

Our FBC Vision for Corporate Worship (Abridged)

At FBC our aim is to glorify God together through worship. And although we do this individually, God's word commands believers to meet for a time of corporate worship (Heb. 10:24-25). Our aim in this document is to provide understanding and a rationale for this by explaining what worship is – and isn't; who we worship; who worships; why we worship; how we worship; and when and where we worship.

What Is Worship

Worship is simply glorifying God. And while we often associate it with music, corporate worship involves reading the Word; praying the Word; preaching the Word; singing the Word; seeing the Word (Baptism and Communion) and giving in accordance with the Word.

Why We Worship

We worship together to exalt our God above all else, and in the process build each other up and proclaim our allegiance to Christ before the world.

Exaltation. Our aim, as the congregation gathers to meet with God in public worship is to glorify and enjoy God in accordance with his written Word.

Edification. As we gather to exalt and glorify God, we edify others. Songs of praise to God are also tools for teaching each other God's word. We attend church to receive from God but also to serve and encourage others.

Evangelism. Through corporate worship we seek to display a deep love for and unity under God; in contrast to the prevailing culture that promotes personal autonomy and individual preference.

Who We Worship

The triune God of the Bible is the object and subject of our worship. Instead of gathering as consumers, we understand that God is the audience and as His children, we have come by His grace to give something to God that he alone deserves.

Who Worships

God gathers his people to put the distractions of life aside and to focus instead on Him. Because we believe in the importance of the family, children of all ages are welcomed in corporate worship.

When and Where We Worship

Meeting together is part of what it means to be a church. Since the church is understood to be the people of God rather than the place, it follows that the church can assemble anywhere at any time to engage in corporate worship. God calls us to gather for worship on the first day of the week, the day Jesus was raised. (Acts 20:7)

How We Worship

The author of Hebrews writes "let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 11:28-29). As the redeemed of Christ, we at FBC believe corporate worship is our priority and therefore strive to maintain a joyful yet reverent atmosphere.

The gospel, the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, is what makes worship possible. Therefore, the gospel is what we proclaim in worship because it is what calls a people together in worship, inspires a people to praise in worship and sends a people out in a life of worship. Every Sunday is another opportunity to preach, pray and sing about the cross, glory in our Redeemer, and marvel at the good news of Jesus Christ.

Our corporate worship gathering is structured by the word of God so our desire is to lead the gathered church to do what Scripture commands...

Reading: God creates and sanctifies his people by His Word. Paul instructs Timothy to “devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture.” (1 Tim. 4:13) The simple act of listening to God’s Word, with a shared commitment to believe and obey it, binds a church together. We will highlight the corporate dimensions of reading Scripture when planning a service by having the church read Scripture corporately.

Preaching: More than simply a lecture, preaching is, in the words of Professor John Murray, “a personal, passionate plea”. Paul writes, “We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20). We are accountable to God for the preaching we hear and embrace. Paul warned the Christians in Galatia that they could not escape blame if they accepted a different gospel. They were accountable for the preaching they embraced (Gal. 1:6). The sermon takes the central place. We try to take the main theme of the sermon text and infuse it throughout the whole service, so that the songs, Scripture reading, and prayer anticipate the sermon and prepare our hearts for it.

Prayer: FBC highlights the corporate dimension of worship through corporate prayer. FBC elders will promote this by leading in corporate prayer that praises God, confesses sin, offers thanks, and intercede for specific needs.

Baptism: We worship God as we see death to our old selves and new life in Christ depicted through the act of baptism. FBC will look for ways to emphasize the corporate dimension of baptism by performing baptisms when the whole church is gathered to highlight how baptism involves union with Christ’s people.

Communion: We worship God as we proclaim the life, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus through partaking in Holy Communion. FBC will attempt to clearly emphasize the corporate dimension of the Lord’s Supper by exhorting members to reconcile, examine themselves and read together the Apostles’ Creed before partaking in the bread and cup.

Giving: Giving is an act of worship that reminds us of our commitment to support and participate in building the Kingdom; and in so doing encourage and admonish each other in our responsibilities. (Col. 3:16-17).

Music: The psalmist calls us to, “Sing to the Lord a new song, His praise in the assembly of the godly!” Singing is an act of love for God and our brothers and sisters. When we hear the voices of our fellow church members, we remember that we’re not in this alone. God has welcomed us into His family. Therefore, we want our singing to encourage and edify others while echoing scripture and expressing rich theology to the glory of God.

Online: Viewing a livestream worship service is intended for people who, due to illness, immobility, or for some reason cannot be together with their FBC family on the Lord’s Day. It is never intended to replace in-person corporate worship. Rather it is a temporary substitute to our regular meeting with one another in person.

Conclusion: At First Baptist Church we believe that Christ-centered worship is our priority, and as such we will strive to maintain a joyful yet reverent atmosphere. We believe that the Word of God is central to all that we do and is a sufficient guide for our corporate worship. As William Temple put it, worship is “the quickening of conscience by God’s holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love”. Therefore, we will seek to worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:24) with reverence and awe (Hebrews 12:28) and in the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:4).