



Dynamics of Church Life

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
God's Word	The Gospel	Spiritual Renewal	Holistic Worship	Dependent Prayer	Loving Community	United Mission
The Bible is our life and authority.	By his death & resurrection, Jesus gives us his Spirit and makes us God's children.	God's Spirit frees us to live more and more like Jesus in every area of our lives.	All of life is for worshipping our Triune God.	We thank our Father for his love and present our needs to him.	We follow Jesus in vital connection with other believers.	We invite everyone to trust and follow Jesus with us.

Holistic Worship

I originally planned to preach a sermon on the mission of the church as we relate to the world, specifically: "we invite everyone to follow Jesus with us." Of course this is what the church is called to do!

But as I studied the relevant passages, I began to discover that it is nearly impossible to talk about the mission of the church toward the world without first talking about the mission of the church toward God, which is *worship*. Before Jesus sent his followers into the world, they *worshipped* him (Matthew 28:18-20). The simple observances of the gathered church—whether reading, singing, praying, or observing the sacraments—are acts of *worship*. The church itself is a worshipping community since it was formed by God to do what humans had failed to do—properly ascribe to God the worth he deserves.

So, as I have come to realize, a series on the dynamics of church life would be incomplete without dealing with the dynamic of "holistic worship." I use the word *holistic* to signal that worshipping is something that we must do every moment of our lives, not just when we gather for church.

A good passage for helping us understand the church as a worshipping community is **1 Peter 2:9-10** (although we could have as easily gone to John 4:21-24, Romans 15:5-13; 1 Corinthians 14:24-25, Ephesians 3:7-13; Revelation 5, and many other passages).

From 1 Peter 2:9-10, we learn that a worshiping community:

1. Experiences glory - 2:9b

"The excellencies of him called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

2. Tells a story - 2:10

"Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

3. Embraces an identity - 2:9a

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession."

4. Lives a message - 2:9b

"That you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

(That this message is something to be *lived* as well as *spoken* is clear from the ethical commands Peter gives throughout the rest of his letter.)

Discussion Questions

1. Read together one or more of the other suggested passages: John 4:21-24, Romans 15:5-13; 1 Corinthians 14:24-25, Ephesians 3:7-13. How do they add to your understanding of the church as a worshiping community?
2. How can personal testimonies of God's work in our lives contribute to the worship experience of the church?
3. How much of God's excellence do you think the world sees, when they view how you and other Christians behave? If you are unsatisfied with this, what can you do to change it?
4. What current practices of our church help invigorate our view and adoration of God's excellencies? What might we do to enhance these practices?
5. Worship is not limited to "church services." Looking beyond our passage, look at the variety of ways in which Peter wants his readers to "proclaim the excellencies" of Christ. Take a couple of these (for example, our behavior as citizens, husband-wife relationships) and discuss how they can display God's worth.
6. Worship is never cheap. In what areas might we feel the cost of worship? Consider Romans 12:1-2.