

## WHY DO WE WORSHIP THE WAY WE WORSHIP AT KCPC?

The thoughtful question has been asked: "**Why do we at KCPC worship the way you do?**" The question comes from the serious biblical reflection of Christians after the worship service. I would ask you to read this carefully and prayerfully with your family so that all will know why we do worship the way we worship at KCPC. There have been many good books written on this subject and with all sincere humility, many of the books can perhaps address the question more fully.

As a pastor and one who searches the Scripture, I do want to know why we do all that we do as a congregation to the best of my ability, and so I will try by God's grace to explain this to you to the best of my ability. There is a list for further reading at the end. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask me, or to discuss with me further!

I will attempt to answer this question "**Why do we at KCPC worship the way we do?**", by asking and attempting to answer the following questions:

(1) What is liturgy and does Scripture give to the people of God a biblical form for worship? (2) What did the New Covenant Churches learn concerning worship from the Old Covenant "Churches" or people of God? (3) What should our bulletin, or service of worship look like after reflection on Scripture? (4) What should be the main focus and purpose of Biblical worship?

### What is Liturgy?

The order of service or worship service on the Lord's Day is "liturgical". Now usually when we think of "liturgical", we think of men with long robes, candles around the sanctuary, and sweet incense filling the air (what has crassly been referred to as "smells and bells").

***The word "liturgy" is basically the order of how a particular congregation "does worship" together as the corporate body of Christ. In other words, it is what is found in the bulletin for the worship service, or what is actually done in the service if there is no bulletin.***

Some churches may say that they do not have a liturgy, but this simply is not true. Any order (even if it is a disordered service!) is a liturgy. The question is not whether a church ***is liturgical in practice***, but rather ***is the liturgy biblical?*** The important question is to do all things by God's

grace according to His Word. Has there been reflection from God's Word on the congregation's liturgy?

### **Presenting Ourselves to God Corporately and Individually**

In Romans 12, the Apostle Paul begins his imperative section of Christian living in chapters 12-16 based on the indicative chapters of 1-11 with a summary of the Christian devotion to God:

**Romans 12:1** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

The Apostle Paul teaches us that as Christians our entire lives are to be lived unto God because of what he has done for us in our being united to Jesus Christ, and this is our spiritual worship in presenting our bodies as living sacrifices. This is language of the Old Covenant and can biblically inform our service of worship or liturgy (see [Worship According to Scripture](#), by Hughes Oliphant Old).

The Apostle Paul is saying that when you present yourselves to God in a general way, or in a daily way, we are to approach him as those who are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. We do not bring real blood sacrifices to God, for those were merely types in the Old Covenant. Rather in the New Covenant, we bring ourselves to God clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, washed in his blood, and when we serve God in our daily lives we do so in Christ! We offer up ourselves entirely to God in Christ - who is our life.

**Colossians 3:1-4:** If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

If we do this spiritual worship of God in a general way each day of our lives, how much more should we think about how we approach God as a corporate covenantal community in Christ. The Lord's Day is a very special "holiday" that comes on the first day of every week, where God specifically calls his people corporately to himself in a way that is unique from our day to day walk with God in Jesus Christ.

The Lord's Day is and always has been a "special day" to focus on the corporate aspect of who we are as the people of God being prepared for the New Heavens and the New Earth! The Lord's Day is a day when the focus is on the People of God, rather than merely the individual Christian. This is one reason why the letters in the New Testament are written in the plural "you". The letters of revelation that teach God's people about his

salvation and mercy in Christ were read to the gathered corporate covenantal community of Christ's people!

As Christians we want to consider what Hebrews 12 teaches us about the New Covenant way of corporate worship, and think biblically about how to order our liturgy so that it is as biblical as possible (which is another way of saying that KCPC believes in "being Reformed and always Reforming" according to the Bible as we understand better how to live our lives before God, particularly as a corporate covenantal community in Christ).

There are some differences between the Old and New Covenant way of the "worship service" with regards to the place and what we are to bring before the LORD God, but there are also similarities in Hebrews 12 we want to consider.

***The most important similarity between the Old and New Covenants is that God does not change, and so we approach the same Holy God when we worship corporately in the New Covenant era as the Old Covenant people approached. Our way into his presence has changed because the Redemptive-Historical epoch has shifted from promise, shadow and type, to fulfillment, reality, and ant-type:***

**Hebrews 12:18-29:** For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest<sup>19</sup> and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.<sup>20</sup> For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned."<sup>21</sup> Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."

<sup>22</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,<sup>23</sup> and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,<sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.<sup>25</sup> See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.<sup>26</sup> At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."<sup>27</sup> This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken- that is, things that have been made- in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.<sup>28</sup> Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,<sup>29</sup> for our God is a consuming fire.

Notice particularly the last two verses of Hebrews 12 with regard to our worship corporately or our "liturgy":

***"Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."***

In light of the accomplishment of Christ and his once and for all holy sacrifice for his people, we are specifically, as God's corporate covenantal community in Christ, to be grateful and offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.

Now some would say that how we do worship, that is, how we offer to God acceptable worship is not laid out for us in a Biblical way, but I would argue that it is (I have recently been greatly influenced by this in an exceptional book entitled ['The Lord's Service: The Grace of Covenant Renewal Worship'](#) by Jeffrey J. Meyers).

### **Old and New Covenant Worship**

We should remember that the New Covenant Churches' worship relied on much of what was already understood in the way of how the Old Covenant taught a person to approach God. The New Covenant Churches were continuing to approach and worship God in many of the same ways the Old Covenant people approached and worshipped God. They did not think it necessary to reinvent fully the liturgical wheel!

***However, although they depended on much that was already established, they were NOW being informed by the fulfillment in the fullness of the times of Jesus Christ and his final and perfect sacrifice for sinners.***

***It was not that the New Covenant Churches decided to have new ways of worshipping God, as if the old way was simply outdated and so they sought what would be understood as "first century contemporary worship".***

***The New Covenant Churches were now understanding in light of the New Covenant revelation what the Old Covenant types truly meant in Christ (that is one of the main purposes of the Book of Hebrews!).***

How would one summarize the Old Covenant liturgy that is laid out for us in broad brushes in the Old Covenant (see Exodus 24-40; The Book of Leviticus, particularly chapters 1-10; Nehemiah 8-9)? The Old Covenant way of approaching and worshipping God was initiated by God with a call to the corporate covenantal community to come to Him and offer their worship represented by a Mediator (this varied with occasion between Priests, Levites, and Teachers, but the biblical point is that worship was led by men called by God and "ordained" as we would say it).

For instance, at Mount Sinai, the people of God were invited or called to worship God as His people through the representatives Moses and Aaron as imperfect, yet called mediators between God and his people. The

corporate covenantal community were told by Moses to bring to God certain sacrifices that were symbolic substitutes and signs of a greater reality that would come to pass in time (Leviticus 1-16). Later in the period of the Tabernacle and then the Temple, the place of corporate worship changed, but the corporate covenantal community of people were still represented by priests, Levites, and teachers.

The corporate covenantal community were called to offer to God thanksgiving and praise for his taking them out of slavery and bringing them into God's own presence. The people were to hear the Word of God and respond to it in covenantal obedience. They were then to go out and represent God as lights to the world/the nations. Then the people would commune with God in a meal that he had provided for them. Finally, the leader of the service would pronounce a "good word" or benediction on the corporate covenantal community:

**"Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel:  
you shall say to them,  
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.  
"So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them."  
(Numbers 6:23-27)**

The ordained leaders of the people (Aaron and his sons at this point in Redemptive-History), would pronounce blessing as embodied representatives of God himself. These men, called and selected by God, were "incarnations" of God to the people as their priests. They were to represent God by "putting his name upon the people", and God would bless the corporate covenantal community! (v. 27).

### **"Give Me Chapter and Verse to Support All This"!!**

Sometimes Christians will want you to prove something you do in the Christian life, such as attempting to have a biblical liturgy, by saying: "Give me a chapter and verse to support your teaching". I think this is a faulty and immature way of interpreting Scripture (It IS noble to search the Scriptures (Acts 17:11), but this should be done carefully, not merely a "chapter and verse" kind of exegesis).

***We need to remember when searching the Scriptures that there is a "big picture" of which we must be aware. Some things we do, such as the way we worship, or how we develop our liturgy, cannot simply be reduced to a "chapter and verse".***

Again, we must not forget that the New Covenant Churches were familiar with the "big picture" or Old Covenant story of how worship was done (This is what made the Bereans "noble" - -they were not individualistically comparing Bible verses with one another, rather they knew the Old

Covenant story and were seeking to understand how the New Covenant story and fulfillment and Christ "fit in" as it were).

***There were some things that were no longer relevant to the New Covenant congregations, such as offering a lamb as a sacrifice, but the reason these things were no longer relevant was not because they had some new and contemporary insights into God's worship, but rather something new and greater had happened that fulfilled that Old Covenant type in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ!***

So, why do we worship at KCPC the way we worship? That is the question, and so far it doesn't seem like I have answered it, but I wanted to lay a biblical framework for "WHY" we do worship, or why our liturgy is the way it is! Notice in the lay out from KCPC that there is a "covenantal conversation" between our LORD God in Jesus Christ and the corporate covenantal community of worshippers in Christ!

### ***God speaks and His people respond!***

This is basic, but most essential for understanding what we are doing when we worship together! You could also say God serves us and we in gratitude for what he has done in Christ, serve and worship Him in response.

### **"How Then Should We Live...and Design Our Bulletins"!?**

If you have noticed the form of the bulletin at KCPC, it is designed this way with a specific purpose at guiding the corporate covenantal community in Christ from the initial beginning of the worship in approaching God, to worshipping God, and then finally to responding to God and ending closing worship. What were we biblically thinking when we organized the worship service in this way? Here is a short summary. Notice how God serves, then we serve God, or God speaks and His people respond.

#### **God's People:**

**Prelude: We Prepare to Approach God by Prayerfully Preparing our Hearts.** We can appreciate the excellence of the musician helping to lead the service, but our focus should be on realizing that "the LORD is in his holy temple, let all the earth be silent before him" (Hab. 2:20).

Remember that worship music, including the prelude is not primarily designed to "make one feel good" or to promote "goosey pimples" (although there is a chance this may occur). Worship music is designed to help and assist the people of God to come into God's holy presence with thanksgiving, and into his holy courts with praise (Psalm 100), so that the people of God will realize the ceremonial and unique aspect of

approaching God's presence together in a way that is unique to the rest of the week. There is nothing wrong with Biblical pageantry, or getting caught up in the true drama of worship if it is based on God's Word! (see Michael Horton, ['A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship'](#)).

**God:**

**Call to Worship** (God calls us to worship Him). This is a reading of Scripture, the very voice of God speaking to His people through the ordained minister (or at least under his supervision in certain times and circumstances).

**God's People:**

**Confession of Sins** By God's grace, the only Lamb we offer up to God, is Jesus Christ, the Lamb who was already offered up for us by God Himself!

**God:**

**Forgiveness of Sins** (from Scripture such as 1 John 1:8-2:1). God absolves his people of their sins corporately through His Word as his ordained, or called minister declares this Word to God's people:

**If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.**

**But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.**

**God's People:**

**Praise and Thanksgiving to God** (Hymns and Songs sung corporately to God). We sing as a corporate covenantal community in Christ songs that are Scriptural in content and form. As the people of God we do not merely want to make the false dichotomy between whether something is appropriate because it is "traditional" or "contemporary", rather we want to seek God for wisdom and discernment with regard to our praise and thanksgiving to God in both content and form (see ['Reforming Our Worship Music'](#), by Leonard Payton and James M. Boice)!

**God:**

**Scripture Lesson** (Scripture is Read for all to hear the voice of Christ-Romans 10:13-17). We hear God's Word read to His people, realizing that when we read the Word of God, we hear the very voice of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we listen to the Word of God as his corporate covenantal community in Christ, we must strive to pay attention for we will not hear from God this clearly, until He dwells with us eternally in the New Creation!

**God's People:**

**Praise and Thanksgiving to God.** We respond as God's people to His Word with praise and thanksgiving that is carefully and wisely selected to honor God and His Word, rather than merely choosing what suits our likes and dislikes that change like the ever-shifting wind!

**God:**

**We Hear the Word of God Preached and Proclaimed** (there is a objective, Redemptive-Historical declaration and proclamation of what God has done "outside of us" in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ). The sermon proclaimed by the ordained minister who speaks for Christ to His people is not merely a time of teaching, although it will teach (The ordained minister is like Christ who walks among the churches in the Book of Revelation, chapters 2-3, and speaks to them with instruction, rebuke, and encouragement by His Spirit, so Christ still speaks through His Word today in instruction, rebuke, and encouragement).

The sermon proclaimed by the ordained minister is not merely a time of "having our needs met" through cute anecdotes, practical and pious application of how to be more righteous, although there will be a place for appropriate anecdotes and illustrations, and the Holy Spirit through the minister's sermon and proclamation will help the people of God to live righteously and holy before him (see '[Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching](#)', R. C. Sproul, Sinclair Ferguson, John MacArthur, Jr., and Eric Alexander).

The sermon proclaimed by the ordained minister is first and primarily a declaration of what God has done for his people in Christ throughout Redemptive-History! The sermon proclaimed by the ordained minister is first and primarily a declaration of forgiveness for the repentant who turn from self to Christ Jesus, and a judgment against the wicked who continue to live rebelliously suppressing the truth of God in Christ and rejecting his Word. This is what Hebrews 4:12-13 means with regard to preaching:

***For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Heb. 4:12-13).***

As Jeffrey Meyer's points out in his book, every sermon is a kind of eschatological "Last Day", or "Judgment Day". For those who believe the Word, they are declared righteous in Christ and for those who reject the Word, they are declared wicked and under the wrath of God's judgment in Christ. This kind of thinking about what preaching is about, will point the people of God's focus on the work of God in Christ for us and way from

ourselves. I will address this at the conclusion, but preaching is not merely evangelistic either, although it does evangelize.

**God's People:**

**We respond in Prayer.** We ask God by His grace to aid us in our battle against sin and to enable us by His Holy Spirit to offer ourselves up to God which is our spiritual worship.

**God:**

**God invites us to commune with him at his table.** God by His Spirit invites us to dwell in His presence (spiritual, yet true and real presence), by supping and dining with Him with God as he serves his corporate covenantal community in Christ, preparing a table for them in the wilderness in the midst of our enemies (see Keith Mathison, '[Given For You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper](#)').

***As Christ says at the Last Supper: "But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves." (Luke 22:26-27)***

**God's People:**

**We respond in our Tithes and Offerings to God.** This grateful giving and act of worship reveals to the world in our material possessions and gifts that God has given to us, that we are grateful and desire to be obedient in our giving back to God what he has so graciously and mercifully given to us!).

**God:**

**God Pronounces a "Good Word"/Blessing to His People.** Through God's minister (who stands serving and ministering before the congregation as a physical embodiment of Jesus Christ, as the ordained priests and Levites did in the Old Covenant), God pronounces a "good word", blessing or benediction to the people because Christ took the "bad word", curse or malediction upon himself "for us".

**God's People:**

**Meditation and Reflection.** We meditate on what we have heard and ask God for grace to live unto God in Christ more wholeheartedly as a corporate covenantal community in Christ. We are dismissed to fellowship as the corporate covenantal community of Christ's people.

**A Plea to Combat Individualism in the Church of Jesus!**

In our extremely individualistic age of Christianity, the individual person who worships God seems to be our primary focus many times rather than

the corporate body of believers in Christ. If we understand a biblical liturgy, or our way of doing worship, primarily as a corporate covenantal community in Christ, we will avoid the worship mistakes that are made in today's congregations. What mistakes should I mention?

Well, think about when the individual is solicited for worship or liturgical advice as to what makes them truly "feel" close to God, or what makes them feel worshipful!

***If we solicit individuals in the congregation to tell us what makes them feel a certain way, we run the risk of doing worship merely for man and not for God. Aerosmith songs have caused my spine to tingle, and made me feel good, but I don't think they would be appropriate in the worship of God!***

God does give to his people in a worship service, and so it is appropriate for God's people to receive from God- -we need to hear his word, have our sins forgiven again in Christ, know that we are not condemned in Jesus, and to know that although God is a consuming fire, he is also our Father because of the work of Jesus Christ! It is not as though the individual does not matter to God! Rather, it is that the individual is truly blessed when he gathers corporately as a family, a body, a unity of people baptized by Christ's Spirit, a people called by His Name, and ultimately a corporate covenantal community in Christ (see ['With Reverence and Awe: Returning to the Basics of Reformed Worship'](#), by D. G. Hart and John Muether)!

Also, with regards to considering more of a "corporate covenantal community in Christ" mentality, we will hopefully seek the Word of God as His people to know HOW God's people have worshipped Him at their best, and we will continue to seek the Word of God for wisdom (this is another definition of what "Reformed and Always Reforming" means!). This is what Paul means in Ephesians 3:18 about knowing the love of Christ "together with all the saints".

By God's grace, we will seek to worship God as his called out people in the world and we will avoid making the serious mistake of turning the worship of God into an evangelistic service. There are many well-meaning Christians today who build and form their liturgy, or way of doing worship, as an evangelistic outreach! The very fact that this does not stun us to death before God's holy throne, is a real indicator of how much we all have drunk deeply of, and been formed more by the "pattern of this present age", or even worse, influenced and informed by the particular time period in which we live rather than Scripture!

**Liturgy, Evangelism, and the Great Commission**

The liturgy of God should be formed from Scripture to the best of our ability as we attempt to be reformed according to Scripture, and always continuing to be reformed with humility! The liturgy in the worship service is for God's people, not for outsiders! I plead with those who disregard this reality, even with good intents to save the lost! We want to fulfill the Great Commission and we want to reach the lost evangelistically, but we also must be about becoming mature disciples in Christ which is only obtained through the corporate covenantal community in Christ coming to hear God through His Word and the means of grace He has provided us, and our responding in obedience- -including the obedience of evangelism.

***And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20).***

The two main parts of the 'Great Commission' in Matthew 28 are: (1) Evangelize by "Going!", not merely to make converts (this was one of the reasons Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, see Matthew 23:14-15!!), but (2) "Make Disciples" from all the nations, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. Jesus wants us to evangelize, but to make mature disciples for service to Him (Ephesians 4:11-18; Hebrews 5:13-6:2; 2 Peter 1:3-10).

Part of teaching and maturing as Christ's disciples is to humbly reconsider what Scripture teaches about how we approach God and do worship, or how we form liturgy. Some might say that these things are not as important as evangelism in God's eyes, but this is simply a false dichotomy. We don't need to rip and tear apart Christ's commands of evangelization and disciple-making, rather they both should be done together in obedience to Christ as we mature in Christ as corporate covenantal community in Christ!

***Worship is not evangelism! Worship is not outreach, it is inreach to Christ's people and upreach to God himself, taking hold of his promises in Christ, and being nourished on his Word by His Spirit!***

***There can be evangelistic aspects to worship, but worship is not evangelism, and worship should not be done as an evangelistic service.***

Perhaps we haven't read 1 Corinthians 14 carefully enough with regard to this. I was recently struck by the significance of this passage recently in a

conversation with one of my wise elders in training. Sometimes we read 1 Corinthians 14 as merely "that chapter about spiritual gifts that I don't quite understand", but there is so much more that is relevant to focus our attention upon regarding worship, liturgy and evangelism!

There were supernatural gifts in the early church at Corinth that had yet to cease with the passing of the apostolic age, but even though there were supernatural gifts in the worship of God, Paul calls the corporate covenantal community in Christ at Corinth (not merely to individuals!)...

***...To place a primacy on the Word of God, to order themselves appropriately which includes our liturgy, and to be reminded as the people of God that the worship service is given to believers, designed primarily for the people of God (there is of course a place for evangelism and outreach, but it should not be the worship service! Oh! If congregations in Christ would feed the sheep as they are called to do by God's Word and reach the goats after the sheep have been nourished and fed!).***

### **How "1 Corinthians 14" is about More than Speaking in Tongues!**

1 Corinthians 14:19-26: Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue. <sup>20</sup> Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. <sup>21</sup> In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." <sup>22</sup> Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. <sup>23</sup> If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? <sup>24</sup> But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, <sup>25</sup> the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you. <sup>26</sup> What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

First of all, we learn from this passage that instruction that is clear should be a priority in the worship of God (or "in church" as Paul says here, v. 19). Secondly, Paul says to the congregation there is a possibility of being children, infants and being immature with regards to our meeting together (v. 20), and this should serve to warn us all that we are capable of not only worldliness, but just plain, good old fashioned immature foolishness (which is worse, I will let you decide!).

Thirdly, Paul uses the word "prophecy" in the way we would use the word "preaching" or "proclamation" today (cf. Romans 12:4-10; 1 Peter 4:7-11). The main point that Paul is making in 1 Corinthians 14 is that the teachers and elders at Corinth were charged to be primarily engaged in exegeting

and expositing God's Word (all of God's Word was not fully written yet, because the canon was yet to be closed, so this explains why God allowed there still to be supernatural communication operating for a season -- take into consideration the Redemptive-Historical time shift from Old to New here in order to avoid thinking this means that we should be continuing with supernatural gifts today!). Remember God's sobering, inspired, and prophetic charge to Timothy, and his last words that every minister and congregation ought to consider with the fear of God:

***I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.***

***For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.***

***As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Timothy 4:1-5).***

We do not need supernatural gifts today! Why? Because we have it better than the the Corinthians did! We have the full revelation of God's inspired and Holy Word! We have the full story, both Old and New Covenants, and we have it in our own language by God's grace (at least most Christians in the world).

Finally, notice what Paul says with regard to "outsiders" or goats (reference from Matthew 25:31ff), or unbelievers in 1 Corinthians 14.

***Paul does not say to evangelize unbelievers in worship!***

Rather, Paul clearly says that if the congregation is being faithful as they gather in their corporate covenantal community in Christ and read, study, preach and proclaim the Word of God, then unbelievers or outsiders will be "convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you." (vv. 24-25).

***Can many congregations in Christ say this today? Are we being faithful in worship and trusting God in His power and providence to change not only his people, but to cause rebellious sinners to fall down on their face before Him in repentance!***

***What man-made gimmicks can we come up with for so-called "seeker-friendly" worship that will be faithful to Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 14 and get the results of real and true repentance before God? I don't think we can...***

The principle for the corporate covenantal community of Christ's people is to be about "building up" each other through God speaking from His Word and the people responding to what He says (v. 26). Paul began chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians by focusing the people in worship on God's Word. He said:

**Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. <sup>2</sup> For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. <sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. <sup>4</sup> The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church (1 Corinthians 14:-14).**

Even though the early New Testament church had supernatural gifts given by God until the canon of Scripture was fully closed in the apostolic period, even then with all the gifts, the focus of God's people was to be on the Word of God in prophesying or preaching, or proclamation or declaration to God's people. Earlier in the same letter, the Apostle had told the people of God why the Word was to be the main focus:

**And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. <sup>2</sup> For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup> And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, <sup>4</sup> and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup> that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:1-5).**

**That WORD Above All Earthly Powers!**

God's ministers, teachers, and elders in Christ who stand in the pulpit each Lord's Day, are to be constantly focused on God's Word- - making it plain and clear as possible to God's people! And by God's grace, through the Word, the Holy Spirit ministers to God's people "supernaturally"!!! This is how we grow as God's people.

Paul's emphasis is on the Word of God that addresses God's people (1 Cor. 14:22-23). As Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, has the time come where we are not enduring sound teaching as God's people? Are we accumulating teachers for our congregations to suit our passions (passions are merely "what we like")? Have we turned away from listening to the truth and wandered off into myths? Have we believed the myths that tell us that every worship, every service of the Word, ought to be focused on ourselves, our so-called "felt needs", or every worship should

be directed merely to the lost, in order to evangelize? We want to prayerfully and humbly be watchful with regard to this! This is a serious matter and one which God would call all who believe this to be the situation, to humble themselves in repentance, asking God prayerfully to help us as we are his corporate covenantal community in Christ in a lost world!

***For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. (Romans 12:4-10).***

As God's people, we are invited as a corporate covenantal community in Christ to hear and respond to the Word of God each Lord's Day! What a privilege that we can experience in our worship together the demonstration of the Spirit and of power (1 Cor. 2:4), as the Holy Spirit works through the means of grace that God has given to his people in order for them to grow and mature!

***God grows us through the Word and the worship, and so our service of worship, or liturgy, or the "why we worship the way we worship" should attempt to be biblical both in form and content!***

At KCPC, may our faith be built up and biblically informed with regards to our liturgy and our worship as a corporate covenantal community in Christ, and may our faith rest not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God! I will end with Martin Luther's words from the hymn 'A Mighty Fortress is Our God' - -that has been sung in many biblical liturgical services that honor God in worship:

*That Word above all earthly powers,  
No thanks to them, abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours  
Through him who with us sideth;  
Let goods and kindred go,  
This mortal life also;  
The body they may kill:  
God's truth abideth still;  
His kingdom is for ever.*

IN Christ's love and service,  
Pastor Charles

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**For Further Reading:**

['The Lord's Service: The Grace of Covenant Renewal Worship'](#) by Jeffrey J. Meyers

['Reforming Our Worship Music'](#), by Leonard Payton and James M. Boice

['Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching'](#), R. C. Sproul, Sinclair Ferguson, John MacArthur, Jr., and Eric Alexander

['Given For You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper'](#), by Keith A. Mathison

['With Reverence and Awe: Returning to the Basics of Reformed Worship'](#), by D. G. Hart and John Muether

['Recovering Mother Kirk: The Case for Liturgy in the Reformed Tradition'](#), by D. G. Hart

[Worship According to Scripture](#), by Hughes Oliphant Old

[Pleasing God in Our Worship](#), by W. Robert Godfrey

['Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement: Confessions of A Former Worship Leader'](#), by Dan Lucarini (I don't fully agree with all the conclusions of the book. I think Lucarini does a good job of laying out some of the big problems in CCM, but I don't know if he has the right solutions. Cannot fully endorse, but it is worth looking at, if only for a better sociological understanding of a movement!).

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