



Introduction

What are the high points in the story of Scripture?

How would you describe these high points?

“We were made to worship Jesus together. . . . When the fog of everyday life clears, and we catch a glimpse of heaven’s bliss, we don’t find ourselves sequestered at a study desk or hidden alone in a prayer closet in paradise, or even standing alone before the great Grand Canyon or mountain peak of God’s majesty, but joyfully lost in the worshipping throng of Christ’s people from every tongue and tribe and nation. We were made for corporate worship. . . . Heaven will be more spectacular than we can dream—and the new earth, even better than heaven—but it might be surprising to hear that perhaps the best foretaste we can get on this side is with the gathered church, worshipping Jesus together.” – David Mathis

Corporate worship is vital to knowing and enjoying Jesus Christ.

I. We come to know and experience joy in Christ.

Corporate Worship has the unique ability to usher us into the joy of self-forgetfulness.

“When the Holy Spirit comes down on you in fullness, you can sense your Father’s arms beneath you. It is an assurance of who you are. The Spirit enables you to say to yourself: ‘If someone as all-powerful as that loves me like this, delights in me, has gone to infinite lengths to save me, says he will never let me go, and is going to glorify me and make me perfect and take everything bad out of my life – if all of that is true – why am I worried about anything? At a minimum this means joy, and a lack of fear and self-consciousness.’”¹ – Tim Keller

¹ Tim Keller, *Prayer*, 172.



“Corporate worship is a means of grace not when we’re caught up with what we’re doing (what we’re watching, whether we’re being strengthened, etc), but when we experience the secret of worship—the joy of self-forgetfulness—as we become preoccupied with Jesus and his manifold perfections.”² – David Mathis

“At home in my own house there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through.” – Martin Luther

But what if I am not a joyful person?

“Where light leaves the affections behind, it ends in formality or atheism; and where affections outrun light, they sink in the bog of speculation, doting on images and pictures, or the like. But where things go not into these excesses, it is better that our affections exceed our light from the defect of our understanding, than that our light exceed our affections from the corruption of the wills.”³ – John Owen

“Corporate worship is the single most important means of grace and our greatest weapon in the fight for joy, because like no other means, corporate worship combines all three principles of God’s ongoing grace: his word, prayer, and fellowship. It is corporate worship, with its preaching and sacraments and collective praises, confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings, which most acutely bring together the gifts of God’s voice, his ear, and his body.”⁴ – Dave Mathis

II. Receive the Word of Christ

Corporate worship is designed to help us know and enjoy Christ by inviting us to receive.

Romans 12:2: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

² David Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 158.

³ John Owen, *Works*, vol. 1, 400–401.

⁴ David Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 156–157.



One of the ways we are continually transformed is by receiving the Word of Christ in corporate worship.

“[That God transforms us by his word], incidentally, is why it is so important for Christians to place their lives under the preaching of God's word. For in receiving it we are actively passive. It is expounded to us, not by us; and yet it appeals to our minds, reshapes our thinking, penetrates our consciences, and at this level engages us in intense activity. Although set at a discount today by comparison with participation in either personal Bible study or more particularly group Bible study, neither of these, valuable as they may be, can substitute for the transforming power of the preached word.”⁵ – Sinclair Ferguson

“We see how God, who could in a moment perfect his own, nevertheless desires them to grow up into manhood solely under the education of the Church. We see the way set for it: the preaching of the heavenly doctrine has been enjoined upon the pastors. . . . Many are led either by pride, dislike or rivalry to the conviction that they can profit enough from private reading and meditation; hence they despise public assemblies and deem preaching superfluous. This is like blotting out the face of God which shines upon us in teaching. . . . For neither the light and heat of the sun, nor food and drink, are so necessary to nourish and sustain the present life, as the apostolic and pastoral is necessary to preserve the Church on earth.”⁶ – John Calvin

So I want to urge you to come into the meeting poised and eager to receive.

- Cultivate a heart of humility.
- Cultivate a heart of expectation.
- Cultivate a pattern of faithful attendance.

III. We are imparted a corporate sense of identity.

The worship of the New Testament is designed to give worshippers a corporate sense of identity.

⁵ Sinclair Ferguson, *Devoted To God*, 49, emphasis original.

⁶ John Calvin, quoted in John Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 119.



IV. We participate in the mission of Christ.

Corporate worship sends us out to participate in the mission of Christ.

John 20:21: "As the father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

John 4:23: "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him."

John 10:16: "And I have other sheep that are not of this fold."

But, corporate worship is part of this mission as well.

"As we gather in the presence of the living God on the Lord's Day, the Lord is pleased to use our right worship of Him as a battering ram to bring down all the citadels of unbelief in our communities. Just as the walls of Jericho fell before the worship and service of God, so unbelievers tremble when Christians gather in their communities to worship the living God rightly. Jesus promised us that the gates of Hades would not prevail against the Church. It is not often noted that the gates of Hades are not an offensive weapon. Hades is being besieged by the Church; *it is not the other way around*. We need to learn to see that biblical worship of God is a powerful battering ram, and each of the Lord's Day we have the privilege of taking another swing."⁷ - Douglas Wilson

Conclusion

⁷ Douglas Wilson, *A Primer On Worship and Reformation*, 32.