

“SERIOUSLY JOYFUL AND JOYFULLY SERIOUS”

Faith Baptist Fellowship Philosophy of Corporate Worship

Our hope is that the tone of every worship gathering (and every aspect of every gathering) will be **seriously joyful and joyfully serious**. We strive to be joyfully serious rather than flippant or light or merely chipper at the wonderful realities of the gospel, the deep truths of the Christian faith, and the shared experience of worship each week. But we are not morose. Rather, we are serious about our joy in Jesus Christ and in one another, and desire to encourage and edify and strengthen one another to “rejoice always” because the Lord is at hand (Philippians 4:4-7).

PRESCRIBED ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

God alone determines how he is to be worshiped. Therefore, we must look to the Scriptures to guide us in our corporate worship. As we gather each Lord’s Day we incorporate into our corporate worship the elements we see prescribed in the New Testament.

THE WORD READ & PREACHED - At Faith, we are committed to the reading and faithful preaching of the word. During our gathered worship you’ll hear the word read many times. And when the word is preached, one of the pastors or other qualified men will read a portion of God’s word and then expound upon it, seeking to clarify the meaning of the text and apply it to our lives today.

THE WORD PRAYED - Part of our offense against the spiritual forces that threaten our faith is prayer. We believe that God himself, in his word, has given us the substance of our prayers. During our gathered worship we devote time to prayer, during which we adore and praise God, give him thanks, confess our sins, intercede on behalf others, and petition him to meet our needs.

THE WORD SUNG - We love to sing at Faith and enjoy a mix of theologically rich songs both old and new, accompanied by a variety of instruments in our gathered worship. As we worship together, some people raise their hands and clap while others prefer a more reflective response. We welcome and value both of these as Biblical expressions in corporate worship.

THE WORD SEEN - The ordinances of baptism and The Lord’s Supper (or Communion) are instituted by Christ and given to the church to be carried out corporately, symbolically reenacting the gospel message of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. We partake in the Lord’s Supper the first Sunday of each month and administer the ordinance of baptism as the need arises.

FORMS AND CIRCUMSTANCES IN GATHERED WORSHIP

Forms and circumstances are *how* we carry out the prescribed elements of worship. These include aspects such as how we order the service, when we gather, how long our services are, what instruments we use, when we stand or sit, etc.. While forms and circumstances of corporate worship are not specifically prescribed in the Bible, they should be guided and informed by Scriptural principles and employed with wisdom so as to create an environment most conducive to observing the elements of worship. The following principles guide us in our gathered worship.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CORPORATE WORSHIP

We Seek to Glorify The Triune God

Everything that the Christian does, including participation in corporate worship, is ultimately for God and his glory. The apostle Paul says, *“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”* (1 Corinthians 10:31) Making much of God and his glory is what ultimately satisfies, encourages and stirs the heart of the believer to love God and others and do good works. All elements, forms, and circumstances of corporate worship must have the triune God’s glory as their ultimate goal.

We Seek to Exalt Christ

Corporate worship serves as a public confession of the truth about Jesus Christ. He is the Messiah, the Son of God (Matthew 16:16). He died for our sins and was raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). He is highly exalted and has been given the name that is above every name so that every knee will bow to him and confess him as Lord (Philippians 2:9-11). In corporate worship we confess these truths and more as we read, hear, sing, pray and see the word.

We Seek to Be Spirit-Led

The Holy Spirit is ultimately the one who *“leads worship.”* The kind of worshipers that God is seeking are those who worship him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). We depend on the Holy Spirit to make our worship *“Spiritual,”* genuine, and rooted in truth.

We Seek to Proclaim The Gospel

The Gospel is the most glorious news ever proclaimed. It reminds us of God’s holy character and our desperate sinfulness and his love and provision of grace through Jesus Christ. This calls us to respond with gratitude and praise for what Christ has done for us and depend on God for his ongoing grace to grow in the knowledge of his will and spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. In every aspect of our corporate worship we seek to keep this gospel message central.

We Seek to Teach, Admonish, and Stir Up One Another

God’s will is for us to be sanctified (1 Thessalonians 4:3); that is, progressively transformed to be more like Christ. In our corporate worship we aim to teach and admonish one another (Colossians 3:16) and stir one another up to love and good works (Hebrews 12:14). Genuine worship of a Holy God will result in our transformation into greater holiness.

We Seek Maximum Participation in Our Singing

Scripture commands us to be filled with the Spirit and address one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with our hearts to God (Ephesians 5:18-19). Therefore, our aim in the singing portion of our worship is vibrant, sincere, congregational worship in song. Everyone is part of the *“Worship Team.”*

We Seek Unity Across The Generations

God values generational continuity in the church (Psalm 145:1). The gospel of Jesus Christ is celebrated in all its reconciling and unifying power when many generations participate in the church’s corporate worship. We see this when young people show honor to those of older generations (Leviticus 19:32) and people of older generations do not look down on those who are young (1 Timothy 4:12).

We Seek to Balance The Old And New

Our faith has a long and rich history. We can greatly benefit from the centuries of faithful worshipers who eloquently mingled clear doctrine with deep affection for Jesus Christ. Historic songs, confessions, creeds and other writings remind us that God has been faithful to and has preserved his church for centuries. At the same time God desires that we express our praises to him today and freshly engage our faith as we sing, pray, and worship him (Psalm 33:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:6, 149:1). When ordering our worship and determining the forms and circumstances, wise consideration of language, source, music styles, etc., that represent current cultural expressions should be balanced with historical continuity and biblical faithfulness.

We Seek to Do All Things in Love

Scripture calls us to do all things in love (1 Corinthians 16:14). We acknowledge that it is loving to worship using styles and forms that are maximally edifying for the entire congregation and a cross-generational church. At the same time, love demands that we not seek our own (1 Corinthians 13:5), but surrender even our most deeply cherished preferences to build up others (1 Corinthians 14:26). Not every song or form a of worship element will be everyone's favorite or personal preference. But something that may not be one believer's preference likely resonates in a deep and meaningful way with another brother or sister in Christ. Every believer in the church is asked to apply the gospel and regard others as more important with respect to style preferences (Philippians 2:3).