

BLENDING WORSHIP

Good for the Body

“Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”
(Ephesians 5:18-19)

Introduction

First Church, Jerusalem
(with apologies to Act 2:41-47)

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

And they were continually devoting themselves to one of the four electives offered: the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, or prayer.

And half of those who believed were together, gathering in the temple court at the hour of prayer for traditional worship; and the believers rejoiced in the way things had always been done and in the general sobriety of the proceedings.

And the other half of those who believed were breaking bread from house to house, engaging in new, exciting, and culturally relevant forms of worship with an upbeat heart.

And they all praised God in the form most comfortable to them, and they had favor with some of the people.

But others wondered what they truly had in common, since they were divided in what should have been their central unifying activity.

- Modern Approaches
 - Food Court vs. “Mom’s Home Cooking”
 - “Ipod Theology”
- Biblical Images
 - The early church
 - The heavenly paradigm
- To Blend or Not to Blend?
 - A “Bridge over Troubled Waters”?
 - A Disclaimer

I. A Definition of Blended Worship

The mixing of historic, traditional, contemporary and global expressions of worship into a diverse mosaic of praise with the goal of glorifying God by enfranchising and encouraging the unified participation of believers across demographic and generational lines.

II. A Biblical Case for Blended Worship

- A. THE NATURE OF GOD: *God Himself exists in community, the ultimate expression of unity in diversity.* (Mark 1:9-11)
- B. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH: *The Body of Christ is itself blended.* (Gal 3:28)
- C. THE GOAL OF THE CHURCH: *Unity in Christ.* (Ephes 4:1,3,13)
- D. THE GOAL OF WORSHIP: *Worship is for God.* (Ps 150:3-6)
- E. GOD'S CREATIVITY: *God is the author of diversity.* (Gen 1:21,25)
- F. GOD'S COMMAND: *God calls for diversity.* (Ephes 5:18-19)
- G. GOD'S PRIORITY: *The heart of the worshiper.* (Mark 12:33)
- H. NEW TESTAMENT LATITUDE: *No one right way to worship.* (John 4:23)
- I. A HIGHER CALLING: *The common good.* (Rom 12:10; Phil 2:3)

III. Benefits of Blended Worship

"BODY-BUILDING": learning and living in community

- Keeping the ages together
- Making concessions for the good of the body
- Growing in maturity
- Building a corporate identity
- Expressing unity in diversity
- Learning new ways to praise

IV. Strategies for Blended Worship

A. TEACHING

1. Worship principles: function over form; **no one right way**
2. *Why*, not just *what*
3. What it means to be a community of faith
 - fellowship

- sharing
 - sacrificing
 - making concessions
4. Call to mature response & mutual understanding
 5. The need for timeless expressions and for new expressions of the faith

B. FINDING COMMON GROUND & BRIDGING THE GAP

1. Stake out the middle of the spectrum; avoid the fringes
(musically, instrumentally, stylistically); occasional forays in either direction
2. Balance and variety
 - a. not too formal, not too casual
 - b. NOT just separate parts of service for different styles
 - c. NOT just music
3. *Always* appropriate: Scriptural transitions; sung responses
4. A particular group's preferred style can be specialized in elsewhere
(Sunday School classes, youth groups)
5. Involve both young and old in planning, leading, reading, praying

C. WORSHIP FLOW

1. Less focus on mechanics
2. "Flow, Service, Flow" (www.worr.org/articles)

D. **THEMATIC WORSHIP

1. A theological organizing principle, not a stylistic one
2. Diverting attention from personal preferences to God and his truth

V. Resources for Blended Worship

A. MUSICAL MATERIALS

1. Hymnals and Songbooks
 - *Celebration Hymnal* (Word/Integrity)
 - *Renew! Songs & Hymns for Blended Worship*
 - Denominational hymnals
2. Modern hymns: e.g., Gettys (www.gettymusic.com)
3. Modernized hymns
 - "Before the Throne of God Above"
 - RUF Hymnal (free materials)
(www.igracemusic.com/igracemusic/hymnal)
 - *Hymns for Praise and Worship* (Word)

- *Worship Team Hymnbook* (materials for sale)
(www.communityworship.com/wth_song_directory.htm)
- 4. The choir as worship leader (*Songs for Praise and Worship* [Word])
- 5. Blur the distinctions; use same song in different ways
- 6. Sister churches (ethnic & global expressions)

B. OTHER MATERIALS

1. Scripture readings
2. *Worship Sourcebook* (CICW)
3. *Worship Quote of the Week* (www.wqotw.org)
4. Historical writings: *Te Deum*, creeds, *Book of Common Prayer*
5. *Valley of Vision*
6. Others?

C. SILENCE!

D. BIBIOGRAPHY

- "Blended Worship: Good for the Body" (www.worr.org/articles)
- Robert Webber, *Blended Worship: Achieving Substance and Relevance in Worship*
- Robert Webber, *Planning Blended Worship: The Creative Mixture of Old and New* www.gbod.org/worship/blended.html
- Global music: www.worldofworship.org; links at www.worr.org/worldwide-worship

VI. The Goal

May the God of endurance and encouragement
grant you to live in such harmony with one another,
in accord with Christ Jesus,
that together you may with one voice
glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
(Romans 15:5-6)