

The Faithzone : WORSHIP

This PDF version contains all the material relating to this section of the Video formatted for easy printing and comprising:

- Summary
- Transcript
- All questions/activities listed together
- Each question/activity listed on a separate page with pointers for discussion
- A collective worship

Summary

Presenter: Noel Robertson, professional musician and worship leader

Worship – a vital part of life for Christians.

The long tradition: a history of worship in Durham Cathedral.

Connecting earth and heaven.

Different styles of worship for different times and places, but the same message.

Beyond church - memorials and celebrations.

Respecting the past; finding new expressions of faith to ensure a vigorous future.

Discussion

What styles of worship can be found in churches today and how do they reflect the beliefs of the worshippers?

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Transcript

My name is Noel Robertson. I am a professional musician and a full time worship leader.

I'm based here in Tooting, South London, but I travel all round the country playing and teaching other churches how to enhance their worship.

[Father be glorified tonight...]

To me, Christian worship is a vital part of my life and it has been essential to the life of this country for centuries. It's quite easy to forget that in a modern church

[Give the Lord a handclap in this place...]

But go to an ancient building and you soon realize that our Christian history goes back a long way. This is the cathedral in Durham. It has been a place of worship for just over nine hundred years. But its story goes back even further than that, ever since a group of monks chose this spot as a resting place for the remains of Cuthbert, the great Celtic saint, who brought Christianity to the north of England, back in the seventh century.

The shrine of St Cuthbert has brought people to worship in Durham for centuries. In the mediaeval world, cathedrals symbolized the connection between heaven and earth. They were also mysterious places and the worship would have been completely different to what I'm used to.

Back then, services were led by monks sung in chant and conducted in Latin. But though the way they did things was very different, what they did was just the same as we do today. We today, just like they did yesterday, used prayer and music because they help us speak to God. Like them, when we hear the Bible we find him speaking to us. And at the heart of our worship, as it was for the earliest Christians, is the communion service, celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Of course many churches today practice these things in many different ways. We are free to express ourselves in ways that are relevant to our culture and tradition. Whatever the style, though, the substance is just the same.

But don't think it's just the church that's been affected by all these years of history. Even though only a minority of people now attend church on a regular basis, when we as a nation want to celebrate or mourn together, something of the old ways of worship resurface.

I believe that without the past we don't have a future. Durham Cathedral is a reminder that our traditions of worship are ancient and their roots run deep. We have to learn from our history, to adapt our worship and to find new ways to express our faith. If we do that, then rest assured: the church will still be worshipping in another thousand years.

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Activities

1. What is 'prayer'?
2. All worship involves a sense of being in the presence of the object of worship. Religious places of worship use sight, sound and smell to create a sense of the presence of God. If you had to design a space for worship, how would you do it?
3. Listen to two pieces of devotional music – medieval plainchant and modern Gospel. What kind of effect does each have? Which do you prefer?
4. What are sacraments?
5. Only about 9% of British people regularly worship in church although a greater number would say they were Christian. Do you attend a church or other place of worship? Why - or why not?

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Activity 1

What is prayer?

There's plenty of room for debate on this issue. In all religious traditions, prayer involves trying to bring oneself into the presence of God.

In the Christian tradition, prayer is traditionally thought of as having three facets:

- Praise
- Penitence
- Petition

Pupils could think about how they respond to these three areas of prayer

- What would they be praising or giving thanks for?
- What do they regret about their own lives and the society they live in?
- What would they ask God for?

What ways of praying are used other than words? (Think of examples in the different styles of Christian and in other religious traditions e.g. bells, music, incense, candles, prayer flags etc) Why is each used? Which seem most effective?

Extension

Discuss what words or metaphors you think best describe the act of prayer. Pupils could write their own list-poem: ideas, images, emblems, metaphors which they feel help define this mysterious activity.

George Herbert, the famous 17th century poet who was also a clergyman, wrote several poems about prayer. His poem '*Prayer*', and more about him, can be found at <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/herbert/>

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Activity 2

All worship involves a sense of being in the presence of the object of worship. Religious places of worship use sight, sound and smell to create a sense of the presence of God. If you had to design a space for worship, how would you do it?

Aztec pyramids, a Quaker Meeting House, Stonehenge, a medieval cathedral... photographs of places of worship from religious traditions can be found at http://build.tripod.com/imagebrowser/photos/Architecture/World_Religion/categories/1.html

Look at the various images and at related images from other similar pages at the same site. You can also get free photographs of churches at <http://www.freefoto.com/pictures/church/building/index.asp>

Can you work out details of worship and belief from evidence in the pictures? For example:

- is the building designed for communal or private prayer?
- Is the building divided into different areas for God/people, priests/people, men/women etc?
- Does the shape of the building have a meaning?

Extension

For those unfamiliar with basic Christian architects, lots of information and activities can be found at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/programmes/cathedral/index.shtml>

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Activity 3

Listen to two pieces of devotional music – medieval plainchant and modern Gospel. What kind of effect does each have? Which do you prefer?

These two types of music, referred to in the video, are just a small sample of the different styles of devotional music that have evolved in Christian worship over the last two centuries. These include everything from simple masses and chants such as those of the Taizé and Iona communities to great formal masses by Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart and, more recently, Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten, Duke Ellington's sacred music - not to forget the work of African, South American and other composers. In fact just about every music genre is represented in Christian music making somewhere in the world.

Extension

Write your own piece of music to accompany worship. Decide what aspect of worship you want it to reflect and chose a style, key and tempo that suit. You could, for example, either set it to the existing words of a poem or hymn, use it as background to a reading from a religious text or to create a particular atmosphere. The result should be used in a collective worship.

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Activity 4

What are 'sacraments'?

The word 'sacrament' is traditionally described as meaning 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.'

Across most Christian traditions, the two key sacraments are Baptism and Holy Communion. What are these activities, and what do they represent for worshippers? A thorough, but clear, discussion of their theology and meaning can be found at the World Council of Churches Faith and Order website at <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/faith/bem1.html>

Both sacraments involve an acting-out of beliefs. For those who have no experience of church worship, discuss related secular rituals, e.g. birthday celebrations, joining a scout pack, school assembly (and school uniforms!), court procedures, receiving a degree or a prize, the Maori war-dance performed by the New Zealand rugby team... What is going on in these rituals?

Pupils could design their own 'sacrament'. For example: what would they do / say when a new person joins the class?

Birth, marriage and death are often thought of as being the three points at which people need some sort of ritual gesture. What are the differences between Christian and secular rituals at this point?

Do we need rituals only at these 'crisis' points? When else might we need them?

Extension

Japanese Buddhism generated the tea ceremony – a ritual which involves concentration on an 'ordinary' moment. Several sites tell you more about this ceremony, for example <http://www.teahyakka.com/> or <http://www.holytn.com/tea/Japanesetea.htm>

The sacrament of Holy Communion, when Christians commemorate the last supper that Jesus had with his disciples, is based on the ritual of a meal. Some groups, such as the Quakers, regard every meal as sacramental. In some families and places it is still customary to say 'Grace' before and/or after meals. Perhaps each of our meals could involve reflection and a gesture of gratitude and community – if so, how?

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Activity 5

Only about 9% of British people regularly worship in church, although a greater number would say they were Christian.. Do you attend? Why – or why not?

An open question. Many who do not go to church might claim that they do not miss anything by not going - though, of course, people don't just go to church to 'gain' something, but for many other reasons. Ask the pupils to identify why people might go to church, e.g.

- to be part of the Christian community
- to be part of any community
- to give something back to God in thanks
- they enjoy the culture, music, ritual etc
- they have always gone – either from habit or because it has happy memories for them
- they feel they ought to, although they may not be quite clear why
- they are interested in discovering more about faith
- they are interested in finding out more about themselves.

What do you think of each of these reasons? Are some better than others? Which do you think are the most likely to keep people in church once they have got there?

Why do so many people choose not to go to church?

Should churches change their forms of worship to attract more people?

Do you think people have to go to church to be good Christians? Why – or why not?

Information about Christian practice in the UK can be found in the UK Christian Handbook's Religious Trends 3 and via the website at www.christian-research.org.uk

Extension

Is 'worship' something that is only done in the context of a faith? How would you describe 'worship'? Many people cannot imagine life without football, television or shopping. Does that mean they 'worship' these things?

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Collective Worship - *YOUR* WORSHIP

Four students move forward to begin the collective worship.

SPEAKER 1: This morning we are going to see a short video.

SPEAKER 2: Then we will ask some questions about it afterwards to find out what you think about everything said in the video.

Show the video which lasts about 4 minutes, then play the music as the four students begin addressing the students.

SPEAKER 3: In that video Noel Robertson was looking at the church in the present and the past. He said "...*Though the way they did things was very different, what they did was just the same as we do today.*"

SPEAKER 4: It doesn't matter which period of history you look at, people have always found a way of connecting with their God through prayer and music plays a big part in celebrating that communication.

SPEAKER 1: The music Noel Robertson was using in his church is very different from the music used by worshippers hundreds of years ago.

SPEAKER 2: Do you think it makes much difference to God what sort of music we sing in church? Do you think God looks down and says "Yuck I didn't like that hymn? Why did they have to sing that hymn? They must know that's my LEAST favourite hymn of all time!!!"

SPEAKER 3: Most people would say God doesn't mind how you worship as long as it brings you closer together. The important thing is to find YOUR way to communicate with God.

SPEAKER 4: Even if you choose not to attend a church there's nothing to stop you communicating with God... whenever you like... wherever you are. You can do it walking down the street. You can do it in the middle of playing a game of football or during an aerobics class if you want to, but many people find it's even better if you find a few minutes to have a bit of quiet time

SPEAKER 1: Do you have a way of speaking with God?

SPEAKER 2: Have you ever tried it?

SPEAKER 3: Maybe you'd like it. Give it a try some time.

SPEAKER 4: Or, if the idea of ten minutes silence frightens you half death, why not put on your favourite music to inspire you. Just lie back and find out if it inspires God in the same way. All you've got to do is ask and God will respond. Think about it.