

LOVING THE BRIDE OF CHRIST: What is a Healthy Church Member?

Mark #9 – *Worships God's Way*
(Part I)

"...worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him." (John 4:23)

I. What Kind of Relevance is Relevant for Worship?

"I find most theology really boring. I want to do my own theology." - Doug Pagitt interview with Scot McKnight
(<http://kingdomnexus.squarespace.com/keeping-jesus-revolutionary>)

"[T]he gospel just is not cool. I don't think I need to argue this one further, but just in case: Steve McQueen was cool; Bruce Springsteen, if the new album is anything to go by, is still cool; but being a helpless lawbreaker dependent solely upon God's grace in Christ for salvation has never been cool and never will be. And if the gospel is not cool, then being a minister is not cool; so why try to pretend otherwise?"

- Carl Trueman, "To Baldly Go" on Reformation21.org

A. The "Regulative Principle" for Worship – "Worship is a matter of divine direction"

The light of nature shows that there is a God who has lordship and sovereignty over all, that he is good and does good to all, and that he ought therefore to be feared, loved, praised, prayed to, trusted in, and served with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. *But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God has been instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations or devisings of men, or the suggestions of Satan, or under any visible representation, or any other way not commanded in Holy Scripture.* (WCF 21.1)

1. Does the Regulative Principle reflect an out-dated, chained-to-the-past mentality? How might it instead be considered freeing?

2. Does the Regulative Principle mean that every church will look alike? What will be alike and what will be different?

"To put it simply, in worship we *pray* the Bible, *sing* the Bible, *read* the Bible, and *preach* the Bible and see the Bible (in the sacraments). The language of Christian worship is the language of Scripture."

-Terry L. Johnson, *Reformed Worship*, 34.

Elements = Scripturally determined essentials

(e.g., reading/preaching Scripture, prayer, singing, sacraments; occasional oaths/vows)

Forms = The content or structure through which the element is expressed, where there is considerable freedom

(e.g., preaching Zechariah vs. Luke, singing "Amazing Grace" vs. "In Christ Alone")

Circumstances = broader considerations that facilitate worship, "...to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word" (WCF 1.6)

(e.g., worship at 10 AM vs. 11 AM, air conditioning at 71 vs. 74 degrees, chairs vs. pews)

II. Nadab and Abihu

“Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them.”² And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.³ Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD has said, “Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.” And Aaron held his peace.” (Lev 10:1-3)

1. What was the “crime” committed by these two priests (Lev 10:1-2)? Does the penalty seem harsh to you?
2. What was a clear task assigned to priests (Ex 30:9-10)? What was Moses’ explanation to Aaron, their father, for God’s response? Was did Aaron’s response to Moses communicate?

III. The Golden Calf: “You Know How the People Are”

“When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, ‘Up, make us a god who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’”² So Aaron said to them, ‘Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.’”³ So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron.⁴ And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, “These is your god, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!”⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD.”⁶ And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” (Ex 32:1-6)

1. Were the people requesting a different god other than Yahweh? If not, what did they want?
2. What was the prescribed way God was interacting with His people at Sinai (Ex 20:18-20)? How were the people responding to this arrangement?
3. How does Aaron make the situation worse?

“And Moses said to Aaron, ‘What did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?’”²² And Aaron said, ‘Let not the anger of my lord burn hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil.’²³ For they said to me, “Make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.””²⁴ So I said to them, “Let any who have gold take it off.” So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.” (Ex 32:21-24)

“As long as you notice, and have to count, the steps, you are not yet dancing but only learning to dance. A good shoe is a shoe you don’t notice. God reading becomes possible when you need not consciously think about eyes, or light, or print, or spelling. The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God.” – C.S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*, 4.