

## Why We Worship Together

Worship is the adoration of the Triune Living God. It is our response to all that God is and does. Worship should be the main occupation of the Christian.

A.W. Tozer wrote, "Worship is the missing jewel of the evangelical church." Possibly one reason for this is our lack of appreciation for congregational worship. Some say, "We can worship just as well out on the golf course or in the fishing boat as in the church on Sunday morning." This misses the point.

Psalm 95:2 says, "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Notice the plurals which the Psalmist uses. God calls His people to worship together.

In his book, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church*, Don Whitney gives the following reasons for the priority of corporate worship:

1. We worship God with the Church ***because God reveals Himself more clearly***. We can worship God in a cathedral of sky that's bursting with light and the smells of the earth, accompanied by a chorus of sparrows. The skies above and the whole world around us overflow with the glory of God (Psalm 19:1; Isaiah 6:3).

Yet, you won't hear about Christ and you won't hear the God-breathed words when you worship God in nature, but you will when you worship with the church. There is a much more conspicuous proclamation of God in congregational worship than in nature. For example, creation reveals God as Creator, but not as Saviour. And the Bible says that God's work as Saviour -- an action whereby He makes a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17) -- is more glorious than creation itself.

If you really want to worship God, you will be worshipping Him where His Word is preached and Christ is proclaimed.

2. We worship God with the church ***because God is glorified more than in private worship***.

When our favorite team wins a national championship, it will get more attention and glory if the game is shown to millions throughout the country than if just one person sees it alone on closed-circuit TV. Public glory obviously brings more glory than does private glory. So, too, God receives more glory when you worship Him with the church than when you worship Him alone.

If I tell you what a wonderful wife Laura is, you see that public praise brings her more glory than if I tell her privately. It is important that I tell her the same when we're alone, for if I don't tell her privately it won't mean very much to her if I say great things about her to others. That's the way it is with the public worship of God too.

3. We worship God in church ***because it is more edifying than private worship***. In the public worship of God we can experience the preaching of His Word, the spiritual gifts of Christians, the prayers of our brothers and sisters in Christ, congregational praise, fellowship, and many other things that we cannot receive in private worship.

Even if the church service is not all you think it can be, God can still use it. Something from the sermon may be nourishing to your soul. The words of a hymn or special music piece may strike you with unusual force. Someone may pray for you, or you may hear a prayer that conveys to God something in your own heart.

Also, your participation in congregational worship is more edifying to others than if you were to worship God only by yourself. You can minister to people in ways you certainly cannot if you are not with them. We are urged in Hebrews 10:4, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works."

People can sense that "God was in this place" as they walked in a worship service. I have never heard anyone say that as they watched people "worship" on a golf course or a lake.

4. We worship God in church ***because Jesus participated in worship***. Jesus Christ is not only our Lord but our Example. What was His example in this matter? He faithfully participated in the congregational worship of God as practiced in His day. "So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read" (Luke 4:16). How can anyone claim to follow Jesus who won't worship God as Jesus did? As Jesus customarily worshipped with God's people, so should we.

5. We worship God in church ***because it is more like Heaven***. Like worshipers in the same room, yet divided by a veil, when we worship God there is a sense in which we are participating in the unseen heavenly worship already occurring. The worship in Heaven is congregational worship. Thus our congregational worship is more like Heaven than individual worship. If you want Heaven to be your eternal home, don't you want to frequently experience that which is the "nearest resemblance of Heaven" on earth?

Matthew Henry wrote, "Let every saint praise him, but especially the congregation of saints; when they come together let them join in praising God. The more the better; it is the more like Heaven."

I'll see you in worship in the church!

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