

HEALTHY TENSIONS IN WORSHIP

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I. Introduction

- A. Worship isn't biblical unless there's a healthy tension between *seemingly* opposite truths.
- B. There are certain truths about worship that don't exist in tension with other truths, but rather oppose falsehood.
 - 1. Worship must be directed to the God of Scripture.
 - 2. Worship centers on God's saving work through the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
 - 3. God's Word, not our preferences or opinions, governs our worship.
 - 4. God alone determines how we approach Him, what we call Him, and how we relate to Him.
- C. However, there are a significant number of perspectives and nuances that exist in healthy tension as we worship God.

II. Healthy Tensions

<p>Transcendence of God (Is. 6:1-6) God is majestic, sovereign Holiness and righteousness "Holy, Holy, Holy" Cathedral Traditional liturgy</p>	<p>Immanence of God (Heb. 4:14-16) God is near, Emmanuel Mercy and grace "Jesus, Friend of sinners" Store front church Free-flowing liturgy Both: Is. 54:5; Is. 57:15</p>
<p>Head (Jn. 4:22, Col. 3:16) "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" Teaching, Didactic, Mental Doctrine "Immortal, Invisible"</p>	<p>Heart (Mt. 15:7-9, Col. 3:16) "with thankfulness in your hearts to God" Experiencing, Affective, Emotional Devotion "I Love You Lord" Both: Mt. 22:37</p>
<p>Prostration (Heb. 12:28-29; Rev. 1:17) "in reverence and awe" "let us worship and bow down" Ps. 95:6</p> <p>Reflects the meaning of the most common Hebrew and Greek words for worship.</p> <p>Emphasis on inner reflection.</p>	<p>Celebration/Boldness (Ps. 150, Ps. 100) "trumpet...harp...tambourine...dance!" "let us make a joyful noise!" Ps. 95:1</p> <p>Reflects the tone of many Psalms and the reality that the tomb is empty. Emphasis on external expression.</p> <p>Both: Ps. 2:11 "rejoice with trembling" Mt. 28:8 "fear and great joy"</p>

<p>Vertical (Mt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10) “making melody to the Lord”</p> <p>Glorification “Crown HIM with many crowns” Can lead to Gnosticism, individualism, and spiritual pride</p>	<p>Horizontal (1 Jn. 4:7-12; 1 Cor. 14:26) “addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...”</p> <p>Edification “His glories now WE sing” Can lead to emotionalism, man-pleasing, and a social gospel Both: Rom. 15:5-7</p>
<p>Planned (Mt. 6:7 1 Cor. 11:17-34)</p> <p>Opposing view seen as transient, exhausting, and temporary</p> <p>Strengths: thoughtful, consistent, thematic, responsive to the broader needs of the church</p> <p>“Forms are a means to an end, and if they are constantly changing they obscure the end rather than lead to it.” (Hughes Oliphant Old, <i>guides to the Reformed Tradition</i>, p. 162)</p>	<p>Spontaneous (1 Cor. 14:29-32; 1 Th. 5:19-21)</p> <p>Opposing view seen as stale, boring, and irrelevant.</p> <p>Strengths: can change direction to suit the need of the moment; fosters awareness of God’s active presence; contributes to a present dependence on the Holy Spirit</p> <p>“A man ought not to be so confined by any premeditated form as to neglect any special infusion, he should so prepare himself as if he expected no assistance, and he should so depend upon divine assistance as if he had made no preparation. (Isaac Watts, <i>A Guide to Prayer</i>, p. 183)</p> <p>Our plans are not the Holy Spirit. Both: 1 Cor. 14:39-40</p>
<p>Excellence/Skill (1 Chron. 15:22, Ps. 33:3; 1 Chron. 25:7) Emphasis on practice, rehearsals, and gifting</p> <p>Associated with orchestras, trained organists and paid musicians</p> <p>Bach B Minor Mass</p> <p>Can drift towards arrogance, formalism, and art-worship</p>	<p>Authenticity/Love for the Lord (Ps. 51:17; Ps. 147:10-11) Emphasis on sincerity, engagement, and heart</p> <p>Associated with 22 year old guitarists, kid’s choirs, and volunteers</p> <p>Amazing Grace</p> <p>Can drift towards sentimentalism, sloth, and pride in “genuineness”</p> <p>Excellence has multiple meanings. Both: Ex. 36:2</p>

<p>Historically Rooted (Phil. 4:9; 2 Thess. 2:15) Other view seen as unbiblical, dangerous, man-pleasing, and compromising.</p> <p>“Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about. All democrats object to men being disqualified by the accident of birth; tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of death (G.K. Chesterton, <i>Orthodoxy</i> 64-65).</p> <p>Strengths: comprehensive, unaffected by fads, regulates the theological diet of the congregation, guards against doctrinal impurity, helps people develop a collective memory through repetition</p> <p>We shouldn’t expect non-Christians to be totally comfortable with our meetings.</p> <p>All meetings are liturgical to some degree.</p>	<p>Culturally Relevant (1 Cor. 9:22) Other view seen as unbiblical, boring, rigid, insensitive, and out-of-touch.</p> <p>“At its best, contemporary worship was born not simply out of a desire to swap the organ for a guitar, but out of an intense longing to somehow move from the casual, disinterested reciting of creeds and singing of hymns into an authentic time of loving and grateful interaction with the One who shed his blood for us.” (Joe Horness, <i>Exploring the Worship Spectrum</i>, pg. 102)</p> <p>Strengths: responsive, culturally engaging, more natural, more easily accessible</p> <p>The concern is not familiarity but intelligibility.</p> <p>Both: Mt. 15:32</p>
<p>Corporate (Heb. 12:22-24; Ps. 111:1; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Pet. 2:9-10) “who gave himself for us...to purify for himself a people”</p> <p>“The thought that the Church at worship is an accidental convergence in one place of a number of isolated individuals who practice, in hermetically sealed compartments, their own private devotional exercises, is foreign to the New Testament picture.” (Donald Whitney, <i>Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life</i>, p. 77)</p>	<p>Individual (Ps. 63:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:14-20; Ps. 23) “who loved me and gave himself for me”</p> <p>“When Jesus Christ died, He literally had my name in His mind. He actually knew the one for whom He was dying.” (Jim Eliff, <i>The Glory of Christ</i>, p. 84)</p> <p>Both: Ps. 35:18</p>

<p>Event (Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 10-14; Acts 2:42) “When you come together” Liturgy OT Covenant Renewal continuity</p> <p>“There is a difference between what we do to the glory of God and what we do in the special activity of worship.” (Edmund Clowney, <i>The Church</i>, p. 126)</p>	<p>All-of-life (Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 10:31; Amos 5:21-24) “Whatever you do” Life Categories transformed by the Gospel</p> <p>“In the New Testament there is a stunning indifference to the outward forms and places of worship. And there is, at the same time, a radical intensification of worship as an inward, spiritual experience that has no bounds and pervades all of life.” (John Piper, 9/9//97 Sermon) Both: Heb. 13:15-16</p>
<p>Already (Heb. 12:22-24) “Though you do not now see him, you... rejoice with joy” (1 Pet. 1:8).</p> <p>Deposit guaranteeing...</p>	<p>Not Yet (Rev. 21:1-4) “They will see his face...and they will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 22:4-5).</p> <p>...our inheritance</p> <p>This life is a brief preparation for an eternal occupation.</p>

III. Things to remember when your church is experiencing more tension than health:

- A. Distinguish between major and minor issues.
- B. Seek to understand those with a different perspective before challenging them.

Controversy, even for good causes, tends to create tunnel vision and to breed ungodly attitudes. We make one mountain into the whole mountain range, or one molehill into a mountain. What we see, or think we see, consumes our minds. We lose sight of the mountain range, the context in which both mountain and molehill can be seen and weighted for what they are. We may be exactly right about our particular issue, but narrowed truth becomes unbalanced truth. It loses the ability to listen and be corrected. Narrowed truth becomes half-truth, and broadly false. (David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes*, 32.)

- C. Always seek to address issues biblically rather than experientially.
- D. These truths must not only be taught and retaught, but modeled.