

# Oaks-West Church of Christ

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## Worship is a Witness to the Unbeliever

*by Ken Weliever*

Since we have been traveling for the past 28 months we have visited over 40 congregations.

While in most cases I've preached for the churches we visited, sometimes we were just passing through and stopped to worship. Being a visitor, as opposed to being a member of that congregation, seems to have heightened my sense of observation about the worship services, Bible classes, preaching, and our reception by the members.

Today's Bible reading in 1 Corinthians 14, reminds me that we have a responsibility in our worship toward outsiders and non-Christians.

Worship, of course, is primarily about our relationship with the Lord. We come to worship Him. Not to impress others. Or to make ourselves feel good that we're "going to church." He is to be the focus of our spiritual activities (Rev. 4:11; 20:10).

Furthermore, worship is an individual responsibility. I must sing. Pray. Give.

Commune. And listen to His Word, making personal application. To be pleasing to God my worship must be accurate and authentic (Jn 4:23-24).

When I worship my spirit is elevated as I experience the presence of God and feel the joy of divine association.

The text also reminds us that worship has a collective element. Three words are used that speak to our relationship to one another in the worship service: Edification. Order. Understanding.

"Let all things be done for edification," Paul admonishes. The word "edify" means to "build up." Too often we are more concerned about our own edification than building up our brother in Christ. This chapter deals with the abuse of miraculous, spiritual gifts in the assembly. Pride, personal agenda, and unholy egos were driving the worship service.

Their priorities were misplaced. And

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their heart was in the wrong place. "Pursue love" Paul counseled. Love edifies. And when the church is edified it is strengthened. Motivated to love and good works. And stimulated to greater faithfulness and deeper devotion.

Closely connected with edification is order. "Let all things be done decently and in order" (v. 40). Chaos, confusion and commotion in the assembly distracts us from our primary purpose.

Eight times in this text Paul addresses the importance of understanding. Not only my own understanding but the understanding of other worshipers. The message must be communicated in a way that is meaningful to everyone in the assembly. This requires diligent preparation on the part of worship leaders. And a prepared heart by the worshiper to really hear, really worship, and really make personal application.

Sometimes lost in this chapter, is Paul's concern about the unbeliever who visits the assembly.

Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you. (1 Cor 14:22-25).

While miraculous, spiritual gifts have

ceased, the principles Paul enunciated are still applicable. Edification, order, and understanding are also an important witness to the unbeliever.

What do visitors see when they worship with our local church family? When they pull into the parking lot? When they enter the building? When they meet the members? When the service begins?

Do they see people who are happy to be together, or seem distant, detached, and aloof?

Do they feel welcomed, or are largely ignored?

Do they hear singing that is enthusiastic and vibrant, or dispassionate and dispirited?

Do they see worshipers who are alert, attentive and focused or people who are drowsy, distracted, and disinterested?

Do they hear a message from God's Word that is carefully crafted to spiritually enlighten, encourage and edify, or a disjointed, rambling monologue filled with personal opinions and subjective conclusions?

Do they feel compelled to worship, or to leave?

Do they want to return, or never come back?

And do they "declare that God is really among you," or wonder why He isn't?

Brethren, when we assemble Sunday to worship God, let's not forget or neglect outsiders and unbelievers among us. And, it might we well to examine ourselves and ask, "What do they see?"

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## Welcome!

When you visit our assemblies, you will be received friendly, kindly and courteously. We believe this to be the natural attitude of those who truly love God and mankind. Though you may at first be among strangers, we hope that you will come to know us well and count us as your friends.

**We offer Bible studies as well as correspondence courses for those interested in learning more about what God expects of us.**



**Upcoming Ladies' Bible Classes** - Tuesday, October 13 at the building.

**Gospel Meeting** - October 4-7 with Terry Slack. Due to social distancing requirements, we are not advertising this meeting to other congregations.

**Services for October** - We will be meeting for our 10:45 am service on Sundays and our Wednesday evening class at 7 pm. The gospel meeting will be Sunday morning and each evening at 7 p.m. All other service times remain cancelled for the time being. Thank you for your support and encouragement as we make these difficult decisions! --DT for the elders

*If you know of upcoming events, please inform Darrell so they can be included here.*



Please remember the following individuals in your daily prayers:

June Owens  
Jack Wilson  
Jerry Richardson  
Karen Hallmark  
Shirley Perkins' brother, Leon  
O'Hair Family  
Dinah Williams  
Joy Ulrich  
Kevin Barth  
Lisa Trammel  
Joel and Tori Moore  
Tyler Hairston  
Bobbie Gibbons  
Anna Urquhart  
*And continue to pray for each other*

If you know of someone that needs to be on this list, please tell Darrell (email preferred) and provide updates so names stay on the list as long as needed.

We have many that face challenges on a daily basis and need your prayers as well.

***“praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,”***  
**(Ephesians 6:18 ESV)**

