

On Liturgy

Worship isn't *just* a Christian concept. Temples, churches, mosques, synagogues, monasteries, and even in less orthodox gatherings, people assemble for the purpose of worship; Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and even groups often labeled as cults, all practice some form of formalized worship. These liturgies, whether ancient and elaborate or simple and improvised, serve not only as expressions of belief but as formative acts.

Liturgy is derived from the technical term in ancient Greek *leitourgia*, which means "work or service for the people" is a literal translation of the two affixes "*leitos*", derived from the Attic ("people, public"), and, "*ergon*", meaning "work, service".

Worship

As I said, liturgy is held in many religious services. Please observe how worship is different in some widely known convocations. And even while there are differences, what do you think is the *right* form of worship?

Buddhism

Buddhist liturgy is a formalized service of veneration and worship performed within a Buddhist Sangha community in nearly every traditional denomination and sect in the Buddhist world. The liturgy mainly consists of chanting or reciting a sutra or passages from a sutra, a mantra (especially in Vajrayana), and several gathas. Among all the denominations, all seem to be similar to the traditional Chinese Buddhist liturgy.

Morning chanting, evening chanting, and regularly scheduled Dharma services with typical order for chanting at these services is: Refuge in the Buddha (3x), Incense offering praise, Sutra Opening Verse, Sutra Reading, Dharani recitation, Food offering to hungry ghosts, Offering to Weituo (morning) or Qielan (evening), Transfer of Merits

Islam

Salat is the practice of physical and compulsory prayer in Islam as opposed to dua, which is the Arabic word for supplication. Salat is usually preceded by ritual ablution and usually performed five times a day. It consists of the repetition of a unit called a rak'ah consisting of prescribed actions and words.

Purification, intention, begin the prayer with Takbir al-Ihram, recite Surah Al-Fatiha, recite another Surah, bowing, standing, prostration, sitting, perform the second Sujud, close.

Judaism

Jewish prayer is the prayer recitation that forms part of the observance of Rabbinic Judaism. These prayers, often with instructions and commentary, are found in the Siddur, the traditional Jewish prayer book.

Morning prayer, afternoon prayer, and evening prayer. Also the inclusion of two additional services that are recited on Shabbat and holidays.

In Christianity

Other than some protestant denominations, Christianity, in the sense of worship, has highly structured forms persisting of chants and hymns. So... if we compare religious doxology, can't they easily look alike? Across religions, the order and structure of liturgy follow remarkably similar patterns, even when their underlying theologies diverge. Worship almost always begins with preparation or purification followed by invocation, contains acts of reverence (such as bowing, kneeling, prostrating, or chanting, embody humility), and ends with benediction before a deity.

As a Christian, it's an important question to ask how Christianity is separate from these religions (different religions should ask the same question respectively). Oftentimes, I hear Christians saying that they receive peace when they worship the *Living God* assuming that no other man separate from Christ can tangibly feel some sort of peace. But do we honestly think that Buddhist monks, Hindu devotees, or Muslim worshipers don't also feel a profound sense of peace during their rituals? Try searching up images of these religious figures in their liturgies—you'll see calm, discipline, and even joy written across their faces.

For what is now called the Christian religion existed among the ancients also, nor was it wanting from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh. Then the true religion, which already existed, began to be called Christian.

St. Augustine of Hippo

While liturgy may appear similar across different contexts, the distinction lies in the object and substance of worship. Other religions direct liturgy toward transcendent ideals, cosmic laws, or deities that remain ultimately unreachable. Christianity, however, centers worship on the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who has revealed Himself in history and entered into covenant with His people. The decisive difference is that Christian worship is not merely man reaching up, but God condescending down in Christ. The Truth also uniquely proclaims that the eternal Logos “became flesh” and entered human history (John 1:14). Nowhere is this divine disdain more clearly displayed than in the Eucharist. While other religions employ sacrifices, offerings, or ritual meals to signify devotion, the Eucharist is not a symbol of human striving but the real participation in Christ’s *once-for-all* sacrifice. As Paul writes of the cup of blessing and the bread, we can know that this symbol is a participation in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Evangelical, Pentecostal, etc.

Some of you Christians may be a little lost at the moment. The form of *ritualistic* worship may seem cultish to you. Forms of free-church traditions instinctively recoil at ritual, fearing that structured worship slips too close to dead formalism or even to the “vain repetitions” Christ warns against (Matthew 6:7). But then again, we should question why we worship differently. If nearly every civilization across history, whether Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, or even the earliest Christians, embraced some ordered liturgy, then why should Christians today be suspicious of it? If everyone else’s form of worship conforms to a recognizable structure, isn’t it at least possible that dismissing liturgy altogether might actually put *us* out of step with the historic worship of God’s people?

Liturgy, rightly ordered, guards the church from two opposite dangers: formalism without heart and individualism without anchor. On one hand, a well-ordered liturgy keeps worship from becoming entertainment-driven, self-expressive, or purely emotional. On

the other, it prevents worship from being reduced to mere performance of rote traditions, because its content is rooted in Scripture and sacrament. It's okay to have the guitar and drums play while the crowd throws their hands in the air to praise, but if worship becomes an expression of personal emotion detached from the historic order of God's people, then we risk losing sight of what worship is truly about. Christian worship is not primarily about how it makes us feel, but about offering ourselves as "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1). I'm not saying this to condemn or frighten you for the way your church worships, but to encourage you to understand the reason and intent behind it. Every congregation has a shape to its worship, whether highly liturgical or seemingly spontaneous, and that order matters. There is a reason your congregation worships the way they worship. And it's probably biblical, so don't worry (Romans 12:1, John 4:23-24, Psalm 100:1-2).

Work

Though I mentioned many forms of worship, let's not let liturgy be confined to the boundaries of singing praise alone. In no area of Scripture does it say that our communion with God can only be found in a chapel or church building. As a matter of fact, we should bring our devotion outside the scope of Sundays. Liturgy, at its core, is not merely what happens in a sanctuary or temple.

pray without ceasing
1 Thessalonians 5:17

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all things for the glory of God.
1 Corinthians 10:31

Christians throughout history have spoken of life itself as worship. The way we talk, the way we walk, and even the way we dress should all be worship unto God. When Paul says to pray without ceasing, he's not calling us to abandon ordinary responsibilities and live only on our knees, but to cultivate a life so saturated with God's presence that everything we do becomes prayer.

Coming from a charismatic congregation, sometimes, there's coercion to give up everything and sacrifice your life to put on a leash for ministry. But let's be honest, in many evangelical spaces, there's an unspoken hierarchy: full-time ministry is the *real* call. Everything else? Just a side hustle. We subtly (or not so subtly) imply that the most "spiritual" thing you can do is lay down your career, your dreams, your education, and serve the church. And while that can be beautiful and holy when genuinely called, it becomes dangerous when it's treated as the only faithful option.

That's not what Paul meant when he said to offer our bodies as a "living sacrifice". He wasn't calling us all to quit our jobs and become pastors and missionaries; he was calling us to present our whole lives as worship. That includes your spreadsheets. Your night shifts. Your toddler's tantrums. Your 3 p.m. slump in your college dorm desk that smells like reheated fish. That, too, is sacred ground.

The factory worker, the nurse, the entrepreneur, the janitor, the artist. All of these roles can be deeply liturgical when carried out in awareness of God's presence and for His glory. Work is not a distraction from worship; it is worship. We shouldn't think of work as leaving the sanctuary when we clock in on Monday. If anything, the real sanctuary spills into the streets, the office, the classroom, the home.

The body of Christ is truly beautiful (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). I'll go over this very briefly... With different roles, the church can accomplish all things through Christ. If the Church was only filled with missionaries and pastors, who would build the buildings? Who would design the websites, teach the kids, or roast the coffee beans? Unfortunately, no matter how you want to see it, the world revolves around money so for the church, work isn't optional, it's necessary. But that doesn't mean it's spiritually insignificant. In fact, it means we spend the majority of our lives in the very place where God wants to move.

Because here's the truth: your occupation is a mission field. And sometimes, it's easier to preach the gospel over lunch in the breakroom than from behind a pulpit. People often don't trust random evangelists, but they'll trust people they know: the one who shows up to class on time, handles stress with grace, listens well, helps cover shifts, and doesn't gossip behind their back. That's where the soil of real witness is cultivated.

Don't think that evangelism is limited to street corners or altar calls because it's found in integrity, consistency, the ability to apologize when you're wrong, and the quiet confidence you carry in Christ. In a world burned out on performance and posturing, the gospel often travels best through friendship, humility, and presence—all the contrivances that Christ portrayed in His life on earth.

Liturgy isn't just what we do with our hands raised, but it's also what we do with our hands working. I would argue that the most radical act of worship isn't abandoning the world, but inhabiting it faithfully. And maybe, just maybe, your work [done in love, truth, diligence, and service to others](#) is just as holy as any sermon or song.

Over and Over Again

One of the most overlooked aspects of Christian worship is the significance of small, everyday actions. We tend to associate worship with grand expressions like corporate singing, passionate preaching, and *visible* acts of ministry. But just as our workplaces serve as legitimate arenas for ministry, so too our ordinary routines must be recognized as arenas for worship. It's in the very repetitive, the very ordinary, and even the very boring moments of life that a deeper form of worship is cultivated—one not driven by emotion or spectacle, but by faithfulness. Folding laundry, replying to emails, preparing meals, etc.

Repetition is good. In our fast-paced, novelty-obsessed culture, repetition is often seen as mindless or unproductive. Even in Christian circles, Jesus's warning against "vain repetition" in prayer is sometimes misinterpreted as a condemnation of all repetition. But the issue Jesus addresses in Matthew 6 is not repetition itself, but empty repetition—prayer that is mechanical or rooted in the belief that sheer word-count or formula can manipulate God. He critiques the vain repetition of the Gentiles, who babbled in hopes that their many words would earn divine attention. The problem is not saying something more than once, but it's saying something without heart, without faith, without communion.

Many protestant Christians point out the Catholic and Orthodox Church for "vain" repetition. But before we point fingers and dismiss those practices as spiritually empty, we need to examine the assumptions beneath that criticism. In fact, historic liturgical

traditions often use repetition not to rig God, but to form the human soul. The repeated prayers, creeds, and liturgies are meant to shape the worshiper over time. [Why else do we think Christian programs \(i.e. AWANA\) encourage bible verse memorization?](#)

Ironically, many modern evangelical services fall into a different kind of repetition: three worship songs, a TED talk, and an altar call. And yet we rarely question whether that repetition has become rote. The problem isn't structure. It's a disconnection. And disconnection can happen in any tradition when our mouths move faster than our hearts.

In contrast, Scripture is full of meaningful repetition. The psalms repeat refrains. The angels cry "Holy, holy, holy" without end. Jesus Himself prayed the same words in Gethsemane multiple times (Matthew 26:44). Repetition, when done with intention and love, forms us. So rather than rejecting repetition altogether, we should recover its value. Repetition done with reverence becomes rhythm, and that rhythm becomes our foundation. It's through this repetition that we learn to pray when we don't feel like it, to trust when we're uncertain, and to worship when God feels silent. In this way, repetition isn't a lack of authenticity, it's the training ground for it.

With such a mindset, scrubbing toilets should become an act of gratitude. Studying becomes an offering of our minds to Christ. Even rest itself becomes an act of trust, acknowledging that God sustains the world while we sleep. This vision redefines worship: it is not just a two-hour service on Sunday, but a pattern of daily life where every action can be lifted up as an offering. When we live this way, we begin to see that our habits, our work, and even our interactions with others are woven into a continuous liturgy that glorifies God. We should look forward to the change in the way we even breathe.

Sanctity

When we come into grand places of worship ([yes, Christ has justified us and granted us freedom to approach the throne of grace](#)) we must still remember who we are: God is God, and we are but dust. Let me be plain. Let's not just think that we can serve in any capacity that we desire, but instead, pray and ask if the Lord will allow you to serve, and then step into that place with humility. For it is far better to serve faithfully in the role God has given

you than to take on a place of worship or service beyond your function and treat holy things carelessly.

[Sidenote]

I often ask people if they want to serve in certain ministries and they respond with answers such as, "God *has* to call me. I don't want to be influenced by my own desires so that I can *please* God and *blah blah blah*..." But I think that we sometimes misunderstand what it means to be "called." We assume that unless a supernatural sign or audible voice confirms our desires, we must suppress them; as if our will and God's will are always in opposition. This is a narrow and fear-driven view of free will. While it's true that we are to submit our desires to God, it's also true that He created us with minds to discern, passions to pursue, and gifts to offer. I had a brother explain it to me like this: we drive on a wide freeway; one with, let's say, ten lanes all generally heading in the direction of God. God gives us the freedom to choose which lane to drive in; some fast, some slow, smooth, bumpy, etc. That's our free will in action. But not every lane goes all the way through. Some are exits or off-ramps that lead us away from Him.

So not every decision in life is a hard yes or no, or a clear line between right and wrong. Instead, God often gives us a whole palette of options: many of which are good and permissible. When we abide in His Word and stay aligned with His will, it's not like half our choices are wrong and half are right. It's more like there are eight paths He allows and delights in, and maybe two that He would have us avoid. The more we walk with Him, the more we learn to discern which paths keep us moving in His direction.

Speak to Aaron, saying, 'None of your descendants throughout their generations who has an impairment shall approach to offer the food of his God. For no one who has an impairment shall approach: a man who is blind, or one who limps, or one who has a slit nose, or one with any conspicuous feature, or someone who has a broken foot or broken hand, or a contorted back, or one who is a dwarf, or has a spot in his eye, or a festering rash or scabs, or crushed testicles. No man among the descendants of Aaron the priest who has an impairment is to come forward to offer the LORD'S offerings by fire; since he has an impairment, he shall not come forward to offer the food of his God.

Leviticus 21:17-21

In the Old Testament, only Jews of the tribe of Levi were allowed to serve as priests, and even among them, strict requirements applied. This wasn't because God despised those with disabilities, He created them and loved them, but because the priests were symbolic. They pointed forward to a perfect High Priest who would one day come without blemish or defect. The requirements in Leviticus highlighted God's holiness and the need for purity before approaching Him.

I often say this because being on a worship team is not for me. And for most people who know me, this is an obvious fact. Just having a minimal amount of ability doesn't mean I'm automatically called to serve in more grand spaces. It's a common misunderstanding (especially in church settings) that if you have the smallest skill, you should immediately put it to use in public ministry. But just because I can strum a few chords on a guitar doesn't mean I should be leading worship on stage. Skill alone doesn't equal calling. Ministry, especially something as spiritually significant as leading others into the presence of God through worship, requires more than technical competence. It requires maturity, spiritual sensitivity, humility, and a clear leading from the Lord.

The truth is, not every talent is meant for the platform. Sometimes God gives us gifts to serve quietly, behind the scenes, or in settings that aren't public at all. And that's not less valuable, it's just as sacred. In fact, it often takes more spiritual discernment to not step into a role simply because you're able, and instead wait on God to clarify where and how He wants you to serve.

Ultimately, the goal isn't to be seen. It's to be faithful. And faithfulness means offering whatever we have, not just where we're gifted, but where we're called.

We ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed ... There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God.

Brother Lawrence

And yes, we can say that because of the Incarnation, the demand for perfection is no longer placed on our outward form or ritual purity, but on Christ who was perfect in our place. However, this does not mean that worship becomes casual. Just because Christ has fulfilled the law does not mean our worship should be careless, flippant, or devoid of reverence. Instead, it should deepen our awe, because we are now able to approach God freely through Christ. Let us practice the presence of God, not only in the sacred assembly but in the ordinary tasks of life. Even in the mundane, we are invited to commune with the Lord. I once spoke with a leader who admitted that praying during

“uncomplicated times” felt unnecessary to him, until he realized that those very moments—like shopping for groceries—were opportunities to walk with God. Worship is not limited to the sanctuary; it is the posture of a heart that acknowledges God in all things.

Closing

Worship should be our highest joy. To commune with the Maker of heaven and earth is a privilege beyond measure for us as mere men. As you come to the close of this reflection, let me reemphasize the greatness of worship.

If you find yourself pausing to examine your worship, that is a good thing. Let that pause drive you deeper, root yourself firmly in your understanding of why and how you worship. Remember, we do not know all things, so humility keeps us from condemning others for worshiping differently. Yet even in that humility, hold fast to the truth you have received, and remain steady in your devotion to the One who alone is worthy.

Regarding this, feel free to share prayer requests and thoughts on this blog. Worship is not meant to be walked out alone, it is the song of the whole body of Christ. If you are wrestling with questions about your own worship, or if you simply need encouragement, please don't hesitate :)

Shalom,
Ray



Isaiah 58:1-8

1 Cry loudly, do not hold back; Raise your voice like a trumpet, And declare to My people their wrongdoing, And to the house of Jacob their sins. **2** Yet they seek Me day by day and delight to know My ways, As a nation that has done righteousness And has

not forsaken the ordinance of their God. They ask Me for just decisions, They delight in the nearness of God. **3** 'Why have we fasted and You do not see? Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?' Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire, And oppress all your workers. **4** Behold, you fast for contention and strife, and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like you have done today to make your voice heard on high! **5** Is it a fast like this that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it for bowing one's head like a reed And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the LORD? **6** Is this not the fast that I choose: To release the bonds of wickedness, To undo the ropes of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free, And break every yoke? **7** Is it not to break your bread with the hungry And bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh? **8** Then your light will break out like the dawn, And your recovery will spring up quickly; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.