

# Philosophy of Sunday meetings

## 1. God must be the focus of our worship

Who is worship for?

Ourselves or God?

how do we evaluate worship?

According to our preferences?

According to our feelings?

Mike Pilavachi (Soul Survivor, Watford): "We were challenged to ask ourselves individually, 'When I come through the door of the church, what am I bringing as my contribution to worship?' Then the truth came to us: worship is not a spectator sport, it is not a product moulded by the taste of the consumers. It is not about what we get out of it. It is all about God."

**Jn 4:21-24** God is (actively) seeking worshippers

Those who worship the Father in Spirit & truth

Father: based on personal relationship! (Rom 8:15)

Spirit: overflow of a Spirit-filled life (Eph 5:18-19)

Truth: objective truth of who God is (see below)

Consistent with lifestyle (1 Cor 11:17-22)

Danger of making people centre of worship

Psalms based on who God is & what he done

**Ps 95:1-5** praise for what God has done

**Ps 95:6-7** worship for who God is

Worship is for God but overflows on our lives

Worship changes us – **Isa 6:1-8**

See life in correct perspective v1

Forgiveness & healing v7

Mission & God's heart v8

Worship changes those not-yet-Christians – **Acts 2:1-12**

Worship attracts v12 (but needs explanation)

Worship with proclamation v14-41

## Practical implications?

1. praise & worship must be central
2. praise & worship should be the best it can be (for God)  
(working towards excellence but not perfection)
3. praise & worship needs to be explained

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## 2. Our message must centre on Jesus

2 extremes: 100% true but 100% irrelevant

(open university for 6 yr old – nuclear physics)

Over focus on felt needs with no truth

(humanism & self-help – Wigan: 20min without bib)

## 1 Cor 1:18-25 – centrality of the cross: God's big picture / the big story

Postmodernism – no ultimate truth, no big picture (what's true for individual)

Bible – Big picture: Genesis to Revelation

v18 “message of the cross” foolishness or power of God

what God has done saves not human wisdom

(P not knocking logic & thought – Romans etc)

v20 without God, man's best efforts useless understand salvation

v21 Marion Soards: “Humans simply cannot reason their way to God. If salvation depended upon human reason, then the gospel would depend upon human intelligence and perception, and the message would be for an elite. But God saves humanity (and the world) by the cross of Christ and the message of God's work done there, which is, by this world's standards foolishness.”

v22 Jews look for miraculous signs, Greeks for (human) wisdom

v23 crucified Messiah unthinking for Jews, illogical for Greeks

v24 for those “called” – power & wisdom of God

## Jn 14:6, Acts 4:12 – Jesus: God's only means of salvation (no plan B)

## Acts 17:16-34 – Paul in Athens

v17 P “reasoned”

v18 good news: about Jesus and the resurrection

v22-31 preaching from their culture & Scripture

starting where they are at

moving on to Jesus

## Practical implications?

1. need to expound both the culture & the Bible

2. need to move from people's perspective to God's perspective

3. need to celebrate Jesus as the only saviour of the world

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### 3. Everyone must have a part to play in ministry

One of our values – especially true of Sunday meetings ?

Danger: one man band (or one man + worship group)  
The leader(s) has all answers/anointing/power  
OT principle – not NT  
Acts 2:38-39

Eph 4:11-16 leaders are to equip

Everyone a minister

Key to growth v 16

1 Cor 14:26 the place of prior preparation

The wide variety of contributions

The overall motive

Rom 12:3-8 need to know ourselves v3

Differences are a blessing v4

Everyone is important v5

Everyone is gifted v6

Everyone doing what they should be doing v6-8

Acts 9:10-19 – the example of Ananias

Hearing from God v10

Obedying God v17

Being God's instrument v18

“one another”

Rom 12:5 belongs to all the others

Rom 12:10 devoted to one another

Rom 12:16 live in harmony with one another

Gal 5:13 serve one another

Gal 6:2 carry each other's burdens

Eph 4:2 bearing with one another

Eph 4:32 be kind & compassionate to one another

Eph 5:19 speak to one another

Eph 5:21 submit to one another

Col 3:13 forgive one another

Col 3:16 teach & admonish one another

1 Thess 4:18 encourage one another

Practical implications?

1. we all need to play an active part – no room for spectators
2. each contribution is vital – no room for hierarchy
3. we all need to hear God, obey & be ministers

## Philosophy of Sunday meetings

### 4. Nothing can be accomplished without the work of the Holy Spirit

Importance of relying on God: (do we really believe that?)

Jn 15:4, 5

Ps 127:1-2

Zech 4:6

The Acts of the Spirit:

Acts 1:5,8 waiting for the power of the Spirit  
Acts 2:1-4 all filled with the Spirit  
Acts 2:38-39 receiving the gift of the spirit  
Acts 4:8 still filled with the Spirit  
Acts 4:31 all filled with the Spirit  
Acts 6:3,6 serving in the power of the Spirit  
Acts 7:55 dying full of the Spirit  
Acts 8:14-17 receiving the Spirit  
Acts 8:29 listening to the Spirit  
Acts 8:39-40 transported by the Spirit  
Acts 9:17-19 filled & healed by the Spirit  
Acts 9:31 strengthened & encouraged by the Spirit  
Acts 10:19-21 being instructed by the Spirit  
Acts 10:44-48 the Spirit confirming God's message  
Acts 11:24 Barnabas – full of the Spirit  
Acts 12:2-3 the Spirit directing the church  
Acts 12:4 commissioned by the Spirit  
Acts 13:52 filled with joy and the Spirit  
Acts 15:28 agreeing with the Spirit  
Acts 16:6-7 the Spirit shutting doors  
Acts 19:1-6 filled with the Spirit with tongues & prophecy  
Acts 20:22-23 compelled by the Spirit  
Acts 21:11 Spirit speaking through prophecy

Practical implications?

1. we need to look to the Spirit for His guidance & leading
2. we need to allow time for the Spirit to move in our meetings  
lack of prophetic?
3. we need to seek God in prayer for the moving of His Spirit  
day of prayer & fasting – Thu 6 Nov ?

## Philosophy of Sunday meetings

### 5. Everything we do must be accessible to those who are not-yet-Christians

Accessibility = removing unnecessary barriers

- Eg wheel chair friendly
- Induction loop for hard of hearing
- High contrast colours for poor eyesight

What unnecessary barriers do some have in Sunday meetings?

- Eg language, assumed knowledge etc

**Acts 17:16-34** 3 groups of people – all different needs/understanding  
v16 an inside view into Paul's heart – cares about Athens (pagan city named after Athena – goddess of sexuality)  
P understood God's heart – 2 Pet 3:9

v17a **Group 1:** P went to synagogue & God fearers  
went to people most comfortable with  
own culture & language etc  
church background – need some explanation?  
(Eg Peter)

v17b **Group 2:** went to marketplace – non-churched  
(David Stroud: London not be reached by people released “full time” – but by everyone living fulltime in world)  
Lie of enemy – no-one interested in spiritual things  
Society never been more spiritual?  
Is genuine interest in spiritual things/disillusioned with materialism  
(Eg Geoff & Sally)

v19ff **Group 3:** Epicurean & Stoic philosophers – out of comfort zone  
Can't speak in Christian language – cant expound God's word – need to expound the culture  
Athens people already in God's story – God made the world & everything in it...  
Athens – pagan goddess of sexuality (Athena)  
Mars Hill – pagan god of war  
Dionysius – pagan god of drunkenness  
“Gives everyone life & breath...”  
“He is not far from anyone...”  
Need to show people how they are a part of God's story?  
(eg Paul)

1 Cor 14

### Practical implications:

1. guests not visitors, everything understandable/explained & relevant
2. if “church for those who don't normally do church” – need to think about those people – accessible but not compromise
3. need constant & conscious effort

## **Philosophy of Sunday meetings**

### **6. Everything we do must reflect the character of God**

What do we think of when we think of God (loving, forgiving etc)

As individuals, our character should reflect God's character

Forgive – Eph 4:32

Love – 1 Jn 4:7-11

As a church, our character should reflect God's character?

3 parables of Lk 15? – lost people matter to God & should matter to us

Phil 2 – our attitude should be same as Jesus – humility & service

How should God's character affect what we do on Sundays?

Creativity – Gen 1, 2 Cor 5:17

Acceptance – Lk 15

Generosity – 2 Cor 8:8-9, 2 Cor 9:6-11

Putting other before ourselves – Phil 2, Jn 19:25-27

Excellence – Gen 1, 2 Cor 5:17

Actively seeking the lost – Lk 19:1-10

## Philosophy of Sunday meetings

### 7. Our goal is to enable everyone to progress along their faith journey

Those who became Christian as teenager or adult:

What did you think about God a year before you became a Christian?

What did you think about Christians a year before you became a Christian?

What changed your mind?

Engel Scale –

people often on journey towards faith

people move towards faith at different speeds & in different ways

our role – pray & be friends

what should we pray for people?

Jn 16:5-11 – conviction

Acts 2:37-39 – repentance & faith

Acts 2:41-42 – saved & added

What should we pray for each other?

Col 4:2-4

Eph 6:18-20

How should we be friends with people?

Give time, be interested, do things together

(5 ton truth of a 1 ton bridge – sowing, reaping, keeping)

Goal: everyone (incl us) progressing in faith journey

John 15:1-9

Col 1:28-29

Col 2:6-7

#### **Practical implications:**

- 1) everything we do as a church is an opportunity to make friends & to pray for people
- 2) need to be patient with people & give them the time they require – be in it for the long term
- 3) becoming a Christian is not the end but the beginning
- 4) we mustn't give up on people – Christians or not-yet-Christians
- 5) success is moving people on in their faith journey