

Worship is a big topic. Today, the focus is on typical Sunday worship. You might think I know the agenda for each Sunday, and our church follows pretty close to all traditional Christian churches. That is good but I want to make sure all elements are right and being done properly. Reviewing it once a while also helps each of us to be more conscientious of what we are doing (proper attitude and spirit) during each part of the worship. There are many psalms talked about worship, but about 40 years of my Christian life, I never heard a sermon on Psalm 66. I found this psalm is a treasure on the topic of worship. It is divided into several sections that cover all the elements of worship.

1. Group worship with praise

Many psalms like Psalm 88, 95, 100, 150, etc. contain topic on worship. Psalm 65 to Psalm 68 have a more specific point in the area of group worship like Christian praise God together. The key behind the group worship is each individual worships God in Spirit and truth (John 4:24). Then when all the Christians worship together, God's spirit is among us (II Cor. 6:16, Matt 18:20).

Verses 1 to 4 of Psalm 66 have the theme of "Shout with joy to God, all the earth!". Praise can be in many forms like choir or congregational singing, playing instruments, read God's word, etc. The key again is each Christian worships God individually. God is pleased when each one saying praises deep from his/her heart. I remember many years ago I was singing from my heart with joy during worship singing. One of the choir members sort of signaled me to stop because of my poor singing. If someone is truly worshipping God with full attention to God, how well he/she can notice others. I remember one of my pastors criticized his choir that they were not worshipping, they were doing a performance. A performance is for other people to watch (and be praised for), and worship is intended for God to receive.

2. Tell about God by reading His Word

Verses 5 to 7 described what God has done. For example, verse 6 stated "He turned the sea into dry land, they passed through the waters on foot

– come, let us rejoice in him.” This is reading Old Testament and describes how awesome He is. Thus, worship includes preaching His Word.

3. Praise and Thank God for what He has done to the church

Verses 8 and 9 say “Praise our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard; he has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping.” This section (verses 8 to 12) is about sharing what God has done for the group. For example, praise God together that He provided the church financially, He lead the church through difficult time in the last 2 years, protected the church missionaries in a foreign country, all the churches in this region into revival, etc.

Remember, worship always has two-way effect – worship is to God and He is pleased; God in turn bless us by filling us with His joy, hope, peace, love etc. to encourage and empower us. This is true regardless during praise time, read His Word or thanking Him for what He has done.

4. Offering

Verses 13 to 20 are about individual worship. The first topic in these several verses is about offering (Verses 13 to 15). Each person’s offering shall be a sincere response to God’s love, at the same token, God has commanded each of us to offer. God does not need your money but God wants to see your sincere and thankful heart. Neither you nor your pastor should worry about the church’s offering situation. I remember one of the church members asked me “what can we do because the church offering is getting less and less recently?” I told her that you just need to do your part and don’t have to think about the others. If each member follows God’s command in offering, the church will not have lack of offering situation.

5. Personal testimony (witnessing)

Verse 16 states “Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.” It is very important to have personal testimony in worship. I am not saying every church in all Sunday worship should have the personal testimony time. However, I think the minister must include his personal testimony in every sermon because I did hear some Sunday messages without any minister’s personal testimony. A sermon should have preaching/telling God’s word, and witnessing what God has done so that the

members (Christian and non-Christian attendees) can see personal applications in today's life. In my sermon writing, I always have my personal experience included to let others see how God's word applied in my life and how I was impacted by God's word and action.

6. Prayer

Last but not least is prayer. Verses 17 to 20 are about prayer. Prayer is a very important part of a service. It is a time that God talk to you individually and you talk to God. Self-examination, confession and repentance of sin are also part of this prayer time (Psalm 66:18, John 9:31). The assurance is God always love you and your prayer is always heard.