

WHY WE WORSHIP AS WE DO

In the Church of Christ we endeavor to “speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.” Everything we do is based on what we find in the Bible, be it a direct commandment or an example. We do nothing more and nothing less.

As you read the Old Testament notice that when God gave laws, commandments, assignments, or errands, He insisted on all this being carried out to the letter. God gave the children of Israel specific instructions on how to offer up sacrifices in the book of Leviticus. If they did waver, they were dealt with severely, as were Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10:1-2.

Worshipping God has always been a very serious matter. We today must worship God according to the examples and commandments that are set before us in the Bible. That is what we strive to do in the Church of Christ, follow God’s instructions to the letter. Each Sunday we assemble to pray, sing, give of our means, preach and partake of communion. We strive to do each of these things in accordance to God’s will.

We are commanded to pray, *“Pray without ceasing.”* (1 Thes. 5:17) There is a right way to pray. Jesus said *“And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”* (John 14:13-14) When we pray, we pray to God the Father in Heaven, but we pray in the name of Jesus. Jesus makes intercession for us. Without Jesus, we cannot pray to God.

A very important part of our worship service is the singing. In Ephesians 5:19 we read, *“speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”* We do not have a choir or use musical instruments. We must do only what the Bible says and nothing else. We have no authority for things such as musical instruments or choirs, because we are not the ones to whom the songs are sung. If God’s instructions are not carried out to the letter, then they are not accepted. When we are told to make a melody in our heart, then no orchestra in the world can make us sound better in a worship service to God. Quite the opposite, it would be an abomination to God and would sound horrible to Him. The way we sing in worship, everyone can sing along. Psalms 100 tells us to *“Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.”* If you are singing praises from your heart, even if you are off-key, you are making a joyful noise to God. Singing is a form of worship. God wants us to worship Him in song. God didn’t give all of us musical talent but that does not excuse us. In Exodus 4:10-12 we read about Moses feeling inadequate in speech much like we feel as poor singers but Moses led the children of Israel with the help of God. We sing the words from our heart, that is what God hears, not the vocal chords.

Another part of our worship is giving. We take up a collection every Sunday because we are told to do this in 1 Corinthians 16:2, *"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."* We give as God has prospered us. In other words, God does not dictate what percentage we give as he did in the Old Testament before the establishment of the Church.

Another part of our worship is preaching. Paul tells Timothy, *"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine."* (2 Tim. 4:2) Shortly before Jesus ascended into heaven, he said to the disciples, *"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."* (Mark 16:15) We are commanded to preach the word of God. We do not hire one man to do all the preaching to us on Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. We do not pay a man to go visit the sick for us and do whatever religious work there is to be done while we go about our business. We pattern after the early church. It our duty to visit the sick, and we have a variety of speakers. First Corinthians 14:31 tells us, *"For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted."* We use only male members to speak in the assembly because 1 Corinthians 14:34 says, *"Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law."* So not only can women not preach, but also they are not to speak in the worship assembly. Verse 35 says *"And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."* That is what the Bible tells us and that is what we follow, nothing else.

We who are members of the Lord's Church will partake of communion upon the first day of the week, Sunday. This is often referred to as the Lord's Supper. The unleavened bread of the communion represents to us the broken body of the Lord Jesus when he suffered and died on the cruel cross. The grape juice, referred to as the fruit of the vine in the Bible, represents the blood that Jesus shed on the cross. Jesus instituted this the night before his crucifixion in what we know as the Last Supper. In Mark 14:22-25 we read, *"Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God."* The early church did this on Sunday as can be seen in the example, *"And upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them."* (Acts 20:7) Following the example of Paul and the early Church, we commemorate the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Savior with communion every Sunday.

One noticeable thing missing in our assemblies is Sunday school or Bible classes. After Jesus ascended into Heaven and when the apostles received the

Holy Ghost and Christ's Church was established, only men such as Peter and Paul preached the gospel with the Holy Spirit guiding them, as Jesus had wanted. It was not until 1780 years later that Robert Raikes of England started Sunday school. Notice what the Bible says about doctrines of men: *"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than men."* (Acts 5:29) We would be wise to do the same. If God had wanted Sunday school, it would have been implemented in the early church. There is no authority found anywhere in the Bible for the church to have a divided class. In fact, 1 Corinthians 14:26-35 condemns more than one male member speaking at the same time. Verse 31 especially points out that everyone could learn if they spoke one at a time. Paul says in verse 37, *"If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."*

God's plan has always been for everyone, men, women, and children, to assemble together where a man teaches God's word. Acts 14:27 and Acts 15:30 are examples of this in the New Testament. In the Old Testament Moses did not read commentaries of men and try to form an opinion of how to do things or guess what God wanted done. God spoke directly to Moses and gave him specific, detailed laws and commandments. Notice Joshua 8:35, *"There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them."* Joshua was obeying a commandment Moses had given him in Deuteronomy 31:12.

To take it further, women are often the teachers of Bible classes. As mentioned earlier, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 commands a woman not to speak in a church assembly. In 1 Timothy 2:12 we find a woman is not to teach, *"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."* Proverbs 22:6 says, *"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."* Women should by all means teach their children God's holy word, but women must not teach publicly in a called assembly.

In 2 Timothy 2:15 we are not told just to read the Bible but to study and meditate on it. I encourage you to study your Bible and learn for yourself about God's way of worship.

Adapted from a sermon by DONALD THOMPSON ,Wedowee, AL
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