

THEMATIC WORSHIP

A Rich Feast for the People of God

“Praise him *according to* his excellent greatness.” (Psalm 150:2)

I. DEFINITION OF THEMATIC WORSHIP

A service where a single aspect of God’s nature or work is focused on and celebrated, with the various elements of the service chosen to support and develop that theme.

II. BENEFITS OF THEMATIC WORSHIP

Lingering: a single-minded focus

Learning: a catechetical function

Savoring: time for reflection

Responding: a provision for response

Uniting: a unifying, God-centered focus,

Cultivating: a preparation for preaching

III. TYPES OF THEMATIC WORSHIP

A. Seasonal

1. Church calendar (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Ascension, etc.)
2. Other (Reformation Sunday, New Year’s, July 4*, Mother’s Day)

B. Attribute of God (love, grace, holiness, power, etc.)

C. Biblical Theme or Doctrine (creation, cross of Christ, Lamb of God, heavenly worship, name(s) of Jesus, the Lord my Shepherd, etc.)

IV. CHOOSING A THEME

- A. Follow the calendar
- B. Follow the preacher
- C. Follow the anthem
- D. Cover basic doctrines and attributes regularly

V. MATERIALS FOR THEMATIC WORSHIP

A. Primacy of the Word of God

B. Musical Materials

- hymns and choruses
- individual verses
- choral anthems, solos (also brief excerpts)
- unfamiliar texts to familiar tunes
- *inclusio* (bookends)

C. Textual Materials

- Hymn texts
- Original responsive readings
- Other biblically sound readings (creeds, *Te Deum*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Book of Common Prayer*, quotations)
- Written prayers (original; also from *Valley of Vision*, *Worship Sourcebook*; *Leading in Prayer* by H.O. Old; denominational resources; etc.)

D. Visual Materials

- Banners
- Bulletin covers
- Projected verses, titles, art works, photographs, drawings
- Symbolic objects (shepherd's crook, telescope, etc.)

VI. REINFORCING THE THEME

- Bulletin, newsletter: next Sunday's theme
- Visual elements upon entry
- Read passage for meditation
- Projected verse or title
- Call to worship; introductory remarks/prayer
- Seamless flow; few instructions
- Transition to sermon

VII. CHALLENGES OF THEMATIC WORSHIP

- Finding materials
- "The rest of the story"
- Time and planning

VIII. THE POWER OF THEMATIC WORSHIP

The potential to nourish the soul
and galvanize the worship of God's people
by giving attention to a single, God-centered focus
and allowing time for reflection and response.

IX. AN EXAMPLE

EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE WORSHIP THEMES AND CORRESPONDING SERVICE TITLES

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Titles</u>
Adoration	Worship and Adore the Lord Our God
Advent	Born to Set Thy People Free
Alleluia	Alleluia! Praise the Lord!
Ascension	Seated at God's Right Hand
Assurance	Blessed Assurance; I Am His. and He Is Mine
Bible	Sweeter Than Honey
Church	Many Members, One Body
Communion	The Body and the Blood
Consecration	I'll Live For Him Who Died For Me
Creation	The Work of Your Fingers; My Father's World
Cross	My Glory All the Cross
Death of Christ	The Blood Applied
Emmanuel	God With Us
Exaltation	Worshipping the Exalted Christ
Faithfulness	Thy Great Faithfulness
Father's Day	Fatherhood: Divine and Human
Glory	To The Praise of His Glory
Grace	Tune My Heart to Sing Thy Grace
Heaven	Join the Everlasting Song; Emmanuel's Land
Heavenly Worship (Revel. 4& 5)	The Praises of Men and Angels
Holiness	Holy Is the Lord!
Holy Spirit	The Comforter Has Come
Jesus	The Praise of Jesus
Jewish	Praising the God of Abraham
Joy	Come With Joyful Singing!
King	King of Kings
Lamb	The Worthy Lamb
Light	The Dawn of Redeeming Grace
Lord	Jesus Is Lord
Love	Amazing Love!
Majesty	The Majesty of His Glory
Mercy	Rest for the Weary
Missions	Striving Together for the Faith of the Gospel
Name of Jesus	No Other Name
Patriotic	Great God of Nations
Power of God	Almighty!
Praise	To God All Praise and Glory!
Prayer	Sweet Hour of Prayer
Presence	Seeking the Face of God
Redeemer	My Great Redeemer's Praise
Reformation	Faith of our Fathers
Resurrection	My Redeemer lives!
Rock	Safe to the Rock
Salvation	Who Shall Ascend?
Sanctity of Life	Precious in His Sight
Savior	Hallelujah! What A Savior!
Second Coming	The King is Coming
Shepherd	The Good Shepherd
Sing	Come before His Presence with Singing
Thanksgiving	Giving Thanks
Thirst	Water for the Soul
Worship	Worthy of Worship