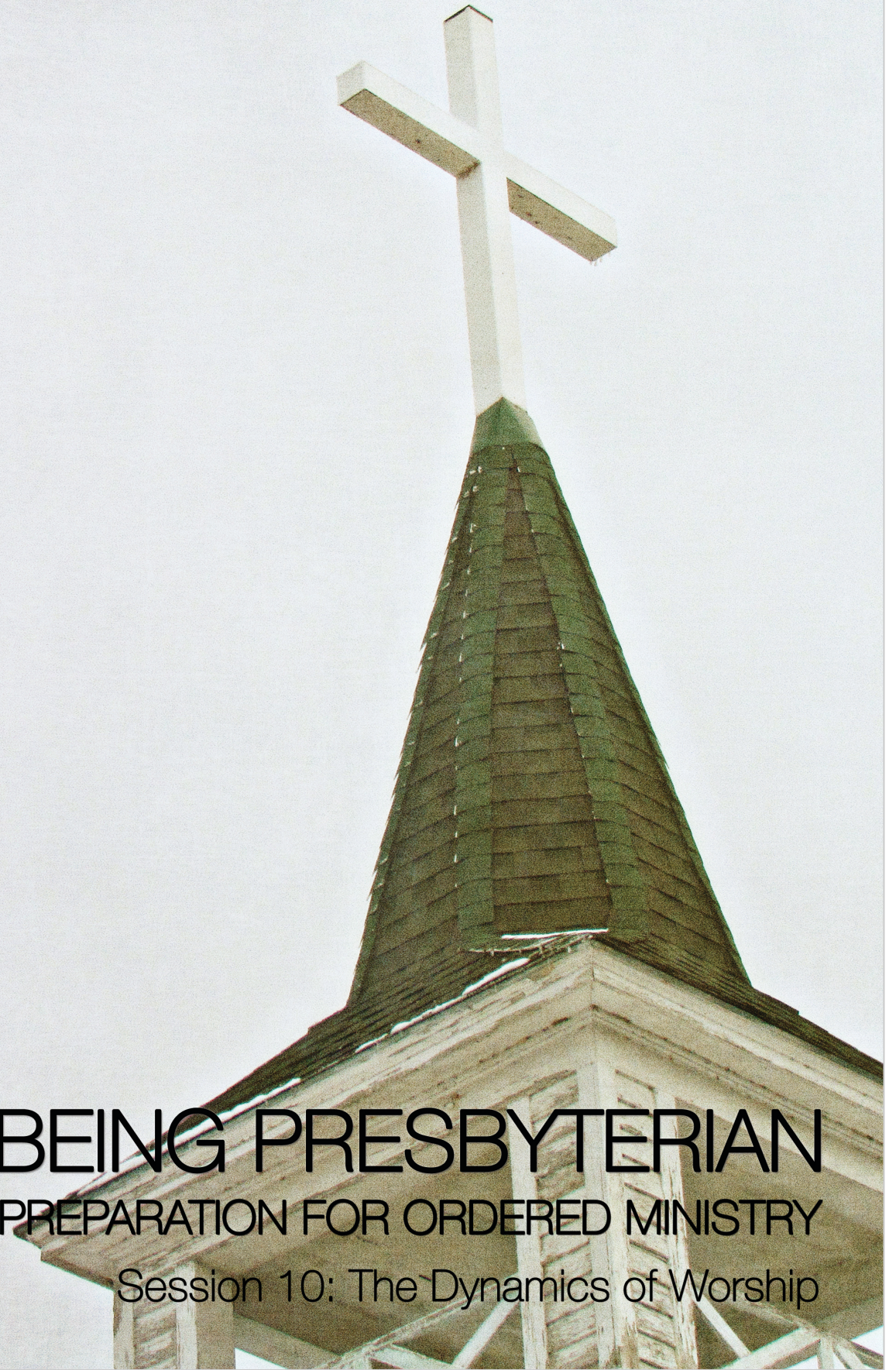


Theoacademy

BEING PRESBYTERIAN
PREPARATION FOR ORDERED MINISTRY
Session 10: The Dynamics of Worship



Theocademy

A ministry of the
Synod of Mid-America

Written by
Jodi Craighow

Edited by
James Gale
Landon Whitsitt

www.theocademy.com

Cover image Creative Commons ©2013 Kate Ter Haar
available online at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/katerha/8508270494>

Getting started

Before watching the video, consider the following questions.

- As you think back, what has been your favorite worship experience? What made this time so special?
- In your opinion, are there “essential elements” to worship? If so, what are they? If not, why not?

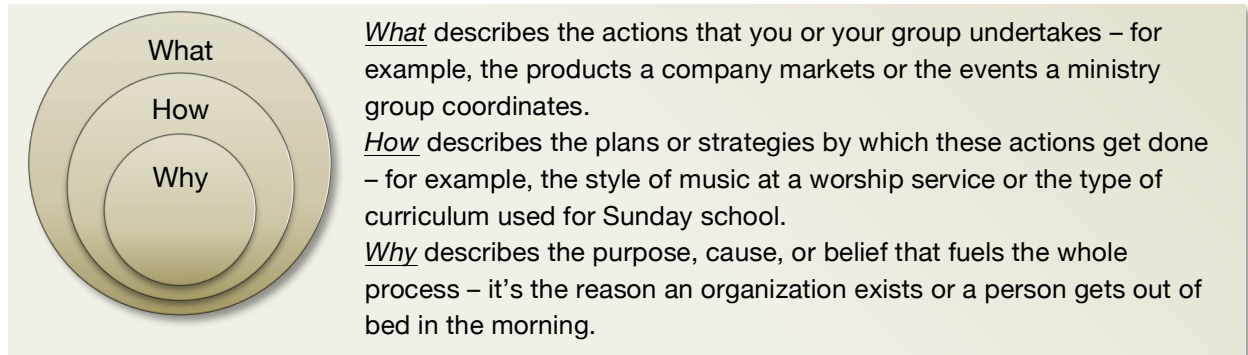
During the video

As you watch the video, answer the following questions.

- How does the PC(USA) Directory for Worship describe Christian worship?
- How does worship help us get a better understanding of God? Of ourselves as humans?
- What role does language play in worship?
- In what different ways does worship help us as Christians to understand (and organize) time?

Why do we worship?

In Session 5, we talked about Sinek's *Why-How-What* leadership model in the context of understanding ourselves as confessional Christians. We can use this same framework when we look at ourselves as



worshiping Christians, as well. Just to refresh your memory, here's an overview of his "Golden Circle:"¹

As is mentioned in the video, the Directory for Worship leads off with the statement that "Christian worship joyfully ascribes all honor, praise, glory, and power to the Triune God." Likewise, the very first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism affirms that our chief purpose (or "end") as humans is "to glorify God and enjoy him forever." So, we can see that for Presbyterians worship is a really big deal – but *why*? Why is it so important to ascribe "honor, praise, glory, and power" to God? In the upcoming sessions we'll talk about *how* God equips and empowers us to worship and *what* that worship looks like, but we need to understand *why* God calls us to worship.

To glorify God...

Our term "worship" comes from the Old English *weorthscipe* – literally, "worth-ship." In his book *The Worship Maze*, Paul Basden defines the term in the following way:

...to worship someone means to recognize and to declare that person's worth. But to worship God pushes 'worth-ship' to its ultimate limits, for true Christian worship calls us to declare the absolute worthiness of God and the relative worthiness of everyone and everything else.
(p. 17)

- **Be.** What aspects of God's character are worthy of "all honor, praise, glory, and power?"

¹ Simon Sinek. *How Great Leaders Inspire Action*. Delivered September 2008 at TEDx Puget Sound. Available online at http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action.

- **Know.** What of God’s wisdom and knowledge are worthy of “all honor, praise, glory, and power?”
- **Do.** What acts of God are worthy of “all honor, praise, glory, and power?”

...and enjoy God forever

Basden’s description of worship doesn’t merely end with declaring God’s worthiness – he adds in that line about “the relative worthiness of everyone and everything else.” Tim Keller, in his book *Jesus the King*, describes this same idea:

Why would a triune God create a world? If he were a unipersonal God, you might say, “Well, he created the world so he can have beings who give him worshipful love, and that would give him joy.” But the triune God already had that – and he received love within himself in a far purer, more powerful form than we human beings can ever give him. So why would he create us? There’s only one answer. He must have created us not to get joy but to give it. He must have created us to invite us into the dance, to say: If you glorify me, if you center your entire life on me, if you find me beautiful for who I am in myself, then you will step into the dance, which is what you are made for. You are made not just to believe in me or to be spiritual in some general way, not just to pray and get a bit of inspiration when things are tough. You are made to center everything in your life on me, to think of everything in terms of your relationship to me. To serve me unconditionally. That’s where you’ll find your joy. (p. 7)

- Imagine that you’ve baked an amazing cake, or taken a beautiful photo, or written a fantastic story. What happens to *you* if you share it with your friends and they like it as much as you do?
- What, then, do you think happens when we enjoy God’s creation and character as much as God does?

- In what ways might we “step into the dance” and fully enjoy God?

Worship's transforming effects

As Paul tells the believers in Corinth, “...all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:18) In other words, when we as God's image-bearers come into God's presence in reverence and worship, our family resemblance becomes more and more apparent. We often joke that old married couples start looking like each other after a while – but the same is true when it comes to the effects of our worship. We can't help but be changed when we spend prolonged face-to-face time with God. All the way back in Session 1, we talked about *Be, Know, and Do*, the three domains of effective leadership – and if we take a close look, true worship affects all three.

- **Be.** Read through the list of God's characteristics that you came up with in the previous section. In what ways has worship helped you become more like that?

- **Know.** **How has worship given you a deeper understanding of who God is and/or who you are?**

- **Do.** Has a worship experience ever helped you to gain a clearer vision of God's calling on your life? If so, what has God called you to do, and how have you acted upon it?

Personal reflection

After the session, complete the following statements.

