

COVENANT WORSHIP
Covenant Fellowship Church
Wednesday, 8 January 2025
Nelson D. Kloosterman

THESES (DECLARATIONS) ABOUT THE CHURCH'S BIBLICAL WORSHIP

1. **The definition of the church's biblical worship is this:** *Worship is the fitting response of God's people to His self-revelation in the written and incarnate Word.*
2. **The character of the church's biblical worship is Bible-governed.** This has often been called "the regulative principle of worship" (RPW, for short). It means this: there are two basic approaches to Christian worship; (1) what is not forbidden by Scripture is permitted; and (2) what is not commanded by Scripture is forbidden. The former is held by Roman Catholics and Lutherans, the latter mainly by Presbyterians (and some Reformed). Unfortunately, the RPW is (1) itself nowhere commanded in Scripture, and (2) too ambiguous to be helpful.

"And so, among some, the RPW means not only no Christmas and no Easter, but no musical instruments, no singing except Scripture texts — oops! Scratch that! Only *certain* Scripture texts, namely, the Psalms, may be sung in worship (some said in *or out* of worship). Not a few reject the use of creeds in worship, and some even frown upon the corporate praying of the Lord's Prayer in worship." (Steve Schlissel, *All I Really Need to Know About Worship* . . .)

3. **The church's biblical worship is Bible-governed in four ways** (from the *Appendix: The Use of Scripture in Ethics*, in *The Ten Commandments: Manual for the Christian Life*, by J. Douma; translated by yours truly):
 - 3.1 The Bible is a *GUIDE*: clear commands and prohibitions. Not living in anger toward a brother in Christ (Matt. 5:22), not looking lustfully at a woman (Matt. 5:28); not worshiping idols (1 John 5:21).
 - 3.2 The Bible is a *GUARD*: the Bible does not command a democratic form of government, or that parents arrange a daughter's marriage. The Bible provides "guardrails," within which certain decisions are normed by Scripture. A person need to be married, but *if* a person marries, he/she is to marry in the Lord.
 - 3.3 The Bible is a *COMPASS*: the Bible points out the direction we should go. For example, regarding in vitro fertilization (IVF), the Bible points us to the nature of a human person, to marriage as a monogamous institution, etc. The Bible provides *principles*.
 - 3.4 The Bible provides *EXAMPLES*: the Bible exalts virtuous people and a Christ-following *lifestyle*. Personal self-denial takes different forms, and cannot be legislated in every instance.
4. **The purpose of the church's biblical worship is covenant renewal.** During corporate worship, the Lord renews His covenant with His people. *Remember*: in the Bible, "covenant" means "a defined formal relationship between persons and groups." In the church's biblical worship, the Lord formally renews His covenant by calling us to worship, restoring us through confession and forgiveness, speaking to us through His Word read and preached, memorializing His grace through a feast, and commissioning us under His blessing.
5. **The nature of the church's biblical worship is dialogic.** God initiates the "conversation," and His people respond—together, as a body, in unison. (Compare the difference between "silent prayer" and "congregational prayer.")

(over, please)

ORDER OF WORSHIP
(* denotes congregation standing)
January 5, 2025

Announcements
Mutual Greetings
Our Time of Quiet Preparation

***God's Call to Worship: Psalm 96:1–6**

***God's Greeting**

*Our Song of Praise: #538

God's Instruction about Our Sin: TPH:890

Our Prayerful Confession of Sin

***God's Assurance of Pardon: Matt. 11:28–29**

*Our Song of Thanksgiving: #380:1,2,3

Our Congregational Prayer: Psalm 23:1–6

***God's Word of Scripture: Mark 1:1–13**

The Sermon

Our Prayer for Application

*Our Song of Response: #431:1,4,5

***God's Benediction**

*The Doxology: #567

Discussion:

- What is the difference between a “stage” and a “platform”? How is this relevant for worship?

- Illustrate ways that this teaching about the *church's* biblical worship can shape and assist you in *family* worship and in *private* worship.

- Mention practices or books that have helped you with regard to family and private worship.

15 January 2025: Covenant Fellowship

22 January 2025: Covenant Accountability