

GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER: LUTHERAN WORSHIP, EVANGELICAL WORSHIP, AND THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN PASTOR

By Paul M. Meier

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INTRODUCTION

It's the gloomy winter of 1563. After decades of debate, the Council of Trent is finally drawing to a close. The last item on the agenda: Should this new-fangled style of music called *polyphony*—music in which several different voice parts are heard simultaneously—be allowed in worship? The discussion soon unravels into a heated dispute. One side is all for the latest, popular styles, with none of this old, monotonous monophonic music. The other side won't stand for change. After all, if chant was good enough for Pope Gregory and all the saints, then, by Jesu, it should be good enough for us! The deliberations are about to get ugly when a timid young man by the name of Giovanni Pierluigi from the town of Palestrina reluctantly offers for consideration his latest polyphonic work. It's the *Missa Papae Marcelli*, which will turn out to be Palestrina's most famous work. Not only is it utterly gorgeous but it's also so skillfully written that you can understand every single syllable. The Council relents, decides that polyphony is not the work of the devil, and the history of Western music as we know it—from Bach to the Beatles—is assured.

It would be a great story if it were true. Hans Pfitzner (1869-1949) portrayed it this way in his obscure 1917 opera, *Palestrina*. But, truth be told, polyphonic music was saved because of the viselike pressure put on the Council by the music-loving Emperor Ferdinand I, not because the prelates were impressed with Palestrina's work.

Nearly 450 years later we're having similar worship debates, though this time it's fact, not fiction. One side, the "contemporary" camp—largely made up of *Evangelicals*—promotes worship that fits with the popular venues of the day, endorses keeping worship simple, and turns its back on the "stodginess" of past centuries of service and song. The other side, the "traditionalists"—particularly the confessional *Lutherans*—desires to stay the course and shuns the thought of "dumbing down" worship at the expense of watering down the Gospel.

Who will prevail? Which is the right way? Is there only one right way to worship? Can there be a present-day Palestrina to bridge the gap? And, if so, can that Palestrina be the *Evangelical Lutheran pastor*?

This paper is entitled *Getting to the HEART of the Matter: Lutheran Worship, Evangelical Worship and the Evangelical Lutheran Pastor*. First we'll briefly discuss what's at the heart of Lutheran worship. Then we'll compare and contrast that with worship in Evangelical circles. And finally, like good little WELS pastors, we'll ask with Martin Luther: "What does this mean?"—for us and for our ministries.

DEFINING TERMS

Before we get into specifics, it's best to define terms so that there is no confusion. When I'm discussing *Evangelicals*, by that I'm referring to the wide spectrum of conservative Protestant denominations, generally Calvinist or Arminian in theology. When I talk about the Evangelical Lutheran pastor, by *Evangelical* I define it by its proper meaning of someone who focuses on the Gospel, or *evangel*, of Christ crucified and risen.

THE HEART OF LUTHERAN WORSHIP

Lutheran worship is steeped in theology. There is an historic saying in Lutheranism that the church stands or falls on the doctrine of Justification. Therefore, Article IV of the Augsburg Confession, “Concerning Justification,” states:

Likewise, they teach that human beings cannot be justified before God by their own powers, merits, or works. But they are justified as a gift on account of Christ through faith when they believe that they are received into grace and that their sins are forgiven on account of Christ, who by his death made satisfaction for our sins. God reckons this faith as righteousness (Rom. 3[:21-26] and 4[:5]).

This chief doctrine saturates everything the Lutheran church does in worship. This is evident through the marks of the church: the means of grace, that is, the gospel in Word and sacrament. The Apology to the Augsburg Confession makes this clear when it states that the church “has its external marks so that it can be recognized, namely, the pure teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the gospel of Christ” (AP VII & VII, 5).

When the gospel is proclaimed in its truth and purity and the sacraments rightly administered in Lutheran worship, everything else will naturally fall into place. In fact, all these “externals” are adiaphora. Concerning such church practices, the Epitome of the Formula of Concord states:

1. We unanimously believe, teach, and confess that ceremonies or ecclesiastical practices that are neither commanded nor forbidden in God’s Word, but have been established only for good order and decorum, are in and of themselves neither worship ordained by God nor a part of such worship. “In vain do they worship me” with human precepts (Matt. 15[:9]).
2. We believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every place and at every time has the authority to alter such ceremonies according to its own situation, as may be most useful and edifying for the community of God.
3. Of course, all frivolity and offense must be avoided, and special consideration must be given particularly to those who are weak in faith.
5. We also believe, teach, and confess that no church should condemn another because the one has fewer or more external ceremonies not commanded by God than the other has, when otherwise there is unity with the other in teaching and all the articles of faith and in the proper use of the holy sacraments, according to the well-known saying, “Dissimilarity in fasting is not to disrupt the unity in faith” (FC Ep X,3-5,7).

And yet, despite such freedom in worship practices, for the sake of good order the Lutheran church over time has offered and applied various guidelines, still biblical in scope, whereby in one’s community and culture the gospel will still be proclaimed and the sacraments correctly administered. A set of four principles comes from the pen of Martin Luther himself:

1. Let the gospel [the good news about Jesus Christ] be the most important part of worship.
2. Let the people participate in worship.
3. Let all of God’s gifts be used in worship.
4. Let the experience of the church be honored at worship.

Another set emphasizes the dimensions of Lutheran worship in which we can employ Luther’s principles.

1. Downward: Worship is a profound *encounter* with God and his manifold gifts to his people.
2. Upward: Worship is an *expression* of our faith or a response to what God has done for us in Christ.
3. Inward: Worship as *education* teaches the faith and nurtures the faithful.
4. Outward: Worship as *evangelism* expresses our faith so others may see.

These principles and dimensions are set within the framework of a liturgy, or order of service, when the good news that Christ died for my sins, once for all (1 Pe 3:18), is conveyed through Word and sacrament.

Such liturgical Lutheran worship has often been criticized for failing to adapt to its changing and challenging cultural surroundings, and for being boring. It has been charged with antiquarianism, boring punch-the-time-clock pacing in worship, and a stubborn insistence on bells, smells, and chancel-prancing while a spiritually hungry world quietly starves to death. If the church continues to insist on worshiping in a language no one understands, with music no one can sing and services no one wants to attend, then the church will die an entirely justified death. “Father McKenzie,” sang the Beatles, “writing the words of a sermon that no one will hear.”

Sadly, the Sunday worship of many a traditional church has become something of a Chevy Bel Air: it starts every time and gets you safely from here to there, but the heart never races and the spine rarely tingles. On the other hand, such worship practices properly point the Way to salvation. Craig Parton, a trial lawyer in California who spent seven years on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ before becoming a confessional Lutheran, describes the benefits and blessings of worship in the Lutheran church:

I found Christ crucified as the center and substance of Lutheran worship. I found a doctrine of the Christian life that flowed out of the forgiveness of sins and that let God do the saving and the sanctifying from start to finish. In short, I found the Gospel for me as a Christian. I found what it really meant to be evangelical.

In Lutheranism I indeed found the evangel—the Good News—as the focus of its prayed, spoken, and sung confession. Yes, I found some things I thought were foreign additions—vestments, altars, candles, pipe organs, corporate confession of sin, kneeling benches, old hymns, written prayers, and a “liturgy” (whatever that was) conducted according to an equally unheard of “church year.” But I also found Christ at the center of all of it and the reason for all of it.

THE HEART OF EVANGELICAL WORSHIP

While Lutheran worship is steeped in theology, Evangelical worship, however, is not. Oh, yes, they have some theology. But, according to Harold Senkbeil,

Evangelicalism is very difficult to confine within one unified theological system; a wide range of beliefs come under its umbrella. From the old-fashioned, southern style Bible thumping of Jerry Falwell through the sophisticated erudition of Robert Schuler’s religious pop psychology, American Evangelicalism presents a bewildering array of doctrinal emphases.

Also, according to Parton, *theology* is a dirty word in Evangelicalism. It has become akin to a badge of honor in

certain megachurch Evangelical circles to have a doctrinal statement that can fit on a 3x5-inch card or, better yet, be uttered in one sentence (e.g., “The Bible is God’s Word, and Jesus died for my sins.”). Much more detail is seen as becoming overly picky about largely irrelevant details (unless, that is, the details are about creation or the end times).

Modern American Evangelicalism has its roots in 17th century Pietism, 18th century Methodism and 19th century Frontier Revivalism. Evangelicals gleaned from Pietism their emphasis on *subjectivity*: “I will praise God for what He has done *for me*.” They borrowed John Wesley’s methods to leading a *sanctified life*—the “how to’s” of godly living. And they took from Revivalism a focus on *conversion*—“I have decided to follow Christ.” Senkbeil notes:

Evangelical theology today has many positive features: its focus on the gospel of Jesus Christ, its view of the authority and reliability of the Holy Scriptures and its emphasis on saving souls. However, confessional Lutherans have difficulty with other elements in today’s Evangelicalism: its unscriptural emphasis on personal decision in conversion, its spotlight on human experience instead of God’s action, and its skepticism about the power of the sacraments.

Parton relates his Evangelical upbringing:

Here is what I was taught: God the Holy Spirit had been handed the baton by God the Son. God the Son did the critical work in the past for sinners in dying on the cross and, more important, was resurrected and was now permanently in heaven listening to our prayers. Thus, the empty cross was an appropriate icon in the Evangelical churches I attended in those decades. Christ wasn’t here anymore—He was in heaven reigning victoriously. Reigning victoriously was also what I was supposed to be doing. The Holy Spirit, however, was in this world and works now. God the Father had high expectations for me that could all be accomplished through obedient cooperation with the Holy Spirit. A sanctified “higher life” (through what Campus Crusade called the practice of “spiritual breathing”) was awaiting me if I would learn to “yield.” By my decision to receive Christ I got the engine started on a cold January morning. But the car was pretty well stuck in the garage until a second decision to walk in the Spirit each moment of each day threw the car into gear. The hope was that the gear would be drive. My personal experience showed me to be more often in reverse or at best in neutral.

Senkbeil astutely observes that the heart and core of Evangelicalism is not its doctrine but its practice.

To be an Evangelical in America today is largely a question of mindset and style of personal piety. Evangelical identity is established more on the basis of which books are read, which religious terms are laced into conversation, and what language is used in public prayer than on what specific doctrines are believed. Nearly twenty years ago, long before Evangelicalism had climbed from notoriety to acceptance, Bruce Shelly observed: “Evangelical Christianity is not a religious organization. It is not primarily a theological system. It is more of a mood, a perspective and an experience” (Bruce L. Shelly, *Evangelicalism in America*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967).

Because of this emphasis of daily routine over doctrine, Parton confesses to, during his time as an Evangelical, having an improper distinction between Law and Gospel and thus an improper motivation for Christian living.

A rhythm to what I was being taught was developing. As an unbeliever I had heard about my sin and my need for a Savior. As soon as I believed the Gospel, however, I quickly heard the list of jobs for me to do around the house. This rhythm of directing me immediately back to works after hearing the Gospel and the forgiveness of sins (i.e., a rhythm of Law-Gospel-Law) was my daily diet received from Evangelicalism's best pulpits and conference centers...

I experienced what happens when Law and Gospel are not understood and thus not distinguished. My Christian life, truly begun in grace, was now being "perfected" on the treadmill of the Law. My pastors did not end their sermons by demanding that I recite the rosary or visit Lourdes that week in order to unleash God's power; instead, I was told to yield more, pray more, care about unbelievers more, read the Bible more, get involved with the church more, and love my wife and kids more. Not until I came to the Lutheran Reformation some 20 years later, did I understand that my Christian life had come to center around my life, my obedience, my yielding, my Bible verse memorization, my prayers, my zeal, my witnessing, and my sermon application. I had advanced beyond the need to hear the cross preached to me anymore. Of course, we all know Jesus had died for our sins, and none of us would ever argue that we were trying to "merit" salvation. But something had changed. God was a Father all right, but a painfully demanding one. I was supposed to show that I had cleaned up my life and was at least grateful for all the gifts that had been bestowed.

From a Reformed point of view, Evangelicals do not understand the sacraments, either. As a result, they do not hold them in high regard like Lutherans do. Parton explains:

From my first days as an Evangelical I learned that Baptism was *our* act of obedience. The Lord's Supper was a memorial of what went on that somber Thursday night. We were taught that wine was not a good idea since grape juice was more likely used (reasoning that our Lord would not condone strong drink on such a solemn occasion, and we mustn't tempt alcoholics, never mind the fact that grape juice as a pasteurized, unfermented beverage was unknown until the nineteenth century). More important, since this was only a memorial and symbolic act, the actual elements used were flexible. What was in your heart was more important than what you put in your mouth. Of central importance was the obedience you showed when reenacting these "ordinances." The flow of these acts was from earth to heaven—"sacrificial."

And yet the Evangelicals have shown that they are not only sensitive but also sympathetic to the culture around them. They have been highly innovative when it comes to media—radio, television and now the internet. One of the key avenues of Evangelical outreach has been through what is known as CCM, or Christian Contemporary Music.

So how does this translate into Evangelical worship? With an emphasis on personal experience and a zeal for evangelism—plus a great marketing strategy, using Hollywood tactics to "sell" salvation—the "seeker service" was born. Devised by Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, a northwest suburb of Chicago, "regular" worship for the faithful was relegated to Wednesday nights, while an innovative service designed to reach the unchurched/unbeliever was scheduled for Sunday morning. It has since been copied by numerous churches of various denominations. This seeker-oriented style of worship has tremendous appeal to not only the visitor but also to the member; and especially to young people who respond favorably to the exciting visuals, swift pacing, and upbeat music. Elements of this new style include:

Worship leaders have replaced music directors. Keyboards have replaced pipe organs. Casual worship teams have replaced robed choirs. Overhead projectors have replaced hymnals. Ten to twelve minutes of congregational singing is now 30 to 49 minutes or even more. Standing during worship is the rule, although a great amount of freedom for body language prevails.

Despite its radical changes in musical style, this is not the chief cause for concern. While there may be spotlights on the singers on stage,

the spotlight in much of Evangelical worship is not on God, but on the feelings aroused within the worshiper. The “praise the Lords” of its enthusiastic worship are often followed by a rhetorical question: “Don’t it make you feel good?” Having borrowed the musical styles of our culture, Evangelicalism has (perhaps inadvertently) borrowed its attitude as well. Worship has now become entertainment.

Thomas Long characterizes Evangelical worship this way:

The great worship heritage of the church, the result of centuries of carefully finding just the right patterns and words and music to praise God aright, has been thrown over for a fast-food, historically ignorant, theologically vacuous massaging of the worship consumerist impulses of our culture. Much that passes for contemporary worship is simply bad music, empty words, and superficial entertainment—in short, MTV at prayer.

Because of its glitz over gospel, Craig Parton warns:

An Evangelical worship style, however, cannot properly contain Lutheran substance. It is like serving an excellent and well-aged cabernet sauvignon in a Styrofoam coffee cup. The result of trying to blend Evangelical “style” with Lutheran “substance” inevitably means the loss of Lutheranism. Lutheranism is oriented around the centrality of the Gospel in the ordered service of Word and Sacrament. It focuses on the objectivity of the Gospel and a Christ who comes to us from outside of us primarily to save as we live lives of daily repentance. Evangelical worship does not look to the ancient worship of the church; church history is largely ignored and distrusted. It is subjective in focus, using the Gospel as something the unbeliever needs while using the Law to whip Christians into shape. It fits easily into a market-driven economy based on the felt needs of the chief religious consumer—the most holy and adored Baby Boomer.

There is much to commend in Evangelical circles. Parton writes: “The grandeur of American Evangelicalism rests in its zeal for the lost... With this evangelistic zeal comes the highest regard for Scripture as the inerrant Word of God.” And Senkbeil adds: “It is not difficult to see the attraction of Evangelical theology for people today who are struggling with anxiety and isolation. In the Evangelical family, many have found instant community, personal worth and acceptance.”

But compared to what Lutherans believe, teach and confess concerning the theology and practice of worship, there are grave differences. Sanctification takes precedence over Justification; “What Would Jesus Do?” is the mantra instead of “What Did Jesus Do!” Word and sacrament are replaced with Word and personal obedience. Concerning Luther’s worship principles, yes, the people participate by clapping along to the music and singing the choruses and raising their hands in prayer. And, yes, all of God’s gifts are certainly used with

lights and big drums taking center stage. But that's where the similarities end. Center stage is the individual worshiper's feelings manipulated by those lights and big drums. The Gospel that should dominate worship speaks volumes about God as Sovereign and very little about God as Savior. And, as already stated, in worship the historic voice of the church is silent. Just as the college students of the '60s used to chant, "Never trust a person over 30," so now these same people—the Baby Boomers—are chanting, "Never trust a song or a creed over 30." Likewise, the young people of today's trivial, throw-away society tune into a worship song they like and listen to it until the next popular one comes along; the past praises are forgotten.

Regarding comparison to the dimensions of Lutheran worship, Evangelical worship is a little bit better. But there are also some noticeable digressions. Encountering God is key, yet it's more about feeling the presence of God than about listening to what God is saying to you. Expressing one's praises is also a vital component to Evangelical worship. And worship as evangelism is even more emphasized in Evangelical circles than among the Lutherans. But rarely have Evangelical Christians been educated and edified in their faith that they have transitioned from the seeker service of Sunday morning to the believer's worship on Wednesday evening—as well as into the life of the church.

In 2007, Willow Creek—the same church that spawned the seeker services—released a short book entitled *Reveal: Where Are You?* The book contains the results of a comprehensive study that Willow Creek conducted among their own members and among members of other churches that use their model. In a nutshell, the survey results showed that heavy involvement in the church programs and activities of Willow Creek did not necessarily translate to spiritual growth and maturity. Findings like these have caused the church leaders to stand up and admit, "We made a mistake."

So then the question begs to be asked: Why have Lutherans for the past two decades or so been incorporating the crassest and most discredited aspects of Evangelicalism—just as Evangelicals themselves are jettisoning them? Is it pride, envy or greed? Is it because their churches are growing and ours aren't, so for a "quick fix" we do exactly what they do and expect it to work? Or is it because we are tempted to become a part of this world rather than simply in it (Jn 15:19)?

In Neil Postman's groundbreaking book entitled, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, he writes how our television-based culture—especially the Evangelicals who have embraced that medium—has degraded religion:

Religious programs are filled with good cheer. They celebrate affluence. Their featured players become celebrities. Though their messages are trivial, the shows have high ratings, or rather, *because* their messages are trivial, the shows have high ratings.

I believe I am not mistaken in saying that Christianity is a demanding and serious religion. When it is delivered as easy and amusing, it is another kind of religion altogether...

As a member of the Commission on Theology, Education and the Electronic Media of the National Council of Churches of Christ, I am aware of the deep concern among "established" Protestant religions about the tendency toward refashioning Protestant services so that they are more televisable. It is well understood at the National Council that the danger is not that religion has become the content of television shows but that television shows may become the content of religion.

Professor Leland Ryken of Wheaton College once observed: "Earlier in this century someone claimed that we work at our play and play at our work. Today the confusion has deepened: we worship our work, work at our play, and play at our worship." To this T. David Gordon adds the comment:

His observation is truer now than when he first made it, as a new generation now witnesses a new

oxymoron for the first time: playful worship. We cannot deformatize or deritualize worship without turning it into play. But once we have done so, once we have removed those forms and rituals that once conveyed significance in worship, it is not all surprising that we employ less formal music in those meetings. If we are willing to tolerate “Worship Lite,” we should have no objections to “Music Lite.” The other side of the coin is equally true: if we employ “Music Lite,” we will inevitably have “Worship Lite.”

Gordon concludes his book, *Why Johnny Can't Sing Hymns*, with this clarion call:

Johnny hasn't been persuaded that hymn-singing is *wrong*; Johnny simply cannot *relate* to anything that doesn't sound contemporary. He cannot shed his cultural skin, the skin of contemporaneity, of triviality, of paedocentrism. He thinks he “prefers” contemporary worship music to other forms, but in reality he prefers contemporaneity as a trout prefers water; it is the only environment he knows. In roughly twenty-five years, Christian worship has gone from being serious to being casual—not because a case has been cogently or theologically argued that “casual” is more appropriate to a meeting with God, but because the culture itself has become casual, and the church has chosen not to resist the cultural inertia. David Letterman doesn't take anything seriously—why should we?

The church's challenge, in such a setting, is to decide whether it wishes to be complicit in the impoverishment of the human experience, or whether it is willing to be a voice crying in the wilderness, at least once weekly providing an alternative to an impoverished culture.

THE HEART OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN PASTOR

So what is the Evangelical Lutheran pastor, “a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Tm 2:15), to do? Ignore the religious vitality of the Evangelicals and remain comfortable under the blanket of traditional Lutheran worship at the risk of presiding over stale services? Or jump on the Evangelical bandwagon at the risk of losing one's Lutheran orthodoxy? Can't it be both in the proper amounts? Jesus said, “Worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:24). Can that not mean that we can take the meat and potatoes of doctrinal purity within our Lutheran worship and salt it with some of the excitement and fervor of Evangelical worship?

Marva Dawn's words may help bridge the gap:

It seems strange to me that churches fight over styles and hastily reject the Church's heritage without investigating its riches or refuse to use global music and new songs without exploring their possibilities. . . . To be biblical, worship must let the classical faith (already wrestled through) constantly question the contextual to keep it rooted in the Church. If worship is only contextual or utilizes only new songs, then the Gospel's uniqueness is easily lost in cultural trappings, and it is more difficult to form Christians who live any differently from their neighbors. As one wise sage has observed, the church that marries the spirit of this age will be a widow in the next.

On the other hand, the contextual perpetually probes the classical to keep it really biblical and not merely sentimentally traditionalistic (rather than traditional). We must keep in mind Jaroslav Pelikan's famous distinction between good tradition, which is “the living faith of the dead,” and destructive traditionalism, which is “the dead faith of the living.”

Likewise, Mark Noll encourages:

Lutherans do have much to offer to the wider American community, but only if they can fulfill two conditions. First, to contribute as Lutherans in America, Lutherans must remain authentically Lutherans. Second, to contribute as Lutherans in America, Lutherans must also find out how to speak Lutheranism with an American accent. Falling short of either condition means that, though Lutherans as religious individuals may contribute much to Christianity in America, there will be no distinctively *Lutheran* contribution. The task is to steer between the Scylla of assimilation without tradition and the Charybdis of tradition without assimilation. If such skillful navigation could take place, the resources that Lutherans offer to Americans, especially to other Protestants, would be of incalculable benefit.

Now, how can we ministers of the gospel do this without becoming overzealous organizers on the one extreme and pastoral prunes on the other?

- *Pray.* “Pray continually” (1 Th 5:17).
- *Know your Savior.* “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2).
- *Know your calling.* “So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God” (1 Cor 4:1).
- *Know yourself.* “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you” (Ro 12:3).
- *Know your people.* “You whom I love and long for, my joy and crown” (Php 4:1).
- *Know your community/culture.* “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.” (1 Cor 9:22).
- *Know your brothers in ministry and trust them.* “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Php 2:1-4).
- *Establish the bond of trust in the face of change and potential conflict.* “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ep 4:2,3).
- *Do worship well.* “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31).
- *Be discerning.* “‘Everything is permissible’—but not everything is beneficial. ‘Everything is permissible’—but not everything is constructive” (1 Cor 10:23).
- *Learn from experience.* “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Ro 15:4).
- *Educate.* “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Ti 3:16,17).
- *Edify.* “‘Sir’, they said, ‘we would like to see Jesus’” (Jn 12:21).
- *Emphasize mission work.* “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Mt 9:37,38).
- *Emphasize the congregation is a family.* “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the

habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb 10:25).

- *Involve others.* “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Ro 12:4,5).
- *Proclaim Law and Gospel.* “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Ro 6:23).
- *Preach Sanctification in the proper context of following Justification.* “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ep 2:8-10).
- *Be faithful.* “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful” (1 Cor 4:2).
- *Praise the Lord!* “Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col 3:17).

CONCLUSION

In the words of Marva Dawn:

We live in a culture starved for genuine hope. Many people find their lives disoriented and hopeless as they feel threatened by many nations’ militarism, overwhelmed by consumerist propaganda, frenzied by technological overkill, bereft of wholehearted relationships. Life often seems futureless.

Worship dare not be glib or superficial, ought not to dispense false assurances or manipulate emotions. Instead, genuine worship always offers the true hope of the Gospel—neither entertainment nor escapism, neither diversion nor another sort of consumerism, but the terrible truth about sin and evil and the even greater truth (in all its glory) that on the cross and through the empty tomb Christ has been victorious over iniquity, injury, and death.

Let every voice, every instrument, every new dimension in the world of sound be tuned for the Lord’s praise!

*And did not Jesus sing a song that night
When utmost evil strove against the light?
Then let us sing, for
whom he won the fight: Alleluia!*

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