

MEETING GOD IN THE GATHERING OF HIS PEOPLE

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1. **CONTEMPORARY HUNGER FOR SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE**
 - a. **New Age religion**
 - The LA 'dance trance'
 - Return to the 'old gods' in the UK
 - b. **Experiencing God through ritual, asceticism and silence**
 - An old idea (Col. 2:16-23)
 - The medieval Mass
 - The experience of the 'numinous'.¹
 - c. **Experiencing God through singing and charismatic gifts**
 - A new supernaturalism and an expectation of encountering God.
 - A passion to see hearts engaged and 'to bring people into a powerful time of relationship with our living God'.²
 - 'Wimber's five-phase model for worship has the goal of intimacy with God'.³

¹ R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (1926), regarded the Holy as ultimately beyond apprehension and conceptualisation, though he thought that aesthetic experience played a part in human experience of the divine.

² J. Horness, 'Contemporary Music-driven Worship', in P. E. Engle & P. A. Basden (ed.), *Exploring the Worship Spectrum 6 Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 102.

2. ENGAGING WITH GOD THROUGH HIS WORDS

a. Luther and the Reformation

- **Christians commune with God through his own self-revelation**
- **The reading and teaching of Scripture must dominate and control all other activities in the assembly.**

b. God's words and congregational ministry

- **A corporate engagement with God**

Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19-20

1 Cor. 14:24-5

- **We should not make artificial distinctions between 'the vertical' and 'the horizontal' dimensions to our gatherings**

1 Cor. 10:16-17

1 Cor. 11:17-34

c. The work of the Holy Spirit

- **Enabling us to relate to God as 'Abba, Father' (Rom. 8:14-16; Gal. 4:6)**

³ D. Williams, 'Charismatic Worship', in P. E. Engle & P. A. Basden (ed.), *Exploring the Worship Spectrum 6 Views*, 143. The five phases are: a call to worship, engagement, exaltation, adoration, intimacy.

- **Bearing witness to the exalted Christ** (Jn. 15:26-7; 16:12-15), enabling us to confess Christ and glorify him (1 Cor. 12:3)
- **Convicting the world about sin and righteousness and judgment** (Jn. 16:8-11; 1 Cor. 14:24-5)
- **Providing believers with spiritual illumination and wisdom** (Eph. 1:17; Phil. 3:15)
- **Enabling us to exercise the gifts of the exalted Christ with love for one another** (1 Corinthians 12-14; Eph. 11-16)
- **Renewing and transforming us in the likeness of Christ** (2 Cor. 3:18; Tit. 3:4-6)

3. UNDERSTANDING AND PURSUING EDIFICATION

- a. **Edification/building** (*oikodomein, oikodomia*) involves founding, maintaining and advancing the church in God's way.
- b. **Jesus is building his church through the preaching of the gospel and the work of his Spirit**

Matt. 16:18

Eph. 2:19-22

1 Cor. 3:9-17

- c. **Jesus is building his church through the ministry he enables us to have to one another (cf. Eph. 4:11-16)**

- d. **Self-edification falls short of the primary goal of Christian assembly, which is edification of the body (cf. 1 Corinthians 14)**

4. CORPORATE WORSHIP AND EVERYDAY DEVOTION TO GOD

At the heart of Christian gatherings there should be a concern to **proclaim and apply the truths of the gospel**, to keep the focus on **God's initiative**, to stimulate and maintain **saving faith**, and to elicit **appropriate expressions of that faith** in the assembly and in everyday life.

- a. **Congregational worship should be 'a point of concentration and special realization' of the worship of everyday life (H. Ridderbos).**
- b. **Church is not simply a means to an end - a preparation for worship and witness in the world - but 'the focus-point of that whole wider worship which is the continually repeated self-surrender of the Christian in obedience of life' (C.E.B. Cranfield).**
- c. **The locus of life and worship should be *God and the Lamb in the heavenly sanctuary* (cf. Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-25; 12:22-9; Revelation 4-22).**