

Liturgy

- I. Liturgy
 - a. Liturgy is the order of our worship
 - b. Should we have liturgy?
 - c. 1 Corinthians 14:26-40
 - d. Liturgy is a guide for our public worship, personal worship, and family worship but is not something by which we are bound
- II. Regulative Principle vs. Normative Principle
 - a. How do we know how to organize our worship?
 - i. Regulative Principle is the principle that we should worship how God has commanded in scripture
 - ii. Normative Principle states that anything not forbidden in scripture is acceptable for worship
 - b. Both views can be taken to extremes, but we should be cautious of the extremes
 - i. God has laid out proper elements of our worship in scripture, yet He has not given us a prescriptive order in which to organize them
 - ii. There is freedom in our liturgy, but that freedom should not be abused and taken as an opportunity to do whatever we want
 - c. “But as in external discipline and ceremonies, he has not been pleased to prescribe every particular that we ought to observe (he foresaw that this depended on the nature of the times, and that one form would not suit all ages), in them we must have recourse to the general rules which he has given, employing them to test whatever the necessity of the church may require to be enjoined for order and decency. Lastly, as he has not delivered any express command, because things of this nature are not necessary to salvation, and, for the edification of the church, should be accommodated to the varying circumstances of each age and nation. It will be proper, as the interest of the church may require, to change and abrogate the old, as well as to introduce new forms. I confess, indeed, that we are not to innovate rashly or incessantly, or for trivial causes. Charity is the best judge of what tends to hurt or to edify: if we allow her to be guide, all things will be safe.”¹
 - d. We should consider the different kinds of people who will be in our services
 - e. If there are many different styles of worship that are preferred, what should we do?

¹ Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), Book 4, Chapter 10, Paragraph 30.

III. Different forms of worship through history

a. Acts 2:42-47

- i. Apostles' teaching
- ii. Fellowship
- iii. Breaking of Bread
- iv. Prayers

b. Justin Martyr (2nd Century)

- i. And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability,² and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows, and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.²

c. Early Church Worship Liturgy

- i. Liturgy of the Word
- ii. Liturgy of the Eucharist

² Justin Martyr, "The First Apology of Justin," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 186.

IV. Reformation and Liturgy

- a. One of the major parts of the Reformation was the focus on recovering “pure” worship and being connected to the early church
 - i. The Reformers did not intend to start their own thing
 - ii. They were heavily connected to the church fathers in everything they did
- b. <https://reformationworship.com/liturgies/>

V. The Shape of the Liturgy

- i. A church’s liturgy reveals their view of worship
- ii. Think about evangelical worship which is as follows: announcements, singing, preaching, alter call
 - 1. Worship is something that we do and bring to God
 - 2. The entire service is an attempt to get people to the altar
 - 3. Everything is loud and exciting, centered around the “praise/worship team” or choir
 - 4. Prayer is used for transitional periods in the service or to ask God in aiding us in our acts of worship
 - 5. Worship is essentially about what we are doing
 - 6. It also becomes a way of helping me fix something in my life
- iii. We need to reform our worship to recover the dialogue and drama of worshipping God
 - 1. The Dialogue of Worship
 - a. Public worship is God calling His people to gather in His presence in which we respond to what He has given and done
 - b. This stresses the importance of the congregation and their participation in the worship
 - 2. The Drama of Worship
 - a. This is not a reference to a play during church
 - b. Our public worship is an enactment telling the story of God’ redemptive relationship with humanity
 - c. The liturgy of our worship proclaims the Gospel itself
 - d. Every part of our worship is connected to that redemptive story and the examples of how God interacts with His people in scripture
 - e. A good example of this is Isaiah 6:1-7 and Isaiah’s vision of God on the throne.

VI. Elements of Worship

a. Call to Worship

- i. How we begin our worship may seem unimportant, but it sets the stage for the rest of the service
- ii. When you look through the liturgies of the Reformation, you will find different ways of opening a service such as the following examples:
 1. A Psalm or Hymn – Martin Luther
 2. A sentence of Scripture – Book of Common Prayer
 3. Votum (Psalm 124:8: “Our help is in the name of the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.”) – John Calvin
 4. Some will argue that we should open with an invocation (calling on God to help us)
- iii. A call to worship is when the pastor/elder “exhorts God’s people to turn from worldly distractions and to focus hearts, minds, and actions on revering him”³
 1. Many times, the call to worship is a statement about God or His work in our lives and not a direct command from God about gathering to worship Him
 2. Ex:
O God, you are my God;
Earnestly I seek you;
My soul thirsts for you;
My flesh faints for you;
As is in a dry and weary land
Where there is no water. (Psalm 63:1)
- iv. Calls to worship should be calls from God’s Word that call us directly to worship Him:
 - a. Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!
Serve the Lord with gladness!
Come into his presence with singing! Psalm 100:1-2⁴
 - b. Sing of steadfast love and justice;
To the Lord, make music. (Psalm 101:1)
I will praise the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

³ Chapell, Bryan, *Christ-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), 222.

⁴ Kelly, Ryan, *Calls to Worship, Invocations, and Benedictions* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2022), 90.

(Psalm 146:2)⁵

v. Why is the call to worship important?

1. God comes to us and calls us to Himself
2. God sets our worship, teaches us how to worship, enables us to worship, and empowers us to worship
3. We do not invite God to come to our presence for He invites us into His presence
4. We can only enter His presence because His Son entered first
5. His Spirit leads us into Worship
6. The gathering of the Church is the Body of Christ which is called together by God
7. The call to worship is a weekly reminder that our God both commands His people to worship Him and desires a relationship with His people

b. Invocation

- i. A prayer, scripture, or song to God to help us worship Him as we should
- ii. Examples:
 1. O lord, you who are merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, descend to us and be with us today that we may bow and worship you. Amen. (Ex. 34:6, Ex. 34:5, Ex. 34:8)⁶
 2. O Lord, open our lips;
And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.
O God, make speed to save us;
O Lord, make haste to help us.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;
As it was I the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
Praise the Lord.
The Lord's Name be praised.⁷

c. Confession of Sin

- i. Whenever a sinner comes into the presence of God, they see His holiness and their own unholiness
- ii. Part of the process of salvation is understanding our need for a savior

⁵ Kelly, *Calls to Worship*, 90.

⁶ Kelly, *Calls to Worship*, 139.

⁷ *Book of Common Prayer* (Huntington Beach, CA: Anglican Liturgy Press, 2019), 13.

- iii. Confession is a time of introspection
- iv. Scripture commands our continual confession of sin:
 - 1. Psalm 32
 - 2. Psalm 51
 - 3. The Lord's Prayer (Mt. 6:9-13; Lk. 11:2-4)
 - 4. James 5:16-20
 - 5. 1 John 1:8-10
- v. Confession can be practiced in several ways
 - 1. Individual quiet prayer
 - 2. One individual praying for the entire congregation
 - 3. The Congregation praying in unison
 - a. Example:

**Do not withhold your mercy from me, O Lord; may
your love and your truth always protect me.
For troubles without number surround me;
My sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see.
They are more than the hairs of my head,
And my heart fails within me.
Be pleased, O Lord, to save me;
O Lord, come quickly to help me.** (from Psalm 40:11-13)⁸
 - 4. Call and response prayer
 - a. Example:

Kyrie Eleison:
Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

d. Assurance of Pardon

- i. The Bible assures us that our sins are forgiven repeatedly, it is crucial for our people to not only confess their sins weekly, but to be reminded that God has forgiven them
- ii. We should not confuse this with the Catholic practice of Absolution in which the priest can absolve sins through the sacrament of reconciliation

⁸ Chapel, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 258.

- iii. Instead, this is a practice in which the pastor/elder declares to the congregation that their sins are forgiven because of the promises of God in scripture
- iv. Assurance of Pardon directly points us to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and is a celebration of His death, burial, and resurrection
- v. Assurance of Pardon can be practiced:
 - 1. Scripture reading
 - 2. Prayer
 - 3. Responsive prayer
 - 4. Singing of Psalms or Hymns that teach of the forgiveness of God

e. Affirmation of Faith

- i. An affirmation of faith is our proclamation of the fundamental truths of our faith for us to remember what we believe
- ii. We are told in scripture to hold fast to our confession:
 - 1. Hebrews 2:1
 - 2. Hebrews 4:14-16
 - 3. Colossians 1:15-23
 - 4. 2 Peter 1:12-15
- iii. Apostle's and Nicene Creed have been historically used for this purpose
- iv. Another option for this time is reading confessions

f. Scripture Reading

- i. One of the central markers of a church is the proclamation of the Word, both in reading and preaching
- ii. The church has always read scriptures in their gatherings, just as Israel was to read scripture (Dt. 31:9-12)
- iii. The reading of scripture has a sacramental nature in which God works through His Word to transform our lives
- iv. Thus, the reader is responsible to prepare themselves as they read the passage so that they are clear, confident, and expressive in their reading of the text
- v. In the early church, the practice became to read one Old Testament passage and two from the New Testament, a gospel and an epistle
- vi. We should not shy away from reading whole chapters of scripture
- vii. One practice of reading is responsive reading
- viii. The practice of reading scripture is a good way of getting the entire church on the same reading plan of the scripture

g. Prayer

- i. Prayer is a central part of Christian worship (Acts 2:42)
- ii. In most low Protestant churches, prayer is done irreverently and passively as time filler
 - 1. We use it as an opportunity for people to exit or enter the stage
 - 2. We use it as a transition filler
- iii. Prayer should be something the whole church intentionally joins in together
- iv. Different times of prayer that can be used in a service
 - 1. Opening invocation
 - 2. Confession of Sin
 - 3. Assurance of Pardon (Absolution)⁹
 - 4. Intercessory Prayer – A time where “intercede” on behalf of others before the Lord
 - a. We pray for our country
 - b. We pray for the lost in our communities
 - c. We pray for other churches around us
 - d. We pray for the sick among us
 - e. We pray for the wayward among us
 - 5. Prayer for the Congregation
 - 6. Prayer of Illumination – A prayer for the preaching of God’s Word and those receiving God’s Word
 - 7. Corporate prayers where the entire church prays together to call on God’s name

h. Singing

- i. Why do we sing?
 - 1. Singing is an expressive way of praying to and praising God
 - 2. To edify your fellow brother and sister (Ephesians 5:19-20)
- ii. When we sing, we are not individuals having our own little worship session
 - 1. We sing with the lights on
 - a. Additionally, singing with either house lights or, preferably, natural lighting
 - b. While lasers and colorful lighting might be cool, it can be a barrier for some who come to public worship and prevent them from participating in worship

⁹ Protestants can practice absolution, but not in the same way as the Roman Catholics.

2. We are to pay attention to each other
3. Congregational singing is vital, and we should be very cautious of turning that over to choirs and praise/worship teams and drowning out our voices with overly loud music
- iii. What are we to sing?
 1. Ephesians 5:19-20
 - a. Psalms
 - b. Hymns
 - c. Spiritual Songs
 2. Songs that build up the faith of the congregation
 3. Our singing should be biblical and focused on God
 4. There is no select age of history we are limited to for song selection, rather we should focus more on the content of the lyrics
 5. Keep the music simple
 6. Limit the distractions as much as possible
- iv. Should we use instruments in worship?
 1. Church history is overwhelmingly against using instruments
 2. We are only about 150 years into the use of instruments in church the way we do today
 3. There is no New Testament scripture for or against using instruments in worship
 4. The Psalms declare that we should use instruments in worship (Psalm 150)
- v. Why are some Christians against using instruments in worship?
 1. There is no New Testament command for it
 2. It was a part of the Old Testament temple worship which has been abolished by Christ
 3. We are to worship in Spirit and Truth, not in guitar solos
 4. It is distracting
 5. It is an opportunity for pride for the instrumentalist

VII. Proclamation of the Word

- a. Worship does not end when the singing ends as preaching is just as much a part of the worship of God's people
 - i. God has always brought His Word to His people through His messengers
 - ii. The preacher is speaking on behalf of God to the congregation by proclaiming His Word from scripture

- b. Let us consider the congregation hearing the sermon:
 - i. He is preaching to people of all ages
 - ii. He is preaching to both men and women
 - iii. He is preaching to rich and poor people
 - iv. He is preaching to educated people and uneducated people
 - v. He is preaching to people from all sorts of backgrounds
 - vi. He is preaching, in many cases, to believers and non-believers
- c. How must the preacher preach God's Word?
 - i. Eisegesis vs. Exegesis
 - 1. Eisegesis is where one reads into a text your ideas and beliefs
 - 2. Exegesis is where one exposes (expository preaching) the text by interpreting the text in it's historical and theological context
 - ii. Acts 20:26-27 - Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.
 - iii. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
 - iv. Titus 2:1 - But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.
 - v. He must preach both to the heart and the mind
 - 1. To preach only to the heart leads to manipulation and doctrineless churches
 - 2. To only preach to the mind is to be boring and to lecture
 - vi. He must apply the text to the listeners appropriately
- d. Some factors that cause preachers to shy away from preaching the way they should:
 - i. Salary and not losing their job
 - ii. Fear of offense
 - iii. Cultural backlash
 - iv. Attempting to draw large numbers of people
 - v. Theological disagreements

VIII. Ordinances

- a. The two ordinances of the Church are Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- b. Both should be practiced in a proper way
- c. The Lord's Supper should be taken often, preferably weekly

IX. Response

- a. This is a time where the congregation responds to God's Word

- b. This time is called the “altar call” today, but I am not convinced that is the most appropriate use of this time
- c. Times of response can be used for:
 - i. Praying together
 - ii. Praying corporately
 - iii. Sinners coming to receive baptism
 - iv. The offering

X. Benediction

- a. Benediction means “blessing” and is the common closing of the worship service
- b. “The Benediction is not a simply a conclusion but is also a reminder to God’s people that they start this new week with assurance of his Blessing.”¹⁰
- c. Two ways churches understand the benediction
 - i. It is a conveyance of the official endorsement of the church on the entire worship service
 - ii. It carries Christ’s on Blessing on His people for the work He calls them to do¹¹
- d. Examples:
 - i. The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace
(Numbers 6:24-26)¹²
 - ii. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession; he set his love on you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers (Dt. 7:6-8)¹³
 - iii. May you trust in the Lord
And be like a tree planted by water.
May you not fear when heat comes;
May your leaves remain green;
May you not be anxious in the year of drought
And never cease to bear fruit. (Jer. 17:7-8)¹⁴

¹⁰ Chapel, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 357.

¹¹ Chapel, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 357.

¹² Kelly, *Calls to Worship*, 170.

¹³ Kelly, *Calls to Worship*, 171.

¹⁴ Kelly, *Calls to Worship*, 177.