

The Presence of God in Gathered Worship

June 11, 2023

1 Corinthians 14:23–25

Background

1. God is present everywhere all the time
2. God manifests his presence in particular ways
3. In God's presence there is fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11)
4. Every Christian has been brought into the presence of God through Christ alone (Matthew 27:51; 1 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 2:13; Hebrews 12:22)
5. Every Christian has the presence of God with him because of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-20)

Dangers to avoid

1. Leaving out the background
2. Doing anything that implies that we earn God's presence through our worship
3. Suggesting that the worship leader will bring us into the presence of God
4. Putting the emphasis on sensing God's presence in the space
5. Putting the emphasis on an ecstatic experience of God's presence
6. Seeking another Pentecost in each worship service
7. Encouraging people to believe in God based solely upon their worship experience
8. Teaching that a particular worship order leads to the presence of God
9. Teaching a direct connection between praise and God's presence
10. Teaching a direct connection between music and God's presence

Why we should come to gathered worship seeking to draw near to God as a church family:

1. Because God promised that Gentile nations would recognize the presence of God among His people (1 Cor. 14:25 with Isaiah 45:14, Zechariah 8:23, cf. Gen. 41:38, Daniel 5:11)
2. Because those who have God's presence should rejoice in that presence by faith (1 Peter 1:8)
3. Because those who have been brought near to God still need to seek God (Psalm 105:4; Hebrews 11:6; Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:31)
4. Because those who have God's presence need to seek to have their heart in harmony with His (Galatians 5:25)
5. Because the Bible calls us to draw near to God with our prayer and praise (Hosea 14:2, Hebrews 4:16, 13:15)
6. Because God draws near to those who draw near to him (James 4:8)
7. Because God's presence is evident in the God-given gifts with which we serve one another when we gather (1 Corinthians 12:5-7)
8. Because God's character is seen in the Christlikeness of one another when we gather (2 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 5:1; Philippians 4:9)
9. Because Jesus reassured the church that they can effectively carry out even the most difficult parts of life as a church family because He is with them when they gather (Matthew 18:20)
10. Because the church is the temple of God on earth, not just as an abstract theory, but in active gathering. We are the temple as we are actively "being joined together" and "being built together" "into a holy temple." We are "joined and held together ... when each part is working properly." (Ephesians 2:21-22; 4:15-16)
11. Because God is present when His living and active Word is taught, preached, read, sung, and spoken about (1 Cor. 2:4 / Heb. 4:12 / 1 Cor. 14:25 / Ephesians 6:17)
12. Because the old covenant joy of "coming to the temple together" becomes the new covenant joy of "drawing near to God together" through Christ (Hebrews 12)