

Understanding Worship: How God Makes Us Christian

This course explores what it means to come before God as his people and how he serves us through his Word. As the class unfolds, you'll gain a clearer understanding of why worship is holy and how the church's liturgy quietly shapes us over time. We'll trace the development of Christian worship from Scripture through the early church, the Reformation, and the American context, considering both decay and recovery. The class aims not only to inform but to form—to cultivate reverence, clarity, charity, and joyful conviction in our worship and witness.

- June 14** **Theology** **We Love Him Because He First Loved Us**
God meets with us in worship because he loves us. Why does that matter?
- June 21** **Theology** **God's Real Presence in Sacramental Worship**
God give his people special grace when gathered together for corporate worship. How?
- June 28** **Theology** **How We Are Being Saved**
God gives himself in the Ministry of the Word by ordained clergy, to whom are entrusted the "keys of the kingdom"
- July 5** **Theology** **Not My Feet Only, but also My Hands and My Head**
Worshippers' response to the Word in their assembly, praise, confession, offering, submission, going
- July 12** **Practice** **Sabbath: A Holy Day for Holy Activity**
How God's "otherness" reorients our perspective of the Lord's Day, his worship, and his expectations of us
- July 19** **Practice** **How Should Our Worship Mature, pt. 1**
The formational liturgy: The role of ritual, simplicity, modesty, style, and calendar
- July 26** **Practice** **How Should Our Worship Mature, pt. 2**
Growing as worshippers: Our approach, our mind, our heart, our voice, our ears, our feet
- August 2** **History** **Ancient Worship**
Old Testament-era worship, the end of the ceremonial law and first-century worship, the early church on worship
- August 9** **History** **Liturgical Developments, Decay, and Recovery**
Medieval worship, Roman Catholic errors, early Reformation worship
- August 16** **History** **Reformed Worship...Not Exactly Straightforward**
The worship traditions of the Puritans, Scots, Westminster Divines, and Continental Reformed assemblies
- August 23** **History** **The Americanization of Reformed Worship**
The rising American low-church tradition, 18th- and 19th-century polemics, and the pursuit of liturgical renewal
- August 30** **Maturity** **Worship Traditions**
Pursuing maturity and prizing our traditions, showing humility when worshipping in churches different from ours
- September 6** **Maturity** **The Witness of Our Worship**
Our worship attendance witnesses to our faith, but attendance isn't the only witness—our fervency, attentiveness, and hospitality at worship also witnesses to our faith. Wrestle with the (sometimes uncomfortable) ways that our assembly and worship witnesses to our children, spouse, extended family, neighbors, fellow church members, seekers, and non-believers.

Recommended reading:

Theological, introductory:

Jonathan Landry Cruse, *What Happens When We Worship* (Reformation Heritage, 2020)

Michael Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship* (Baker, 2002)

Theological, deeper:

B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Wipf & Stock, 2002)

Michael Horton, *People and Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 2008)

Oepke Noordmans, *Liturgy in the Reformed Tradition* (Pantocrator Press, 2018)

Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship: Reformed According to Scripture*, rev. ed. (Westminster/John Knox, 2002)

Historical:

Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (Oxford University Press, 2002)

Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England, Vol. I and II* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996)

Stanley R. Hall, "The American Presbyterian Directory for Worship: History of a Liturgical Strategy," Ph.D. diss. (University of Notre Dame, 1990)

D. G. Hart, *Recovering Mother Kirk: The Case for Liturgy in the Reformed Tradition* (Wipf & Stock, 2003)

Julius Melton, *Presbyterian Worship in America: Changing Patterns Since 1787* (John Knox Press, 1967)

James Hastings Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition* (Westminster Press, 1968)

Johannes Quasten, *Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (National Association of Pastoral Musicians, 1983)

Thomas J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (Liturgical Press), 1991

More worship music-related classes:

This class follows my prior Sunday School series on worship music. In the summers of 2017, 2018, and 2023, I taught a series called *Sing with Understanding* with classes on "The History of Post-Reformation Hymn Singing," "Stories of Our Great Hymns," and "Growing as Musical Worshipers." Audio and handouts from these classes are available on the PPC app. To listen, go to Media|Sunday School and locate the *Sing with Understanding* series.

Questions?

As the class progresses, I'll try to answer as many worship-related questions as I can—no matter whether they're simple or complex. To submit online, use the below QR code or link. Even if you don't have a question, you can use the QR code to see what questions have been asked and give your "thumbs up" if you'd like to hear the answer, too!

QR Code:

Link: <http://bit.ly/43PvlvT>



Proclamation Presbyterian Church – Summer 2026

Dr. Ryan Kelly – ryan@proclamation.org

Understanding Worship: How God Makes Us Christian

CLASS 1: We Love Him Because He First Loved Us

The perfection of our worship

What is the root of our understanding of worship?

Today's takeaway, as we go into worship:

Why did God create us?

What is an important way God demonstrates his love?

How can you understand “becoming a Christian” in two ways?

In what way is Christ's work finished? In what way does it continue?

Questions? Ask here: <http://bit.ly/43PvlvT> or here:

