

Reformed Worship: Preparing Our Hearts

Lesson 15: Preparing for, Participating in, and Profiting from Worship

- I. “Worship isn’t the kind of thing you can just roll out of bed and be ready for. Meeting with God is so momentous an event that it takes careful and sincere preparation.” cf. Ex 19.10-11; WLC 21.8
- II. Proper preparation for worship will necessarily lead to richer participation in worship and more fruitful profit from worship. If worship’s not doing it for you, have you stopped to think that it may be your own fault?
 - A. Ordinary matters
 1. *Don’t stay out or up late on Saturday night.* “On Saturday night be a boring homebody. Stay in and go to bed early.” “Our weak flesh doesn’t need many excuses to catch some extra z’s during worship. So get a good night’s rest and don’t give the devil a foothold.”
 2. *Don’t be rushed on Sunday morning.* Sunday morning is filled with strong temptations and providential testings. So don’t add to it by being rushed. Put your clothes out Saturday night. Go simple on breakfast. Leave the house early. Don’t leave to show up on time; leave to show up early.
 3. *Cultivate a good attitude.* When your Sunday mornings are characterized by hustle and bustle, short tempers and emotional outbursts will be inevitable. But you can go on the offensive by cultivating and practicing a good attitude. Play good Christian music throughout the house. Help set a good mood. Prepare the family for worship, Ps 122.1
 4. *Review for Sunday.* Look over the bulletin and sermon outline. Read the preaching text. Look over the hymns and see if you know them or not. If not, then look them up online to familiarize yourself with them.
 5. *Learn to Linger.* Sunday is a day for community, not for isolation, Acts 2.42. It’s day in which we come in out of our work in the world, and regroup as a family. Cultivate the family life.
 - a) It’s all too easy to go to church the way you go to the theater. God has a lot more in store for you if you’ll just practice a little self-denial.
 - b) Stick around and love your neighbors by asking about their lives and how today’s sermon ministered to them. Get to know the community of faith in which the Lord’s placed you. And grow to learn why God put you here by looking for ways to serve.
 - B. Extraordinary matters
 1. *Honor the Sabbath*, Dt 5.12; Heb 10.25. God has hallowed the Sabbath for us and He calls us to hallow it in our lives as well.
 - a) Work and sports are two of the most common threats to sanctifying the Sabbath.
 - b) We dishonor God, harm our own souls, and show a gross misunderstanding of the fourth commandment when we try to make church fit into our schedule. Honoring the Sabbath begins with recognizing God’s proprietorship over the day and God’s commandment that we treat it accordingly.
 - c) Yes, this is hard. But the sooner we establish and cultivate a biblical view of the Lord’s Day, the easier it’ll be to say no. When our mental and digital calendars have God’s name written across every Sunday, it’s liberating. Just tell everyone who asks that all your Sundays are already booked by God.
 - d) And as you prepare for the Sabbath, remember that the Sabbath is a wonderful provision from God to remind us every week that the way to fellowship with Him is through the gospel and rest, and not through the law and works. The Sabbath is our weekly reminder that we belong to God and not this passing world. And if it’s about

saying *no* to certain things, it's about saying *yes* to things that are far better. The Sabbath is not about *emptying* the day with a set of negative rules; it's about *filling* it with feasting on the riches of the gospel of God's love in a dying and risen Saviour.

2. *Pray*. Take time for earnest prayer for the day. Pray for God to be glorified and pleased to come down in power and grace among us. Pray for a taste of heaven's worship and for a token of heaven's presence among us.
3. *Get right with your fellow worshipers*, Mt 5.23-24. It's hypocritical to enter the church on Sunday, the very house of reconciliation, if we're harboring anger or resentment or bitterness toward others whom the Lord's welcomed into that house, cf. WLC 171
4. *Get right with God*, Mt 7.21-23; Jn 4.23-24. We need to be sure we're meeting God on His day as a loving Father in Christ and not as a Judge. But wherever we are when we walk through that door, if we've come in sincerity and desire nothing more than to know God, we can be sure He'll meet with us and take care of the rest because we can know that it's Him who drew us. —When we have a problem with worship, we have a problem with our love for the One who alone is worthy of it. Fix that, and worship will be a true delight, Isa 58.13-14

III. *Conclusion*. Get in your heart a fixed conviction of what happens when we worship and you'll understand why God cares so much about it and why David longed so much for it.