

Philosophy of Corporate Worship

Grace Bible Church - Watertown, SD

What We Believe About Worship

We believe that God teaches in His Word that all of life is worship (Romans 12:1-2). We believe that the Bible teaches that we were created to worship God (Isaiah 43:6-7). Furthermore, worship isn't just the reason humans were created; it's the reason all things in all the universe were created: to bring glory to God, to worship Him, to reflect His glory and proclaim His worth (Psalm 19:1). We were created to glorify God in every area and in every moment of life, with all our heart and soul and mind and strength (Colossians 3:17). The apostle Paul says it this way: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Corporate worship at Grace Bible Church is meant to be just a part of a whole life that glorifies and honors God, but an important part. Corporate worship is that time when Christ's body joins together to publicly savor and worship God. We don't come together to worship God for any other reason than that it is what we are made and called to do. Worship is an end in itself, because God is our all in all, our satisfaction, the fountain of life, our salvation, in Christ.

Values & Goals That Unite Us In Corporate Worship

- 1. God-centeredness.** We seek a vertical focus in corporate worship services. Overall, our goal is to glorify God, by pursuing and expressing satisfaction in Him.
- 2. Expecting the powerful presence of God.** As we direct ourselves to God, we earnestly seek his drawing near according to the promise of James 4:8. We believe that in worship God draws near to us in power, and makes himself known and felt for our good and for the salvation of unbelievers in the midst.
- 3. Bible-based and Bible-saturated.** True worship is only possible when it is founded and pursued in truth, which is ultimately found in God's word (John 17:17). Therefore our preaching, prayer, and singing will always conform to the truth of Scripture. In addition, God's word will be woven throughout our corporate worship services.
- 4. Doctrinal faithfulness and depth.** We love deep, sound doctrine because we love God and love knowing God. This is reflected in our corporate worship meetings. Therefore, we continually seek to know him more deeply, and avoid anything theologically unclear, confusing, or untrue.
- 5. Content over style.** Because we hold to the previous four values, we are concerned with the content of our preaching, prayers and songs more than the style in which they are executed. Therefore, we seek God-centered, Bible-based, doctrinally faithful content, executed in a style that seems natural for our culture and context.
- 6. Head and heart.** The elements of our worship service should aim at kindling and carrying deep, strong, real affections toward God, but should not manipulate people's emotions. We desire to appeal to clear thinking about spiritual things based on objective truths outside ourselves. We strive for God-aimed intellects and God-aimed affections, light in the mind and heat in the heart. In other words, we desire hearts inflamed by what we know.

7. **Earnestness and intensity.** We try to avoid being trite, flippant, superficial, or frivolous. Rather, we aim to set an example of reverence, passion, wonder and broken-hearted joy. Weightiness is present with celebration as we approach a holy God with humble hearts.
8. **Undistracting excellence.** We try to preach, pray, play and sing in such a way that people's attention will not be diverted from God by unprepared or unskillful ministry nor by excessive elegance or refinement. In our pursuit of God, we seek not to highlight any person. Our aim of undistracting excellence will let the truth and beauty of God shine through.
9. **A mix of historic and contemporary music.** We believe variety in musical tunes, texts, and genres are a gift from God. We also believe some may awaken affections towards God better than others. We joyfully embrace the singing of songs that have been sung by saints for hundreds of years, as well as songs that have been written in God's reviving work of salvation in our own day. Therefore, we embrace a variety of songs that conform to the values listed above and allow us to sing together with thankfulness in our hearts to God in the name of Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:16-17).

Implications for Corporate Worship

We will continue with one common worship service time, location, and format, seeking unity together in Christ Jesus "that with one accord [we] may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:19).

Our main lead worshiper will be characterized by spiritual maturity and depth, sensitivity to God's leading during worship, a pastor's heart, and breadth of musical skills. His worship will be contagious to the congregation as he joyously leads us into God's presence.

We will emphasize spiritual leadership rather than performance, as we encourage spiritually gifted people to minister within their range of ability rather than to perform outside of it.

We will design worship services mainly for the benefit of believers, as we express corporately our passion for the supremacy of God, reflecting it so clearly and joyously that unbelievers who are present may also be awakened to give Him glory.

We believe that a variety of musical instruments may be used to lead in worship, but do not assume that multiple musical instruments are necessary.

Being reasonable and prudent with our God-given resources, we recommend obtaining high quality instruments and sound equipment, capable of reproducing a broad range of instrumentation, to complement and broaden the range of musical styles we use.

We will encourage freedom in worship that is God-honoring and authentic, allowing for Biblically appropriate responses to God's multifaceted glory as we linger for extended periods in His presence.

We will encourage lay participation in the worship service by spiritually gifted people.

Because we are concerned more with spiritual growth than musical variety or excellence, we will encourage anyone interested in music/singing/worship team participation to first become active in the fellowship of the church.

Because we desire for the whole congregation to be able to worship together, we will intentionally seek to include instruments, melodies, and harmonies that support and encourage congregational participation in corporate singing, and thus will avoid instruments, melodies, and harmonies that would hinder such singing.

Because we desire for the whole congregation to be able to worship together, we will strategically select songs and implement new songs in a manner which encourages all to participate.

We will submit all songs, especially new songs, to the church leadership who have been charged by God to protect the doctrinal fidelity of the church, and worship services therein (1 Timothy 1:3, Titus 1:9).

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: *What kind of music do you sing at GBC?*

A: We try to strike a balance among classic hymns, modern hymns, and modern praise songs.

Q: *What instruments are used in your services?*

A: Most always piano or keyboard; however, additional instruments (i.e. organ, guitar, drums, violin) would be welcomed in conformity with the philosophy and values described above.

Q: *What do you do in your services besides music and singing?*

A: Expository preaching is a high priority. In addition: Scripture readings, prayers.

Q: *What do people wear to worship services at GBC?*

A: People are free to wear whatever they want.

Q: *How can I help with corporate worship at GBC?*

A: Speak with Joe Ellyson, Mark Moffatt, or Dan Keller.

[We express our thanks to First Baptist Church - Brookings, Bethlehem Baptist Church - Minneapolis, and Sovereign Grace Church - Aberdeen for their excellent Philosophies of Corporate Worship. They are reflected, and often copied word-for-word in our own.]