

# We Value Worship



## Core Value

### *We Value Worship.*

Worship is an expression of the church's love for God. We value worship that is joyful, diverse, reverent, and inspiring. Through worship "we celebrate the joy of our salvation. We praise God for the life, death, and resurrection of the Son. We worship God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who loves us like a father and mother, who is always redeeming us, and whose grace empowers and sustains us." (From LABC baptismal affirmation)

*O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! (Psalm 95:6)*

*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe. (Hebrews 12:28)*

## Introduction

Central to the life of the church is the activity of worship. Worship is the gathering of God's people to give God glory, honor and praise. Worship always has as its focus God. We often think about an audience when we think of worship, perhaps because we have what in most places would be considered a stage for performance. But in the context of Christian worship there is only one in the audience, and that one is God. We, the people of God, are the participants of worship gathering to give ourselves to God.

When that is considered, worship becomes quite a serious matter. Worship is about God. C. Welton Gaddy has written an intriguing book on worship, *The Gift of Worship*, that helps to clarify its various aspects and to bring into a more clear focus its purpose. I commend it to you for further reading. In that book he contends, not surprisingly given the title, that worship is a gift. He writes: "A capacity to worship and the responsibility to worship inherent in that ability are gifts from God to all people. The attitudes, activities, words, and commitments of worship, as well as the sincerity with which they occur, are gifts from people to God" (p. xi.).

It is also clear that through worship, people like you and me are somehow transformed. Our lives renewed, energy gained, hope received, love offered and embraced. There is something divine about worship that is hard to define and difficult to grasp but there nonetheless.

It is evident that when the term worship is mentioned, most often our thoughts are about styles of worship. Contemporary, traditional, blended, liturgical, and emergent all are terms used to describe worship and yet they mean different things to different people. There may well be as nearly many different styles of worship as there are Baptist denominations.

To say that we value worship is not to say that we value a particular style of worship, though it is apparent that there are methods of worship with which we are more or less comfortable. It is to acknowledge, however, that we accept and embrace our responsibility to approach worship with sincerity, purpose, and commitment.

To that end, let's consider this core value together.

## **Bible Study**

There are several passages in the Bible that talk about worship. The Old Testament is filled with stories of people gathering at an altar to give thanks to God. The prophets consistently call people to a sincerity in their worship. The book of Acts gives us descriptions of the church gathering for worship. And the gospel writers seem to capture a sense of worship whenever Jesus gathers with people and teaches them.

Psalm 95:6 reminds us of our responsibility to come before God with a humble spirit. I often have encouraged people to ask themselves, "What do I bring to worship today?" Sometimes we bring a bad attitude. Sometimes we bring all our distractions. Sometimes we bring bitterness. But what if we brought a humble heart to worship. I think if we did that each week, we would discover not only are we giving ourselves to God in and through worship, but also we would find the indwelling spirit of God filling us to overflowing.

There is something to be said for taking the time to prepare our hearts for worship. We can do that at home by taking the time to pray. We can do it at the worship service itself by centering our lives on God. Worship begins with a humble heart.

The word in Hebrews 12:28 that stands out for me is the word "give." Worship is about giving. God asks that we give ourselves in worship. One thing that could be helpful here is to picture in your mind opening your hands and turning them up toward God, symbolic of your emptying yourself and giving yourself to God. When we do give ourselves to God we discover a freedom to more fully be the people God created us to be.

## **LABC Core Values**

Worship is an expression of the church's love for God. I'm not sure that much else can be said to add clarity. We love God. We gather each week to express our love to God. Through worship the whole world can see that we love God. When people ask, "Why do you worship?" The answer is always, "Because I love God."

It is not by accident that the words joyful and diverse are also found in the core value of music. Worship and music are uniquely related. But what is it that we mean by these terms?

To say that worship is joyful is to acknowledge that worship comes from deep within our soul. One of my favorite authors, Frederick Buechner, in one of his books, writes, “Joy is a mystery because it can happen anywhere, anytime, even under the most unpromising circumstance, even in the midst of suffering with tears in its eyes.” Joy surprises us because we never really know when or where it might show up. So there is that element of surprise in worship. There are days in worship you can almost reach out and touch God. There are other days in worship when you wonder if God is listening. And just the moment we think we aren’t paying attention we get caught in a moment and we are aware that we are in God’s presence.

Worship is joyful not because we have smiles on our faces but because we direct our lives and our hearts toward God. Whenever we acknowledge the presence of the living God, there is joy.

We also value worship that is diverse. That word diverse sometimes gets us. It is not to imply that we have caught the “wishy-washy-ness” of Charlie Brown. No, it is to acknowledge that one’s love for God is expressed in many ways. That shouldn’t surprise us. We express love for our family and friends in many different ways. It is a reminder to us that worship is not so much about the right method as it is about the right heart.

To say that worship is reverent is to acknowledge the sovereignty of God over us. We kneel before God because God is God. God is our maker. We are not equal with God. We are his servants.

We value worship that is inspiring. For me that means worship that moves me to make a decision to move my life more closely in line with the person God has created me to be. That is what Isaiah is expressing in Isaiah 6. He stands in the awesome presence of God having heard God declare, “Whom shall I send?” Isaiah, in commitment of his life, inspired to align his will with God’s will proclaims, “Hear am I. Send me.”

Christian worship does move us closer to God because we have been in God’s presence.

The baptismal affirmation included in this core value reminds us of the unity we share in Christ. There is unity because we love God and unity because we gather to worship the living God. So as we come together in worship we come as individuals who have united our hearts and our lives together to worship and to serve God who loves us and sustains us.

Worship is a gift. I’m glad we are a church willing to accept our responsibility to bring to God our gifts in and through worship each week.

## **Reference**

*The Gift of Worship*, C. Welton Gaddy (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992).





## Daily Devotionals: Worship



### **Monday: *Come, Let Us Worship God Together*, by Kitty Baird**

#### **Scripture Reading: Psalm 104:35**

After a busy and sometimes hectic week, ...an early Sunday morning rush to get to church at the appointed time.... coffee and visit with Maria, Linda, Ted and others...greetings and fellowship with my Sunday School classmates.... an inspiring and thought provoking lesson from the Bible, it is time to go into the sanctuary of our church. What a wonderful way to start a new week. This is worship at its best when I walk into our sanctuary, greet those sitting around me, and settle down to truly concentrate on worshipping our Lord.

When the prelude begins and our ministers walk in, it seems all is right with the world. Dr. Phil reminds us "How Great is our God". This is followed by a prayer to our Father who is so with us at this moment. Our guests are greeted collectively and individually. We listen to one of King David's Psalms; we pray the prayer that our Lord taught us to pray; we sing praises to Him; and, we share our resources, while we have another opportunity to listen to beautiful inspiring music followed by words of encouragement and hope from our pastor's sermon.

Max Lucado, in his book, *Cure for the Common Life*, states: "Worship humbles the smug and lifts the deflated. Worship adjusts us, lowering the chin of the haughty, straightening the back of the burdened." He also wrote: "Worship positions the worshiper. [We may be] so sold on ourselves that we think someone died and made us ruler, or so down on ourselves that we think someone died and just left us. Treat both conditions with worship."

Thank you Tommy, Keith, Phil and Dave for promoting this opportunity for us. Thank you, God, for making it all possible.

My whole being, praise the LORD

Psalm 104:35

### **Tuesday: *Prayer in Worship*, by Jill Robertson**

#### **Scripture Reading: Psalm 45:10**

Psalm 45:10 says, "Be still and know that I am God." I believe in today's world we miss God speaking to us many times because we simply aren't still. Webster defines still to mean without motion, but also as SILENCE.

At LABC we have the discipline of silence as part of our worship service. For me it is a quiet time to listen for God alone. Often when we think of praying we think of talking to God. God likes to talk to us as well and I believe we can hear from him when we get still and listen. During the silent prayer part of worship we can hear that still small voice and feel His comfort, peace and guidance. I like to take that silent time and incorporate it into the other days of the week as well. I believe it is good and right to come unplugged from everything and be still and know my God.

When I think of prayer in worship at LABC, one of my favorite memories was during the Lord's Prayer. As the entire congregation quotes the words of Jesus together we recall how we were taught to pray. One Sunday about a year ago I heard a sweet little voice beside me saying, "for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever." I was blessed to realize my

Elizabeth had captured the words of Our Lord's Prayer and they will forever be in her heart and mind.

What a blessing to hear from God and to know he speaks to us and to all those around us as we worship!

**Wednesday: *Worship as Drama*, Soren Kierkegaard  
Scripture Reading: Psalm 95:6; Hebrews 12:28**

Soren Kierkegaard has likened worship to a drama, but not in the way we might think. We may tend to think of the worship leaders (pastor, choir, and others who ascend the platform) as the actors and the congregation as the critical theatregoers. After all we sit facing the platform or stage, some in theatre style seats, and may even offer our critique of the performance on the way out. This view of worship as drama, according to Kierkegaard, is far off base. On the contrary, God is the audience of worship. The worship leaders are the prompters. Members of the congregation are the actors.

Kierkegaard writes, "In the most earnest sense, God is the critical theatergoer, who looks on to see how the lines are spoken and how they are listened to: hence here the customary audience is wanting. The speaker is then the prompter, and the listener stands openly before God. The listener, if I may say so, is the actor, who in all truth acts before God" (Soren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart Is to Will the One Thing*, New York: Harper & Row, 1938, p. 181).

Together we offer our worship to God. We do not attend worship as an audience seeking to be entertained by the worship leaders. It is God we seek to please. Therefore, when we gather for worship, let our first thought be not, "what can I get out of this," but "what can I give to God."

**Thursday: *What Preaching Means to Me*, by Callie Farmer Minks  
Scripture Reading: Acts 2:37- 42**

This year my older son, Barrett, entered the first grade and consequently advanced from extended session to the mysterious "Big Church". He asked me, "What do you guys do in there anyway?" He quickly learned that "Big Church" means a great deal more sitting still and being quiet. This milestone in Barrett's life reminded me of my own childhood experiences and growth in worship.

When I was a child, each Sunday my friend, Stacie, and I would ceremoniously cross out each portion of the worship service on our programs as they were completed. Greeting...check. Offertory Prayer...check. As Dr. Baker approached the pulpit, I scrutinized the thickness of his stack of papers and settled in for the sermon. During middle school and early high school, too, most sermons took a backseat to writing notes back and forth with my friends. At some point during my teenage years, though, I actually started *listening* to sermons and finding them meaningful to my life.

How often since then have I sat down in the pew burdened, only to leave feeling as if the sermon was preached directly to me. It is amazing how the power of the spoken word can evoke laughter, tears and change. Do I remember every sermon? No, but the ones I do remember, I will never forget. Dr. Noel preached a sermon about "hands" that helped me find my path as an unsure college student. When Tommy spoke about learning to hug, as a nonhugger myself, I understood the importance of embracing those you love because life can be fleeting. One of the

most important sermons of my life was actually one I missed, When my father made his profession of faith at nearly 60 years of age.

From Dr. Roberts, to Dr. Baker, to Dr. Noel and Tommy, each has impacted my life in some profound way. I am proud and grateful to have grown up at LABC and find comfort in raising my children in the love and security of my church home.

**Friday: *Worship is for Everyone*, by Tommy Valentine**

**Scripture Reading: Matthew 19:14**

Worship is an event intended by God for people of all ages. Whether we are 2 or 42 or 82, worship is an event to which all of us bring something. That was emphasized by my parents during worship. As a child I can remember my parents holding the hymn book so I could see the song and pointing with their fingers to the words as we sang. They did the same when the Bible was read in worship. Their actions emphasized to me the importance of what I brought to and did in worship. When I got older and sat with the other youth I still grabbed a hymn book and sang along and would turn in my Bible to the scripture readings for that day.

Still today, I believe worship is a time for all of us, from the youngest child to the oldest person present. We are God's people and we have gathered to give ourselves in worship to God. When that happens, God always rejoices.