Word and preach the Word and sing the Word together Sunday after Sunday.

May God grant us the grace to be a church that loves and prioritizes the weekly gathering. May we be a church that *anticipates* the weekly gathering and *prepares* for the weekly gathering. And may He make us into a people who worship together with all our hearts – so that a watching world would be forced to say, “*How altogether worthy, how altogether lovely, and how altogether wonderful must their God be!*”

### **Prayer**