

Worship by the Book

The Mission of the Church Part 09
Selected Passages 7-6-2014

Summary: To find the drawn, call disciples, use the gospel (not benevolence), focus on the interested (methods like Biblical counseling and investigative Bible studies). Fifth method for spreading: Reach the peoples (Paul-type). Methods for expressing: Showcase glory, remove distraction, assist the heart with music, engage the mind, use your body, and give.

Introduction.....	1
#5 Go Fishing.....	2
How to Find the Drawn?.....	2
1) Call Disciples	2
2) Use the Gospel as Bait	2
Benevolence is for the Household of Faith.....	2
Didn't John 6 Give Jesus an Opportunity to Preach?	3
3) Focus on the Interested	3
Go to Where They Might Be	3
Go to Where the Fish Are Biting.....	4
Counseling	4
Investigative Bible Studies	4
#5 Reach the Peoples.....	5
Methods for Expressing Delight	6
1) Showcase Glory.....	6
2) Remove Distraction	7
3) Assist the Heart	7
4) Engage the Mind	7
5) Use Your Body.....	8
a. The Bible Commands It	8
b. God is Worthy to Receive It	8
c. Your Soul Needs It.....	8
d. Others Are Inspired by It	9
6) Give	9
Conclusion: Rely on the Spirit	9
Application Questions (James 1:25)	10

Introduction

Not long ago I watched a Youtube video of a guy who wanted to remove the engine from an old car so he wrapped chains around the engine and then around a big tree, put the car in reverse, and gunned it. And it worked. It ripped the engine completely out of the car, taking the whole front end of the car with it. Very, very effective method. Of course, the one drawback is that both the engine and the car are now completely destroyed. Now, instead of just driving it to a junkyard, they have to tow the car and find a way to dispose of the engine – and clean up a huge mess. What can we learn from that? How about this: methods matter. It matters what method you use to do things. The ends do not automatically justify the means. And so in our study on the mission of the church, we didn't stop after discovering what the church is supposed to do. We are also looking into what God has said about what methods He wants us to use to accomplish what He wants done.

This is an especially important question for the church, because the task we have been called to is a spiritual one. We are dealing in an invisible world – hearts and souls – things we cannot see. Our task is like doing brain surgery blindfolded – with a world-class surgeon telling you what to do. If you don't follow his instructions exactly and you get creative, you are not going to have good results.

So what did the Surgeon tell us to do for deepening our love for God and becoming more Christ-like?

- Apply the Word of God to the hearts of men and women, and
- Deal with sin the way Jesus taught us to deal with sin.

How about the task of spreading delight in Christ - winning the lost? What methods will work for that?

- 1) Be the Church
- 2) Preach the Word
- 3) Call Disciples (make sure people are able to count the cost)
- 4) Go Fishing

It is the hard work of commercial fishing. We need to put our backs into it, and become all things to all men and be persuasive and find a way to somehow save some.¹

We need to work hard, but we also need to remember that only God can open up a person's heart. Three times in John 6 Jesus makes the point that no one will come unless the Father draws him. No matter how hard you work, you will never get anyone to genuinely come to Christ if the Father is not drawing that person. So the only catchable fish are the people that God is drawing. So how do we find those people? So far we have found two answers to that question.

#5 Go Fishing

How to Find the Drawn?

1) Call Disciples

First, if you want to discover which people are being drawn by the Father, call people to discipleship. Let them know about the extreme demands Jesus makes, because only the drawn will still be interested when they hear that part. They will still be interested because God is opening their eyes to what an immense treasure Jesus Christ is – worth far more than anything they will have to give up.

2) Use the Gospel as Bait

The other method we found was to use the gospel as our only bait, because that is what the catchable fish are hungry for. If we try to attract people with amusement and entertainment, you attract mostly undrawn people. Same goes for attracting people by giving handouts. It attracts the wrong crowd and it puts people into the wrong frame of mind to receive the gospel, because we are directing their gaze to the value of the thing we are handing out rather than the value of Christ. And whatever your soul gazes at is the thing it will tend to latch on to as its treasure.

And nowhere are these principles more clearly illustrated than in John 6, where a crowd comes to Jesus because they got free food, but when Jesus gives them the gospel instead of more free food they turn on Him like the bears in Estes Park when you stop feeding them. That is why they have signs – “Don’t feed the bears.” Feeding the undrawn has a similar effect. There are areas where years ago missionaries came in and built building and dug wells and handed out free food and clothing, and it trained the people to think that is what missionaries are for. So now when today’s missionaries come, and they don’t hand out all the goodies, the people get angry. And the last thing they want to hear at that point is the gospel.

Benevolence is for the Household of Faith

What do we see in the book of Acts? When the beggar asked Peter and John for some financial assistance, they did not give him any. But then there is a whole chapter devoted to the process of the organization and administration of how to meet the physical needs of the needy widows *within* the church.

¹ 1 Cor.9:19-27, 2 Cor.5:11, Ro.11:14.

Didn't John 6 Give Jesus an Opportunity to Preach?

I realize this is very new to a lot of you. You may have come from a church that teaches that one of the main responsibilities of the church (if not *the* main responsibility) is to provide humanitarian aid to unbelievers to set up a platform for giving them the gospel – so that in some cases they have more programs for caring for the needy outside the church than for those inside! They have Galatians 6:10 completely backward – “Do good to all men, especially those *outside* the family of believers.” It is one of those doctrines that you hear so many times from so many different preachers that you can forget to ask, “Where is that in the Bible?”

Even after last week's sermon there were still some of you who were saying, “Wait a minute – Jesus attracted this crowd by giving away free food and had a chance to preach the truth to them. Isn't that always a good thing?” The answer is this: There is a reason why all through that chapter John focuses only on the negative results. The Holy Spirit is showing us that preaching – even Jesus' preaching, does not work when the people miss the point. Those people totally missed the point of the miracle – thinking it was about provision of food rather than proof of who Jesus was, and as a result they rejected Christ and His message.² Preaching does not work when people miss the point – so why would we utilize methods that will make our listeners more prone to miss the point?

3) Focus on the Interested

Go to Where They Might Be

If you want to catch fish, go where the fish are likely to be. I say that because another big trend in outreach efforts has been to focus on places they aren't as likely to be. Over and over I hear people say, “You can't expect unbelievers to come to church. They aren't going to come to a religious setting. That turns them off. You have to go to places where they like to be – like bars. We need to hang out with them in the bars – like Jesus did.”

The justification for this is always Jesus. They say, “Oh yeah - Jesus hung out in the bars and the taverns and with prostitutes and sinners, and He couldn't stand hanging out with religious people.” None of that is true. The Bible never says Jesus hung out in bars and taverns. When someone tries to tell you that, ask him to show you in Scripture. Luke 4:16 says it was Jesus' custom to go to the synagogues and preach. But no verse says it was His custom to frequent bars.

““But wasn't Jesus was a friend of tax collectors and sinners.”

That phrase – “Friend of tax collectors and sinners” appears one time in the Bible.

Luke 7:34 "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'"

Was that accusation true? Was Jesus a gluttonous man and drunkard and a friend of tax collectors and sinners? No! Jesus did befriend *repentant* sinners, but the accusation in Luke 7 was that Jesus befriended people like that because He was attracted to that lifestyle. And that was a false accusation. Jesus preached against that lifestyle, and demanded that tax collectors and sinners repent of their sin and follow Him.

And is it true that Jesus couldn't stand religious people? No. Jesus had sharp conflict with the legalistic Pharisees – but not because they were religious. It was because they were committed to false religion instead of true religion. When Jesus saw religious people with real faith, committed to true religion, He loved being around those people. The only place we know of where Jesus routinely hung out was the synagogues, which is the most religious setting they had in that culture.

² The way we know that the point was the miracle part rather than the food part is verse 26. It is also confirmed in Mark 6:52 when the disciples are astonished at Jesus' ability to walk on water and command the wind and waves. The fact that they were astonished at that proved that they still did not understand about the loaves.

And we see the same example in the book of Acts. Eight different times in chapters 13-19 it says Paul went into the synagogues to preach.³ And it says that **was his custom**. And in the few occasions that he did go some other place, it was usually a place where drawn people might be likely to be found – like places of prayer.

Acts 16:13 On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

A few verses later they are on their way to another place of prayer (Acts 16:16).

Now, in Acts 17 they preached in the marketplace, and then they were invited to speak at the Areopagus, which was a place where people gathered to hear speakers speak on various philosophies and religious ideas. And in chapter 19 they spoke in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (19:9). And of course Paul preached in prison, and in court, when he was on trial he would try to convert the judge. So they were not limited to strictly religious settings. Any place where people would listen, they would preach. But there is no mention of bars or brothels or entertainment venues or anything like that. Why do you suppose they never went to entertainment venues – like the coliseum? Could it be because they understood that when people go somewhere to be entertained, they generally are not in a good frame of mind to hear a message about how this world is not a great treasure or a source of joy? Entertainment venues don't generally put people into a very good posture for becoming broken and repentant over sin and wanting to give up this world for what Christ offers.

Go to Where the Fish Are Biting

So let's focus most of our attention on the places where the catchable fish are going to tend to go, like – churches. And wherever we go, let's focus our energy on the fish that are biting. One of the very first things Jesus taught His disciples was to focus on the interested.

Matthew 10:14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town.

Move on. Why? Because there are a whole lot of people out there who are eager to receive the gospel, and it would be wrong to deprive them because you are determined to beat your head against the wall trying to argue with someone who won't listen. As long as they are listening, keep talking. But when they trample what you are saying underfoot or become hostile to you, then you are dealing with dogs and pigs, not fish – so move on. Don't throw pearls and holy things to dogs and pigs (Mt.7:6) – focus on the interested.

Counseling

This is another reason why I think biblical counseling is such a good venue for evangelism. That is a context where you have people who have a real, spiritual problem that has gotten their attention, and they are coming to a church to get biblical insight on how to deal with that problem. If that isn't fertile ground for finding drawn people, I don't know what is. It is like a pond stocked with hungry fish! Unbelievers coming to you and asking, "Please, tell me what the Bible says about how to solve the problems in my heart."

Does God sometimes call people like Jeremiah to persist with a hard people? Yes. So we don't want to turn this into any kind of hard and fast rule. But generally speaking, the pattern in Scripture is, focus your energy on the interested.

Investigative Bible Studies

Another strategy that really falls in line with these principles is what they call an investigative Bible study. You find unbelievers that have questions and invite them to a Bible study. Unbelievers are

³ 13:14, 14:1, 17:1,2,10,17, 18:4,19, 19:8. Even after turning to the Gentiles after Jewish rejection, they still went to synagogues, and Gentiles got saved from their synagogue preaching (Acts 13:47-49, 14:1, 18:4-8).

comfortable because the whole group is made up of unbelievers, no question is out of bounds, and the answers come right out of the Bible. I have heard more than one missionary say they have seen more people won to Christ through this method than any other method. Joyce was just telling Tracy the other day that she called her 16-year-old daughter who is away for a month at a dance camp, and she asked, “Have you been in the Word every day?” And Erin said, “Yes, everyone knows that at a certain time of day, I go off to a separate room with my Bible.” And several of the other girls have started following her into that room and asking questions about the Bible. Erin probably doesn’t know it, but she is using one of the most powerful evangelistic techniques in the field. All she is doing just trying to have her devotions – but the thing about the drawn is ... they are drawn to God’s Word. I heard Jeff Grow is doing one too – for his neighborhood. It is a great strategy for focusing on the interested.

#5 Reach the Peoples

How do we reach the lost? Be the church. Preach the Word. Call disciples. Go fishing. And one more – Reach the Peoples (plural – people groups). In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all *nations*. The word “nations” does not mean countries. It means cultures of people who share the same language and customs. So our mandate is more than just reaching all the various countries. We need to reach each unique culture.

It is not just a matter of how many people get saved. It is also a matter of how many different *kinds* of peoples. When we see the glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation, part of what brings such glory to the Lamb of God is the fact that He receives praises from every people group.

Revelation 5:9 ... You are worthy ... because ... with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

God wants His Son to be honored by the maximum number of different languages and cultures and people groups. That is why the Second Coming is being delayed until we reach all the various people groups.

Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

That is why all the money that is given at Agape and designated for missions – we make sure half of it goes to an organization that is focused on reaching unreached people groups - cultures where there is no Christian witness at all. Places where they couldn’t hear the gospel even if they tried, because it’s not available. We call the effort to reach those people “frontier missions” or “Paul-type” missions, because Paul was focused on establishing the church in cultures that had never been reached before.

But that is not the only kind of missions work. Paul also told Timothy to remain in Ephesus and do the work of an evangelist. The church was already established there, and yet Timothy was uprooted from his culture and brought into Ephesus to help them as a missionary. So the other half of our missions money goes to Timothy-type missions – missionaries that are working in places where some gospel witness exists, but they need our help. So there is Paul-type to reach the unreached, then there is Timothy-type (cross-cultural missions in areas that need help), and then there are local missions within our same culture. Typically we just refer to that as evangelism.

All three are crucial. This is the work of the church, which means every single Christian should be involved. You should either pack your bags and go to the mission field as a missionary, or be serious and intentional about sending missionaries. Scripture teaches that if you support a missionary financially, you share in that work and in the reward (Php.1:4-6, 4:15-19). So the first Sunday of every month at Agape is missions Sunday. Today happens to be missions Sunday. Any money that you put in the box and designate for missions goes directly to these efforts to reach the nations. I would urge you to set aside a certain amount each month for missions, so that on Judgment Day if God asks you, “Did you reach the nations with the gospel?” you won’t have to be ashamed.

Methods for Expressing Delight

We have looked at methods for winning the lost:

1. Be the Church
2. Preach the Word
3. Call Disciples
4. Go Fishing
5. Reach the Peoples

That is the spreading part of our mission. And for the deepening part of our mission (becoming more holy and pure as a church) we have two methods:

- Applying the Word of God to the hearts of men and women
- Dealing with sin the way Jesus taught us to deal with sin

So now we know the biblical methods for spreading delight in Christ and for deepening delight in Christ. But what about the first part of our task: *expressing* delight in Christ? What methods does the Word of God call for when it comes to worship? The best answer I can give to that question is the series we did back in 2012 titled “The Worshipping Church.” If you haven’t listened to that series recently I would strongly urge you to do that. In fact, I have some thumb drives here that have that series and the Loving God series on them, and I will give one to anyone here who will commit to listening through the Worshipping Church series. Just see me afterward.

But for now, let me just give you a very brief summary. As priests of the living God we are to offer worship and praise. Scripture commands that when we come together we must speak to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making music in our hearts to the Lord giving thanks for all things (Eph.5:19-20).

1) Showcase Glory

So what methods does the Bible call us to use for that? How about we take our cues from the way they do it in heaven? I don’t know if any better passage in Scripture to learn how to worship than Revelation 4-5 – the ultimate worship service. The most basic principle we see in those chapters is this – worship is a response to seeing the glory of God. They see wonderful things about God, and they respond – that is worship. In chapter 4, God is seen seated on His glorious throne, with the living creatures drawing attention to His holiness and eternity, and look at the response:

Revelation 4:9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever.

When you see something that is true about God, and you like it – it amazes you, or it gives you joy, or it awes you, or humbles you – expressing that awe or joy or amazement to God is worship. If you get some perspective on His wisdom or power or kindness or love or whatever, and that causes some kind of reaction in your heart – expressing that reaction is worship. So true worship cannot happen without a reaction in your heart to seeing God’s glory. And the reaction in your heart cannot happen unless you see something about God that has an effect on you. So what is our method for leading worship? Point to the glory of God.

Worship is not a response to music. If you hear exciting music and you get excited, that is not worship. Atheists have that same reaction to exciting music. Worship is not a response to music; it is a response to God’s glory – seeing one or more of His attributes in a way that affects your heart.

So our method is to do all we can to showcase God’s glory. The way to get people to really worship is not by telling them to stand up and pressuring them to sing louder. The way to get them to worship is to showcase God’s glory as revealed in Scripture.

2) Remove Distraction

And one of the keys to showcasing something is removing distractions. If a jeweler wants to amaze you with the beauty of diamond, what does he do? Does he put it on a dazzling painting with lots of brilliant colors? No – just the opposite. He puts it on black velvet. Why? Because that removes all distraction so you can see the beauty of the diamond. Does the black background add anything to the beauty of the diamond? No. It does not need anything added. It is already beautiful, but in some settings it is hard to appreciate that beauty. So showcasing it on black velvet enables you to appreciate the beauty that is there.

That is what the praise team's job is - to take the diamond of God's glory and place it on black velvet. Remove distractions. That is why we don't have all kinds of interruptions in our praise time. Sing a song, then say, "Good morning, how are you all doing? Nice sunny day today..." Then sing another song, then give some announcements. Then another song, then pass a plate. Once we begin, our goal is to have an unbroken train ride up to the top of a mountain of worship, so that when we have sung our last song, we have had our gaze fixed on God's glory for a half an hour straight, and we are ready to hear from God through His Word. So many times I am tempted to say a few words when I come up to the pulpit after the singing, but unless those words are a continuation of worship, I hold back. I have come up with some really funny jokes, but I bite my tongue. When the reader comes up to do the Scripture reading after the songs, we ask them, "If you have a quick remark designed to continue the direction of the worship, fine. But no small talk. No joking around. No announcements." We have labored for a half hour to bring ourselves into the holy of holies – the last thing we want is some distraction that pulls our attention back down to the mundane.

3) Assist the Heart

So we showcase God's glory by pointing attention to truths about Him from Scripture. Then we do all we can to showcase those truths by removing distractions. And then we take it a step further – we try to use music and readings and prayers to assist the heart in responding. Music is mentioned very often in Scripture – but almost always in contexts of worship. Very rarely any other context.

Revelation 5:8 the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp

Music, if it is used in the right way, can take a small response of worship in your heart and amplify it. Today at the north campus our final song was an upbeat version of "How Great Thou Art" – focusing on God's greatness. Did the music help? If someone walks up to you and says, "God is great" you might say, "Yeah – right on – all the time." But there is a difference between that, and spending 30 minutes admiring God's greatness, and then having some very well thought out lyrics put before you about God's greatness, and hearing a hundred voices around you all unified in celebrating that greatness, and the whole thing is assisted by keyboard and drums and guitars and bass and a strong lead vocal and harmony – it gives you an opportunity to literally shout your response to God. All that can take a little flicker of joy in your heart (or awe, or honor, or delight) and amplify it to something greater.

4) Engage the Mind

You'll notice throughout Revelation 4-5 that all the worship is a rational response to truth about God. Jesus takes the scroll, and they put two and two together and out come the songs about the worthiness of the Lamb to take the scrolls. That is important, because very often people will fall into the error of bypassing the mind and just going for sheer emotions. They use the music to work themselves up into a euphoric, mindless emotionalism, and they think that is worship. And they might be clapping and shouting and have tears streaming down their face, but if you stopped them and said, "What is it, specifically, about God that you are so happy about right now?" they will have no answer. There is no

answer, because their mind is empty. It is not focused on truth from Scripture about God. People like that very often think of doctrine as being like cold water thrown on the fire of their “worship.”

But we believe that our only way of encountering God is through truth about God from Scripture. And God calls us to love Him with all our heart and all our soul and all our ... *mind*. God does not want mindless worship. He chose to reveal Himself in the written Word through concepts and ideas and propositions and commands. So in order to experience God we must think and process what He has said.

That is why we are so careful about the songs we use at Agape. We have a list of 14 different principles we use to examine a song before deciding to use it in our corporate praise time. And even when we do decide to use a song, most of the time we have to trim down some of the repetition because the trend these days is to repeat things so many times that it disengages the mind. When you have thought as much as you can about some little phrase, but it keeps repeating, your mind just wanders. You can't stay focused on worship, and you find yourself thinking about all kinds of other things.

If it is true that worship is a response to the glory of God, and the glory of God is revealed through propositions and ideas communicated in the Scriptures, then the mind must be engaged.

5) Use Your Body

Throughout these chapters we see the living creatures and elders and other worshippers giving physical expressions of worship. In Revelation 5:8 the 24 elders **fall down** in worship. I would like to see a video of that. They didn't trip, no one pushed them – it is worship. And it is not described as a slow kneeling, but as a falling down. They know God can see their heart, and yet they fall down anyway - a very physical expression. Let me give you four reasons to use your body in corporate worship.

a. The Bible Commands It

First, it is the way the Bible teaches us to worship. Everywhere you look in Scripture, whenever there is worship, there is some external, physical expression: singing, shouting, kneeling, falling down on the ground, bowing, standing, lifting up the hands, clapping, and dancing. Scripture commands those things. Raising your hands, clapping – those are not a matter of culture or religious background. It is a matter of worshipping God the way He commanded us to worship Him.

b. God is Worthy to Receive It

Jesus lifted His hands in prayer (Luke 24:50). The creatures in heaven God designed just for worship bow down (Rev.5:8). If the 24 elders and the four living creatures surrounding the throne and the Son of God Himself have physical expressions of worship, are we going to think we are above that? Are we too dignified for that? Am I embarrassed to bow before the King of kings when I am surrounded by a bunch of people who desire more than anything else to see God honored? Is God not worthy of enthusiastic, excited, heartfelt, worship from our entire being? We come in here and give each other hugs and shake hands - we give physical expressions of love to complete strangers. But we cannot move a muscle in expressing love to the one we supposedly love more than anyone or anything else?

c. Your Soul Needs It

God designed you so that your body and spirit are interconnected and entwined and interdependent so what takes place in your spirit has an effect on your body, and what you do with your body has an impact on your spirit. So when you have a little, tiny feeling of reverence for God, and then you actually kneel down, or bow your head, or get down on your face - that can take that little feeling of reverence and amplify it. The godly emotions that we have often start out weak and fragile and they need to be cultivated and nurtured, like a little tiny flame that could blow out at any moment, and you are trying to get it going. And physical expression can help get it going.

This is why Sam normally has us sit down after the first couple songs. He does that to give us a chance to spontaneously stand at a moment in the worship when we are truly moved with respect for God.

We want all your movements during the praise time to have meaning – to reflect things that are actually taking place in your heart. We want you to stand at a moment when you are struck with His majesty, and you want to show Him honor by rising in His presence. And if we are all standing, and a lyric comes up that impresses you with God’s holiness, and you have a sense of wanting to bow before Him – sit down. Bow your head. When you have a moment when you just really want to offer to God what is in your heart, lift your hands in the air as a way of saying, “*This* part of the song right here, God, *this* part right here - that’s what I really want to say to You right now.” When one of the lyrics in a song strikes you and your heart says, “Yes! God – that’s how I feel!” shout “Amen!” Amen is a very special word God has given us that stays the same in every language. And its purpose is to affirm what was just said: “Yes! I agree with that and love that truth!” And it glorifies God when we do that. Even God says amen .A healthy church should have lots of amen’s. According to 1 Corinthians 14:16 we are not allowed to do anything in church that people can’t say amen to. Those of you who never say amen out loud – now that you have heard this sermon, I will just assume you are disagreeing with everything that’s being said.

Psalm 149:3 Let them praise his name with dancing

How about that one? Not all of us are capable of moving our bodies to rhythm. Which means if you are able, you need to have twice as much movement in order to make up for people like me. And if in our church culture dancing for joy before the Lord in public worship would be a distraction, that’s a bad thing and it needs to change. And in the meantime, whatever level we are at right now, we should have the goal of ramping that up a notch or two. And those of you who are more expressive and are holding back – you need to lead the way because it’s hard for some of us.

d. Others Are Inspired by It

These things can have such an impact on your heart - and not just your heart, but the hearts of all the people around you. That is the fourth reason. There have been times my mind was wandering during the praise time, and I am not thinking about God at all, and then all of a sudden someone in my peripheral vision gets on her knees. And my immediate impulse is to look up at the lyrics on the screen and think, “What did I miss? That dear sister just caught a glimpse of the majesty of God that sent her to her knees in worship – I want to see what she saw.” So her being expressive snaps me out of my distraction and helps me worship. If you are worried that being expressive will distract people, I think you should be more worried that being nonchalant might throw cold water on people’s worship. I would much rather be distracted by joyful worship than be dragged down by a culture of tepid praise. Let’s worship with our whole being.

6) Give

One last method: give. Throughout Scripture worshipping God involves giving offerings to Him. And the key there is give in faith, and give with a joyful heart. That is a crucial part of worship, which is why we do our offering during the singing time. At whatever point you are moved with joy, come on forward and put your gift in the box to express your joy to God. I realize it’s a little clumsy getting out to the isle, but don’t worry about that – we’re all family here, and we’re all worshipping God.

Conclusion: Rely on the Spirit

As we wrap this series up, let me leave you with one last observation. Have you noticed that throughout all nine of these sermons, one of the main points every single week had to do with the role of Scripture? True worship begins with seeing truth about God in Scripture. Winning the lost requires the proclamation of Scripture. Growing in holiness and purity happens when we apply the Word of God to the hearts of men. We saw in Ephesians 4 that the beginning, middle and end of the whole process of the

church fulfilling its mission is fueled by the Word of God. And that is because trusting the Word is what gives us access to the Holy Spirit (Gal.3:2). And it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that all this work can be accomplished.

You can tell how much a church relies on the Holy Spirit by how committed they are to applying the Word of God to the hearts of men. You can tell how Spirit-filled the worship is by how much it rises out of truth from God's Word. You can tell when a church is really depending on the Spirit by how central the preaching of the gospel is in their efforts to win the lost. Churches who don't use the Bible much – that is a symptom of trusting in our own efforts. They can couch it in "Holy Spirit" language all they want, but people who really trust the Spirit will use the means the Spirit has given us – the Bible. That is why our rule of thumb at Agape is this – when we are considering a ministry, the more direct the ministry of the Word the more resources that ministry merits.

So let's be faithful to be what God called us to be, and to do what God has called the church to do, and to do it in the way God has instructed us to do it – relying on His methods rather than our own ideas. When we do that, we can trust Him and rejoice in whatever response comes.

Benediction: Psalm 100:1 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. 2 Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. 3 Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. 5 For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Application Questions (James 1:25)

- 1) Do you believe God is honored by your involvement in reaching all nations? If so, what are you doing? If not, what do you think God wants you to do?
- 2) If you were to move your level of enthusiasm in worship up one notch from where it is now, what would that look like? And what stands in the way of you doing that?