

LESSON 11

THE LEADERSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN WORSHIP

Introduction

"Opportunity only knocks once." Having acknowledged the inner authority of your particular leadership style in the previous lesson, it is my hope to join with you in submitting to the higher authority of the Holy Spirit as our journey begins the homeward stretch. Your participation in this study may be the opportunity that God is using to help you adjust or refine your leadership style in terms of more effectively planning and implementing worship experiences. The way in which God chooses to knock on the door of your heart is by means of the persuasive power of the Holy Spirit. This opportunity may not confront you again unless you continue to remain open to what God is trying to reveal to you as a fellow traveller on the path towards more effective ministry.

Karl Barth exclaims: "Christian worship is the most momentous, the most glorious action that can take place in human life."¹ It is celebration at its highest! For worship to be celebration it must not only be well-planned but it must also be the vehicle for Spirit-led communion with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

It may seem that there has been a one-sided emphasis up to this point on the many human resources involved in preparing for worship. A listing of those who contribute to making worship effective could be quite lengthy. The service must be planned, the sermon and music prepared, the building cleaned and made ready and all auxiliary materials at hand. Everyone from the minister to the caretaker has a significant part in preparing for the coming worship services. Each person should carry out his or her responsibility with a sense of expectancy in helping the congregation encounter and praise God.

As important as each person's role may be, worship is obviously incomplete without the empowering of the Holy Spirit. The same God who is praised on Sunday is the motivator of the preparation made during the week. It is the Holy Spirit who breathes life into the preparation. Without the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit, the best preparation will be ineffective.

It is indispensable that worship leaders recognize the predominant role of the Holy Spirit in

¹ Karl Barth quoted in J.J. von Allmen, *Worship: Its Theology and Practice* (London: Lutterworth, 1965), p. 13.

the worship experience. When excessive attention is given to human endeavours, such as lengthy announcements and promotional activities, worship turns inward to the "me, my and mine." Thus the Holy Spirit must be allowed to function as the true leader of worship.

Enough has been said to affirm the indisputable role of the Holy Spirit as the key leader of our worship services. It may be more helpful to indicate three ways in which this crucial leadership role manifests itself. First, it is present in *our sense of expectation*. Secondly, it is present in *our art of recognition*. Thirdly, it is present in *our act of incarnation*. Will you join me now as we continue our inward search for guidance in the spirit of prayer?

Awaiting the Spirit's Leadership

A sense of expectation must precede every worship experience if the leadership of the Holy Spirit is to be felt. When the people of God gather for worship, they are usually led through a type of formal or informal (Free Church) order of worship by one or more worship leaders. The congregation may be truly inspired by the beauty of an artistically performed solo or choral selection. Or, it may be moved deeply by the sincere prayers of a humble saint who pours out his or her soul to the Lord because of a personal burden. The pastor reads the Scripture in a manner that brings fresh insight to the congregation and later preaches a sermon that challenges people to more effective living. A member of the congregation perhaps shares a word of testimony concerning what the Lord has done in his or her life during the week. The singing by the choir and congregation lifts the spirits and enables people to forget what is going on elsewhere, rejoicing in the fellowship of the Lord. Unsaved people hopefully respond to the invitation to accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

Therefore, many people have participated in the service in one way or another from the human standpoint, but they are not the "one" dynamic leader or director of what takes place in the worship experience. The true leader is the invisible person of the Holy Spirit. This acknowledgement certainly is no secret. At the very beginning of the service the congregation invokes the Lord's blessing and prays for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all that is to be said and done.

Ancient astronomers, taking the earth for the centre of the universe, tried to figure the movements of other bodies in the heavens, but their calculations always went astray. But once they

When does worship turn inward?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

When worshippers enter the worship service, they must expect the leadership of the _____

(Holy, Spirit)

The Holy Spirit is the true worship _____

(leader)

started with the sun as the centre of the solar system, their figures came out correctly, and they were on the road towards further truth.

So it is with worship. If one's heart's desires are placed in people, regardless of their varied abilities, worship will be meaningless. Once the family of God recognizes that the church is a particular fellowship (*koinōnia*) of believers created and directed by the Holy Spirit and made one under the sovereign rule of God through Christ, worship is placed in its proper perspective. Believers should remember that a distinctive of the early church is the zeal Christians showed in their worship because the Holy Spirit had come to make Christ supreme in their lives.

True, God uses human instrumentalities, but these vessels must be Spirit-filled as the apostle John declared while in exile on Patmos: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10). John felt the leadership of the Lord even though he was in exile. Great things can happen when God's people unite under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

An example of the family of God being in the Spirit may be seen in the weekly meetings held by John Wesley. There was something different in these meetings from the customary church practices held in English churches at that time. The meetings were referred to as "weekly gatherings" during which the members shared regularly with one another what the Lord had done for and with them during the week. There was open confession of sin as well as prayer for needs that were mentioned. Surely Wesley's dynamic personality and preaching were strong influences on the lives of those attending. However, the lasting results of their active participation came from the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The Holy spirit brings life and vitality into Christian worship.

Is it not awe-inspiring that the Almighty God, who became incarnate in Jesus Christ, and who created us for the purpose of fellowship, is also actively present in one's worship through the ministry of the Holy Spirit? God both initiates and receives the believer's praise. The elements of adoration and praise, contrition and confession, celebration and thanksgiving are all brought about through the direction of the Holy Spirit in one's life and worship.

Ralph Martin, writing concerning the features of early Christian worship, states:

There can be no doubt that the hallmark which stamped the assembling together of Christians (Heb. 10:25) as something for which no other religion can provide a parallel, was the presence of the living Lord in the

Worship is placed in its proper perspective when it is recognized that the church is a fellowship of believers _____ and _____ by the Holy Spirit.

(created, directed)

Worship leaders should be _____

(Spirit, filled)

Is the following statement true or false?

The elements of adoration and praise, contrition and confession, celebration and thanksgiving are all brought about through the direction of the Holy Spirit in one's life and worship. _____

(true)

midst of his own (Matt. 18:20; 28:20). The promised word, "There am I in the midst of them" was fulfilled as often as his people assembled in his name. He who was bodily absent (Mark 14:7) drew near in a special way as they met. All the component parts of divine service were calculated to lead the worshipers to an awareness of his presence.²

Thus the invisible presence of a Holy God knits together the hearts of believers (Cf. 1 John 1:3).

Recognizing the Spirit's Leadership

The art of recognition is essential if the leadership role of the Holy Spirit in worship is to be discerned. One may ask, where is the Spirit present? Where there is enthusiasm or dynamic personalities, or gifted musicians, or warm feelings? It is impossible to say. However, what is certain is that the Holy Spirit testifies to Jesus Christ. Peter, John and Paul all taught that the Holy Spirit bears witness to Jesus. The Spirit is active where the gospel is preached in its fullness. No other test is trustworthy. The Spirit is alive in those who believe and live by the gospel.

The leadership role of the Holy spirit in worship must not be overlooked, for when the people are left to their own thoughts and ways, worship turns inward and becomes self-centred. Luther calls this introspection "the heart turned in upon itself." This abuse may be illustrated by the excessive amount of time and the manner in which guests are often greeted during the worship service. Certainly guests should be welcomed and made to feel at home in the service; however, members should be careful that their motivation is not basically that they do not want their church to be known as "cold." Churches want visitors to recognize their "sweet" fellowship.

Loud talking and constant chatter up to and during the instrumental prelude is another indication of worship turned inward. Again the inference is to justify this lack of sensitivity to the Holy Spirit on the basis of Christian fellowship. The tragedy is that reverence and quietness are all too often equated with dullness and undesirable liturgy.

The influence of television to compartmentalize people's lives may be noted in modern worship experiences. People are accustomed to

The Holy Spirit bears _____ to

_____.

(witness, Jesus)

Is the following statement true or false?

Worship turns inward and becomes self-centred when people are left to their own thoughts and ways.

_____.

(true)

² Ralph P. Martin, *Worshipping in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 130.

going about their business until the time for their favourite television programme. Attention is then focused on "the tube" until the next commercial break. During the interruption of the flow of the programme, people move around, talk or do whatever they like until the programme begins again. This domestic habit is carried over into the church service by the interruption of worship to greet guests and make announcements. While these recognitions and remarks are important to the Lord's work, such matters should be dispatched early enough in the service in order to detract as little as possible from the continuity of the worship experience.

Without the leadership of God's Spirit one's cultural biases, likes and dislikes, can easily take over, and priorities get shifted out of order. The early Christian Church was able to sense the living presence of Christ in its midst because of the leadership of the Holy Spirit. As Martin says:

Worship takes on its authentic meaning when God is at its heart and our self-centered interests and fussy concerns are kept under proper control Exactly at this point we need the Spirit. He is the answer to the church's agenda for worship. For he alone can lead the people of God to their true source of being in the Lordship of God as the central factor in their life, and can turn us away from self-oriented ways and works to that "place to stand" from which we enjoy a God related perspective.³

Thus New Testament worship, as described by W.C. van Unnik, "stands within the magnetic field of the Holy Spirit."⁴

There may be variety as to the forms of worship, but there must be no mistaking the fact that the Church is dependent upon the Spirit for the reality of its worship. W.T. Conner aptly describes the action of the Holy Spirit in worship, saying:

The Spirit must release the springs of prayer and praise if there is to be genuine worship. The Spirit must create in the hearts and minds of the people the consciousness of God with all that that means. God in his love

³ Martin, *The Worship of God*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), p. 174.

⁴ W. C. van Unnik, art. "Dominus Vobiscum: The Background of a Liturgical Formula," *New Testament Essays in Memory of T. W. Manson* (ed. A.J.B. Higgins, Manchester, 1959), p. 294. Cited in Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, p. 131.

Greeting guests and making announcements should be done

_____ in the _____.

(early, service)

State two things that can happen in a worship service if the Holy Spirit is not allowed to be in control.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

and holiness must be unveiled to the spiritual vision of men. Often men seek God for the sake of efficiency of evangelism, missions or social service. These forms of activity will certainly result when God is truly worshiped for his own sake. Should he not be worshiped and praised because he is worthy of our worship and our praise and not for what we may receive in return, even in the way of spiritual efficiency? God should be worshiped for his own sake and not for man's sake.⁵

Embodying the Spirit's Leadership

The act of incarnation is the result of our accepting the leadership role of the Holy Spirit in worship. Although the fundamental work of the Holy Spirit is to testify to Jesus, this prior work is not an end in itself but a means to the end of the ultimate work of re-presenting Jesus in the life of his faithful followers. Peter's preaching Christ at Pentecost was undergirded by the Holy Spirit. John teaches that the Spirit will bear witness to Jesus (Cf. John 14:15-17, 25,26; 15:26,27; 16:13-15; 1 John 4:2). Paul also speaks of the witness of the Spirit in re-presenting Jesus to us (Gal. 4:6,7; 1 Cor. 12:3).

Martin mentions three actions of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers which are summarized as follows:

1. *The Holy Spirit promotes and inspires the Christian confession of saving belief.* The first Christians had a vivid awareness of the Spirit's presence and power in their worship.

You know that while you were yet heathen, you were led astray in many ways to the worship of lifeless idols. I want you to know that no one who is led by God's Spirit can say, "a curse of Jesus!" and no one can confess "Jesus is Lord," unless he is guided by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:2,3).

The Spirit safeguards one's worship from unseemly and indecorous manifestations that lead only to confusion and disorder (1 Cor. 14:33). The Holy Spirit inspires the confession that Jesus is Lord and enables believers to set their lives under the authority of Jesus.

2. *The offices of the Spirit are exercised in the several ways worship takes place.* The Holy Spirit energizes and controls the various configurations that together go to make up all we understand about Christian liturgy. The Spirit

The Holy Spirit promotes and inspires the Christian _____ of _____ belief.

(confession, saving)

One is only able to confess Jesus as Lord by the _____.

(Holy, Spirit)

The offices of the Spirit are exercised in the _____ ways _____ takes place.

(several, worship)

⁵ W.T. Conner, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1949), p. 139.

inspires the church to pray, helping believers in their weakness (Rom. 8:26,27) and interceding for Christians before God. Paul explains that the Spirit gives life and so places the believer within the family and fellowship of God's people (Cf. 2 Cor. 3:6; Rom. 8:2, 11; Gal. 5:25). In Ephesians 2:18 Paul expresses in classic form the conviction rooted in Christian experience that is gained through worship:

Through Him (Christ) we both (Jews and Gentiles, now one in the new man, the body of the church) have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

The Spirit mediates the believer's relationship with the Father.

3. *The Spirit keeps Christian worship on the right track so that elements that are inalienably personal and distinctively corporate are not lost.* The Corinthian church made a sacrilege of the Lord's Supper. Ideas of sacramental magic (in 1 Cor. 10:1-22) and gnosticizing individualism (1 Cor. 14:26-40) were negative aspects of Corinthian worship. Paul reminds this church of the ethical dimensions of the gospel. He calls for restraint, proper order and an awareness that sharing the body and blood of Christ is a token of commitment to Christian living. Although the Spirit may not be specifically named, His activity is certainly in Paul's mind as may be seen from Galatians 5:16-29.⁶

There are three worship elements in the Pauline churches according to Martin which assist in keeping our worship on the right track. These elements are as follows.

1. The charismatic element was prominent in worship. This refers to the offering of enthusiastic and exuberant praise and prayer under the direct creative inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

2. Congregational worship also had its "didactic" side, referring to the spoken word aimed at clarifying the will of God for believers (Cf. 1 Cor. 12:8; 14:26; Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2; 4:13; 5:17), instructing (1 Cor. 2:13; Col. 3:16), prophesying which is similar to preaching, and discerning the truth and testing the content of prophetic oracles (1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:21). All these learnings are ministries made possible as Christians "are inspired by one and the same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:11, RSV).

3. There is also the note of praise for which the term "eucharistic" conveys the exact sense.

The Holy Spirit helps keep Christian worship on the right

(track)

List three actions of the Holy Spirit in Christian worship services given by Martin.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

There are three worship elements in the Pauline churches that help keep our worship on the right

(track)

The _____ element was _____ in worship.

(charismatic, prominent)

Congregational worship also had its "_____ " side.

(didactic)

The Pauline churches also offered _____ to God.

(praise)

⁶ Martin, *The Worship of God*, pp. 174-85.

The word is from the Greek verb "to thank" or "praise" and applies equally to prayers of thanksgiving which are referred to as "blessing God in the Spirit" (1 Cor. 14:16), to prayers of "general thanksgiving" (1 Tim. 2:1-4) with one special focus, namely, "grace over food" (1 Tim. 4:3-5), to hymns of praise inspired by the Spirit (Eph.5:19,20; Col. 3:16,17) as well as to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.⁷

The presence and power of the Holy Spirit are decisive factors amid the diversity of forms and practices used in worship. Martin summarizes the actions of the Holy Spirit in the following manner:

He leads men to a confession of Jesus as Lord (1 Cor. 12:3); at the same time he checks any tendency to erroneous worship which seeks to offer to God what is unacceptable to him.⁸

Examples of the later restraint are in 1 Corinthians 12:3 and 14:32ff.

The pervasive influence of the Spirit in Christian worship in the New Testament is worth observing. The Holy Spirit inspires prayer (Rom. 8:26,27; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 6:18; Jude 20) and opens the believer's mind, heart and voice in vocal praise (1 Cor. 14:2, 15; Eph. 5:19). It is by the ministry of the Holy Spirit that one has access to the Father through the mediation of the Son (Eph. 2:18; Rom. 5:2-5; 8:34; Heb. 7:25). It is also by the ministry of the Holy Spirit that one is led into the deep truths of God's Word (1 Cor. 2:10-16; John 16:13ff.) as the Spirit imparts to some fellow-believer who has the gift of teaching (Rom. 12:7; Eph. 4:11ff.) the word of wisdom and knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8). Moreover, the Holy Spirit expounds the truth of God to others for their benefit (Cf. 1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Thess. 1:5; Acts 17:24-28 for illustrations). And the Spirit's effectual presence in a church service when effective preaching is made leads unbelievers to fall down under conviction and yield to God's bidding (1 Cor. 14:25; John 16:8ff.).

In these quiet moments near the end of our journey it is a privilege to "break bread together on our knees." We have been fed by "the living Word" through "the written word" (to use Karl Barth's helpful distinction) under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. What started as the supreme

List three elements of worship characteristic of the Pauline churches.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Show the relation of the following Scriptures to worship.

Romans 8:26,27 _____

1 Corinthians 14:2 _____

Ephesians 2:18 _____

John 16:13ff. _____

Acts 17:24-28 _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 180-82.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

act of divine incarnation (John 1:14) has aroused our sense of expectation, has sensitized our art of recognition, and has energized our act of incarnation because of our openness to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Summary

"Opportunity only knocks once." It is only now that you have been prepared to look within and ask for divine guidance in reflecting upon your own leadership style in planning and implementing worship services. Because you have acknowledged the leadership role of the Holy Spirit in your life, you are ready to review with me the same leadership role in the worship services for which you are responsible.

Preparation for worship involves the devoted ministry of numerous persons with many talents and skills. Each person should carry out his or her responsibilities under the leadership of God's Spirit. The "one" dynamic leader in preparing for worship is not the minister, as important as he may be, but the Holy Spirit who is ever present in worship preparation and in the service itself. It is the Holy Spirit who bears witness and testimony to Jesus. All who have a part in preparing and leading worship programmes should sense the Spirit's presence in the service. The Holy Spirit is central to the service. God, through the person of the Holy Spirit, is present both in the preparation stage for worship as well as in the worship service itself.

Recognizing the Holy Spirit's presence in the service may seem illusive to some people. Yet there are several signs that may serve as spiritual barometers. The Spirit is active when Jesus is proclaimed, honoured and lifted up. Furthermore, the Spirit is alive in those who believe and live by the gospel.

Worship with excessive emphasis upon people tends to turn inward and become self-centred. Thus worship loses its objectivity when too much attention is given to human factors.

The Holy Spirit is active in worship when confession of sin and positive spiritual decisions for Christ are made. This is the work of the Spirit. In addition, the Holy Spirit inspires, intercedes on the congregation's behalf and mediates the believer's relationship with the Father. Without the Spirit's leadership worship would lose sight of its purpose as did the worship of the Corinthian church. The Spirit also reminds Christians of the ethical implication of the gospel to daily living.

Worship in the Pauline churches has three conspicuous elements: the "charismatic" element in which exuberant praise and prayer were

We must carry out our _____ under the leadership of God's _____.

(responsibilities, Spirit)

There are signs to help us recognize the _____ presence in worship services.

(Spirit's)

made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; the "didactic" element which included spiritual and doctrinal instruction; and the "eucharistic" element of praise and thanksgiving.

As this time of personal meditation draws to a close, you will want to return to your special pew from the kneeling position. We have learned together that the taste of human "pudding" will be sweetened by divine "manna" from heaven as the Holy Spirit continues to exercise leadership in our lives and in our worship experiences. That continuing assurance is cause for celebration. Will you join with me now as we stand together and sing praises to our God as the climax of our journey?

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (*Levels 1, 2, and 3*). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1 .Who is the true leader of worship?

2. What bearing does the Holy Spirit have on the worship service?

3. To whom does the Spirit give witness?

4. What is the best test to determine the Spirit's presence in a worship service?

5. When is the best time to greet guests and give notices (announcements) in a worship service?

6. What are some things that can happen in worship services when the Holy Spirit is not allowed to be the leader?

7. Give three actions of the Holy Spirit in Christian worship services.

8. According to Martin, what were three elements of worship characteristic of the Pauline churches that help us in our worship today?

9. Give examples of the Holy Spirit's leadership in worship.

10. How should worship leaders go about their duty and responsibility?

11. How can we recognize the Spirit's presence in the worship service?

12. What happens when an excessive emphasis is given to human factors in the worship service?

Supplementary activity (*Levels 2 and 3*). The following questions are based upon the study guide.

1. What do lengthy announcements (notices) and promotional activities do to a worship service?
2. What must worshippers expect when entering a worship service?
3. How may we recognize the Spirit's presence in worship?
4. In what ways are we insensitive to the Holy Spirit in our worship services?
5. List things the Holy Spirit can help us avoid in our worship services.
6. How do we "incarnate" the Holy Spirit in our worship?

Advanced activity (*Level 3*). Review pages 63-65 in Segler and consult the study guide to do the following.

1. How does the Holy Spirit work in the worship of the Church?
2. What can we learn from the Pauline churches to help us in our worship?
3. Write and preach a sermon (or deliver a lecture) entitled: "The Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Worship of a Church."

Seminar Discussion

1. Discuss the congregation's sense of expectancy in worship.
2. How do you recognize the leadership of the Holy Spirit in worship?
3. What does the author mean when he talks of the incarnation of the Spirit's leadership?
4. Have a time of prayer for the Holy Spirit to enable each student to be led in worship by the Holy Spirit.