

Considerate Worship (Part 2)
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We are in a sermon series called High Praise / Deep Worship. It was motivated by a prophetic word when then Lord said that experiencing this deeper dimension of praise and worship requires 4 things. I spoke on the first two of those which were Consecrated Worship and Concentrated Worship.

Last week and today I am preaching a 2-part sermon on Considerate Worship. We defined considerate as being attentive, thoughtful and concerned for others. The others I am talking about are first of all – God. And then the other believers in the worship service.

Last week I spoke on considering what God wants in worship. The Bible is very clear and specific about how God wants to be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

We looked at some of the ways the Bible teaches we should worship God by: Singing – Shouting – Clapping – Lifting our Hands – Standing – Kneeling - Dancing and Giving. We want all these forms of praise to be expressed in our services.

So, we always consider God first! But today I'm preaching the second half of my message on Considerate Worship and I'll focus on considering other people in worship. And our guiding principle for corporate worship is found in 1 Cor. 14:40

Let all things be done decently and in order.

So, we want all forms of worship, but we want them to be decently and in order. Without this principle, we will quench the Spirit. Not allowing the various forms of worship quenches the Spirit, but worship that is out of order also quenches the Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 says:

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

The word quench means to extinguish, to put out a fire, to suppress, to stifle; to restrain; to hinder. In fact, the NIV translates this verse: *Do not put out the Spirit's fire...*

What quenches the Spirit? The other verses tell us. We quench the Spirit when we:

Don't rejoice - Don't pray - Are not thankful in everything

Despise prophecy and the gifts of the spirit

Don't test things and let everything go whether it's of God or not

Give in to sin

Notice that we quench the spirit by despising prophecy and the gifts of the spirit. The New Testament church service involves the gifts of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 14:26 says:

When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.

You can look at that two ways – when the gifts operate make sure it's done in a way that builds up the church OR the gifts MUST operate for the church to be strengthened. I believe both interpretations are true. That's why 1 Corinthians 14:39 says:

Be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues.

Despising the gifts of the Spirit quenches the Spirit. You may say I don't despise the gifts, but the verse really means stop counting as nothing. The New Century Version says: *Do not treat prophecy as if it were unimportant.*

We must value and welcome the Holy Spirit and His gifts or we will quench the fire of the Spirit. We also quench the Spirit by the opposite extreme - when we don't test things and just let everything happen to the point of excess. Remember - Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 14:39-40

Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.

Some people think decently and in order only comes by not letting anything be done. Others think we should just let anything be done without question. Both of these things quench the fire of God. The balance is to let all things be done – but in an orderly way. Anything else quenches the fire of God.

In a church where there is the fire of the Spirit – there is potential for wildfire – people out of order. We have two options; to say either – we don't want wildfire, so to eliminate that risk, we will have no fire – OR – to say we want the fire of God – we will risk the wildfire and deal with flare ups as they arise. That's what we want to do.

But quenching the Spirit is not the way to remedy these abuses. We must be careful not to quench this holy fire. A synonym for fire is zeal. Romans 12:11 says:

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

The word fervent means boiling hot – so hot you glow.

God is saying, if your fire is low, fan it; if you're not on fire, get on fire. He didn't wait for someone else or wait for spontaneous combustion, just get on fire. He holds us responsible for being on fire spiritually. But he also holds us responsible to carry the fire decently and in order.

Letting all things be done decently and in order means that we need leadership in worship. The biblical word for "decently" means to do something honestly and properly. The word "order" in the Greek carries the idea of something done in a fitting way or something done according to order.

The Jewish historian Josephus used this word when he recorded the way in which the Roman army camps were orderly, organized, and well-planned. The word for order is a military term which has to do arrangement and rank. This speaks of order and leadership.

Adam Clarke's Commentary says order means: Everything in its place, everything in its time, and everything suitably. The point is that timing plays an important role in corporate worship. As Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 says:

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven... A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance... A time to keep silence, and a time to speak.

There is a proper time for dancing, shouting, singing, laughing, or crying in a church service. Individuals must remain sensitive to the leading of the Spirit and the worship leaders to discern the time. That's why Vine's Expository Dictionary says that "due order is in contrast to confusion in the gatherings of a local church."

In the Bible, you will find all the people doing the same thing at the same time during worship. That's why Romans 15:5-6 says:

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, in corporate worship we are all of one heart and one mouth praising God together.

The word for order used in the Bible also meant to be respectful, courteous, accommodating, well-mannered, and polite. In other words – CONSIDERATE!

I know it's not popular to say in this self-centered culture we live in, but the Bible commands us to consider others in everything we do. Philippians 2:3-4 says: *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

We must consider how our words and actions impact others.
 We must consider others before we hit send on a text.
 We must consider others before we post on social media.
 And we must consider others in our worship.

Our first consideration is God and worshipping the way He wants, but our second consideration is considering how our worship or lack of worship impacts others. This is loving God and loving people – the Great Commandment!

We all can enter into the presence of God in our personal worship times. And we can do it when we want to how we want to. But corporate worship is different. It takes leaders and it takes followers. If you want to enter into the presence of God in corporate worship – you must be able to be led.

I remember one guy years ago in another church who would do the opposite of whatever the congregation was doing.
 If everyone was dancing – he was on his face.
 If everyone was on their faces – he was dancing. He was out of order.

This is why we have worship leaders. Our musicians, singers and we the congregation minister to the Lord under the direction of our worship leader. The worship leaders minister under our supervision.

The worship leaders gives direction – which song we sing – how fast – when to sing louder – when to stop - and everyone follows them. Without that we would have discord rather than harmony.

Deb and I and the elders are also followers – we are being led in worship. However, there are times when we come up and take over so to speak. We may feel a certain direction or a song or an altar call. You don't see the worship leader arguing with us. They may be feeling a different direction – but they immediately submit to leadership.

We believe God leads through the leaders and the congregation follows their lead. Embrace that – don't chafe at that. A river without banks is a large puddle – swamp – or flood. Leaders provide the banks – the direction – that's our responsibility.

Leaders who are discerning will know the depth that the congregation is ready for and where the banks should be placed. There should be a progression of going deeper in worship and the things of the Spirit, but leaders must lead this process. Otherwise, there will be hundreds of people each trying to take the congregation in a different direction. That is the definition of confusion and God is not the author of confusion!

Corporate worship is not a collection of individuals gathered together to have their own individual worship times in a group.

Corporate worship is a group of people worshipping God together in unity following the direction of the Holy Spirit. To facilitate that, we have worship leaders who lead the congregation in singing, standing or bowing, shouting or being quiet before the Lord. This principle is found in Isaiah 65:8 –

Thus says the Lord: “As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one says, ‘Do not destroy it, for a blessing is in it,’ So will I do for My servants’ sake.”

This verse is not specifically talking about worship, but the principle is true: new wine is found in the cluster, not in the individual grape. So many people think, “I’ll just go to God on my own and get everything I need by myself.” You should go to God on your own. But the new wine – the new anointing – the present move of God – is found in the cluster.

Your one little grape doesn’t have it all. We need each other, even in worship. The corporate anointing when we all worship together is greater than the individual anointing when we worship alone.

In private devotions, you don’t have to consider other people, but in corporate worship, none of us should be thinking just of ourselves. We must be sensitive to others.

Some people want to come into a worship service and do their own thing. They don’t care about anyone else; they don’t care if they are blessing others or distracting others. But the Bible teaches that we must consider others during public worship. Therefore, we should worship in a way that is sensitive to the flow of worship and to others in the congregation without drawing attention to ourselves, which may distract others and quench the Spirit.

Following the flow of the Spirit and leaders in worship means if we’re singing a song you don’t like, you don’t say, “I’ll sit this one out.” No, we all submit and we all sing. If they’re saying, “Let’s all shout” – we all shout. You don’t say, “I don’t feel like shouting.” We submit and we all shout.

The opposite is also true, if the leaders feel it’s time to be quiet and still before the Lord, we don’t continue to shout because we don’t feel like being quiet. Why? Because the anointing is in the cluster.

The key passage regarding order in New Testament worship is 1 Corinthians 14. The main theme of this chapter is that believers should consider how their worship impacts others.

The use of spiritual gifts and the way we worship should always be done with consideration of others. Because of that, 1 Corinthians 14 – the chapter on order in corporate worship – begins with:

Pursue love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts.

Let's look at 1 Corinthians 14 to discover some guiding principles on order in corporate worship. 1 Corinthians 14:18-19 says –

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Evidently, the Apostle Paul worshipped differently in his own personal quiet time with God that he did at church. That's because he knew that in corporate worship, he had to consider how his worship impacted other people.

Some people measure spiritual maturity by the intensity of their own experiences, but Paul teaches that true maturity considers others in the expression of worship. The whole point of this chapter is that Paul is exhorting us to limit ourselves and our expression for the sake of others.

The Corinthian church was a gathering of individuals all doing their own thing in worship and Paul corrects this by teaching how to worship in public. 1 Corinthians 14:5 says –

I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.

The principle we see here is that our goal in corporate worship is not just to edify ourselves, but to edify others. 1 Cor. 14:23 says:

If the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?

The principle found here is that we must consider unbelievers and the unformed when we worship. We cannot just do what we want without considering how it will impact them. (We do have some meetings that are believer's meetings - like prayer meetings – where there are no unbelievers present and in those meetings we may all pray in tongues at the same time, something we would not do in a Sunday service.)

1 Corinthians 14:27-28 says:

If anyone speaks in a tongue, two — or at the most three — should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.

The principle found here is that there are limits on our worship. There are limits to how many people speak in tongues. This is also true of prophecy. 1 Cor. 14:29-33 says:

Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not the author of confusion or disorder but of peace.

The principle here is that our spirits are subject to us. We are never to be “out of control” or think that the Holy Spirit is taking over our bodies and making us do something. We must control ourselves. That means we must limit or restrain ourselves for the sake of others. Some people may feel suppressed by this, but they must understand that this is part of dying to ourselves so that life is worked in others. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 gives a practical example of this:

Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission... If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

The issue here is not women teaching or preaching; it is women talking out loud to their husbands at church and disturbing others. Once again, the principle is that you must sometimes restrain yourself in order to consider others in worship.

In closing, let’s agree to flow together in unity in our worship. When they were in unity at the dedication of Solomon’s Temple – the presence of God was so thick the leaders could not stand to minister.

When they were in unity on the Day of Pentecost – the Holy Spirit was poured out. When we all worship in unity, God shows up in power and glory.

There are churches who have backed off extravagant worship because they believe it will scare people off. They think they are being considerate of people, but the Bible says when we sing a new song – people will hear it and put their trust in the Lord!

There are churches who stopped moving in the gifts of the Spirit because they think it offends people. They think they are being considerate of people, but the Bible teaches that when the gifts of the Spirit are operating decently and in order – even unbelievers *...will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"*

When we worship in unity – considering God first and then others – God is glorified – the devil is terrorized and unbelievers are evangelized!

So let’s consider others in worship – let’s worship in spirit and in truth – let’s worship in unity - let’s worship decently and in order! Let’s stir up zeal for the Lord! Let’s stir up the gifts that are within us! Because when the Lord sets a church on fire – people will come out to watch it burn!