

The Pastor Is the Primary Worship Leader.

Geoffrey R. Kirkland
Christ Fellowship Bible Church

Lots of titles swirl in church-circles today. Minister of music. Worship director. Worship pastor. And on they go. Often these titles that relate to a 'worship leader' point to the person who plans, leads, and organizes the music part of the service.

As important as those faithful folks who serve in the area of music are, and those who give leadership in the music in the church gathering, we do well to remember that the primary worship leader in the assembly of God's people is the pastor.

If worship could be simply defined as a response to the revelation of who God is and what God has done, then the pastor is the one who has the primary duty of revealing God to the people through Scripture and preaching Christ week by week. It is he who sets the glory and majesty of God before the people through the reading, preaching and application of the Word of God. Of course, this understands worship to *not* be synonymous with music; music can be an expression of worship and it can be a vehicle by which the saint can adore and praise God. But the "worship time" does not equal the "music time" in the church gathering.

So how does the pastor function as the primary worship leader in the church gathering?

I. PREPARATION TO MEET GOD.

The pastor has the wonderful privilege of calling the saints to prepare themselves to meet with God. As Moses called Israel to purify themselves for in three days, God would descend to meet with them (Exodus 19), so the pastor leads in guiding the congregation to prepare well *ahead of time* to meet with the Lord. Again, worship is fundamentally a *heart-filled response to who God is and how God has revealed Himself*. Through the faithful preaching of God's Word week by week, and the diligent leading the flock to the throne of grace in prayer, and the modeling of heart-preparation for corporate worship, this is one important way in which the pastor leads believers in worship.

2. SOBRIETY IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

Worship is serious. Just read Revelation 4 and 5 and one will quickly find the absence of joking and trivialities and worldliness. In fact, the innumerable multitudes in heaven (both angels and saints) are often prostrate before the sovereign Lamb worshiping Him, adoring Him, and offering expressions of praise, honor, and worship. The pastor functions as the primary worship leader as he teaches the Word of God so that there is a sobriety in the presence of God. It's as the pastor-hymnwriter of old once penned it: "how sweet and awful [=awesome] is the place with Christ within the doors." As the saints gather to worship God in corporate worship, it should resemble the corporate worship of heaven (as seen in Revelation 4, 5, 7, 15). There should be a great sobriety, understanding that Almighty God, in full, unclouded glory is beheld, present, and fully deserving of our focus, delight, and worship.

3. DECLARATION OF THE GREATNESS OF GOD.

Perhaps the greatest way the pastor functions as the worship leader is by setting God before His very own people through the regular, consistent, solid expounding of Holy Scripture. In preaching the Word faithfully, God shows Himself to His people through the mouthpiece of the preacher. In heralding the Bible, the greatness of God will shine forth brilliantly and unmistakably. The minister will declare the sinfulness of sin, the glory of God, the sufficiency of Christ, the propitiation of Christ, the certainty of judgment, and the call to repent and believe the gospel. As the Word of God goes forth in power, aided by the Holy Spirit, God exalts Himself, honors His Son, builds His church, edifies His people, and compels them to worship privately, publicly, and evangelistically. Thus, the pastor who tirelessly obeys God's call to "preach the Word" is the real, ultimate worship leader in showing who God is to the congregation thus allowing them, by God's grace, to respond in praise, worship, humility, repentance, and adoration.

4. MAINTAINING A FOCUS CENTERING ON GOD.

The pastor has the responsibility of maintaining a Godward focus in the worship gathering. The music is to exalt Christ. The Scripture reading is to be serious, focused, and clear. The prayers in the gathering should reflect those of Scripture (in all their various forms). The preaching should be expository, Christ-exalting, gospel-declaring, and Spirit-empowered. From start to end, the worship service should maintain a focus centered on the majesty of God, the glory of Christ, and the enabling grace of the Spirit. It is the pastor who ultimately carries the service along and he is the one who is to see to it that God -- not man -- remains the focus of the entire gathering. God must be central; not man. God must be exalted; not man. God must be thought highly of; not man. God's Word must be preached; not man's. It is the pastor who can plan, lead, maintain, and see to it that the corporate worship gathering centers on God from beginning to end through everything that is done.