

WHY BAPTISTS BELIEVE WHAT BAPTISTS BELIEVE, PART 33

WORSHIP SERVICES

So now we are going to shift gears and talk about worship services. We Baptists do things a little different than other denominations. We'll start with *[Question 8]*. Which of the following is an essential ingredient for any successful worship service? **God's presence.**

Let me say this - inspirational music, dynamic preaching and proper planning may be nice to have - I think all of them are good and certainly they enhance the worship experience. But they are not essential for worship. You can still worship God without those other things. God who is the object of our worship **MUST** be present. We cannot truly experience genuine worship without the presence of God. Did you realize that we don't even have to be in church to worship?

Consider the example of Jacob from Genesis Chapter 28. Jacob is on the move. He's heading north... "Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.' And he was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven'" (Genesis 28:16-17). Jacob had a little time of worship, worshipping God. Where was Jacob when he had this worship experience with God? He was in a desolate, rock-strewn hilly terrain out in the middle of nowhere, somewhere around Bethel. Here Jacob worships the Lord.

My point here is that we can worship God wherever we are at. We can worship Him anywhere!

Our modern-day Baptist worship services follow a pattern and there is a purpose behind it. You begin with a time of preparation for worship. Prior to the service this should be a time of quiet

reverence and meditation as you get your heart ready for worship.

Then you get into the corporate worship itself. There is a period of celebration, congregational singing, time of welcoming guests. Before the pandemic in 2020, we actually took up the offering as an act of worship. Then you begin to focus on the individuals, personal praise and worship, special music, prayer and the message itself. You begin to reflect on what God is saying to you and how you need to respond. Finally in the Baptist church there is a decision time where you respond to God. That's the idea behind why we do things the way we do in our Baptist church services.

[Question 9] In most Baptist worship services, what is offered at the conclusion of the sermon? **An invitation.** It is a time to respond to God. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do? One Baptist preacher explained it this way when asked why Baptists offer an invitation. He said, "Every person Jesus called, He called publicly." An invitation gives people the opportunity to respond publicly with something God has laid on their heart. People come forward for a variety of reasons. They come forward to get saved and to make that public. Some come to pray either with the Pastor or by themselves at the altar. Some come to "rededicate" their lives - they have drifted away from God, repented and now they want to get back to God. Some come to join the church. Some come to surrender to God's calling on their life, whatever that calling might be. All these decisions are made public.

Now, worship may also lead someone to confess their sins. That is done privately. That is not something you do publicly, unless your sin is against the whole church. Most of time we confess our sins privately as needed. It should prompt us to respond to the Holy Spirit's leading, His conviction. It should motivate us to commit our lives afresh and anew to God.

I want you all to tackle *[Question 10]* on your own. Go ahead and read Acts 2:37-47 and then list some of the activities that were observed by the early church. I mentioned a couple of them for you just to get you started. You will find, as you go through this list, that we do many of the same things today. Some things haven't changed.

BUILDING UP THE BODY

I referenced 1 Corinthians Chapter 12 earlier where Paul emphasizes the importance of the body being strong and healthy and all the parts working together. These verses come at the end: "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Corinthians 12:26-27). Paul was addressing a local church here, the church at Corinth specifically. But he is also talking to us. So, we are all in this together. We need each other. God wants all of us contributing to the church body and He has designated and equipped certain individuals to help strengthen the body in particular ways. Use your talents and gifts.

"And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12). This is the purpose of the local church - build up the body (edification); encourage each other.

[Question 11] Besides prophets and apostles, whom did God give to strengthen church members?

Evangelists, Shepherds (pastors, overseers, bishops) and **Teachers**

Our responsibility as individual members of the church is to strengthen the body, to encourage and pray for each other.

“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation--if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good” (1 Peter 2:2-3). Who is Peter talking to here? To Christians. Many of these believers are spiritually immature and he’s chastising them for that. Given all that God has done for you in saving your soul, why would you want to stay as a newborn infant? Why would you not want to grow and learn more about this wonderful Savior of yours?

[Question 12] “Like **newborn infants**, long for the pure spiritual **milk** (NASB adds “of the word”, that by it you may **grow** up into salvation.

In the same way that babies crave for and desire their mother’s milk, we Christians should crave the milk of God’s Word! But, as you grow, you want meat (milk no longer satisfies you). You want a little more depth. You want to grow up and be stronger. That should be same the desire in our spiritual lives.

Congregational worship, the various church ministries, Bible study, discipleship training, outreach, children’s and youth ministries, even the recreational activities, are designed to help members of the body to grow spiritually. Don’t stay where you are at. God does not want us to stay spiritual babies. He wants us to grow.

What happens if you have a newborn baby that does not grow. It stays a baby while all the other kids are growing. What would you think? You would say, “There’s something wrong with this kid!” It is very sad.

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:25).

[Question 13] As God's children, what does Hebrews 10:25 say we should not neglect? **Meeting together with other believers.**

So yes, give your tithes and offerings. Certainly, you should continue to read God's word. If possible, serve on a committee. Get baptized. Become actively involved in your church. But DO NOT neglect getting together with God's people on a regular basis to worship and fellowship.

[Question 14] is a personal reflection question --- Why did you join this church? Think about this and answer it in your own words.