Preach the Word: Because It Informs Our Worship and Walk

Scripture: John 4:24
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The modern evangelical quest for relevance has created several rifts in the church, perhaps none more visible than the divide over worship. Deep, biblical understanding of God's Word and His character is routinely pitted against the euphoria of a vibrant musical experience. But that false dichotomy is a great injustice to the church, as it obscures the massive impact the Bible has on the reality and genuineness of true worship.

I often tell young pastors at the outset of their ministries, "You have to go down if you're going to lead your people up." In other words, the degree to which your people will experience transcendent worship is directly related to the depth of their comprehension of divine truth. Those who understand the gospel the deepest are the ones who worship with the greatest exaltation and exhilaration.

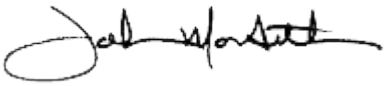
Sadly, most churches are content to live in the flat land. The preacher never goes deep in His preaching so the people never go high in their worship. As a result, churches cannot express real worship that rises from a soul filled with the glory of the truth, so they replace it with emotional manipulation, smarmy tunes, and superstition. They call it worship, but it's really more an expression of feelings than an expression of true adoration rising from the mind that has grasped the depth of profound doctrine.

For me personally, the most important element in worship music is the lyrical content. The appropriate musical accompaniment should be suitable and memorable, but the words carry the truth. When the words are teeming with rich theological life and biblical accuracy, they inform the mind, and that launches a legitimate experience of glorifying God. But your people will not appreciate that type of profundity without the biblical background needed to understand the depth of the great realities about which they are singing. They have to be taught if they are to enjoy and express the true worship which God seeks (John 4:24).

Teaching the Bible expositionally protects God's people from the theological errors and the carnality so deadly to true worship, as well as guards the purity of their Christian walk. In some churches, pastors get up each week and do little "sermonettes for Christianettes," which are essentially short God-talks about self-help and positive feeling. But they do nothing for their people to protect them from error, sin, or temptation.

The Bible speaks very pointedly about so-called shepherds who fail to protect their sheep from spiritual harm (cf. John 10:12–13). Those who leave their sheep vulnerable to wolves are unfaithful shepherds. They have failed to impart any true knowledge of God; no doctrinal foundations have been laid; no deep soul work has been accomplished. Their communication style may be enjoyable and their meetings may be full, but those pastors who do not faithfully proclaim the Word of God to their people are failing their sheep where it matters most. One day they will give an account to the

Chief Shepherd for why they took such poor care of their flock (cf. 1 Peter 5:1–4).



(Adapted from *The Master's Plan for the Church*.)

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