1. How engaged are our people in worship?

“[W]e are not producing worshippers in this country. Rather, we are producing a generation of spectators, religious onlookers lacking, in many cases, any memory of a true encounter with God....”

~ Sally Morgenthaler, Worship Evangelism, 17

2. The Biblical pattern: participatory and active

1 Corinthians 14:26: “When you meet together, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in tongues, and another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must be useful to all and build them up in the Lord.”

1 Corinthians 12: “...one body with many parts...”

Ephesians 4:15-16: “Under [Christ’s] direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”

Hebrews 10:25 “And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming is drawing near.”

3. The demise of multi-voiced worship

- Historic patterns

“When someone comes to church and constantly hears only one person speaking, and all the listeners are silent, neither speaking nor prophesying, who can...regard it to be a spiritual congregation? Or [who can] confess...that God is dwelling in them through his Holy Spirit with his gifts, impelling them one after the other to speak and prophesy?”

“Worship calls for the involvement of our mind, body and soul. Worship demands nothing less than the complete, conscious, and deliberate participation of the worshipper.”

~ Robert Webber, *Worship is a Verb*, Word, 1985

- **Children of the Modern era: worship as education**
  
  The sermon: “*a homiletical ocean liner preceded by a few liturgical tugboats.*”


- **Heirs to Revivalism: Charles Finney (1792-1875)**
  - Emphasizes freedom and innovation over tradition and history
  - Changes the relationship between worship and culture, worshippers and worship
  - Reverses the relationship between worship and evangelism
  - Narrowing of the goal of worship: private religious experience
  - Programmatic worship: worship as experience

- **Surrounded by an entertainment culture**

4. **Hunger for engagement**

- **Top 10 Very Important To Me**
  - Encounter with God
  - Depth / Substance
  - More frequent communion
  - Experience of community
  - Worship with the senses
  - Participatory worship
  - Challenging preaching
  - More use of Scripture
  - More contemplative
  - Experience of transcendence


- **E.P.I.C. worship:** Epic / Participatory / Image-rich / Connective


  “Net Gen-ers are active initiators, collaborators, readers, organizers, writers, authenticators, and even strategists.... They do not just observe; they participate. They inquire, discuss, argue, play, shop, critique, investigate, ridicule, fantasize, seek and inform.”


- **Hot or Cool media (Marshall McLuhan)**

  “As pastors and worship leaders, our job is to...make participants out of spectators. We have to help people pour out what God pours in. Spectator worship has always been and will always be an oxymoron.”

  ~ Sally Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism*, Zondervan, 49

  “Youth who reported having done several of these activities also reported higher rates of church attendance, personal prayer, Scripture reading, and volunteer work. In addition they reported a greater influence of religious teachings on their ‘big decisions,’ a stronger commitment to their faith tradition, a stronger commitment to marrying within their tradition, and a greater desire for others to know about their faith commitment.”

“In this very real world, good doesn’t drive out evil. Evil doesn’t drive out good. But the energetic displaces the passive.”


I think participation and involvement are key. In a consumer culture, it’s all too easy for worship to be something else we consume. So for us, we consciously want to get people involved in worship creation rather than in worship consumption. We also feel that being involved and taking part is a better way to learn anyway. It also enables more gifts of the community to be used.”

~ Johnny Baker, Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures
   Baker Academic, 2005, 159

5. How might we encourage broader engagement in worship?

• How well do we prepare people to enter into worship?
• Who is driving the worship: leaders or the congregation?
• What kinds of opportunities do worshippers have to respond?
  • to the presence of God
  • to what they hear God saying
  • to offer their own prayers
  • to pray for the world
  • to speak honestly to God
  • to reaffirm their desire to follow Jesus
• What types of responses do we encourage? Emotional, physical, intellectual?
• How wide a range of responses do we encourage in worship?
• How narrow or broad is the topical scope? How much of God’s story do we encounter?
• How do our physical spaces affect our level of engagement?
• What role do acoustics play?
• How does worship leadership/song leadership affect engagement levels?
• Does everyone have a voice in worship?
• How well do we connect with one another?
• How effective is our approach to preaching?
• In what ways is worship shaped by the gifts and insights of those who gather?
• Do we need to redefine what “successful” worship looks like?

“A true encounter with God leaves us with a lot more than good feelings. It leaves us with changed hearts and calls us to changed lives. Very simply, to experience God’s presence is to be transformed from the inside out. Think for a moment about the response of just a few biblical figures to the presence of God: Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, Mary, Paul, and Peter. Each one was struck to the core of his or her being in an encounter with the living God, forever altered by his or her proximity to holiness. Should we be any different?... Worship, in the final analysis, means change.”

~ Sally Morgenthaler, Worship Evangelism, Zondervan, 1999, 52

“[W]orship is a rehearsal in becoming godly.”

~ Graham Kendrick, Learning to Worship as a Way of Life, Bethany Houses, 1985
“[Multi-voiced worship] depends on the vitality of the spiritual life of the worshippers, who are together responsible for creating corporate worship. There is no room to hide…behind a few spiritual superstars. This is the heart of multi-voiced worship. This is why it is so hard to sustain but also why it is so valuable. Multi-voiced worship is a barometer of the spiritual life of a church in a way that mono-voiced worship can never be.” ~ Stuart Murray Williams, Multi-voiced Worship

6. The role of creativity and innovation in worship

“[Worship] ‘works’ best—when, through long familiarity, we don’t have to think about it. As long as you notice, and have to count, the steps, you are not yet dancing but only learning to dance. A good shoe is a shoe you don’t notice. Good reading becomes possible only when you need not consciously think about eyes, or light, or print, or spelling. The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God. But every novelty prevents this. It fixes our attention on the service itself; and thinking about worship is a different thing from worshipping....

A still worse thing may happen. Novelty may fix our attention not even on the service but on the celebrant.... Try as one may to exclude it, the question, ‘What on earth is he up to now?’ will intrude. It lays one’s devotion waste. There really is some excuse for the man who said, ‘I wish they’d remember that the charge to Peter was ‘Feed my sheep;’ not ‘Try experiments on my rats,’ or even, ‘Teach my performing dogs new tricks.’

Thus my whole liturgiological position really boils down to an entreaty for permanence and uniformity. I can make do with almost any kind of service whatever, if only it will stay put. But if each form is snatched away just when I am beginning to feel at home in it, then I can never make any progress in the art of worship.”


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Vertical Habits: Relational Words for Worship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love You.</th>
<th>Praise</th>
<th>Psalm 95</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sorry.</td>
<td>Confession</td>
<td>Psalm 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why?</td>
<td>Lament</td>
<td>Psalm 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’m Listening.</td>
<td>Illumination</td>
<td>Psalm 119</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help.</td>
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<td>Psalm 86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thank You.</td>
<td>Thanksgiving</td>
<td>Psalm 136</td>
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<tr>
<td>What Can I Do?</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Psalm 116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bless You.</td>
<td>Blessing</td>
<td>Psalm 103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

~ from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship [http://worship.calvin.edu/](http://worship.calvin.edu/)
Example: The Shape of our Conversation with God

- We come together as a community of believers (spoken or sung call to worship, gathering song, greeting)

- God’s presence is named and acknowledged (greeting, song or prayer of invocation, opening responses)

- We praise God for who God is, and how God has acted toward us (song, prayer, scripture, etc.)

- We speak honestly to God about ourselves... (corporate prayer, silence, song, scripture, reading, etc.)
  ...and we receive God’s Words of Assurance (scripture, song, litany, etc.)

- We listen for God’s Word to us (sermon, scripture, drama, reading, video, testimony, etc.)

- We respond to God’s Word (thanksgiving, confession, commitment)

- We meet together at God’s Table (communion)

- We call God into the difficult circumstances of our lives/our world (sharing, corporate petitions and intercessions)

- We reaffirm our commitment to God / offer ourselves in service to God (offering, song, reading, silence, affirmation of faith, etc.)

- We leave with the promise of God’s presence (Benediction)