

Coming Back to the Heart of Worship

It's a little bit of a challenge to talk about worship because it means such different things to different people. But I care about this topic because worship is one of the core of the purposes of the church and it's what makes the church unique. What you do at church is different than any other experience in your life. That's the way it should be. And I want Desert Oasis Chapel to be a place of worship that is both welcoming and rewarding to those who come in here. We'd just love to experience worship as the first century church must have — an exuberant rejoicing in the knowledge of God's love but also a real reverence in the presence of the living God.

So I'm certain worship was delightful and liberating to the early believers. I would hope it will be to us as well. In worship we simply come before the Lord saying that we want to spend time with God, to be in God's presence and we know that God is worthy of our attention. "Worthy" is the root word of worship, God is worthy of our praise and prayers and, importantly, God has found us sufficiently worthy to be in His presence.

I think worship is supposed to be refreshing, edifying and refining. If we're really in God's presence, we will come away from this place feeling renewed, in the sense that our wishes and needs have been laid before God and they are heard and we discover, over time, that God responds. But we also come into the perspective that God and God's creation are much larger than our personal issues and that news us not upsetting but liberating.

Worship is designed to build us up, that's the meaning of edifying. If we are doing our job right, you will walk out of here knowing something you might not have known and will not hear outside of church. And perhaps you will feel something but we cannot guarantee that. We praise God but we don't contrive an emotional experience in our services because to do so is to produce a counterfeit spirituality.

Finally, for today, regular worship is refining. Last week I wrote the following: worship "is our statement that we believers recognize the greatness of God and profess our need and desire to be in relationship with that God. We do so remembering that our God adores us and knows us intimately and wants to have time with us. But God is God, much more than our spiritual friend. God is our Creator and designer, our Helper but also our Refiner. God wants to love and support us but also to "perfect" us, refining our thoughts, behaviors and character. Not everything is acceptable to God but, at the same time, God is not invested in punishing us. The old word is God "chastens" us, corrects us for our own sake and for the sake of our relationship. Just as we wouldn't like to hang out with people whose habits and manners are vile to us, God wants us to be growing in our understanding and character and, also, behavior." So worship is the time and place we come together before the God who made us, knows us perfectly, challenges us and is at work to refine and perfect us. As we go together through times like these, we are somewhat humbled; many of us have to admit we're not so brilliant or even lucky. Many of us come again to know that we need God. And in Christian worship, we come face to face with the intimate, mysterious Lamb of God - the God-man who became one of us to take the penalty for us and ransom us — buy us back for God. Now we know that we are worthy and made worthy to be known as God's people. We're getting close to the heart of worship.

Thanks for taking the time to read this,
Pastor Nick