

How to Plan and Lead Worship Services
Lecture Notes for Ming Dao Press, Hong Kong, China
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Here are some salient steps in the planning and leading of worship services.

I. First, know your congregation.

- A. Every congregation has its own personality, experience, leadership, history.
- B. Older, established congregations (and older, experienced Christians) have deeply ingrained ideas about worship.
- C. New congregations (especially with new, young Christians) may have little first-hand experience in the worship of God.

II. Second, know the central biblical teaching on worship.

- A. A revisit to the first passage describing worship post-Garden, Genesis 4.
- B. The focus in this text is on Yahweh's gracious act in looking at the worshiper and then at the act "with favor" (Heb. שָׂאֵף [šā'â]).
- C. Yahweh's desire in our worship is to respond in grace.
- D. The fact that He accepts our worship at all is a marvel of His grace.
- E. Worship is all about grace!

III. Third, plan a systematic Bible teaching program on the topic of God's holy worship.

- A. Emphasize *grace* in your teaching.
- B. Emphasize *wonder* in your preaching.
- C. Resist authoritarian attitudes of legislating; rather be an encourager.
- D. Resist absolutizing the methods; allow for creativity and freedom.
- E. But in all, seek the true biblical teaching.

IV. Fourth, seek for creative ways to bring your congregation's experience closer and closer to the biblical models.

- A. Having a full Passover *Seder* as a Christian congregation during Holy Week may be a means for people to see how recitation (the *Haggadah*) and symbols may be used in the true worship of God.
- B. Having a youth group lead in worship of the congregation by the use of drama and song may show older people new ways of showing vitality in the worship of God.

V. Fifth, consider that your work is going to be very difficult.

- A. Accept the fact that older, established congregations move very slowly and make changes with considerable reluctance.

- B. New congregations, when made up of new Christians, may not wish to work hard at the worship of God.
- C. All the while you are seeking to make changes in the worship patterns of your congregation, you must remember that *you* are also to be a worshiper of God.

VI. Sixth: elements to consider in your planning and leading of God's worship:

- A. The leader of worship must first be the lead worshiper! One cannot lead in worship if one is not first of all a true worshiper.
- B. Sound biblical preaching. The exposition of Scripture ought to be understood by the preacher to be a principal part of the congregational worship of God.
- C. Reading of Scripture. It is appalling to observe in many churches that the pastoral, congregational reading of the Bible is becoming more and more uncommon.
- D. Congregational prayer. Equally appalling is the loss of a focus on prayer in the congregation's worship service. This does not "televise" well; the models of worship in many places seem to be taken more from media consultants than from biblical ideals.
- E. Congregational responses, including the confession of our holy faith.
- F. Opportunities for believers to give praise to God for answered prayer. "Tell it in the congregation" is a strong biblical mandate.
- G. Music! Well, so very much to say here! I will plan to say a lot!