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In the Spirit and Truth

UNVEILING THE TRANSFORMATIVE
ESSENCE OF WORSHIP

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REFORMED & PRESBYTERIAN SEMINARY

VISION

We see Nepali Communities flourishing in the fruits of the Gospel through the labor of disciples who are yoked to Christ.

MISSION

To provide Christ-centered training to equip godly leaders for Christ's church among Nepali people, who are authentic in Christian character, competent in theological knowledge and equipped for ministry.

VALUES

We want to glorify God through upholding these values:

Reformed World and Life View
Christ-Centered Education
Missionary Spirit and Zeal
Gospel Transforming Community
Nurturing with Nepali Resources
Network of Christian Leaders
Covenant Spirituality
Servant Leadership
Holistic Human Development
Training for Vocational Ministry

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

To ensure excellent theological education. All applicants must fulfill all the requirements and qualifications in order to get admission at Reformed & Presbyterian Seminary (RPS).

General Requirements for both programs Master of Divinity (MDiv) and Bachelor of Theology (BTh) Admissions:

Follow these steps to apply

- Step 1:** Fill the online pre-application available in Seminary *website* (www.rpsnepal.com).
- Step 2:** Seminary will contact with you via phone or email to submit your complete forms.
- Step 3:** Download the application form from website and fill the form completely and send it to the seminary office.
Or you can also take application from RPS office.
- Step 4:** Submit the application forms to office before July 15 (check the list of required documents when you submit application).
- Baptism Certificate, if no certificate, an official letter from pastor.
 - Transcripts and Certificates from all previous schools/institutions.
 - Letter of Recommendations—one from Pastor, and another from academic institution.
 - An essay recently written by you (200-350 words-only for MDiv.)



FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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CONTENT

From the Principal’s Desk II
Rev. Amit Karthak

Word from Chairman III
Rev. Dr. Mahendra Bhattarai

सम्पादकीय IV

नेपाली मण्डलीहरूमा आराधना नवीनता 1
Rev. Dr. Arbin Pokharel

एक आतिथ्यपूर्ण लिटर्जी (उपासना विधि) सृजना गरौं 9
Rev. Santosh Khatiwada

आराधना अभ्यास र सैद्धान्तिक शिक्षा बिच अन्तरसम्बन्ध 17
Rev. Amit Karthak

The Promise of the Worship Day 19
Rev. Milan Tamang

The Priesthood of Jesus Christ and its Significance in our Worship 23
Mr. Binod Magar

Accountable Repentance, Forgiveness, Reconciliation 26
Charlotte Witvliet, PhD

Worshipping the Triune God 29
Dr. John D. Witvleit

Nairobi Statement On Worship And Culture 37

Leadership Wisdom for Pastors, Worship Planners, and Worship Leaders 42
Rev. Kathy Smith

Being Aware and Prepared for Worship 44
Dr. Charlotte Witvliet

A Call for God Centered Worship 46
Rev. Amit Karthak

Book Reports 50-51

Stott, John. **Basic Christian Leadership**. InterVarsity Press, 2006. 50
by Ajay Shrestha (Abraham)

Mason, Andy. **God’s Leader**. 10Publishing , 2017. – by Alisha Maharjan 51

Appendix..... 52

EDITORIAL TEAM

EDITORIAL TEAM
Rev. Ganga Subedi (Prem)
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Rev. Mani Koirala
Rev. Amit Karthak
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FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

Rekindling the Flame: A deeper dive into Christian worship

Examining and reevaluating concepts and expressions of Christian worship is a matter of great importance in Nepal. This is due to the ever-changing environment of theological thought and practice in this country. Therefore, in this issue of Restorers magazine focus is on the topic of Christian worship. It is entitled: "Worship Matters," with specific consideration being given to, "In Spirit and Truth: Unveiling the transformative essence of worship."

In past issues the contributions of the late Rev. Dr. Birendra Shrestha (former principal), are recalled, along with those of foreign missionaries, and various volunteer pastors and leaders who either preceded or followed him. All of these contributors significantly advanced the development and publication of successive editions of Restorers magazine.

Additionally, it would be unfair not to mention the selfless contribution and dedication of Rev. Mani Koirala (former principal), as the chief editor of our past issues. Through his hard work and commitment, this magazine has been published in hard copy and digital formats – even during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thanks are due also to Rev. Dr. Arbin Pokharel and Rev. Jayraj Gurung for their financial support and advisory guidance, along with the late Rev. Dr. Birendra Shrestha, Pastor Rameshwar Yadav, and Miss Menuka Mishra for their involvement on the editorial team previously. With new members on the editorial team, and a number of national and international writers contributing on the subject of Christian Worship, this special issue with all humility and prayer is brought before our readers. Gratitude is expressed also to the entire faculty and staff of RPS for their contributions and technical support. Particularly for this issue, we are indebted to the experts from Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Grand Rapids: Dr. John D. Witvleit, Dr. Charlotte vanOyen Witvleit, Dr. Kai Ton Chau, Dr. Maria Eugenia Cornou, Rev. Kathy Smith, and Dr. Anne Emile Zaki for their special contributions.

Within the context of Reformed Protestantism, Christian worship is distinctively shaped by its God-centeredness, acknowledging God's power and sovereignty. It is hoped and prayed that these scholarly works written by various national and international authors on Christian Worship will ignite renewal of worship of this praiseworthy God in our local churches.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Rev. Amit Karthak

Principal

WORD FROM CHAIRMAN

Humbly, in spirit and truth, worship God and glorify Him.

Worship is an expression of our inner soul with adoration, admiration, reverence and awe to God, the Creator of the universe, all sovereign, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, unfathomable, eternal, invisible, and immutable. We worship God in all our humility to glorify Him with all that we are and in spirit and truth (John 4:24) in all His Majesty and in all who He is.

As summarized in the very beginning of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the whole purpose of human existence is to glorify God and rejoice in being with Him. And yet, as depraved as we are, as humans, we have deviated from the path so gracefully laid for us by God amidst the mundane attractions, subconsciously forgetting or deliberately defying God as did Eve or falling prey to sensuality aroused by beauty as David did. Here, human weakness succumbed to the devil's power to separate men from God, leading to being short of God-given capacity to worship Him. The impurity of our hearts and souls inhibits us from worshipping God truly and fully. While the capacity and attitude of worshipping God is His grace on us, which can vary among individuals, the expression of worship may be accentuated or even subverted depending on where one is since humans can be influenced by external stimuli viz culture, tradition or the environment in situ. Nevertheless, no power can take from men the core seed of worshipping and glorifying God as they are created to worship and glorify Him. Thus, even the sub-surfaced, veiled, or invisible capacity or desire in (wo)men to worship God may become visible or expressed sometimes or the other. Therefore, men's inner or hidden disposition to worship God can be induced to become outer expression.

A Worship may cover literally just any element, point, thought, or subject expressed in a dignified manner, vocally or in a calm manner under God's sovereignty since it is essentially a part of fellowship, petition or propitiation, or just a conversation with God as led by the Holy Spirit in the presence of Christ. It could be sung or just spoken. It might be related to creation, the sins committed by men, compassion, redemption, salvation, or Christ's return to Earth! It may be "ordered," organized, liturgical, or in "free flow" as led by the Holy Spirit, depending on the choice of the leaders or the congregation at Worship. Some hold praise and adoration with or without music or choir as being a full worship, but for many others, reading of the Word of God, even a portion of catechism in a devotional form and sermon are all integral components of Worship. Many devoted Christians consider their whole life being worship to God even though they may admit that occasionally they may be challenged to maintain its sanctity.

Rev. Dr. Mahendra Bhattarai

Chairman, Reformed & Presbyterian Seminary

सम्पादकीय

■ रेभ डा गंगा सूबेदी (प्रेम)

प्रिय पाठकहरू:

Restorers पत्रिकाको अंक ७, २०२३ मा हार्दिक स्वागत छ ।

यस पटकको अंकमा हामीले ख्रीष्टिय आराधनालाई मुख्य विषय बनाएका छौं जुन तपाईंहरूको हातमा आइपुगेको छ । पत्रिकाको यस अंकमा ख्रीष्टिय आराधना र हाम्रो जीवन, हाम्रो मण्डली र यसका उपासना सम्बन्धी खाँचोहरूका बारेमा विविध पक्ष र कोणबाट प्रकाश पार्ने कोशिश गरिएको छ । विषयका हिसावले यस अंकमा यहाँहरूले ‘ख्रीष्टिय उपासनामा गहिरो अध्ययन गर्दै पुनः जागृत गराउने’, ‘नेपाली मण्डलीहरूमा आराधना नविनता’ “आतिथ्यतापूर्ण उपासना विधि सृजना गरौं”, “आराधना अभ्यास र सैद्धान्तिक शिक्षा विचको अन्तरसम्बन्ध”, “आराधनाको दिन-दैनिक आराधना”, “परमेश्वर केन्द्रित उपासनाको लागि बोलावट” ‘त्रिएक परमेश्वरको आराधना’ लगाएतका शीर्षकहरूमा रहेर ख्रीष्टिय आराधनाका विविध आयामहरूमा प्रकाश पार्ने प्रयत्न गरिएको छ । लेखकहरू प्रस्तुत विषयहरूमा स्वदेश तथा विदेशमा लामो समयदेखि अभ्यास, अवलोकन र चिन्तन मनन गर्नु भएको व्यक्तिहरू हुनु भएकोले उहाँहरूको गहिरो अध्ययन र अनुभव र समेत यहाँहरूले अध्ययन गर्न पाउनु हुनेछ, भन्ने आशा राखेका छौं । यस सन्दर्भमा क्यालिभन इन्स्टिच्युट अफ क्रिस्चियन वर्सिपको योगदान महत्वपूर्ण छ, त्यहाँ कार्यरत विद्वान शीर्ष व्यक्तित्वहरूका लेखहरू पनि यस अंकमा समेटिएका छन् ।

अझ पनि नेपाली मण्डलीहरूमा आराधना भन्नाले साप्ताहिक रूपमा मण्डलीमा गरिने गीत भजन प्रार्थना हो भन्ने बुझाइ छ । तर यी लेखहरू र गत मार्चमा सम्पन्न ख्रीष्टिय आराधना सम्मेलनमा प्रस्तुत विषय र छलफल तथा बाइबलीय दृष्टिकोणबाट हेर्दा आराधना त हाम्रो जीवनकै महत्वपूर्ण पाटो हो भनेर जोड दिइएको छ । किनकी हामी आराधना गर्न बोलाइएकाहरू हौं । सृष्टिदेखि अहिलेसम्म परमेश्वरको चाहना नै हामीलाई हर क्षेत्रमा आराधना गर्नका लागि उत्साह दिइएको, साप्ताहिक रूपमा मात्र होइन । यी लेखहरू अंग्रेजी र नेपाली दुवै भाषामा छन् र पाठकहरूले यी लेखहरूद्वारा ख्रीष्टिय आराधनासम्बन्धी शिक्षा तथा ज्ञान प्राप्त गर्नुहुनेछ र परमेश्वरकै महिमाको निमित्त अगाडी बढ्न सहायता मिल्नेछ, भन्ने आशा गरेका छौं ।

धन्यवाद ।

नेपाली मण्डलीहरूमा आराधना नवीनता

■ Rev. Dr. Arbin Pokharel

“यदि सम्पूर्ण जीवन आराधना हुने हो भने, मण्डली यस्तो ठाउँ हो
जहाँ हामी त्यो कसरी गर्ने भन्ने कुरा सिक्दछौं ।”

- जेम्स के ए स्मिथ

इस्वी सम्वत २०२३ को मार्च महिनामा कस वे मण्डलीले “आराधना नवीनता” सम्बन्धी सम्मेलन आयोजना गरेको थियो । त्यस सम्मेलनको लक्ष्य “नेपाली मण्डलीहरूमा आराधना नवीकरणको जग बसालिनेछ” भन्ने थियो । त्यसको उद्देश्य चाहि “पास्टर-अगुवाहरू मण्डलीमा आराधना नवीनताको निम्ति ईश्वरशास्त्रमा पोख्त हुन, संकल्प सपनाहरू कोर्न, र नयाँ अभ्यासहरू अपनाउन उत्साहित हुनेछन्” भन्ने थियो । बाइबलका गहिरा रहस्यहरूको प्रकाशद्वारा उनीहरू उत्प्रेरित हुनेछन् भन्ने आशा राखिएको थियो । मैले त्यस सम्मेलनको प्रथम (सत्रमा) बाँडेका कुराहरू यस लेखमा राख्दैछु ।

मण्डली संसारको सबैभन्दा सुन्दर संकल्प हो ।

मण्डली संसारमै सबैभन्दा सुन्दर संकल्प हो । मण्डलीको खाका (ब्लुप्रिन्ट) सृष्टिमा नै रचिएको थियो । येशू ख्रीष्टले त्यस रचनालाई आफ्नो जीवनद्वारा प्रस्तुत गरेर देखाउनुभयो । यो कुरा पावलले एफिसीको मण्डलीको लागि प्रार्थना गर्दै यसरी भन्नुभएको छ :

म यो पनि प्रार्थना गर्दछु, कि तिमीहरूको हृदयका आँखा उज्यालो होस्, र कुन आशाको निम्ति उहाँले तिमीहरूलाई बोलाउनुभएको छ, र सन्तहरूमा उहाँको महिमित उत्तराधिकारको सम्पत्ति के हो, सो तिमीहरूले जान्न सक । ...जो उहाँले ख्रीष्टमा पूरा गर्नुभयो, जब उहाँले ख्रीष्टलाई मरेकाहरूबाट जीवित पार्नुभयो, अनि स्वर्गीय स्थानहरूमा आफ्नै दाहिने बाहुलीपट्टि बसाल्नुभयो । सबै शासन, र अधिकार, र शक्ति र राज्यमाथि, र यस युगका मात्र होइन, तर आउने युगका पनि जति नाउँ छन् ती सबैमाथि उहाँलाई राख्नुभयो, र परमेश्वरले सबै कुरा उहाँका पाउमुनि राखिदिनुभयो, र मण्डलीको निम्ति उहाँलाई नै सबै कुराको शिर बनाइदिनुभयो, जुन मण्डली उहाँको शरीर, उहाँको पूर्णता हो । र उहाँले नै सबै थोक परिपूर्ण पार्नुहुन्छ । (एफिसी १:१८-२२)

अनि पछि फेरि उहाँ भन्नुहुन्छ,

सबै कुरा सृजनुहुने परमेश्वरमा युग-युगदेखि लुप्त रहेका रहस्यको योजना के हो, सो सबै मानिसलाई खुलस्त गराउने अनुग्रह मलाई दिइयो, ताकि यसरी मण्डलीद्वारा परमेश्वरका विभिन्न किसिमका ज्ञान स्वर्गीय स्थानहरूमा शासकहरू र अख्तियारवालाहरूका माझमा प्रकट गरिओस् । योचाहिँ ख्रीष्ट येशू हाम्रा प्रभुमा उहाँले पूरा गर्नुभएको अनन्त उद्देश्यअनुसार थियो । (३:९-११)

महान् पास्टर तथा लेखक जोन स्टट भन्नुहुन्छ, “मण्डली परमेश्वरको अनन्त उद्देश्यको केन्द्रमा रहेको छ । यो उहाँको पछिल्लो विकल्प वा इतिहासको दुर्घटना होइन । उहाँले इतिहासभन्दा पहिले नै सुनियोजित तरिकाले मण्डलीको बारेमा सोच्नुभयो अनि पूरै इतिहासभरि त्यसको निम्ति क्रियाशील भइरहनुभएको छ र त्यसलाई अनन्त भविष्यसम्म सिद्ध गराउनुहुनेछ । त्यसको निम्ति उहाँले आफ्ना मानिसहरूलाई संसारबाट बोलाएर आफ्नो महिमाको लागि छान्नुभएको छ ।” उहाँकै शब्दमा,

“For the church lies at the very center of the eternal purpose of God. It is not a divine afterthought. It is not an accident of history... For his purpose, conceived in a past eternity, being worked out in history, and to be perfected in a future eternity... to build his church, that is, to call out of the world a people for his own glory.” (John Stott, The Living Church, 19)

यस कार्य र उद्देश्यमा येशू खीष्ट आफैं सम्पूर्ण रूपले लगनशील हुनुहुन्छ । आफ्नो सेवाकार्यको पहिलो दिन नासरतको एक सभाघरमा येशूले भन्नुभयो, “परमप्रभुका आत्मा ममाथि छ, किनभने गरीबहरूलाई सुसमाचार सुनाउनका निम्ति उहाँले मलाई अभिषेक गर्नुभएको छ । कैदीहरूलाई छुटकाराको घोषणा गर्न, र अन्धाहरूलाई दृष्टि दिन, थिचोमिचोमा परेकाहरूलाई स्वतन्त्र गराउनका निम्ति, र परमप्रभुका प्रसन्नताको वर्ष घोषणा गर्नका निम्ति उहाँले मलाई पठाउनुभएको छ” (लूका ४:१८-१९) । यो वचन यशैया अगमवक्ताले ७५० वर्ष अघि नै बोलेका थिए । त्यो मिसन लक्ष्य लिएर आउने व्यक्ति मसीह बाहेक अरू कोही पनि हुन सक्दैन भन्ने कुरा यहूदीहरूले बुझेका थिए । त्यसैकारण येशूले “म मसीह हुँ” भनी दावी गर्नुभएको हो भनी उनीहरूले बुझे र उहाँलाई मार्ने उपाय खोजे । तर येशू जुन मिसन लक्ष्यको निम्ति आउनुभएको थियो त्यसको लागि उहाँ मर्न पनि तयार हुनुहुन्थ्यो ।

मण्डली खीष्टको मिसन लक्ष्य मात्र होइन, यो उहाँको शरीर पनि हो । उहाँले आफ्ना चेलाहरूलाई अन्तिम भोजनको समयमा भन्नुभयो, “जसरी पिताले मलाई पठाउनुभयो, त्यसरी नै म तिमीहरूलाई पठाउँदै छु (यूहन्ना २०:२१) ।” मण्डली एक शब्दमा भन्नुपर्दा येशू खीष्टको शरीर हो । उहाँको जन्म, जीवन (कार्य र शैली), मृत्यु र पुनरुत्थानको अपरिहार्य परिणाम वा प्रतिफल मण्डली हो । येशू स्वर्गारोहण हुनुभएपछि उनीहरूले गर्नुपर्ने कामको विषयमा चेलाहरूलाई कुनै दुविधा थिएन । उनीहरूले गएर त्यही काम गर्न थाले जुन काम तिनीहरूको बिचमा रहँदा येशूले गर्दैआउनुभएको थियो अर्थात्, निको पार्ने कार्यहरू, सुसमाचार सुनाउने कार्यहरू अनि परमेश्वरको राज्यको बारेमा सिकाउनुपर्ने कुराहरू । येशूका यिनै सपनाहरू लिएर चेलाहरूले मण्डली निर्माण गरे । यसरी मण्डली बनेको थियो ।

मण्डलीको दर्शन साकार भएको एक चित्र

सुसमाचार र मण्डलीको दर्शन लिएर २०६७ सालमा हामी गोरखाको सिमजुङ गाविसमा पुगेका थियौं । त्यहाँ मण्डलीको धेरै वृद्धि भएपछि ढोडेनी बजारमा नयाँ पक्की भवन बनाएर २०७२ साल वैशाख १ गते मण्डली त्यहाँ सायौं । त्यो भवन अर्पण कार्यक्रममा लगभग पूरै बजार नै जम्मा भएको थियो । म आफैले वचन बाँड्दै गर्दा, यी चार बुँदाहरू बाँडेको थिएँ : १)

मण्डली अनुग्रहको इनार हो, २) मण्डली सुसमाचारको केन्द्र हो, ३) मण्डली प्रार्थनाको घर हो, ४) मण्डली आशाको मुहान हो । अनि मैले भने, “यस मण्डलीमा तपाईंहरू सबैलाई हार्दिक निमन्त्रणा छ । यहाँ हरेक शनिवार १० बजे आउन सक्नुहुन्छ ।” त्यसपछि उत्सवको भोज खाएर हामी सबै घर फर्क्यौं । त्यसको बाह्र दिनपछि, वैशाख १२ गते माथि वारपाकमा केन्द्र पारेर नेपालमा महाभूकम्प गयो । ढोँडेनी बजारका अधिकांश (९५ प्रतिशत) घरहरू ध्वस्त भए । पूरै बजारमा एउटा मात्र घर थियो जसमा भूकम्पको कुनै असर परेको थिएन । त्यो चाहिँ सिमजुंग क्रस वे चर्च थियो । ईटा र सिमेन्टको नयाँ संरचना भएको कारणले त्यो नभत्केको हुनुपर्छ । तर जब दुई महिनापछि राहत वितरणकै क्रममा म त्यहाँ पुगेँ, तब गवाहीहरू प्रत्यक्ष थिए : यो चाहिँ परमेश्वरको अनुग्रहको इनार बनेको रहेछ, एक आशाको केन्द्र । बजारभरिका मानिसहरू पाल टाँगेर मण्डलीको आँगनमा बसेका थिए । राष्ट्रिय र अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय राहतहरू त्यहीँबाट वितरण भइरहेको थियो । बजारभरिका बाल-बालिकाहरू त्यहीँ आएर प्राथमिक कक्षाहरू अध्ययन गरिरहेका थिए । त्यो मण्डली एउटा जीवित गवाही बनेको रहेछ । त्यहाँ मानिसहरूको निम्ति येशू ख्रीष्टको मण्डलीको दर्शन साकार बनेको रहेछ । त्यहाँ एउटा सुन्दर समाज बनेको रहेछ ।

आराधना नवीकरण सम्मेलनको पृष्ठभूमि र आवश्यकता

क्रस वे चर्चको दर्शन यो रहेको छ : “मण्डली अनुग्रहको इनार हो जहाँबाट उगाएर सेवा गर्दा नेपालका ७७ वटै जिल्लाहरूमा ख्रीष्ट केन्द्रित समाजहरू स्थापना हुनेछन् ।” यो दर्शन बोकेर हामी काठमाडौँमा उपस्थित छौं । सन् २०१७ सालमा जब क्रस वे चर्चको नयाँ भवन निर्माण हुँदै थियो, तब नजिकैको जग्गामा अस्थायी भवनमा आराधना गर्दै गर्दा हामीले नहेम्याहको पुस्तकलाई अध्ययन गर्दै थियौं । वचनको शीर्षक “आराधना केन्द्रको सरोकार” भन्ने राखिएको थियो । नहेम्याहले शुसन सहरबाट आफू कहिल्यै नपुगेको ठाँउ, यरूशलेम आराधना केन्द्रको निम्ति दर्शन बोकेका थिए । त्यो ठाउँ दामी वा भयंकर भएको कारणले होइन, तर परमेश्वरले भविष्यमा त्यसलाई संसारभरिका मानिसहरूको लागि आराधनाको केन्द्र बनाउनुहुने दर्शन नहेम्याहले पाएका हुनाले हो । त्यो दर्शन र भविष्यको निम्ति उनले आफ्नो वर्तमानको राजदरवारभित्रको जागिर र उच्च ओहोदा, मान-सम्मान, राजनीतिक शक्ति र पहुँचहरूले दिने सुविधाको जीवन, साथै आफ्नो भविष्य, सुख-चैन, शान्ति र संभावनाहरूलाई बलिदान गर्न उनी तयार भएका थिए । यस्तो दर्शनलाई विजुली बत्तीको उदाहरणमा भन्नुपर्दा, यो एक आफूले मात्र उपभोग गर्न पाउने विजुली बत्तीको प्रशस्ताको लालच वा आशा थिएन । तर संसारभरि पुर्‍याउन सकिने विद्युत उत्पादन गर्ने केन्द्रको स्वार्थ र सरोकार थियो । यो विश्वभरिको निम्ति भविष्यको आराधना केन्द्रको लागि देखिएको निस्वार्थ दर्शन थियो । त्यही दर्शनले क्रस वे चर्च काठमाडौँमा एक मण्डली बनेको छ र त्यही दर्शनको आडमा नेपाली मण्डलीहरूमा आराधनाको नवीकरणको निम्ति यो सम्मेलन एक अभियानको कदम बन्नेछ, भन्ने आशा राखेर आयोजना गरिएको हो ।

नेपाली मण्डलीहरूमा आराधना नवीकरण अत्यावश्यक छ । किन र कसरी ? केही कारणहरू हेरौं । नेपाली मण्डलीहरू सुसमाचारमा धेरै धनी अर्थात् अग्रसर छन् । यो कुरा इतिहासले

प्रस्ट पारेको छ । नेपाली मण्डली विश्वमै अति तिब्र गतिमा वृद्धि भइरहेको मण्डलीहरू मध्ये एक मानिएको तथ्यांक छ । त्यसैकारण मण्डली सम्बन्धी यस्तो बुझाइ बन्न गएको छ: “सुसमाचारले मण्डलीमा वृद्धि ल्याउँदो रहेछ, त्यसैले मण्डली वृद्धि नै मण्डलीको दर्शनको लक्ष्य हो ।” कतिपय अगुवाहरूले यही विचार व्यवहारमा राखेको पाउँछौं ।

यस्तै प्रकारले, सतहमा देखिने कुराहरू, जस्तै, ठूला-ठूला कार्यक्रमहरू, भवन, विश्वासी संख्या, भेटी वा बजेट, इत्यादि मण्डलीको सफलताको मापदण्ड मानिने हो भने अगुवाहरू अवश्य पनि ती कुराहरूमा व्यस्त हुने नै भए । तर नेपाली मण्डलीहरूमा विडम्बना यो रहेको छ कि धेरै विशाल र फराकिलो हुँदै गरेको अवस्थाहरूमा सतहमुनि रहेका जराहरूमा भने धेरै वृद्धि भएको पाइँदैन । सतहमाथिको विशाल संरचनाहरूलाई धान्न जमिनमुनिको जग बलियो हुनुपर्छ र जगहरू सही तत्वहरूले निर्माण भएको हुनुपर्छ । तर ती कुराहरूको अभावले गर्दा मण्डलीहरूमा त्यो धेरै समस्याहरू आएको हामी पाउँछौं ।

यस्ता अवस्थाहरू कहाँ देखिन्छन् त भन्दा: क) विश्वासीहरूमा चेलापन वा परिपक्व विश्वासको अभावमा, ख) मण्डलीहरूमा नेतृत्वका प्रतिफलहरूमा प्रशस्त देख्न सकिन्छ, ग) बाइबलीय शिक्षाको अभावमा, वचनको अर्थ लगाउने र प्रचार गर्ने तरिकाहरूमा यो प्रशस्त देखिन्छ, घ) ईश्वरशास्त्र पठनपाठन गर्ने ठाउँहरूमा विद्यार्थीको अभाव छ । मण्डलीहरूले आफ्ना छोराछोरीहरू पढाउन लगानी नगरेका अवस्थाहरू छन् । यसरी मण्डलीका जराहरू वचनको मलिलो माटोमा वृद्धि हुन नसकेको अवस्थाहरू देख्न सकिन्छ । (म आफूले बाइबल कलेजमा पढाउँदै आएको आज २२ वर्ष हुँदैछ ।) जब वचन बुझ्नको लागि लगानी पुग्दैन, तब मण्डलीहरूमा यसको बुझाइको अभाव हुन्छ र अभ्यासमा वचनको फल आउँदैन । फलस्वरूप मण्डलीहरू आ-आफ्नै भावना र अनुभवको भरमा भौतारिरहेको पाइन्छ ।

हामी नेपालको धर्म र संस्कृतिमा हुर्केका व्यक्तिहरू भएको कारण हाम्रा जीवनका दृष्टिकोणहरू यही पृष्ठभूमि र अभ्यासमा आधारित छन् । यसकारण आराधनामा आउँदा हाम्रो विश्व-परिदृष्टि (worldview) महत्वपूर्ण हुन्छ । हामीले ध्यान दिनुपर्छ कि के कस्ता दृष्टिकोण हामीले हाम्रो समाज र धार्मिक संस्कृतिबाट सिकेर आएका छौं र ती हाम्रा आराधनाका लागि उपयुक्त छन् कि छैनन् ? धेरै ठूला-ठूला अपेक्षा बोकेर हामी मण्डली जान्छौं, अनि धेरै जसो असन्तुष्ट नै बसिराखेका हुन्छौं, किन ? लेखक रूथ हेली बार्टन भन्नुहुन्छ, “समुदाय चाहिँ मण्डलीले ‘अधिकतम प्रतिज्ञा गरेको तर थोपै पुर्‍याउन नसकेको’ विषय बनेको छ ।” (“Community is the most ‘overpromised and underdelivered’ aspect of the church today.”) किन होला ? किनभने, मण्डलीबारे हामीले गलत विचार र अपेक्षाहरू राखेका छौं । यसैले धेरै जना निराश र असन्तुष्ट छन् । यो अवस्था परिवर्तन हुनुपरेको छ ।

हामी अगुवाहरू पनि माथि उल्लेखित विषयहरूमा उत्तरदायी छौं । कसरी ? मण्डलीभित्र निम्न प्रश्नयोग्य अभ्यासहरू छन् :

क) हामी विना तयारी वचन प्रचार गर्छौं । पास्टर-अगुवाको सबैभन्दा प्रमुख जिम्मेवारी परमेश्वरको वचन अध्ययन गर्नु र सही तरिकाले सिकाउनु हो । यो प्राथमिक जिम्मेवारीमा

नै हामी धेरै चुकेका छौं । भनिन्छ, “अल्पविद्या भयंकरी” अर्थात् थोरै ज्ञान खतरनाक हुन्छ । हामीले हाम्रो महत्वपूर्ण दायित्वलाई हल्का रूपमा लिइराखेका छौं ।

ख) धेरै अगुवाहरूले मण्डलीलाई एक वैकल्पिक पेशाको रूपमा बहन गरिराखेका छन्, “कहीं कतै अरू व्यवसाय फेला परेन वा फापेन भने पास्टरीय काम गर्दै गरौं न” भन्ने विचार हावी भएको छ । यस्तो सोचाइ अहिले व्यापक छ । यसलाई “Gig-economy” भनिन्छ, जसले भन्छ, “सस्तो बजारमा अलिकति लगानी गरेर हेरौं न, कतै नाफा भइ पो हाल्छ कि ?” यस्तै विचारले नेपालमा कतिले “Gig-Church” को रूपमा मण्डली संचालन गरिराखेको पाइन्छ । त्यहाँ समर्पण र लगानी थोरै छ, तर आशा गरिएका नाफा वा फाइदाहरू अथाह छन् । कतिपय यस्ता मण्डलीहरू त कोभिडको कारणले बन्द पनि भइसकेका छन् ।

ग) आश्चर्यकर्म (चंगाइ) र आशिष्का प्रतिज्ञाहरूले चुलिएका मण्डलीहरू नेपालमा धेरै पाइन्छ । हो, परमेश्वरले आशिष् दिनुहुन्छ, आश्चर्यकर्महरू र चंगाइ पनि गर्नुहुन्छ तर ती सबैको उद्देश्य भने हामीलाई उपभोक्ता बनाउनु होइन, तर मण्डलीद्वारा उहाँको महिमा विश्वभरि पुर्‍याउनु हो । तर आश्चर्यकर्म, चंगाइ र आशिष्को प्रतिज्ञाहरूले चुलिएका नेपाली मण्डलीहरूमा परमेश्वरको महिमाको अभाव छ र धेरै जना निराश भएका छन् ।

घ) पवित्र आत्मा र आराधनाको विषयमा यस्तो विचारधारा नेपाली मण्डलीहरूमा पाइन्छ, त्यो हो : साउन्ड सिस्टमले गुन्जिएको अनि भावना र आवेगको अभिव्यक्तिले भरिएको आराधना मात्र आत्मिक हुन् । ती नभएका मण्डलीहरू पवित्र आत्मा नभएका मण्डलीहरू हुन् भन्ने बुझाइ रहेको पाइन्छ ।

यस्ता समाज र संस्कृतिले आकार दिएको मण्डलीका नमुनाहरू (mental model) बोकेर हिँड्दा मण्डलीले धेरै जनालाई असन्तुष्ट र भ्रमित बनाइराखेका छन् । यसैकारण धेरैले सोध्दैछन्, “वास्तवमा मण्डली के हो ?” त्यसैले मण्डलीमा पश्चात्ताप र पुनर्जागरणको खाँचो छ, जहाँ “करारको आराधना” भनिने बुझाइको खाँचो छ । करार भनेको परमेश्वरसँग सठिक सम्बन्धको ढाँचा हो । यसको अभ्यास आराधनामा गरिन्छ । यसकारण आराधना बुझ्न प्रथमतः परमेश्वरको चरित्र र स्वरूप बुझ्न आवश्यक छ । त्यसपछि उहाँको करारको सम्बन्धको ढाँचा र शैली बुझ्नुपर्छ । सम्पूर्ण बाइबलले बुझाउन चाहेको मुख्य उद्देश्य यही हो ।

प्रशिक्षक माइकल गोहिन भन्नुहुन्छ, “मण्डलीशास्त्र सर्वप्रथम त मण्डलीको पहिचानको विषय हो: हामी को हौं र कसको सेवा गर्दैछौं ? यदि बाइबलको घटना कहानीले हाम्रो पहिचान बनेको छैन भने यो आफै सामाजिक स्थलगत संस्कारहरूले परिचित हुन थाल्छ । अब महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्न यो छ: के हाम्रो पहिचान बाइबलबाट आउने हो ? कि हाम्रो समाज र संस्कृतिबाट आउने हो ?” (“Ecclesiology is first of all about the church's identity- who we are and who we serve. And if the biblical story is not the place where our identity is forged, then by default this place will be somewhere else, almost certainly in our cultural story and social location.”)

यसैकारण मण्डली र आराधना बुझ्न हामीले केही आधारभूत शब्द र वाक्यांशहरू अध्ययन गर्न आवश्यक हुन्छ । त्यसको निम्ति हामी दुई-तीन वटा विषयहरू हेरौं:

१) मण्डली : मण्डली खीष्टको शरीर हो ।

येशू खीष्टको जीवन, मृत्यु र पुनरुत्थानले एउटा समाजलाई जन्म दियो । येशू खीष्टको आगमनको मिसन उद्देश्य समग्रमा संसारमा परमेश्वरको उपस्थिति ल्याउनु र उहाँको महिमा प्रकट गर्नु थियो (यूहन्ना १:१८) । उहाँले परमेश्वरको योजनामा उदाहरणीय जीवन जिएर र शिक्षा प्रदान गरेर जानुभयो । एउटा जीवन जिइ सकेर जानुमा उहाँको उद्देश्य के थियो ? चेलाहरूले येशू सँगसँगै जिएर, उहाँबाट सुनेर, सिकेर मण्डली स्थापना गरेको थिए । येशूको जीवनद्वारा मण्डली उत्पन्न भएको थियो । मण्डली येशूको जीवनको अपरिहार्य फल (परिणाम) हो । त्यसैले हामी पनि खीष्ट केन्द्रित मण्डली हुनुपर्छ । त्यसको निम्ति उहाँको जीवन, चरित्र, स्वभाव, वचन, विचार, आचरण, कार्यशैली र लक्ष्य मिसनलाई पर्याप्त रूपमा बुझेर अभ्यासमा ल्याउनुपर्दछ ।

मण्डली खीष्टले प्रेरितहरूलाई बुझाउनुभएको थियो र त्यसको मिसन उहाँले तिनीहरूलाई हस्तान्तरण गर्नुभयो (लूका ४:१८-१९; मत्ती १६:१८) । येशूले अन्तिम भोजनको प्रसंगमा चेलाहरूलाई भन्नुभयो, “जसरी पिताले मलाई पठाउनुभएको छ, त्यसरी नै म तिमीहरूलाई पठाउँदैछु” (यूहन्ना २०:२१) । अनि पावलले आफ्ना पत्रहरूमा प्रकट गरेका छन् कि मण्डली खीष्टको शरीर हो (१ कोरिन्थी १२; एफिसी ३-४; कलसी १) । यही आधारमा हामीले मण्डलीलाई बुझ्न आवश्यक छ ।

२) मण्डलीका जगहरू केमा बसालिएका छन् ?

आराधना नवीकरणको जग बसाल्ने उद्देश्य राखेको यस सम्मेलन र अभियानले नेपाली मण्डलीहरूमा साँचो परिवर्तन ल्याउनको लागि सतह मुनि जरामा हुने क्रियाकलापलाई ध्यानमा राख्नुपर्दछ । संरचनाहरू मुनि जगमा बसालिने धातु पदार्थका कुराहरूलाई ध्यानमा राख्नुपर्दछ । कुनै रुखले फल दिन कम्तिमा ३ देखि ४ वर्ष लाग्छ । अनि जग बसाल्ने पनि एक योजनाबद्ध प्रकृया हुन्छ ।

येशू खीष्टले दुई किसिमका जगको दृष्टान्त भन्नुभयो,

“यसकारण जसले मेरा यी वचन सुन्छ र पालन गर्छ, म एक जना बुद्धिमान मानिससँग त्यसको तुलना गर्छु, जसले आफ्नो घर चट्टानमाथि बनायो । अनि पानी पत्थो, र बाढी आयो, अनि हुरी चल्थो र त्यस घरमाथि बजारियो, र पनि त्यो घर ढलेन । किनकि त्यो चट्टानमाथि बसालिएको थियो । जसले मेरा यी वचन सुनेर पनि पालन गर्दैन, त्यसको तुलना एउटा मूर्ख मानिससँग गरिन्छ, जसले आफ्नो घर बालुवामाथि बनायो । पानी पत्थो, र बाढी आयो, अनि हुरी चल्थो र त्यस घरमाथि बजारियो, र त्यो घर ढल्यो, अनि त्यसको ठूलो विनाश भयो ।” (मत्ती ७:२४-२७)

यस दृष्टान्तको मुख्य पाठ यही थियो कि मजबुत घर त्यो व्यक्तिको जीवन हो जसले परमेश्वरको वचन सुन्छ र पालन गर्छ । कच्ची घर त्यो व्यक्तिको जीवन हो जसले वचन सुन्छ तर पालन चाहिँ गर्दैन ।

कुनै पनि घरको लागि जगको महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका हुन्छ। त्यसले पूरै घर अनि त्यस भित्रका सबै थोकहरूको भार बोक्न सक्ने हुनुपर्छ। तर जग भने जमिनको सतह मुनि, नदेखिने ठाउँमा लुकेको हुन्छ। नेपालको २०७२ सालको भूकम्प र टर्की देशमा हालसालै गएको महाभूकम्प सम्भन्धुहोस्। काठमाडौँका धेरै घरहरू भूकम्पमा भत्किए। टर्की देशको भग्नावशेषको बारेमा “धेरै उस्ताउस्तै देखिने घरहरूमध्ये कुनै भत्किए तर कतिपय चाहिँ किन भत्किएनन्” भनेर सोध्दैगर्दा एक सिभिल इन्जिनियरले जवाफ दिए, “कतिपय घरहरू सरकारले निर्देशन गरेको मापदण्ड अनुसार निर्माण सम्पन्न भएका थिएनन्। तिनीहरू चाहिँ प्रायः भत्केको पाइयो। तिनीहरूका पिलरमा सिमेन्टसँग धेरै अनुचित तत्वहरू पनि मिसाइएको भेटियो। त्यसैले जग र पिलरहरूले घरलाई धान्न सकेनन्।”

के हाम्रा आत्मिक जगहरूले परमेश्वरको मण्डलीको मापदण्ड पास गर्ला ? के हाम्रा आत्मिक पिलरहरूले साधारण भूकम्पहरू धान्न सक्लान् ? यी गम्भीर प्रश्नहरू हुन्। यसकारण पास्टरहरूले परमेश्वरको मण्डलीको निम्ति मापदण्डहरू अध्ययन गर्न र पालन गर्न अत्यावश्यक हुन्छ।

३) ख्रीष्टीय आराधना परमेश्वरको करारको आधारमा बुझ्नुपर्दछ

याह्वे परमेश्वर आफ्ना मानिसहरूसँग वास गर्न र करारको सम्बन्धको ढाँचामा बस्न चाहनुहुन्छ। यो कुरा हामी बाइबलको मुटुमा पाउँदछौं। प्रस्थानको पुस्तकमा परमेश्वरले इस्राएलीहरूलाई मिश्र देशको दासत्वबाट उद्धार गरेर ल्याउनुहुँदा उहाँले तिनीहरूलाई नयाँ राष्ट्र र नयाँ पहिचान दिनुभयो। सर्वप्रथम उहाँले तिनीहरूलाई सिनै पर्वतमा १० आज्ञासहित व्यवस्था दिनुभयो। त्योभन्दा अगाडि उहाँले भन्नुभयो, “सबै जातिहरूमध्ये तिमीहरूचाहिँ मेरो बहुमूल्य निज धन हुनेछौ। सारा पृथ्वी मेरै भए तापनि तिमीहरू मेरो निम्ति पूजाहारीको एक राज्य र एक पवित्र जाति हुनेछौ” (प्रस्थान १९:५-६)। अनि १० आज्ञाको परिचयमा उहाँले भन्नुभयो, “म परमप्रभु तिमीहरूका परमेश्वर हुँ, जसले तिमीहरूलाई मिश्रदेश, अर्थात् दासत्वको देशबाट निकालेर ल्याएँ” (२०:२)। यो करारको भाषा हो। यस बारे टिप्पणी गर्दै यूजिन पिटरसन भन्नुहुन्छ, “परमेश्वरको छनौटले नयाँ विशेष पहिचान सृजना गर्‍यो, अनि करारले दायित्वपूर्ण सम्बन्ध निर्माण गर्‍यो।” (“Election creates a unique identity, covenant describes a responsible relationship.” Eugene Peterson, Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Works, 42).

करार भनेको परमेश्वर र मानिसहरू बिचको सम्बन्धको ढंग-ढाँचा हो। बाइबलको हरेक पन्नाले भन्न खोजेको परमेश्वरको इच्छा र उद्देश्य करार नै हो। परमेश्वर सम्बन्धको गतिशीलतामा मानिसहरूसँग कार्य-व्यवहार गर्नुहुन्छ। हामीबाट पनि यो सम्बन्ध दोहोरो रूपमा कायम राखेको उहाँ चाहनुहुन्छ, जस्तो दुलहा र दुलहीले एक-आपसमा राख्दछन्। ख्रीष्टीय आराधना हाम्रो परमेश्वर र मानिसहरूसँग व्यक्त गरिने त्रिकोणीय सम्वाद हो, जहाँ सम्बन्धका आधारहरूको लागि बोल्ने र सुन्ने कामहरू प्रशस्त हुन्छन्। एउटा परिवारमा जस्तै सम्बन्धको गतिशीलतामा जीवनका मुहानहरू हुन्छन्।

निष्कर्ष

जसरी साइकल गुड्नको लागि दुईवटा पांग्रा चाहिन्छ, त्यसैगरी नेपाली मण्डलीहरू आराधनाको नवीकरणमा लम्कने हो भने त्यसको लागि चाहिने दुई आधार चाहिँ पवित्र आत्मा र परमेश्वरको वचन मात्र हुन् । यस सम्मेलनद्वारा आशा गरिएका कुरा यी नै हुन् कि नेपाली मण्डलीहरूले आराधनाका यी गहिरा रहस्यहरूलाई ध्यानमा राख्नेछन्, अध्ययन गर्नेछन् र भोलिका दिनहरूमा बाइबलमा प्रकट भएको परमेश्वरको इच्छा अनुसार आत्मा र सत्यतामा उहाँलाई पुज्नेछन् ।

येशूले भन्नुभयो, “... बेला आइरहेछ, ... जब सच्चा आराधकहरूले पितालाई आत्मा र सत्यतामा आराधना गर्नेछन् । किनकि आराधना गर्ने यस्तै आराधकहरूलाई नै पिताले खोज्नुहुन्छ” (यूहन्ना ४:२३) ।

उहाँले यो पनि प्रतिज्ञा गर्नुभयो, “तर सल्लाहकार, अर्थात् पवित्र आत्मा, जसलाई पिताले मेरो नाउँमा पठाउनुहुनेछ, उहाँले तिमीहरूलाई सबै कुरा सिकाउनुहुनेछ, र मैले तिमीहरूलाई भनेका सबै कुरा तिमीहरूलाई याद दिलाउनु हुनेछ” (यूहन्ना १४:२६) ।

यदि हामीले मण्डलीलाई बाइबलीय आराधनाको नवीकरणतर्फ लम्काएनौं भने, यसलाई ख्रीष्टको शरीरतर्फ बढाएनौं भने, अवश्य पनि त्यो मण्डली वरिपरिका राजनीतिक र सामाजिक तत्वहरूको मण्डली बन्न पुग्नेछ । अनि त्यो मण्डलीलाई सामाजिक प्रगतिशीलताको हुरी-बतासले अवश्य बहकाएर लानेछ ।

पवित्र आत्मा परमेश्वर स्वयम्ले मण्डलीलाई नवीकरणतर्फ डोच्याउनुभएको होस्, आमेन ।

एक आतिथ्यपूर्ण लिटर्जी (उपासना विधि) सृजना गरौं

नेपाली मण्डलीको आराधना तालिकामा येशूलाई पुनः खोजौं ।

■ Rev. Santosh Khatiwada

परिचय

यस परिचयात्मक भागमा हामी आराधना केन्द्रित तीन वटा महत्वपूर्ण विषयहरूबारे संक्षिप्त चर्चा गर्नेछौं ।

जसमा :

- १) फेरिंदै गएको आराधनाको परिभाषा
- २) नेपाली मण्डलीको आराधनाको दुई धारहरू र
- ३) सामूहिक आराधनाको नवीन परिभाषा

१) आराधनाको फेरिंदै गएको परिभाषा

विश्वव्यापी मण्डलीहरूमा अक्सर आराधना (गीत, संगीत, वातावरण र अगुवाहरू) ले मानिसहरूमा पारिरहेको प्रभावअनुसार यसको परिभाषा तय हुँदछ । यसलाई साइमन चानले “the free market economy” भन्नुहुन्छ । आराधनाको परिभाषा यो सन्दर्भमा फरक प्रवृत्तिको देखिन्छ । जस्तो कि, असल र खराब आराधना । आराधकहरूमा ईश्वरीय प्रभाव पार्नु असल आराधना भन्न सकिन्छ भने आराधकहरूमा नकारात्मक प्रभाव पार्ने त्यसलाई खराब आराधना भन्न सकिन्छ । वर्तमान परिप्रेक्ष्यमा हाम्रो आराधना पनि बजारिया भएको छ । त्यो बजारिया आराधनालाई व्याख्या गर्न म यहाँ एउटा शब्दको प्रयोग गर्न चाहन्छु । त्यो हो, ‘उपभोक्तावादी आराधना’ । वर्तमान अवस्थामा आराधकहरू लाभकर्ताजस्ता भएका छन् । साइमन चानले आराधनालाई “Redemptive eschatology” / “Ontological eschatology” गरी दुईटा वाक्यांशमा परिभाषित गर्नुभएको छ । यसलाई अझ व्याख्या गर्न उहाँले प्रस्थान ८:१ र प्रकाश ४:८ देखि ११ सम्मलाई सन्दर्भ बनाउनुभएको छ । पहिलो खण्डअनुसार आराधना दासत्वबाट छुटकारा वा उद्धारको घटनाको नतिजा हो । यसलाई हामीले इसाएलीहरूको मरुभूमिको यात्रा, भेट हुने पाल र मन्दिरको सन्दर्भमा बुझ्न सक्छौं । दोस्रो खण्डअनुसार आराधना हाम्रो स्वभाव, हाम्रो पहिचान र अस्तित्व हो, किनभने हामी परमेश्वरका हौं । यसर्थ हामीले कसरी आराधना गरिरहेका छौं भन्ने कुराको निर्धारण वा चित्रणले आराधनावारे हाम्रो ईश्वरशास्त्र वा स्वीकारोक्तिको महत्वपूर्ण विषयलाई कसरी लिइरहेका छौं भन्ने कुराको उजागर गर्दछ ।

यसका बारेमा केही परिभाषाहरूलाई दृष्टिगत गर्नु अझ सान्दर्भिक होला:

“The fullest definition of worship, then, is something like “obedient action motivated by the beauty of who God is in himself.” Tim Keller.

परमेश्वर स्वयम् नै आराधना हुनुहुन्छ । अर्को परिभाषालाई पनि हेरौं:

“Worship is the proper response of all moral, sentient beings to God, ascribing all honor and worth to their Creator-God precisely because he is worthy, delightfully so”

फेरिंदै गएको आराधनाको सन्दर्भमा हामीले हाम्रो ईश्वरशास्त्र वा स्वीकारलाई पुनर्विचार गर्नु जरुरी देखिन्छ ।

२) नेपाली मण्डलीहरूको सामूहिक आराधना वा भेलाको शैली दुईटा धारहरूमा विभाजन भएको छ ।

क) परम्परागत धार

परम्परागत धारमा हामीले प्रयोग गर्ने भाषा, शब्द, बाजा वा संगीत अलि चोखो, अलि आत्मिक देखिने र सुनिने गरेका छन् । जस्तो कि, हामी मण्डलीमा आइसकेपछि हरेक पटक ‘आमेन-आमेन’ भन्ने, ‘हल्लेलुयाह- हल्लेलुयाह’ भन्दै फरक प्रकारको हाउभाउ प्रस्तुत गरी हाम्रा छिमेकीहरूले मेसो नपाउने शब्दहरू प्रयोग गरिरहेका हुन्छौं । हाम्रा गीतहरूद्वारा दैनिक उपयोग गर्ने परमेश्वरको प्रबन्धलाई नै सांसारिक, अनात्मिक भनेर हर्काछौं, यतिकैमा आराधनाहरू टुङ्गिन्छन् । नेपाली मण्डलीहरूले आराधनामा अन्य भाषा र अगमवाणीहरूलाई पनि बढी नै जोड दिंदै आइरहेका छन् ।

ख) समकालीन धार

यस धारमा मण्डलीको अगुवापन सेलिब्रेटी शैलीमा पुगेको छ भने मण्डली समुदायचाहिँ लाभकर्ता जस्तै देखिन्छन् । साइमन चान भन्नुहुन्छ, “Many church services have become one huge entertainment, in which there is no mention of sin and what is offered as gospel is -the therapeutic model of life.” आराधनाको यस धारमा पास्टर अगुवाहरू पनि सेलिब्रेटी जस्तै कार्यक्रम प्रस्तुत गर्न शनिवार बिहान २ घण्टा मात्र मञ्चमा आउँछन् । अरू दिन मण्डलीको दैनिक कार्यभार नसम्हालेको र विश्वासीहरू माझ नरहेका कारण (उनीहरूका सेवाप्रति) प्रश्न उठ्न थालेका छन् । अर्को पाटोमा मण्डलीमा चलाइने बाजा गाजा, साइंगीतिक भुण्डका अगुवा पनि सेलिब्रेटी जस्तै शनिवार दुई घण्टाको लागि कार्यक्रम प्रस्तुत गर्न आएजस्तो देखिन्छ । मण्डली समुदायचाहिँ थेरापी गर्न आएका व्यक्तिहरू जस्तो लाग्छ ।

३) सामूहिक आराधनाको नवीन परिभाषा

नेपाली शब्दकोश अनुसार नवीनता भनेको ‘नयाँपन’ वा ‘नवीन’ हुनुको विशेषता हो । यसलाई मानिसहरूको आकर्षण, आराधकहरूमा प्रत्यक्ष पर्न गएको प्रभावको आधारहरूमा व्याख्या र

अभ्यास गरिंदै आइएको छ । अब हामी संक्षिप्त रूपमा आराधना नवीनताका बारेमा चर्चा गरौं । इतिहासभरि नै सामूहिक आराधनामा नयाँपन हुनको लागि कुनै न कुनै प्रकारको अभ्यास भएको देखिन्छ । यसलाई तिमोथी केलरले “Worship Wars” भनेका छन् । विशेष गरी रिफर्मड परम्पराको इतिहासलाई हेर्ने हो भने मार्टिन लुथरले पुलपिटको स्थानान्तरणबाट नवीनताको शुरुवात गरेका थिए । उनको यो अभ्यास “priesthood of all believers” मा आधारित थियो । १६औं शताब्दीमा रोमन क्याथोलिक आराधनामा प्रयोग गरिने पियानोलाई विस्थापित गर्दै जुइङ्ली भन्ने थियोलोजियन र पास्टरले गीत, बाजागाजाको प्रयोग नै नगरिकन सामूहिक आराधनाको रचना गरे, जहाँ शिक्षा, प्रचार र प्रार्थना मात्र हुने गर्दथ्यो । जोन क्याल्भिन भन्ने अर्का थियोलोजियनले सामूहिक आराधनामा गीत (भजनसंग्रहमात्र), संगीत, वचन, दान भेटी र प्रभुभोजको अनिवार्य अभ्यास राखेर सामूहिक आराधनालाई नवीकरण गरे । तर १९ औं शताब्दी पछिबाट भने सामूहिक आराधना ‘सिकर सर्भिस’ केन्द्रित हुँदै आएको छ र यो अहिले पनि विश्वव्यापी रूपमा अभ्यासमा छ भनी टिम केलर भन्नुहुन्छ । यसको अर्थ मानिसहरू आराधनाको अब्जेक्ट हुन आए । मण्डलीहरूमा मानिसहरूको रुची अनुसारका गीत संगीत, उनीहरूको अभिलाषा, बजारिया संस्कृतिको नक्कल, आधुनिक र चलनचल्तीको कुराहरूले सामूहिक आराधनाहरू सम्पन्न हुँदै आएका छन् । नवीकरणको क्रममा धेरै मण्डलीहरू ऐतिहासिक मण्डली, बाइबल र संस्कृति तिर फर्केका छन् । अर्को पाटोमा, नवीकरणको क्रममा धेरै मण्डलीहरू आधुनिकतातिर वा बजारिया संस्कृतितिर लम्किएका छन् । वर्तमान अवस्थामा हामीले मण्डलीको सामूहिक आराधनामा नवीनताको कुरा गर्दा यी दुई धारभन्दा बाहिर गएर सन्तुलित मार्ग खोज्नु जरुरी छ, त्यो हो : सुसमाचारमा फर्केर आउनु वा खीष्ट केन्द्रित सामूहिक आराधना रचना गर्दै जानु । सुसमाचारमा फर्किआउनु वा खीष्ट केन्द्रित हुनु भनेको नवीकरणको क्रममा सिर्जना भएका ऐतिहासिक लिटर्जीहरूमा खीष्ट येशूलाई पुनः पत्ता लगाउनु हो र हाम्रो मण्डलीको लिटर्जीहरू आतिथ्यपूर्ण हुँदै जानु हो । यसलाई जोन क्याल्भिनले अनुग्रह, सुसमाचार र खीष्ट केन्द्रित लिटर्जीको रूपमा परिभाषित गरेका छन् । उनको यो अनुवादचाहिँ “Sovereignty of God” भन्ने ईश्वरशास्त्रीय शिक्षामा आधारित छ । “Liturgy tells a story. We tell the gospel by the way we worship because Christian public worship is a representation of the gospel” Says Bryan Chapell.

मण्डलीको सामूहिक आराधनाले त सुसमाचारको घोषणा गर्नु पर्ने हो र येशू खीष्टको मुहार प्रतिविम्बित गर्नुपर्ने हो । येशू खीष्टको उपस्थिति, उहाँले भोगेको दुःख, मृत्यु, पुनरुत्थान र यसका परिणामहरू प्रस्तुत हुनुपर्ने हो । हाम्रा मण्डलीका आराधनाहरूमा मानिसहरूलाई हामीले यो गर, त्यो गर, यो नगर, यति गर, यति देउ, यसरी आउ, यसरी जाऊ मात्र भनिरहेका छौं कि ? आज हामीले सुसमाचार वा खीष्ट केन्द्रित लिटर्जीको कुरा गर्दै गर्दा, अनुग्रहले भरिएको वा आतिथ्यपूर्ण लिटर्जीको कुरा गरिरहेका छौं । हो, अब नेपाली मण्डलीहरूका सामूहिक आराधनामा नवीनता आउनु भनेकै सुसमाचारमा फर्कनु हो र पश्चाताप गरी खीष्टको अनुग्रहमा स्थापित हुनु हो । Bryan Chapell भन्छन्, “Worship is about renewing relationship with the present CHRIST” खीष्टको यो अनुग्रहमा सहभागी हुने हो भने हामीले आतिथ्यपूर्ण वा खीष्ट केन्द्रित लिटर्जीको अभ्यास गर्ने

पर्दछ । Bryan Chapell भन्छन्, “Corporate worship is nothing more, and nothing less, than a representation of the gospel in the presence of God and His people for their good”. अतिथि सत्कार लिटर्जीको अंशहरू: परमेश्वरको उपस्थिति (अनुग्रह बग्ने धाराहरू), उहाँका मानिसहरूको गवाही, उहाँका मानिसहरूको भलाई वा उन्नति हुन् ।

आराधना नवीनताका लागि लिटर्जीको महत्व

लिटर्जी : “Ecclesial Practices”

लिटर्जीलाई जेम्स के.ए. स्मिथले बडो फराकिलो रूपमा परिभाषित गरेका छन् उनी भन्छन्, “homo liturgicus.” वचनको वरिपरि हुन आउने वा गाँसिएका कृयाकलापहरूको क्रमलाई लिटर्जी भनिन्छ । लिटर्जी लाई “ordo” भनेर साइमन चानले परिभाषित गर्नुभएको छ । लिटर्जीलाई मण्डलीको ईश्वरशास्त्र, विश्वासको सार, सम्पूर्ण सेवाकार्यको सारांशको रूपमा पनि व्याख्या गरिएको छ ।

“The liturgy may be described as embodied worship. It is worship expressed through a certain visible order or structure (thus the phrase “order of service”)” . Further he says “The ordo is a consistent whole; what it reveals is a whole way of life of the ecclesial community. As Lutheran liturgiologist Frank Senn puts it, “Liturgy expresses nothing less than a worldview.” “Many Theologians have called the order of service a “liturgy”. The Greek term leitourgia referred to work done for the good of the public. When used in the context of a church gathering, “liturgy” refers to the “work” or ministry of exaltation and edification for which God gathers his people – or better, that God himself performs in and through his people” Says Matt Merker in his book, Corporate worship. “Structure of a church’s worship service is called its liturgy” says Bryan Chapell. It is order of worship. “Worship is a “creative response” to God’s self-revelation”.

जेम्स के ए स्मिथको भनाइअनुसार आराधना (लिटर्जी) लाई आर्ट (कला) पनि भन्न सकिन्छ । बाइबल ईश्वरशास्त्रमा लिटर्जी यस्तै हुनुपर्छ भनेर भनिएको छैन । तथापि परमेश्वरले आफूसँग विशेष सम्बन्धमा रहन बोलाउनुभएका मानिसहरूको संगतिमा उहाँले विभिन्न प्रकारले आफूलाई उपलब्ध गराउनुभएको छ । हामी केही बाइबलको पाठहरू हेरौं ।

क) उत्पत्ति १:३, ३१, २:१ २:१५ देखि १८ ।

ख) व्यवस्था १२:१ देखि ७, १२ ।

ग) नहेम्याह ८:१ देखि १०

घ) प्रेरित २:४२ देखि ४७ र १३:२

ड) हिब्रू ९:१

लिटर्जीको महत्वलाई चर्चा गरौं:

लिटर्जी एक विराट् भोजको टेबल जस्तै हो: आतिथ्यको सरोकार

“Without a liturgy, we will not be able to actualize our theology of worship in practice”
Simon Chan

परमेश्वरको करारको स्वभाव वा गतिशीलता नै यसरी बनेको छ कि जब जब हामी सामूहिक आराधनामा आउँछौं, हामी कुनै न कुनै रूपमा परमेश्वरसँग बोलिरहेका वा प्रतिक्रिया जनाइरहेका हुन्छौं । त्यसैगरि, परमेश्वर पनि उहाँको वचन, शिक्षा र पवित्र आत्माको उपस्थितिद्वारा हामीलाई सेवा दिइरहनुहुन्छ । यो प्रक्रियामा समावेश जति पनि क्रियाकलापहरू छन् तिनै क्रियाकलापहरू मिलेर लिटर्जीको निमार्ण हुँदछ । जसले परमेश्वर र मानिसको सम्बन्धलाई अभिव्यक्त गर्दछ । यहाँ म एउटा भनाइ उद्धृत गर्न चाहन्छु, “To be sure, some may associate the idea of liturgy with high – church formalism and rote tradition. But in reality, every church has a liturgy. No matter how simple or complex, how short or long, each church’s order of service expresses a set of theological values. And in turn, the liturgy gradually inculcates those same values in the church’s members”

- १) लिटर्जी ईश्वरशास्त्रको माध्यम हो । यसले ईश्वरशास्त्रलाई अभिव्यक्त गर्ने काम गर्दछ ।
- २) लिटर्जीद्वारा नै मण्डलीका विश्वासीहरूले ईश्वरशास्त्र सिक्दै जान्छन् ।
- ३) लिटर्जीद्वारा मण्डलीलाई सामूहिक चेलापनमा डोर्‍याउन सकिन्छ ।
- ४) लिटर्जी सामूहिक चेलापनको शक्तिशाली साधन हो किनकि यो “हृदय” लाई तालिम दिने असल माध्यम हो ।
- ५) लिटर्जीले मण्डलीका गतिविधिहरूलाई सुव्यवस्थित गर्दछ ।
- ६) परमेश्वर र मानिस बिचको करारको सम्बन्धले नै माग गर्दछ ।

म यहाँ अर्को भनाइलाई उद्धृत गर्दछु “We should see the church’s worship service – the whole thing, not just the sermon – as a mass discipling activity. The gathering isn’t simply a single spiritual discipline; it’s a host of them. It’s a way of taking the experiences of prayer and worship, which we so often compartmentalize and individualize, and unifying them in the life of the congregation”

लिटर्जी रचना गर्दा वा लेख्दा ध्यान दिनुपर्ने बाइबलीय शिक्षाका आधारहरू

हाम्रो ईश्वरशास्त्र र आतिथ्यको सरोकार ।

१) बाइबल वा वचन नै सर्वोत्तम हो । वचनमा प्रकट भएअनुसार परमेश्वर सिद्ध हुनुहुन्छ । १ कोरिन्थी १४:३३, “तिमीहरू पवित्र होओ जस्तो म पवित्र छु ।” २) मण्डली आराधकहरूको समुदाय हो । “To be church is to be the worshipping community making a normative response to the revelation of the triune God” “Theological Ecclesiology”.

क) मण्डली परमेश्वरको राज्यको किल्ला वा चौकी हो: “we gather as ambassadors, not consumers. The goal of a worship service (liturgy) is not to entertain or to provide an inspiring experience. It is to honor our king and make him known”. हामीले मण्डलीलाई बाइबलमा प्रकट भएअनुसार परिभाषित गर्न अल्छी गर्छौं भने हामी लिटर्जी सिर्जना गर्न र यसका लागि अध्ययन गर्न पनि अल्छी गर्दछौं । यहाँ म अर्को भनाइलाई उद्धृत गर्न चाहन्छु “We do not go to church merely as an event to attend, we are more likely to slip into a self-centered mindset. We'll rate a service based on how it served us.”

ख) मण्डली एक सिद्ध मन्दिर हो: यसको अर्थ यो दोहोरो मामिला र सरोकारको विषय हो: परमेश्वर र मानिसहरू तर्फ । मण्डलीमा हामी परमेश्वर र एक अर्कासँग संगति गर्दछौं । मण्डली भवनभन्दा पनि परमेश्वरको मानिसहरूको भेला भएको हुनाले हामीले तयारी गर्ने लिटर्जी व्यक्तिगत समय, चाहनाभन्दा माथि उठेर तयार गर्नुपर्दछ ।

ग) मण्डली खीष्टको शरीर हो: यसको अर्थ मण्डलीको आराधना सेवा एक अर्काको हित “edification” or “build up” एक अर्काको भलाइको लागि ध्यान दिएर तयार पार्नु पर्दछ । “सक्रिय सहभागीता” करारको प्रकृति नै त्यस्तो छ कि परमेश्वर बोल्नुहुन्छ अनि हामी प्रतिक्रिया जनाउँछौं ।

२) मानिस पापले ग्रसित छ : रोमी ३:१०, २३ पदहरू । हामीले बनाएको लिटर्जी मृत लिटर्जी पनि बन्न सक्छ । आराधना केवल मानिसहरूको तर्फबाटको प्रस्तुति वा प्रतिक्रिया मात्र होइन तर यो परमेश्वरलाई चढाइने उत्कृष्ट बलिदान हो ।

३) सुसमाचार मात्र एक मापदण्ड हो : बाइबल, इतिहास र आधुनिक संस्कृति विच सन्तुलन । “Christian worship is a “representation” of the gospel” Says Bryan Chapell

तयारीका व्यावहारिक चरणहरू के के हुन् ?

अनुग्रह अतिथिसत्कारको मुहान हो ।

परमेश्वर बोल्नुहुन्छ:

परमेश्वर हामीसँग हुन आउनु भएको छ:

येशू खीष्टमा हामीले परमेश्वरलाई देखेका छौं: अब हामीले एउटा अनुग्रहमाथि अर्को अनुग्रह पाएका छौं ।

यूहन्ना १:३, १४ र १८

“Worship cannot be done in the abstract; actual forms are needed to express our praise and adoration of God and by which we offer our prayer and thanksgiving” आराधनालाई

हाम्रो प्रतिउत्तरको रूपमा परिभाषित गर्दा, हाम्रो प्रतिउत्तर कुनै न कुनै क्रम वा आकारमा वा संरचित हुन्छ। यसले सामूहिक आराधनामा लिटर्जीको अपरिहार्यतालाई जनाउँछ र तयारीका व्यावहारिक चरणहरू महत्वपूर्ण प्रकारले पालना गर्न पनि उत्साह दिँदछ। अर्को भनाइलाई म यहाँ उद्धृत गर्न चाहन्छु। “John Calvin stressed that what we do in a worship service is not neutral. The elements of worship either teach us about the God who is there, or about a god that we have re made in our own image” Says Matt Merker. सामूहिक आराधना सेवा विभिन्न प्रकारका तत्वहरू मिलेर बनेको हुन्छ। ती तत्वहरूले परमेश्वर, मानिसहरू र संसारका बारेमा केही न केही कुरा सिकाइरहेका हुन्छन्। कति पटक सिद्धान्तहरू वा शिक्षाहरू, चेलापनको चक्र, विश्वासको सार, दर्शन मूल्यमान्यताहरू पनि। त्यसकारण हामीले सामूहिक आराधनाको लागि तयार पार्ने लिटर्जी वा आराधना तालिकाले कस्तो सन्देश वा शिक्षाहरू प्रवाह गर्दछन ती कुराहरूमा संवेदनशील हुनु जरूरी देखिन्छ।

१) ख्रीष्टियान क्यालेण्डरको अध्ययन र प्रयोग

“Christ's life, death, resurrection, ascension, Pentecost Parousia”

२) साप्ताहिक तयारीका चरणहरू:

क) पास्टर, (प्रचार, प्रचारक) संगीतिक भुण्डमा रहेका अगुवाहरू, अन्य समूहको भेट र प्रार्थना
ख) मण्डलीले थाहपाएको चिनेको वा उपलब्ध भएको अगुवापन

ग) सामान्य, सरल वा सजिलै बुझ्न सकिने

घ) व्याख्यात्मक प्रचार

३) ख्रीष्ट केन्द्रित आराधना सेवा वा लिटर्जी

अतिथि सत्कार भनेको के हो त ?

सामान्य बुझाइमा अतिथिको सेवा नै अतिथि सत्कार हो। ख्रीष्ट केन्द्रित वा सुसमाचार केन्द्रित लिटर्जी भनेको आतिथ्यले भरिएको लिटर्जी हो। पृथ्वी र यसमा भएका जे जति छन् ती सबै नै परमप्रभु परमेश्वरका हुन् (भजन २४:१)। येशूले भन्नुभयो, “पिता र म एकै हौं।” यो संसार वा ब्रह्माण्ड उहाँले हामीलाई केही समय रहनका निम्ति प्रबन्ध गरिदिनुभएको हो। त्यो पनि येशूले उहाँको घरमा वा उहाँको आफ्नै खर्चमा। यसलाई मैले “Gospel Hospitality” भनेको छु। जब हामी सामूहिक आराधनामा भेला हुन्छौं तब पिता, पुत्र र पवित्र आत्माको स्थान र समयमा उहाँहरूको टेबल वरिपरि हुन्छौं। यसर्थ हाम्रो भेलाहरू वा सामूहिक आराधना अतिथि सत्कारले भरिनु अपरिहार्य छ। हामी कहाँबाट सुरु गछौं त ? ख्रीष्ट केन्द्रित लिटर्जीलाई हामीले सुसमाचारको घटनाक्रमहरूबाट हेर्दा हाम्रो लिटर्जीमा समावेश भएका कुराहरूले सुसमाचारको घटनाहरूलाई देखाएको हुनुपर्छ।

पहिलो घटना वा सुसमाचार हो, सृष्टि। परमेश्वरले आदिमा आकाश र पृथ्वी सिर्जना गर्नुभयो। बनाइएका सबै कुराहरू हेरेर उहाँले भन्नुभयो “ती सबै कुरा असल थिए” उत्पत्ति १:३१। उहाँले रचना गर्नुभयो वा जीवन अस्तित्वमा ल्याउनुभयो। परमेश्वरले नियमहरू राखिदिनुभयो।

सृष्टिको घटनालाई हेर्दा हामी थाहा गछौं कि परमेश्वर महान् हुनुहुन्छ । भजनकारले यसरी भनेका छन्, “परमप्रभु महान् हुनुहुन्छ र प्रशंसाको अति योग्य र उहाँको महानता अगम छ” भजन १४५:३ । हाम्रो लिटर्जीहरूमा परमेश्वरको महानता प्रकट हुनु आतिथ्यपूर्ण लिटर्जी बनिदै जानु हो । हामीले यो लिटर्जीमा बाइबलको पाठहरू, गीतहरू र अन्य क्रियाकलापहरूलाई छनोट गर्न सक्छौं ।

दोस्रो घटना हो, पतन । पहिलो मानिसको अनाज्ञाकारीताले सृष्टिमा पाप ल्याएको छ र पापले पतन ल्याएको छ । सृष्टिलगायत मानिस पनि पापले पतन भएको छ । बाइबल ईश्वरशास्त्रले यसरी बताएको छ “धर्मी कोही छैन, एक जना पनि छैन” (रोमी ३:२३) । “किनकि सबैले पाप गरेका छन् र परमेश्वरको महिमासम्म पुग्नबाट चुकेका छन्” (रोमी ३:२३) । हाम्रो लिटर्जीहरूमा कन्फेसनको भाग हुनु वा हाम्रो पापको चेतना हुनु जरुरी छ ।

तेस्रो घटना हो, उद्धारको प्रतिज्ञा । परमेश्वरले हामीलाई उद्धार दिने प्रतिज्ञा गर्नुभएको छ । यो उद्धारको प्रतिज्ञा पुरानो नियमको सम्पूर्ण घटनाक्रमहरू हुँदै नयाँ नियममा येशू ख्रीष्टमा आएर उहाँको मृत्यु, पुनरुत्थान र स्वर्गारोहणमा पूरा भएको छ । हाम्रो लिटर्जीहरूमा क्षमा तथा कृतज्ञता प्रकट हुने ईश्वरशास्त्र पाठ, गीत र प्रार्थनाहरू समावेश हुनु आवश्यक हुन्छ ।

चौथो घटना हो, नवीकरण । अहिले येशू ख्रीष्टले पिताको दाहिने हातबाट सृष्टिमाथि शासन गर्दै हुनुहुन्छ । उहाँको अधीनताको अर्थ सबै कुराहरू नयाँ हुँदैछन् । हाम्रो गीत, वचन प्रचार र ईश्वरशास्त्र पाठहरूमा हामीले प्रयोग गर्ने शब्दहरूमा यो संसारलाई हर्कानुभन्दा ख्रीष्टले नयाँ बनाउँदै हुनुहुन्छ भन्दै धन्यवादका आचरणहरू प्रकट गर्नु असल हो ।

पाँचौं घटना, ख्रीष्टको दोस्रो आगमन । येशूले भन्नुभयो “निश्चय, म चाँडै आउँदैछु” (प्रकाश २२:२०) । येशू फेरि आउनु हुनेछ । उहाँको दोस्रो आगमन चाहिँ मण्डलीको भविष्य र आशा हो । हाम्रा गीत तथा भजनहरू, प्रार्थनाका शब्दलगायत अन्य कृयाकलापहरूमा कसरी आशा प्रकट गर्ने भनी ध्यान दिनु जरुरी हुन्छ ।

मण्डलीको लिटर्जीले यी पाँच वटा घटनाहरूलाई प्रकट गर्नु नै सुसमाचार वा ख्रीष्ट केन्द्रित लिटर्जीको निमार्ण हुनु हो जुन नेपाली मण्डलीका आराधनामा खाँचो छ । रिफर्म्ड आराधनाको परम्परामा आतिथ्यपूर्ण आराधना लिटर्जीको नमुनामा वचन केन्द्रित धार्मिक विधिहरू (प्रभुभोजको टेबल र बप्तिष्मा) को अभ्यास हुने गर्दछ । नेपालको अधिकांश मण्डलीहरूमा बप्तिष्मा एक छुट्टै कार्यक्रमको रूपमा आराधना तालिकाभन्दा बाहिर हुने गर्दछ । यी विषयहरूमा मण्डलीले पुनर्विचार गर्नु मात्र होइन तर परिवर्तनलाई अभ्यास गर्नु जरुरी देखिन्छ । अनि मात्र नेपाली मण्डलीहरूमा एक आतिथ्यपूर्ण लिटर्जी स्थापित हुन्छ । यही नै आराधना सेवामा नवीनता हो ।

आराधना अभ्यास र सैद्धान्तिक शिक्षा बिच अन्तरसम्बन्ध

■ पास्टर अमित कार्थक

आराधनाले परमेश्वरलाई अर्पण गरिएको श्रद्धापूर्ण भक्ति, प्रशंसा र उपासनामय सेवा तथा कार्यहरूलाई बुझाउँछ (यूहन्ना ४:२३-२४) । यसमा प्रेम, कृतज्ञता र ईश्वरप्रति अभिव्यक्त गर्ने समर्पणका कुराहरू समावेश हुनुपर्दछ । इसाई आराधनामा भक्तिपूर्ण भजन-गीत, प्रार्थना, वचन प्रचार र प्रभुभोज र बप्तिस्माजस्ता पवित्र विधिहरू सामेल छन् (प्रेरित २:४१-४२) । सरल रूपमा भन्नुपर्दा, आराधना परमेश्वरको योग्यतालाई आदर गर्नु हो -यद्यपि आराधना त्यतिमा मात्र सीमित हुँदैन । आराधनामा मानिसको खाँचो र परमेश्वरको अनुग्रहमा सचेत प्रतिक्रिया जस्ता परमेश्वर केन्द्रित अवधारणाहरू र परमेश्वरबाट मिलाप र चङ्गाइजस्ता महत्त्वपूर्ण विषयहरू पनि सामेल हुन्छन् । वास्तवमा आराधना परमेश्वरको आह्वानको प्रतिक्रिया हो । एकातर्फ परमेश्वरले मानिसहरूलाई आशिष् दिन आह्वान गर्नुहुन्छ भने अर्कोतर्फ मानिसहरू विश्वाससाथ उहाँको आह्वानलाई स्वीकार गर्दै उहाँको अधि आएको चाहनुहुन्छ ।

सिद्धान्तले आराधनालाई जस्तो बन्नुपर्ने हो त्यस्तै बन्नलाई आकार दिन्छ र यसको गरिमालाई अझ सशक्त बनाउँछ । सैद्धान्तिक ज्ञानले आराधना सेवाहरूको मुख्य उद्देश्य, सामग्री र संरचना निर्धारणमा ठूलो भूमिका खेल्नरहेको हुन्छ । आराधनामा परमेश्वरको अधि जिम्मेवारसाथ कसरी प्रस्तुत हुने भनेर पनि सिद्धान्तले नै निर्धारण गरिरहेको हुँदछ । आराधना समुदायको धार्मिक विश्वासको मूर्त अभिव्यक्ति हो (कलस्सी ३:१६) । सिद्धान्तले धार्मिक शिक्षा र धर्मशास्त्रीय सत्यतालाई समेटेको हुनुपर्दछ । सिद्धान्तहरूले आवश्यक पर्ने बाइबलीय शिक्षा र ईश्वरशास्त्रीय अवधारणाहरू व्यक्त गर्दछन् जसले परमेश्वर, मुक्ति र इसाई जीवनलाई मार्गदर्शन गर्दछन् । सिद्धान्तहरू परमेश्वर, वचन, मानिस, पाप, खीष्ट, उद्धार, न्याय र स्वर्ग आदि हुन सक्छन् । आराधनाको सम्बन्धमा, सिद्धान्त आराधनामा गरिने अभ्यास, क्रियाकलापहरू, भाषाशैली आदिको मूल्याङ्कन र यसलाई पूर्ण रूपमा परिभाषित गर्ने प्रक्रियाहरू समावेश हुन्छ । अर्थात् आराधनाको अभ्यासले हाम्रो सैद्धान्तिक दृष्टिकोण प्रतिबिम्बित गर्छ । आराधनाको अभ्यास सधैं धर्मशास्त्रीय सिद्धान्तहरूको अधि हुन्छ ।

हाम्रो आराधनाको भाषा शैलीहरूबाट नै सिद्धान्तहरूको निर्माण प्रक्रिया (ढाँचाहरू) सुरु हुँदछन् । यसैले आराधनाको अभ्यासलाई सैद्धान्तिक अध्ययनको निम्ति पूर्वसर्त मानिन्छ । वास्तवमा प्राथमिक सिद्धान्त चाहिँ आराधना अभ्यासमाथिको चिन्तन, मनन र व्याख्या हो भन्दा अत्युक्ति नहोला । साँचो भन्नुपर्दा आराधना नै धार्मिक सिद्धान्तको अभिव्यक्ति हो । एकातर्फ समुदायको विश्वास शिक्षाहरूले वा सिद्धान्तले आराधना गर्ने तरिकालाई आकार दिन्छ भने अर्कोतर्फ व्यक्तिको आराधना अभ्यास वा शैलीले उसले अवलम्बन गर्ने सिद्धान्तलाई व्यक्त गरिरहेको हुन्छ (रोमी १२:१-२) । कसैले भनेका छन्, “मलाई व्यक्तिको आराधना शैली देखाइदेऊ, म उसको

सैद्धान्तिक विश्वास देखाइदिन्छु ।” आराधना अभ्यास र सिद्धान्त विचको यो अन्तरसम्बन्धले मण्डली र विश्वासीहरूको जीवनमा महत्वपूर्ण प्रभाव पार्दछ । यी दुवै इसाई विश्वासका आधारभूत स्तम्भहरू हुन् र यिनीहरू बीचको सम्बन्ध, विश्वासको अभ्यास र मार्गदर्शन गर्ने मूल सिद्धान्तहरू बुझ्नलाई आवश्यक हुन्छ । यो सम्बन्धको अध्ययन सिलसिलामा, आराधना र सिद्धान्तहरू इसाई पवित्र विधिहरूका सन्दर्भमा कसरी जोडिएका छन् भनेर विस्तृत रूपमा अन्वेषण गर्नुपर्ने आवश्यकता खड्किरहेको छ ।

हाम्रो आराधनालाई पनि समुदायको विश्वास र विभिन्न सम्प्रदायमा अभ्यास गरिने साम्प्रदायिक शिक्षाहरूले गहिरो रूपमा प्रभावित तुल्याइरहेको हुन्छ । विश्वासीहरूको आराधना गर्ने तरिकाले परमेश्वरको प्रकृति, उहाँका गुणहरू र मानवतासँगको उहाँको सम्बन्धको बुझाइलाई झल्काउँदछ (कलस्सी ३:१६) । विश्वासीहरू नियमित रूपमा आराधनामा संलग्न हुँदा, तिनीहरूको सैद्धान्तिक विश्वास र धर्मशास्त्रीय समझ बलियो हुन्छ । प्रार्थना, गीत र सेवाको विधिमा र्फत मुख्य धर्मशास्त्रीय अवधारणाहरूको पुनरावृत्तिले आराधकहरूको दृष्टिकोण र हृदयको विचारहरूमा सैद्धान्तिक विश्वासको महत्त्वलाई अझ बलियो बनाउँछ । आराधनाद्वारा, विश्वासीहरू परमेश्वरका सन्तानको रूपमा परिचित हुन्छन्, ख्रीष्टद्वारा प्राप्त उद्धारको महत्त्वलाई थाहा गर्दछन् र बाइबलीय सिद्धान्तअनुसार जिउने बोलावट पाउँदछन् ।

आराधना र सिद्धान्त विचको सम्बन्धले मण्डली समुदाय र यसका व्यक्तिगत सदस्यहरूको जीवनमा महत्वपूर्ण प्रभाव पारिरहेको हुँदछ । बाइबलीय सत्यतामा आधारित जीवन्त र स्वस्थ आराधनामय जीवनले विश्वासीहरूको आत्मिक जीवनमा आध्यात्मिक चेतना वृद्धि गराउँदछ र परमेश्वरको चरित्र र उद्देश्यको गहिरो समझलाई बढावा दिन्छ । बाइबलका शिक्षाहरूलाई सही रूपमा प्रतिबिम्बित गर्ने आराधनाले विश्वासीहरूका विचमा एक मजबुत एकताको भावना उत्पन्न गर्दछ, किनभने तिनीहरूले सामूहिक रूपमा आफ्नो साझा विश्वास व्यक्त गर्छन् । साथै आराधना र सिद्धान्त विचको सम्बन्धविच्छेदले धर्मशास्त्रीय भ्रम, मनतातो आत्मिकपन र सम्भावित रूपमा समुदायमा विभाजनसम्म ल्याउन सक्छ (हिब्रू १०:२४-२५) ।

इसाई विश्वासमा आराधना र सिद्धान्त विचको अविभाज्य सम्बन्धले हाम्रो आराधना अभ्यासहरूलाई बाइबलीय सत्यतासँग पङ्क्तिबद्ध गर्ने महत्त्वलाई प्रकाश पार्दछ । आराधना इसाई समुदायको मूल विश्वासलाई मनाउने र मूर्त रूप दिने, धार्मिक विश्वासलाई सुदृढ पार्ने र आध्यात्मिक यात्रामा मार्गनिर्देशन गर्ने माध्यम बन्दछ । यो गहिरो सम्बन्धको पहिचान एक जीवन्त र फस्टाउँदै गरेको मण्डली समुदायलाई बढावा दिनको लागि महत्वपूर्ण हुन्छ जहाँ आराधना सबै सदस्यहरूको लागि एक परिवर्तनकारी र एकताबद्ध अनुभव बन्नजान्छ ।

प्रारम्भिक इसाई आराधना अभ्यासहरूले इसाई आराधनाको सेवामा एक आँखीभ्याल प्रदान गर्दछ जसले समकालीन आराधनालाई सुसूचित गर्न र समृद्ध बनाउन बहुमूल्य अन्तरदृष्टि प्रदान गर्दछ । प्रारम्भिक इसाई आराधनाका विशेषताहरू जाँचेर र हाम्रो समय र सान्दर्भमा प्रतिबिम्बित गर्दा, हामी आराधनाको मूल तत्त्वहरूलाई अझ राम्रोसँग बुझ्न सक्छौं र यसलाई आधुनिक इसाई समुदायको आवश्यकताहरू पूरा गर्न (अपनाउन सक्छौं) सक्छौं ।

THE PROMISE OF THE WORSHIP DAY - TRANSFORMATION OF OUR DAILY WORSHIP

■ Rev. Milan Tamang

Sometimes two spheres of our life can feel like they are in an adversarial relationship—“worship” & “work.” “Weekly worship” begins to feel like medicine that keeps us from perishing in the daily grind and boredom that we call “daily work.” But is “worship” merely a mechanism for coping with a completely different sphere of life that we call “work”?

The current issue of *Restorers* explores how “worship” transforms the lives of God’s people. We focus on weekly worship’s transformative power on the sphere of life we call “work.” A main *purpose of weekly worship is to prepare* us to return with joy and purpose to our *primary worship—weekday work*.

The article has three movements. (I) We will explore a three-letter Hebrew root [בָּעַד] toward examining an Old Testament belief, inseparable union between “worship” and “work.” (II) We will examine how the Hebrew root is used in a primary text: The Moses (Aaron)-Pharaoh Narrative (Exodus 6:28-12:32). (III) We will use lexical and textual discoveries toward making four applications. We believe that these applications flow naturally from the text, and that they can guide “*worship services*” toward their ultimate purpose. Worship services prepare God’s people for purposeful return to the daily “*service of worship*.”

(I) The lexical subject of our paper is a three-letter, Hebrew root [בָּעַד]. A whole network of related words form on these three Hebrew letters.¹

To summarize the meaning of the root in its primary verbal form: [בָּעַד]²

“^ato work, to serve; ^bto worship”

¹ Most Hebrew words are formed from a three-letter root. Nuances to the root meaning (eg. nominal, verbal, adjectival, etc.) are indicated the addition of prefixes, suffixes or—since the introduction of the Massoretic System—various vowel pointings.

² Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 712.

The Hebrew thought world sees a deep continuity between “work” and “worship.” Consequently, to properly articulate the root in verbal form, we believe it appropriate articulate the verb’s English meaning with a hyphen: “to serve—to worship”.

Or to clarify this surprising concept another way. Where most of the world’s languages make a significant distinction between what is considered two spheres of life—

Nepali:	“आराधना गर्न”	“काम गर्न”
English:		“to worship” “to work”
Spanish:	“adorar”	“trabajar”
Korean:	“예 배 하 다”	“일 하 다”

--the Hebrew language sees a single, unified action. So then, “to worship-to serve” are two strands composing one thread.

Consider similar conclusions with an examination of the nominal form: [עֲבָדָה]³

“^aservant, slave; ^ba subject under a chief; ^ca worshipper”

If the verbal form connotes “to worship—to serve,” this nominal form emphasizes relationship, the subordinate as contrasted to the superior. The word expresses relationship in view of the economic, legal, political, religious spheres, or a combination of them. The word then, implies *to whom* the subordinate’s “labor—worship” belongs, whether they function as member of a community (ie. clan, family) or personally.⁴

(II) Consider the “Moses(Aaron)-Pharaoh Narrative” (Exodus 6:28-12:32) toward engaging in a more practical discussion. In this pericope’s action, the ‘Ten Plagues’ are front and center. But theologically, the main concern is a matter of “worship” (verbal- עָבַד)⁵. To whom does Israel belong and to whom she shall render her life as “servant” (nominal- עֲבָדָה)?

The key refrain throughout the narrative is—

HEBREW: ⁶

ENGLISH: “Thus says the Lord, let my people go
so that they might **worship** me in the wilderness.” (Exodus 8:20-NIV)

³ Ibid, 713–714.

⁴ Among other key forms of this word, we should also consider the nominal form [עֲבָדָה]. Close examination will elicit similar results. One will find a unity and overlap between concepts rendered in English “work, worship, service”. (Cf. BDB)

⁵ For the key use of עָבַד in the narrative, cf: 3:12, 4:23, 7:16, 8:1,20; 9:1,13; 10:3,7,8,11,24,26; 12:31

⁶ Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: With Westminster Hebrew Morphology. (Stuttgart; Glenside PA: German Bible Society; Westminster Seminary, 1995), Ex 8:16.

The matter of “*Who*” Israel should “*worship—serve*” is resolved narratively, through the drama of ‘The Ten Plagues’. The drama builds through the main dialog: (a) Moses(Aaron)—“The Demand” (above) (b) Pharaoh—“A Response”. The story follows Egypt’s “man-god”(Pharaoh) as he slowly loses confidence in view of The LORD’s mighty signs and wonders—

“...go to offer sacrifices...but you must not go very far.” (8:28)

“Go **worship**...but” ...not the women and children (10:8)

“Go **worship**...only leave your flocks and herds behind.” (10:24)

Unconditional release is granted only after Pharaoh’s “hard heart” is broken for good, in the most tragic of the plagues—the death of all the Egyptian’s first-born. To prevent any greater destruction of his nation, a fearful, angry Pharaoh demands—

“Up! Leave my people...Go **worship**...!” (12:31)

The matter of “*What*” Israel’s “*worship—service*” means is resolved at Mt. Sinai (Ex 20:1-21).⁷ The LORD writes The Decalog with His finger on two tablets. Ten Commandments serve as charter for Israel’s new life. The Ten Principles are not merely elements for a once-per-week liturgy, they are the foundations for Israel’s daily “worship—service.”

(III)The theme of this current journal volume is “Unveiling the Transformative Essence of Worship.” We now summarize the transformative essence of “worship”(ie. the weekly worship service) in it’s impact on our everyday “work/service.” Consider our conclusions in four phrases that flow from our grammatical and textual work above.

A MATTER of WHAT: The Hebrew root [עבד] urges one to see “worship--service” and being “worshipper--servant” as a unified whole. The call for Israel to change her allegiance from Pharaoh to The LORD meant a transformation of every hour of the week and every minute of the day. The point of contemporary worship is the same. In view of mixed alliances, The LORD’s people must be reminded of His claim over all areas of life (ie. The Decalog). Though in view of Christ’s coming, God’s people must disciple where Moses(Aaron) left off.

A MATTER of WHO: In the narrative, the main issue of [עבד] is to whom Israel (ie. their clan, family) should serve. Pharaoh (“The Culture of Unbelief”) aggressively claims ownership of Israel’s service. Moses(Aaron) proclaim a “New Kingdom” under the rule of “The True Sovereign.” Today, worship should prepare people for their daily life in all spheres of life with the same question. Will it be “The LORD’s Kingdom” or “The Kingdom of this World”?

⁷ Here may be as good time to remember The LORD’s prophetic word to Moses during his ordination at the burning bush— “When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship...on the mountain.” (Ex 3:12b)

A MATTER of WHEN: At Mt. Sinai, Israel *began* their one-time gathering by reflecting *on* and rejoice *in* the nation's deliverance. Yet, the *high point* at Mt. Sinai was Moses' receiving and transmitting The Decalog (Ten Commandments), the call to an entire life of service. In the same way today, God's people gather weekly to remember their salvation and celebrate (*ie. "Worship Service"*). Yet, the point of the service is to move people confidently back into the world for everyday "worship-service" (*ie. Service of Worship*). As worship leaders or congregation members, the equipping for everyday is our high aim.

A MATTER of WHERE: The Decalog invites Israel into shalom-filled living in her daily engagements with unbelieving ANE neighbors. In the same way, our calling apart on "The Festive Day" has one purpose—singing, praying, reading and teaching that fosters joyful return to "regular, everyday work" as a "Holy People" among and unbelieving world.⁸

Reformed Presbyterian Seminary has a high calling. We are raising up pastors, worship planners and interns who will invite the congregation into God's grand story and His claims over everyday. The calling is to prepare for 'The Worship' beyond the 2-3 hours on "The Worship Day." The Story moves us from the old narrative—Pharaohs ("Culture in Rebellion") demanding self-glorifying service toward increased misery of those around. Rather, it's a new narrative—The LORD ("The Holy City," a "New Kingdom") inviting people into regular, everyday life through His son, toward joyful service with other in all areas of life.

Hear the lovely words of The LORD's Messiah,

"...no longer slaves. I call you friends" (Jn 15:15).

Of our cross-purchased new relationship, we are told

"...my yoke is easy, my burden is light." (Mt 11:28-30)

Sometimes spiritual lives feel like out-of-breath living toward next week's "weekly retreat." Nevertheless, there is a God-Centered kind of worship that sends The LORD's people with clarity and expectation into the "worship-service" of every day. Let's promote together, The LORD's everyday "worship" spaces— fields & kitchens, classrooms & offices. May we go out with joy, armed with His everyday worship tools—phones & shovels, pencils & pans.

⁸ A good way to move toward [עבד] "work-worship" is through a thorough familiarity with the Ten Commands (Ex 20, Dt 5) understood throughout their illustration and application in the various genres of The Old and New Testament. These commands are not old or outmoded. Especially as understood in the ministry of Christ, they are the patterns of His New Testament ministry and the fresh breeze of His Spirit from early church times until today. Of course, the truest understanding of "worship-service" is not through mere precepts or principles, but The LORD's living grace alive and well in His people, as foretastes of what will be fulfilled in His people on that Great Day.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF JESUS CHRIST AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN OUR WORSHIP

● Mr. Binod Magar

While thinking and talking about worship, what comes to our mind? What takes the central place in our thinking? For many, it is all about music (singing, playing musical instruments) and a worship leader/team encouraging us to worship God in a church service. For the most part, people have missed the primary object of worship, which is Jesus Christ, and have been focusing on secondary things, such as music and the worship team. The priesthood of Jesus Christ should greatly impact our understanding and practice of worship. Therefore, it is very important for all believers to learn about the priesthood of Jesus Christ. The theme of the priesthood can be seen throughout the Old and New Testaments.

Jesus Christ, Our High Priest

Hebrews 7:23-9:12 portrays Jesus Christ as High Priest. In the OT, there were many Levitical high priests, and their office was temporary. They themselves were sinners who had to offer sacrifices for their own sins. Thus, their sacrifices had to be made on a regular basis. They entered the holy places through a man-made tent and by means of the blood of goats and calves. In contrast, Jesus, as a high priest whose office is permanent and eternal, was holy and innocent. Because of this, he only had to offer sacrifices for others. He offered himself as the “once for all” sacrifice. He entered the holy place of the presence of God by means of his own blood. The mosaic law was unable to make men perfect since a succession of sinful, mortal priests administered it. Jesus, however, is by God’s oath established forever as the holy priest/Son, thus permitting his followers to draw near to God on the basis of his person and work (Hebrews 7:11-28). Also, the new, better covenant based on Jesus’ eternal high priesthood comes with God’s oath and with Jesus as the guarantor, and thus it is superior to the Mosaic covenant. Jesus, as a high priest, establishes a new covenant for us and sets us free from the bondage of the laws that a mortal could never fulfill. This is why we are no longer under the law and its worship practice, but we are under Christ, and we worship God through Christ.

Our Permanent access to God through Christ

In the Old Testament, God's people took part in real worship. It was the real God they were worshipping, but this had to be done at a distance. Access was denied. Only priests were allowed to enter the Tabernacle, which was known as the "earthly place of holiness" (Hebrews 9:1-5). They went inside while other worshipers remained outside in the courtyard. However, once inside, the priests could enter the Holy Place, but not the Most Holy Place. The high priest could enter only once a year to offer sacrifices for the people and himself- he had to do so very carefully. But Jesus Christ has permanently solved this issue. Now, because of Jesus, we can confidently enter God's presence. This access is not temporary, as in the Old Testament, but is permanent.

We should always remember and be humbled that it is only through Christ that this access has been made possible and that our worship is accepted. Neither our arts, musical arrangements, gifts or talents take us into God's presence nor make us acceptable before Him. It is only through Jesus Christ. This truth challenges us to correct one of our misunderstandings regarding the role of worship leaders in our church services in Nepal. We tend to think and say that worship leaders are the ones who take us to God's presence. This is a completely unbiblical notion. Leaders' musical roles and responsibilities should not be understood as a means for us to enter God's presence. Bob Kauflin reminds us that the most important worship leader is Jesus. He reveals God to us and, through his perfect sacrifice, provided the only way into the Father's presence (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 10:19–22). We can't do what only Jesus does.

Christ, the Perfect Mediator

The apostle Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:5-6 that "there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time." We have a perfect mediator who has enabled us to be rightly related to God. It is through the mediation of Christ that our sins are forgiven, and we receive His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). The Holy Spirit who regenerates us is also the "Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9). Thus, we find salvation in and through the mediatorial work of Christ. Christ is also our everlasting intercessor. Through Christ's pleading, we obtain favor. Hence, confidence in prayer arises and peace for the godly conscience to rest securely upon God's fatherly mercy. They are persuaded that whatever has been consecrated through the Mediator is pleasing to God. It is only through Christ that our worship is acceptable.

An Eternal Inheritance

Hebrews 9:15 says, “Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.” This inheritance, won by Jesus, involves the forgiveness of sins. We were born under sin's dominion and were naturally children of death. We were unable to redeem ourselves on our own. Only Jesus Christ, who is holy, can deliver and cleanse us. This inheritance implies other benefits that flow naturally from our forgiveness. These benefits include our future resurrection, the new heaven and the new earth, and Jesus himself. What we are most looking forward to is being with Jesus eternally. We are eternally secured in Christ. So, this truth gives us hope and confidence regarding our future and prompts us to worship God through the new identity which Christ has won for us.

Vocation of Priesthood

In the Old Testament, the priesthood was restricted to the sons of Aaron (a kind of priestly aristocracy). But in Christ, the requirements and privileges of birth and lineage for the priesthood have been abolished. Just as humans were originally called to function as God's priestly image bearers, so now the vocation of the priesthood (engaging in worship and mediating God's presence to the world) is open to all. It is only because of Christ's purity and holiness that our reconciliation with God was made possible. Christ plays the priestly role, not only to render the Father propitious toward us by an eternal law of reconciliation but also to receive us as his companions in this great office (Rev. 1:6). Deviation from this biblical truth has led churches in the past to return to Old Testament practices. During the medieval time of church history, the priest celebrated the mass at the high altar, and the lay people were spectators; the Reformers deliberately brought the action down from the chancel to the nave and ensured that the lay people were not merely spectators but participants. A wrong understanding concerning the vocation of the priesthood could lead today's churches back to the medieval era, where congregations were spectators who depended solely upon worship leaders for praise & worship. We should be careful to avoid such errors.

Conclusion

After learning about the priesthood of Jesus Christ from the Bible, one must be humble and accept the truth that nothing except Christ gives us access to the presence of God. Also, we must remember that only through Christ is our worship of God acceptable. Our confidence in worship must come only from Jesus Christ and his finished works as a high priest. Though we are given the role of priesthood through Jesus Christ, we should always be careful not to deviate from Jesus Christ in our worship. Those who are responsible for leading music in churches must know this truth and view their ministry accordingly.

ACCOUNTABLE REPENTANCE, FORGIVENESS, RECONCILIATION

■ Charlotte Witvliet, PhD

Repentance with accountable change

- Repentance seeks to honestly see and name one's wrongdoing, apologize, make amends, and cultivate new behaviors that create positive relational possibilities for the future.
- Confession is not wallowing in our badness, defining of ourselves as only a wrongdoer.
 - Offense rumination promotes self-condemnation and does not promote accountable repentant change in relation to God and others.
 - **Humble and accountable repentance prompts Godly sorrow about one's wrongdoing that leads to making relational repair.**
 - II Corinthians 7:10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

Accountable forgiveness

- Forgiveness is a faith-filled response to relational injustice that reckons with the wrongdoing, relinquishes resentment and retaliation toward the person responsible for the hurtful transgression, and desires good transformation for that person.
- Thus, forgiveness resists both minimizing offenses and defining people in terms of their offenses.
- Empathy and compassion foster forgiveness—which flourishes best in contexts of safety and accountability.
- In addition, forgiveness—whether given or received—has beneficial side effects for emotions and our physiological stress responses.

Steps that help people forgive

- 1) Truth-telling: the offender is a human being—a person first.
 - acknowledge the “imago dei” – people are image bearers of God
- 2) Truth-telling: the offense was wrong and has harmful consequences.
 - accountably acknowledged sin and the effects of brokenness
- 3) Transform: See the offense as evidence of that person’s need to change and grow.
 - pray and work for redemptive transformation
- 4) Transform: Find even a small way to genuinely wish the offender well in being transformed.
 - justice and mercy meet at the cross – both accountable repentant change and forgiveness important.

Research Outcomes (25 years of psychology studies comparing forgiveness to offense rumination)

- Reduced revenge, avoidance, anger, sadness
- Increased empathy, calm and positive emotion, more social orientation, forgiveness
- Calmer heart responses, calmer face muscles under eye and above the eyebrow
- Better sleep

Examples of offenses and good changes we can pray for and pursue

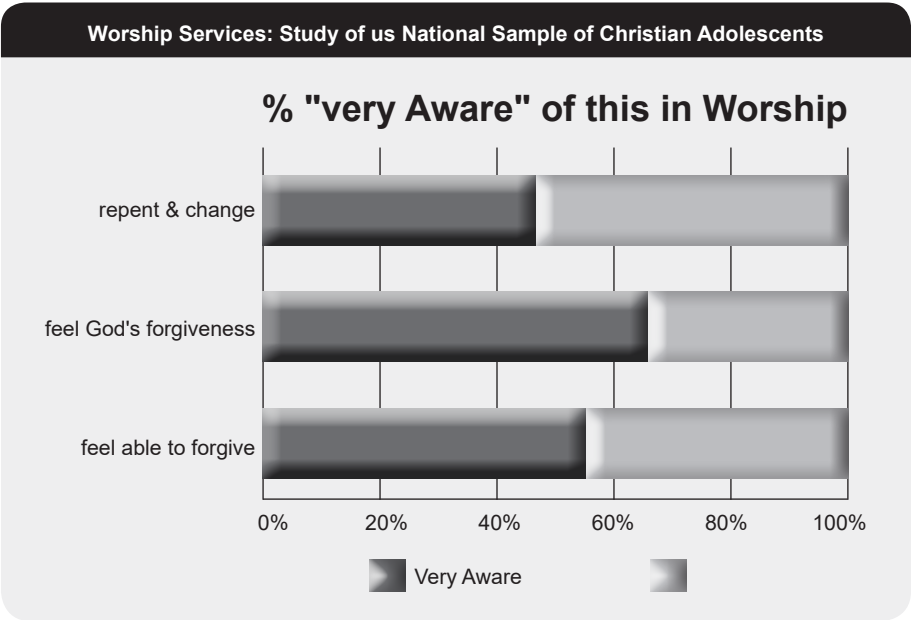
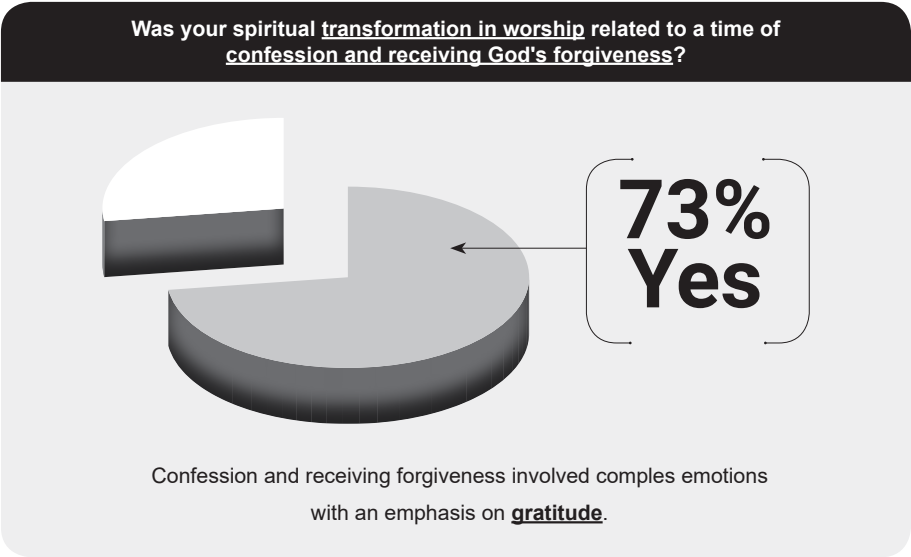
Offense (the wrongdoing): Transformation needed (what the person needs to develop):

- Lie ■ Honesty
- Gossip ■ Restraint, confidentiality
- Betrayal ■ Faithfulness
- Stealing ■ Honoring another’s belongings
- Abuse ■ Honoring another’s body and well-being
- Killing ■ Honoring another’s life

Forgiving can be done by one person. Reconciliation takes two or more people.

Building a bridge of reconciliation between people -E.L. Worthington, Jr.,
Forgiving & Reconciling, 2003 IVP

Worship Findings



WORSHIPING THE TRIUNE GOD:

RECEIVING AND SHARING CHRISTIAN WISDOM

ACROSS CONTINENTS AND CENTURIES (2010 Edition)

■ **Dr. John D. Witvleit**

Introduction

The sharing of wisdom is a common practice in many cultures Eastern and Western, Southern and Northern and is particularly suited for learning and sharing across cultures, generations, and centuries, both in oral and written forms. The sharing of wisdom comprises a significant strand of the biblical literature, including Proverbs and proverb-like Psalms, Jesus' beatitudes and several Pauline exhortations. To share wisdom is to knit together the sinews of Christ's body, the church. Sharing wisdom is, thus, a central practice for global Christian fellowships, like the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). When the wisdom that is shared is a faithful echo and appropriation of scriptural wisdom, a faithful testimony to the Word and "Wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1.24), then this sharing of wisdom can be a sign of Pentecost, not Babel a gift of the Holy Spirit, "the Spirit of wisdom" (Eph 1.17).

The purpose of this collection of proverbs about the practice of Christian worship is to build up the body of Christ for faithful service and ministry. This collection of proverbs is gathered by Reformed Christians. It is at once a catholic collection, reflecting participation in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, and a particular collection, reflecting the unique history, theological convictions, and practices of Reformed communities worldwide. This document was drafted in response to mandates by both World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) at its 2004 Assembly in Accra, Ghana, and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) at its 2005 Assembly in Utrecht, the Netherlands, following a period of communication with member churches from both organizations. It was developed by the worship planning team for the 2010 WCRC Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, in consultation with pastors, teachers, and other leaders throughout the world, both within and outside of the Reformed tradition, and was refined by the Worship and Spiritual Renewal Section of the Uniting General Council.

The document is designed to present a vision for worship and spiritual renewal in which we invite each other to deeper and more vital expression. It is not designed to impose a set of practices on member churches or to imply that worship in

member churches already embodies the fullness of this wisdom. The document is designed for several uses:

1. The document can be used within a given congregation or denomination to shape a conversation about the gifts, challenges, strengths and weaknesses of local practices. Those leading these conversations could pause after each proverb and ask “how has God gifted us to practice this wisdom?”, “in what ways is God calling us to embody this wisdom more faithfully?”, and “in what other ways would we express the wisdom of our practices related to this theme?” Each proverb is designed to elicit conversations that explore the connections between theological convictions and practices, conversations of testimony and spiritual discernment that are indispensable for fruitful ministry in any context.

2. The document can shape a conversation between and among congregations, denominations, and believers from quite different cultural contexts. Those shaping these conversations could pause after each proverb and ask “how is God gifting each of us in our unique cultural contexts to practice this wisdom?” and “in what way might God be calling us to practice this more faithfully, particularly in light of what we learn from each other?”

3. The document is an invitation to collaborative in-depth study and further refinement. Each proverb is a summary of a field of research and Christian reflection, drawing upon work in Biblical exegesis, theological reflection, and historical scholarship. Each proverb could be fruitfully refined after continuing reflection in light of the challenges of faithful discipleship. Thus, this collection is not designed to be final or complete. It is designed to be open-ended: any member church or ecumenical partner can easily supplement this collection with its own materials. Future WCRC gatherings could also amend this collection by adding proverbs to respond to unique challenges that arise in the future.

The ultimate goal of all of these uses, however, is not simply to enhance conversations or to result in a better document. The ultimate goal is nothing less than to elicit, by the Spirit’s power, the faithful and grateful worship of the triune God. May God’s Spirit bless these words and all who wrestle with them so that the church of Christ may be strengthened.

Note: For this edition of the document, the terms ‘church,’ ‘congregation, and ‘community’ are used interchangeably, reflecting the different uses of our member churches. The terms ‘blessed’ and ‘wise’ alternate throughout the document, with the term ‘blessed’ typically used to refer to blessings God gives when we follow biblical commands, and ‘wise’ for judgments that congregations make in

discerning God's will. We anticipate further refinement of this usage, following responses from member churches.

1. A Called and Forgiven People: Assembling in Jesus' Name

1.1 Called by the Triune God

Blessed are the people of God who are deeply aware that they are both called by and address the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects and cares for the church through Word and Spirit—1 a God of splendour and majesty perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ, the “image of the invisible God” (Col 1.15).

Blessed is the community that gratefully acknowledges that the triune God not only receives our worship, but also makes our worship possible, prompting us through the Holy Spirit, and sanctifying our offerings through the perfect priesthood of Jesus Christ, who during his life on earth offered praise “to the Father,” “full of joy in the Holy Spirit” (Luke 10.21), and even now “ever lives to pray for us” (Heb 7.25).

Blessed is the congregation that insists that believers gather to worship God not first of all in order that God might bless them, but because God has already blessed them.

Blessed is the congregation that then discovers that God does indeed bless them as they worship the triune God who nourishes, teaches, convicts, and corrects them, and strengthens bonds that unite believers with Jesus Christ and with each other through the sanctifying actions of the proclamation of the word and corporate prayer, through baptism and the Lord's Supper, through fellowship, offerings, and testimony.

1.2 Corporate Assembly, the Whole People of God

Wise is the worshipping community that “does not neglect meeting together” (Heb 10.25), but joyfully gathers in Jesus' name, eager to proclaim the Word of God, to offer praise and prayer, and to celebrate the sacraments, each of which are actions of the whole people of God, “the royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2.9).

Blessed is the congregation that invites all worshipers including those which our cultures may label in different ways as ‘disabled’ to full, conscious and active participation in corporate worship, engaging heart, soul, and mind in devotion to God, deeply aware of how their own personal worship participates in a much larger chorus of praise to God.

Blessed is the congregation that expresses in its worship the communion in the body of Christ, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, the oneness that is the gift and calling of God, that unites the young and old, and believers of every time and place who share a common calling by the Spirit of God in Jesus Christ.²

1.3 The Holy Spirit

Wise is the worshipping community that recognizes how the Holy Spirit works through both reason and emotion, through both spiritual disciplines and surprising events, through both services that are prayerfully planned and through moments of spontaneous discovery.

Wise is the worshipping community that recognizes that the lasting value or spiritual power of worship does not depend upon our own creativity, imagination, intellect, or emotions, but comes from the Holy Spirit, who may choose to use any or all of these things. For truly, worship is a gift to receive, not an accomplishment to achieve.

1.4 Affirming and Resisting Culture

Wise is the church that seeks to be “in” but not “of” the world, (John 15.19) resisting aspects of the culture that compromise the integrity of the gospel, and eagerly engaging its culture with the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ who comes to each culture, but is not bound by any culture.

Wise, then, is the church that is grateful that the gospel of Jesus is at once transcultural, contextual, cross-cultural, and counter-cultural.

1.5 The Goodness of the Redeemed Creation

Wise is the congregation that makes clear that its worship participates in the song of praise that is offered by all creation. Wise is the congregation that celebrates worship as an embodied reality, grateful for the gestures and postures that express our praise and prayer, and the book, water, bread, and wine, that God ordains for our use the gifts of God for the people of God.

1.6 Leading God's People

Wise is the community that calls, trains, affirms, and responds to those gifted or leadership in all genders, ages, races, abilities providing formative training and mentorship for them in the theology and practices of worship. Wise are leaders in worship who equip all the members of the community for full, conscious, and active participation, (cf Vatican II) taking care to express hospitality to those who are not yet a part of Christ's body, the church.

1.7 Artistic Expression

Blessed is the congregation in which the Word is proclaimed and prayers and

praise are offered not only through words, but also through artistic expression: through gifts God has given to each local community in music and dance, in speech and silence, in visual art and architecture. Blessed are the artists who offer and discipline their gifts so God's people may testify to the goodness of God, offer thanks and express repentance. Wise are artists who are grateful both for the limitations offered by the second commandment, and also for the example of the biblical artists called by God and equipped by God's people for service according to God's commands. (Ex 35.30ff) Wise is the church that gratefully receives the gifts of faithful songs and artworks from other centuries and other cultures, celebrating the catholicity of the church, and cultivating creativity through new songs and works for worship.

2. Joyfully Proclaiming God's Word

2.1 Word and Spirit

Blessed is the congregation in which the Word of God is proclaimed with conviction and joy surrounded by expectant prayers and profound gratitude for the Holy Spirit's work to illuminate the hearts and minds of God's people.

2.2 The Breadth of the Christ-Centered Word

Wise is the congregation that nourishes believers with readings and sermons that engage the breadth and depth of God's Word, Old Testament and New Testament, always proclaiming the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2.3 Calling Forth Rest and Witness, Justice and Peace

Blessed is the congregation in which the proclamation of God's Word comforts those who mourn and confronts those who oppose God's reign. Wise is the preacher who invites hearers to receive God's lavish grace, to repent from sin and evil, to turn toward Christ, to proclaim peace, "to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God" (Mic 6.8).

2.4 Resisting Idolatry

Wise is the congregation that proclaims the Word of God in ways that actively expose and resist both the idols that we are tempted to worship instead of God and also the idols of our distorted understandings of God. Blessed is the congregation that challenges these distortions by contemplating the person and work of Jesus Christ, "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's being" (Heb 1.3).

2.5 Credo: The Response of Faith

Wise is the congregation in which the proclamation of the gospel is accepted as the word of God, which is at work in you who believe (1 Thes 2.13), leading to

both confession and praise, both repentance and a commitment to service, both compassion and a passion for justice, both personal and communal actions, both new obedience and profound gratitude. Blessed is the congregation that invites believers to testify to the goodness of God by expressing the faith of the church that transcends and forms our individual experiences and unites us with believers across cultures and centuries, and by testifying to the work of God in the life of the local community.

3. Responding to God in Prayer and Offerings

3.1 Praise and Gratitude

Blessed is the church that offers praise and thanksgiving (cf Ps 50.14, Heb 13.15), not only extolling the beauty and glory of God, but also contemplating, reciting, and celebrating all that God has done throughout history.

Wise is the congregation that draws upon and learns from the Bible's own narratively-shaped prayers of praise and thanksgiving (e.g Ps 136) as it gives form to its own prayer.

3.2 Praying in Jesus Name, Through the Spirit

Blessed is the church that prays in Jesus' name, acknowledging our union with our ascended and everpresent Lord. Blessed is the worshiping community that prays in and through the Holy Spirit, desiring the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and acknowledging that as we pray the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness,

interceding for us according to the will of God (Rom 8.26-27), and resisting the "cosmic powers of this present darkness" (Eph 6.12).

3.3 Full Range of Human Experience

Wise is the church that, following the example of the Psalms, encourages honest and trusting prayers to God that express the full range of human experience the 'anatomy of the soul" spoken, sung or silent, danced, dramatized or visualized prayers of celebration and lament, trust and desperation, supplication and intercession, thanksgiving and confession, healing and hope. Blessed is the church that prays not only for its own needs, but also for the needs of the world that God so loves.

3.4 Gifts and Offerings

Wise is the church that gratefully practices the giving of gifts, time and talent, as an act of dedication and worship. Wise is the church which affirms that all of life is lived in service to God and neighbor, and that believers are called to be stewards of every gift of God.

4. Baptizing and Feasting

4.1 Jesus' Commands to Baptize and Celebrate the Lord's Supper

Blessed is the church that faithfully obeys Jesus' commands "to make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything Jesus has commanded (Matt. 28:20) and to "eat and drink in remembrance of me," (Luke 22.19-20) receiving these signs as occasions in which God works to nourish and sustain, comfort and challenge, teach and transform us.

4.2 Baptism

Blessed is the congregation that announces that their true identity is found in Jesus Christ. Blessed is the congregation that proclaims how the waters of baptism are a sign and seal of God's promises to wash us clean, to adopt us into the body of Christ, to send the Holy Spirit to renew, empower, and resurrect us a to new life in Christ.

Blessed is the congregation that proclaims how the waters of baptism are also a sign and seal of God's call to renounce sin and evil, to embrace Christ, and our new identity in him and to live a renewed and holy life.

Wise is the community who celebrates baptism joyfully and remembers that baptism as a means of grace and encouragement to live out our vows of covenant faithfulness.

4.3 Lord's Supper

Blessed is the church that regularly celebrates the Lord's Supper as a feast of thanksgiving, communion, and hope. Blessed is the congregation that not only gratefully remembers God's creating and redeeming work in Jesus Christ, knowing his presence in the breaking of the bread, but also gratefully receives the gift of union with Jesus Christ and Christ's body, and looks forward to the feast of the coming kingdom.

Blessed is the congregation that shares this meal by "discerning the body of Christ" in its manifold oneness, by expressing hospitality for one another with grace and truth (1 Cor 11.29-33), and by reflecting God's hospitality for us in ministries of hospitality in the world.

5. A Blessed and Commissioned People Serving in Jesus' Name

5.1 God's Sending

Blessed is the congregation in which believers are encouraged by God's gracious blessing, and challenged by God's gracious call to proclaim the good news of Jesus and to live as a healing presence in the world in the name of Jesus.

5.2 Daily Worship

Wise is the community that nourishes faith by encouraging daily worship for all believers, with emphasis on reading and meditating on God's Word, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, offering prayers of praise and petition, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, listening for God in "sheer silence", (1Kings 19.12) and living every moment before the face of God.

5.3 Hospitality and Evangelization

Blessed are communities in which hospitality is practiced in both public worship and in personal lives, where strangers and guests are welcomed and embraced, where the poor and marginalized, diseased and forsaken, can find refuge under the shadow of God's wings. Blessed are communities in which all people are invited and challenged

to become disciples of Jesus, receiving baptism and formation in the faith. (cf Mt.28.19)

5.4 Formation for Worship

Wise are congregations that invite and challenge believers of all ages and abilities to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 3.18).

Blessed are congregations that nurture the faithful interplay of scripture, doctrines, practices, and the fruit of the Spirit. Wise are congregations that deepen worship through reflection on and teaching about the meaning of worship practices.

5.5 Worship, Compassion, and Justice

Blessed are congregations whose public worship points to Jesus Christ, and Jesus' message about the kingdom of God. Blessed are congregations whose corporate worship and public witness are consistent with each other and faithful to God's Word,

whose worship and witness are a testimony to the work of the Holy Spirit. Blessed are congregations who seek to receive the liberating work of the Holy Spirit who alone can break through hypocrisy and through whom justice and peace, worship and witness, can truly embrace.

5.6 Maranatha: Worship and Christian Hope

Blessed are congregations who are not content to live only the present moment, but whose worship expresses the groaning of all creation for the fullness of God's reign in Jesus Christ. Blessed are congregations whose life together is summed up in the certain hope of the prayer "Maranatha" "come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22.20).

NAIROBI STATEMENT ON WORSHIP AND CULTURE

This statement is from the third international consultation of the Lutheran World Federation's Study Team on Worship and Culture, held in Nairobi, Kenya, in January 1996. The members of the Study Team represent five continents of the world and have worked together with enthusiasm for three years thus far. The initial consultation, in October 1993 in Cartigny, Switzerland, focused on the biblical and historical foundations of the relationship between Christian worship and culture, and resulted in the "Cartigny Statement on Worship and Culture: Biblical and Historical Foundations." (This Nairobi Statement builds upon the Cartigny Statement; in no sense does it replace it.) The second consultation, in March 1994 in Hong Kong, explored contemporary issues and questions of the relationships between the world's cultures and Christian liturgy, church music, and church architecture and art. The papers of the first two consultations were published as *Worship and Culture in Dialogue*. (1) The papers and statement from the Nairobi consultation were published as *Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity*. (2) In 1994-1995, the Study Team conducted regional research, and prepared reports on that research. Phase IV of the Study commenced in Nairobi and will continue with seminars and other means to implement the learnings of the study, as LWF member churches decide is helpful. The Study Team considers this project to be essential to the renewal and mission of the Church around the world.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Worship is the heart and pulse of the Christian Church. In worship we celebrate together God's gracious gifts of creation and salvation, and are strengthened to live in response to God's grace. Worship always involves actions, not merely words. To consider worship is to consider music, art, and architecture, as well as liturgy and preaching.
- 1.2. The reality that Christian worship is always celebrated in a given local cultural setting draws our attention to the dynamics between worship and the world's many local cultures.
- 1.3. Christian worship relates dynamically to culture in at least four ways. First, it is transcultural, the same substance for everyone everywhere, beyond culture. Second, it is contextual, varying according to the local situation (both nature and culture). Third, it is counter-cultural, challenging what is

contrary to the Gospel in a given culture. Fourth, it is cross-cultural, making possible sharing between different local cultures. In all four dynamics, there are helpful principles which can be identified.

2. Worship as Transcultural

2.1. The resurrected Christ whom we worship, and through whom by the power of the Holy Spirit we know the grace of the Triune God, transcends and indeed is beyond all cultures. In the mystery of his resurrection is the source of the transcultural nature of Christian worship. Baptism and Eucharist, the sacraments of Christ's death and resurrection, were given by God for all the world. There is one Bible, translated into many tongues, and biblical preaching of Christ's death and resurrection has been sent into all the world. The fundamental shape of the principal Sunday act of Christian worship, the Eucharist or Holy Communion, is shared across cultures: the people gather, the Word of God is proclaimed, the people intercede for the needs of the Church and the world, the eucharistic meal is shared, and the people are sent out into the world for mission. The great narratives of Christ's birth, death, resurrection, and sending of the Spirit, and our Baptism into him, provide the central meanings of the transcultural times of the church's year: especially Lent/Easter/Pentecost, and, to a lesser extent, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany. The ways in which the shapes of the Sunday Eucharist and the church year are expressed vary by culture, but their meanings and fundamental structure are shared around the globe. There is one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one Eucharist.

2.2. Several specific elements of Christian liturgy are also transcultural, e.g., readings from the Bible (although of course the translations vary), the ecumenical creeds and the Our Father, and Baptism in water in the Triune Name.

2.3. The use of this shared core liturgical structure and these shared liturgical elements in local congregational worship as well as the shared act of people assembling together, and the shared provision of diverse leadership in that assembly (although the space for the assembly and the manner of the leadership vary) are expressions of Christian unity across time, space, culture, and confession. The recovery in each congregation of the clear centrality of these transcultural and ecumenical elements renews the sense of this Christian unity and gives all churches a solid basis for authentic contextualization.

3. Worship as Contextual

3.1. Jesus whom we worship was born into a specific culture of the world. In the mystery of his incarnation are the model and the mandate for the

contextualization of Christian worship. God can be and is encountered in the local cultures of our world. A given culture's values and patterns, insofar as they are consonant with the values of the Gospel, can be used to express the meaning and purpose of Christian worship. Contextualization is a necessary task for the Church's mission in the world, so that the Gospel can be ever more deeply rooted in diverse local cultures.

- 3.2. Among the various methods of contextualization, that of dynamic equivalence is particularly useful. It involves re-expressing components of Christian worship with something from a local culture that has an equal meaning, value, and function. Dynamic equivalence goes far beyond mere translation; it involves understanding the fundamental meanings both of elements of worship and of the local culture, and enabling the meanings and actions of worship to be "encoded" and re-expressed in the language of local culture.
- 3.3. In applying the method of dynamic equivalence, the following procedure may be followed. First, the liturgical ordo (basic shape) should be examined with regard to its theology, history, basic elements, and cultural backgrounds. Second, those elements of the ordo that can be subjected to dynamic equivalence without prejudice to their meaning should be determined. Third, those components of culture that are able to re-express the Gospel and the liturgical ordo in an adequate manner should be studied. Fourth, the spiritual and pastoral benefits our people will derive from the changes should be considered.
- 3.4. Local churches might also consider the method of creative assimilation. This consists of adding pertinent components of local culture to the liturgical ordo in order to enrich its original core. The baptismal ordo of "washing with water and the Word", for example, was gradually elaborated by the assimilation of such cultural practices as the giving of white vestments and lighted candles to the neophytes of ancient mystery religions. Unlike dynamic equivalence, creative assimilation enriches the liturgical ordo—not by culturally re-expressing its elements, but by adding to it new elements from local culture.
- 3.5. In contextualization the fundamental values and meanings of both Christianity and of local cultures must be respected.
- 3.6. An important criterion for dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation is that sound or accepted liturgical traditions are preserved in order to keep unity with the universal Church's tradition of worship, while progress inspired by pastoral needs is encouraged. On the side of culture, it is understood that not everything can be integrated with Christian worship, but only those elements that are connatural to (that is, of the same nature as) the liturgical

ordo. Elements borrowed from local culture should always undergo critique and purification, which can be achieved through the use of biblical typology.

4. Worship as Counter-cultural

- 4.1. Jesus Christ came to transform all people and all cultures, and calls us not to conform to the world, but to be transformed with it (Romans 12:2). In the mystery of his passage from death to eternal life is the model for transformation, and thus for the counter-cultural nature of Christian worship. Some components of every culture in the world are sinful, dehumanizing, and contradictory to the values of the Gospel. From the perspective of the Gospel, they need critique and transformation. Contextualization of Christian faith and worship necessarily involves challenging of all types of oppression and social injustice wherever they exist in earthly cultures.
- 4.2. It also involves the transformation of cultural patterns which idolize the self or the local group at the expense of a wider humanity, or which give central place to the acquisition of wealth at the expense of the care of the earth and its poor. The tools of the counter-cultural in Christian worship may also include the deliberate maintenance or recovery of patterns of action which differ intentionally from prevailing cultural models. These patterns may arise from a recovered sense of Christian history, or from the wisdom of other cultures.

5. Worship as Cross-cultural

- 5.1. Jesus came to be the Savior of all people. He welcomes the treasures of earthly cultures into the city of God. By virtue of Baptism, there is one Church; and one means of living in faithful response to Baptism is to manifest ever more deeply the unity of the Church. The sharing of hymns and art and other elements of worship across cultural barriers helps enrich the whole Church and strengthen the sense of the communion of the Church. This sharing can be ecumenical as well as cross-cultural, as a witness to the unity of the Church and the oneness of Baptism. Cross-cultural sharing is possible for every church, but is especially needed in multicultural congregations and member churches.
- 5.2. Care should be taken that the music, art, architecture, gestures and postures, and other elements of different cultures are understood and respected when they are used by churches elsewhere in the world. The criteria for contextualization (above, sections 3.5 and 3.6) should be observed.

6. Challenge to the Churches

- 6.1. We call on all member churches of the Lutheran World Federation to undertake

more efforts related to the transcultural, contextual, counter-cultural, and cross-cultural nature of Christian worship. We call on all member churches to recover the centrality of Baptism, Scripture with preaching, and the every-Sunday celebration of the Lord's Supper—the principal transcultural elements of Christian worship and the signs of Christian unity—as the strong center of all congregational life and mission, and as the authentic basis for contextualization. We call on all churches to give serious attention to exploring the local or contextual elements of liturgy, language, posture and gesture, hymnody and other music and musical instruments, and art and architecture for Christian worship so that their worship may be more truly rooted in the local culture. We call those churches now carrying out missionary efforts to encourage such contextual awareness among themselves and also among the partners and recipients of their ministries. We call on all member churches to give serious attention to the transcultural nature of worship and the possibilities for cross-cultural sharing. And we call on all churches to consider the training and ordination of ministers of Word and Sacrament, because each local community has the right to receive weekly the means of grace.

For a link to the text of this statement, go to http://www.worship.ca/docs/lwf_ns.html

John Witvliet: The document is helpful because it calls each of us to give attention to each of these four dimensions of the gospel. To those of us who have pursued cultural relevance with just about all our attention and energy, it calls us to dwell with the transcultural dimensions of the faith and determine which parts of our culture we should resist. To those of us inclined to make universal pronouncements, the documents calls us to see the contextual nature of our own formulations and to learn from formulations from other cultural contexts that may challenge, complement, or enrich our understanding. To those of us with few if any contacts with people unlike ourselves, it invites us to the risky and rewarding prospects of forming cross-cultural friendships. The document challenges every leader, every congregation, and every denomination to not only develop their area of strength, but also their area of weakness.

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<http://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/listing.html?type=tag&search=Culture>

LEADERSHIP WISDOM FOR PASTORS, WORSHIP PLANNERS, AND WORSHIP LEADERS

■ Rev. Kathy Smith

Introduction:

Effective worship planning and leading require effective leadership. As leaders in the church, our primary goal is to bring glory to God and provide benefits to God's people through meaningful worship experiences. In this essay, we will explore six strategies for effective leadership, which can be applied in any context, especially during changing times. These strategies, presented by Rev. Kathy Smith from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, encompass knowing oneself, understanding the congregation, communicating clearly and appropriately, practicing healthy reciprocal leadership, expecting suffering, and staying connected.

Know Yourself:

Effective leadership begins with self-awareness. As leaders, we must examine our personal traits, strengths, and weaknesses. By asking reflective questions about our family background, spiritual gifts, response to anxiety, approach to authority, and work preferences, we gain insight into our leadership style. Honest introspection helps us understand how our personalities influence our leadership decisions and interactions. Engaging in discussions with trusted colleagues or mentors can further enhance our self-awareness.

Know the Congregation:

Understanding the congregation is fundamental to effective leadership. Each congregation has its unique tradition, personality, and history. Leaders must take the time to familiarize themselves with how the congregation deals with change and identify its key leaders and their styles of functioning. Recognizing signs of resistance within the congregation allows us to address potential challenges proactively. By comprehending the congregation's response to change, we can tailor our leadership approach accordingly.

Communicate Clearly and Appropriately:

Clear and effective communication is essential in leadership. Leaders must ensure that the church community is well-informed about their plans and intentions. Gaining early "buy-in" from the congregation is crucial to build trust and support. Regular and transparent communication helps foster enthusiasm among

the worshippers. Leaders should also attentively listen to those who express hesitations or opposition, valuing diverse perspectives within the community.

Practice Healthy Reciprocal Leadership with the 4 C's:

Leadership is not solely the responsibility of leaders; it is a reciprocal process involving both leaders and followers. Effective leadership aims to shape the congregation's corporate life, especially in worship, in alignment with Christian practices faithful to the gospel. Adaptive leadership bridges the gap between the congregation's current reality and its desired values and goals. Understanding the 4 C's—Character, Conviction, Competencies, and Confluence—facilitates the development of trust, vision, healthy responses to change, and a harmonious alignment between leaders, the congregation, the situation, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Expect Suffering:

Leadership, in its essence, often entails suffering. As exemplified by Jesus Christ, true leadership involves humility and service. Leaders should expect challenges and endure them for the right reasons. Embracing the cruciform shape of leadership, where suffering is not avoided but embraced for the greater purpose of serving God and His people, strengthens the character and integrity of leaders.

Stay Connected:

Leaders must stay connected with the governing leaders and staff of the congregation. Encouraging a learning environment within the church fosters lasting change and spiritual renewal. Engaging in study, discussions, and prayer enables leaders to understand the congregation's values, learn from various voices within the community, and develop trust in Christ as the ultimate leader of the church. Staying calm in the face of change and anxiety is vital for effective leadership during times of transition.

Conclusion:

Effective leadership is crucial for pastors, worship planners, and worship leaders in creating meaningful and transformative worship experiences. By knowing ourselves and the congregation, communicating clearly, practicing healthy reciprocal leadership, expecting suffering, and staying connected, we can lead our church communities in ways that honor God and benefit His people. Embracing these strategies will enable us to navigate changing times and adapt our leadership to any context, enhancing the worship experience and drawing closer to God as we serve His people.

BEING AWARE AND PREPARED FOR WORSHIP

■ Dr. Charlotte Witvliet

In today's fast-paced world, where distractions abound, it is crucial for the church and its members to be aware and prepared for worship. As Professor of Psychology, Charlotte Witvliet proposes, the bio-psycho-social view of people can help the church live out its love for God and others. This essay explores key aspects of worship, focusing on love, gratitude, hope, accountability, repentance, and forgiveness, all of which contribute to a deeper and more meaningful worship experience.

Love as the Foundation of Worship:

The foundation of worship lies in the commandments given to us by Jesus. Love plays a central role in worship, as we are called to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31). Recognizing that every person bears God's image (Genesis 1:27) reinforces the importance of showing love and respect to one another as an integral part of the worship experience.

Gratitude and Hope:

Gratitude and hope are essential attitudes in worship. We are encouraged to give thanks in all circumstances, as it reflects God's will for us in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:18). By rejoicing in hope and being patient during tribulations (Romans 12:12), we foster a spirit of optimism and trust in God's providence, enhancing our worship by focusing on the positive aspects of life.

Accountability and Repentance:

Self-reflection is crucial in the process of worship. Psalm 139:24 reminds us to seek God's guidance in examining our hearts and acknowledging any anxieties or offensive behaviors that may hinder our connection with Him. This awareness leads to genuine repentance, exemplified by the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:20-21, 32), where acknowledging and turning away from sin brings about reconciliation and celebration.

Embracing Forgiveness:

Forgiveness is a pivotal aspect of worship. Colossians 3:13 urges us to forgive others just as the Lord forgave us, emphasizing the transformative power of forgiveness in fostering harmonious relationships within the church. Ephesians 4:31-32 calls for letting go of negative emotions and adopting a compassionate and forgiving attitude, mirroring Christ's example of forgiveness towards us.

Conclusion:

To be aware and prepared for worship, we must embrace the bio-psycho-social perspective of psychology to support the church's love for God and others. Love, gratitude, hope, accountability, repentance, and forgiveness form the core components of worship, nurturing a deeper connection with God and strengthening bonds within the Christian community. By internalizing these principles, we can ensure a more fulfilling and spiritually enriching worship experience, paving the way for a more profound understanding of God's love and grace in our lives.

A CALL FOR GOD CENTERED WORSHIP

■ Rev. Amit Karthak

The primary function of the church is to honor God. The congregation of God's people offering a praise sacrifice publicly before God on the Lord's Day exemplifies the God-centeredness of Christian worship. This gathering of believers seeks to encounter the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and to know and glorify Him. True worship is referred to as "worth-ship," which incorporates the New Testament idea of prostration. Other biblical terms for worship mean "to serve," referring to dedicated availability for service to God (e.g., Rom. 12:1).

The Act of Worship today frequently has become either a seeker-sensitive, soul-winning endeavor, or, alternatively, what we know as Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. Firstly, let me summarize what "seeker-sensitive, soul-winning endeavor" implies. It is a bait-and-switch operation. A bait-and-switch strategy is one whereby a person obtains what they desire by coercing others. Their main agenda is to be sensitive to seekers and win souls. Even though being seeker sensitive is not wrong in itself, it can easily detract from the main focus of worship altogether. Secondly, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, depicts God as observing our actions on earth and longing for us to be decent, just, good people. The primary purpose of existence then, is for us to be happy and satisfied with ourselves; God's involvement in a person's existence is unnecessary and unwanted – unless He is required to solve a problem. Being a good, moral person is seen as central to living a good and happy existence. To quote: "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is about belief in a particular kind of God: one who exists, created the world and defines our general moral order, but not one who is particularly personally involved in one's affairs— especially affairs in which one would prefer not to have God involved."¹ By what we have heard and said, we have successfully created our own gods whom we worship and seek to please. We may be failing to realize that we are worshipping our own conceptual gods while being deceived into believing that we are worshipping the true God.

¹ Dame, Christian Smith Dr William R Kenan Jr Professor Of Sociology University Of Notre, and Candidate University Of North Carolina Melina Lundquist Denton Ph.D Chapel Hill. *Soul Searching : The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2005.

Duncan states, “God’s Word itself must supply the principles and patterns and content of Christian worship. True Christian worship is by the book. It is according to Scripture. The Bible alone ultimately directs the form and content of Christian worship.”² As scripture warns us: “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other.” (Matthew 6:24). Terry L. Johnson writes:

When God draws near, he has special business with us. As in Isaiah’s case, he wants to remind us of his greatness and holiness. He wants us to acknowledge that greatness in our praises. He wants to convict us of sin, and he wants us to confess that sin and receive his forgiveness. He wants us to hear his word and obey it. He wants to hear our baptismal and membership vows, and to preside at the discipline of the church. He wants to fellowship with us in the Lord’s Supper. He wants to receive our gifts. He wants us to acknowledge our unity and love for one another as his body. For such purposes, God draws near.³

We cannot seek to save souls or please people and at the same time worship one true God. The purpose of worship is not to gain souls or please people, but to glorify God. Our worship services should be ordered to express devotion to God, not to add numbers or to request from Him anything and everything that our hearts desire. We are to prioritise the edification of the believers through prayer, confession, singing, reading and preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments.

In the last few years, and especially after COVID-19 lockdowns, there has been some confusion about whether Christians must gather together for worship. I have met several individuals who do not think that corporate _ gathering is an essential part of their growth as the children of God. However, it is the place where we gather together as covenant people to worship God. Merker states:

A church is a blood-bought people, devoted to the worship of the one true God. They’re set apart from the world. They’re committed to serving one another and loving their neighbors. And they do all this by assembling together in space and time...It gathers, then scatters, then gathers again. Its members continue to be part of the church throughout the week, as they serve and represent Christ in their homes, their workplaces, their neighborhoods. But a church is never less than a gathering.⁴

² Duncan, Ligon. *Does God Care How We Worship?* P & R Publishing, 2020.

³ Johnson, Terry L. *Worshipping with Calvin*. EP BOOKS, 2014.

⁴ Merker, Matt. *Corporate Worship*. Crossway, 2021.

Meeting together does not use up all of the church's life. Even if a church isn't meeting, it still exists in the way its members help each other and in the way they work together to do good in the world. However, in its purest form, the church does show itself in the act of gathering for worship, and this is what makes it a church. If rightly understood, it is the altar where we must come every time to offer our sacrifices of praise and receive sanctification by God's Spirit and His Word. There is no substitute for congregational worship (Hebs 10:24, 25). The church gathers to worship God. Christians have gathered historically on the Lord's Day for worship and have been empowered by His Spirit to carry out His commands. The focal point of worship is God and seeking His will for us, His people.

In the Reformed tradition, worship centers on God and consists of praising, confessing, imploring, and engaging with His Word. This emphasis is reflected (?exemplified) in the teachings of the Bible which exhort individuals to draw near to God, to glorify His name, kneel before him, sing joyful songs, and offer thanks to Him. Either worship is people-centered or God-centered, but not both. Congregational worship should consist of God-glorifying devotional activities. The Bible teaches us that public worship is greatly to be preferred over private spiritual exercises. Every grateful heart wants God's name to be lifted up publicly—and the more public the better, as the Psalmist say, "Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!" (Psalms 96:3). Psalm 95 says:

Vs. 1-3

Oh come, let us sing to the Lord;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!
For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

Vs. 6.

Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand. (NIV)

In this way worship is God-centered and God-directed, not man-centered. It is God-centered because, “We “draw near” to God in worship (James 4:8–10; Heb. 4:15–16; 10:19–23). We ascribe glory to His name (1 Chron. 16:29; Ps. 96:7; 29:2). It is before Him that we bow down and kneel (Ps. 95:6–7). We come before Him with joyful songs (Ps. 100:2). We sing for joy “to the Lord” (Ps. 95:1–2; 96:1–2). We “give thanks to the Lord” (Ps. 106:1).⁵ We praise Him, confess our sins to Him, and bring our prayers and petitions before Him. He speaks to us from the Bible, meets with us at His table, and we enjoy His fellowship. It is God-directed because, His Word is the final authority on our life and worship as His people. The true God set up the right way to worship Him, and His own revealed will makes it so that He can’t be worshipped in any way that isn’t in the Bible. So, if worship is to be about God, as it should be, it should be led by His Word.

To sum up, one of the most natural things for us to do as believers is gathering together so that we might worship God together. Worship therefore belongs primarily in the congregation and only secondarily to the individual. Sadly, much of our worship remains increasingly focused on the individual’s experience. Worship cannot credibly claim to be about God if the majority of this time is devoted to creating an evangelistic, educational, or emotive experience for its attendees. Worship focuses on both God’s glorification and His presence, drawing near to Him in order to glorify and know Him. True worshippers thirst for God and desire His “dwelling places” and domains, desiring to behold His magnificence, power, and compassion. As we pursue God – as opposed to simply having an experience with Him – we glorify and even enjoy Him. Christian worship requires biblical preaching, congregational singing, biblical readings, and covenantal sacramental practices, these services being conducted in the local languages.

Let us, approach the true and living God via His Word and Spirit and offer Him public praise, confession of sin, thanksgiving, and supplication in “spirit and truth” (John 4:7ff), and with “reverence and awe” (Hebrews 12:28). Incorporating biblical contents is the most important step towards advancing our worship services in a God-centered direction (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; John 17:17).

⁵ Johnson, Terry L. *Worshipping with Calvin*.

BOOK REPORT

STOTT, JOHN. BASIC CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP. INTERVARSITY PRESS, 2006.

■ **Ajay Shrestha (Abraham), M.Div. student**

Stott's Basic Christian Leadership is a comprehensive work on Christian leadership. Today, being a leader is a challenging task. Power struggles arise among Christian leaders, who are called to shepherd others, yet they may tempt to abuse their position of authority. Pastors believe that to preach and minister credibly, they must display confidence and strength. Often, culture rather than Christ shapes our models of leadership. John Stott offers this biblical model of servant leadership as an alternative vision that the apostle Paul exemplified in his service to the Corinthian church. Above all, Stott reassures us that God is still at work despite our human weakness. "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong." 1 Corinthians 1:27. A clear expression of the nature of leadership and the thoughtful study of Scripture we have come to expect from John Stott, this exposition of 1 Corinthians 1–4 offers us a ministry model. Leadership must be rooted in humility and grace, serving the church with the love of Christ.

In the first chapter, Stott finds the ambiguity of the church. The church is sanctified yet still sinful and called to be holy. The church is enriched yet still defective, eagerly awaiting Christ's return. The church is united (the only church of God) yet still unnecessarily divided and called to renounce personality cults. (p 24).

In the second chapter, Stott illustrates that Paul's correspondence to the Corinthians is power through a weakness in three different ways. We have a weak message (Christ crucified), weak preachers (full of fear and trembling), and weak hearers (the socially despised) because God chose a weak instrument (Paul) to bring a weak message (the cross) to weak people (the Corinthian working class). However, through this triple weakness, the power of God was to bring His will to glory. (p 43)

Chapter three teaches the role of the Holy Spirit in four stages: searching, revealing, inspiring, and enlightening. Therefore, we must depend on God and humble ourselves before the Word and the Holy Spirit.

In order to have a healthy, biblical understanding of Christian leadership, we urgently need a healthy, biblical understanding of the church. No one brags about people, but only about the Holy Trinity of God: God the Father, who gives the seed growth; God the Son, who alone is the church's foundation; and God the Holy Spirit, who resides within and sanctifies the church.

Finally, Stott characterizes the four different models of the ministry. Leaders need to have a serving heart and be Christ's servants. They, too, need to be the stewards of the revelation, having enough knowledge to interpret the Scripture faithfully. Leaders need to consider themselves the scum of the earth and be ready to face any challenge or consequence without pursuing popularity with the world but being faithful to the gospel. Spiritual fatherhood is a significant leadership characteristic in caring for the flocks with humility and gentleness.

BOOK REPORT

MASON, ANDY. GOD'S LEADER. 10 PUBLISHING, 2017

■ Alisha Maharjan, M.Div. student.

Mason's book, *God's Leader*, is challenging, energizing, stimulating, and profoundly encouraging. In this book, Mason presents a comprehensive guide to leadership from a spiritual and biblical perspective on Christian leadership, emphasizing the importance of faith, reliance on God, and attributes for effective leadership in the church.

Moses, Daniel, Abraham, King David, and Solomon are examples of God's leaders in the Bible. Church leaders are God's leaders. All of God's leaders have to fight spiritual battles daily, and we need God to win these battles. The battle is between God and Satan. Furthermore, since we are fighting from God's side, we need to depend on God.

Leaders can become discouraged at times or lose confidence in the battle. Mason encourages leaders to keep fighting. Leaders need direction, encouragement, correction, and refreshment from God through His word. God has revealed a picture of leadership in the Bible. Christian leadership is also His idea. God gives victory over the battle to those leaders who rely on Him and His word. God's Word directs God's leaders. A leader leads in God's strength by ordering their lives according to God's Word.

Mason points out eight timeless principles in his book. According to him, God's leaders are word-centered, cross-centered, loving, not lazy, fighters with the power of Christ, faithful in hard times, and godly and prayerful leaders. Mason's straightforward writing style helps the readers understand and apply these principles without any prior theological background. This book is filled with leadership examples from the Bible, giving it a solid biblical foundation for leadership principles.

No leadership book is complete in itself. Even though Mason provides the best spiritual foundation for leadership, it needs more practical guidance on how a leader can apply these principles in their day-to-day life. The book would have been close to a complete handbook for Christian leadership if it had some contextually relevant real-life case studies and stories. However, Mason is worth considering if anyone is looking for a book to understand biblical principles for Christian leadership.

APPENDIX

Additional Resources for Further Exploration

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