

Worship is our heart’s steady focus on God. It involves our entire being: it is heart, mind, soul, and body focused on God. When misplaced, focused on created people, places, and things, instead of the God they are meant to glory, worship can become a form of idolatry. It is so interesting because it involves imperfect, created beings focusing on our perfect Creator. It is a very serious matter, and it can also be a bit humorous. Here are some of my favorite church bulletin bloopers.

- The outreach committee has enlisted 25 visitors to make calls on people who are not afflicted with any church.
- The peace-making meeting scheduled for today has been canceled due to a conflict.
- The audience is asked to remain seated until the end of the recession.
- The third verse of Blessed Assurance will be sung without musical accomplishment.
- The Rev. Merriwether spoke briefly, much to the delight of the audience.

Many a pastor, on preaching for any length of time, has invariably rediscovered or been reintroduced to the value of brevity. So, in brief, today is the first in a series of messages about being engaged in the life of the church called, “Be Engaged: Share Your Heart, Do Your Part.”

Notice that these five weeks begin and end with focusing on God instead of us. Worship leads to service, which leads to sharing, which leads to giving, which leads to inviting, all of which is worship.

Here at Brewster Baptist, we have many ways you can be engaged in worship. You can volunteer to be on our flower team, volunteer to help in the tech booth, make worship possible for a parent by volunteering in the Nursery, join the team of Worship Welcomers, join us in the choir, praise team, or help lead a service; these are just a few of the ways you can be engaged, share you heart, and do your part in a worshipful way. For those participating online or remotely, you can engage in conversation on the Live Stream, send a letter of encouragement to a ministry team, pray for our church, or write a letter to a friend. We always appreciate your feedback, which helps us improve our shared experience.

Last week, Pastor Doug shared with us a wonderful orientation of the things that worship does. I refer you to that excellent list for continuing reflection:

1. “Worship **dispels loneliness** – and helps us feel part of a larger community – which is a key component to living longer and healthier.
2. Worship **brings hope** when life is hard – and life is often hard.
3. Worship **counters self-centeredness** and reminds us that life is not all about us.
4. Worship **reminds us of important values** we may forget.
5. Worship **strengthens our courage**.
6. Worship **brings us a sense of forgiveness**.
7. Worship **gives us the opportunity to express praise and thanksgiving**.
8. Worship **renews our faith** when it’s weakening.
9. Worship **empowers creativity**...
10. Worship is a form of **corporate prayer** that brings positive change to people.
11. Worship **calls us out of who we are to who we may yet become with God’s help**.

12. Worship is a **transcendent experience** that helps us stand apart from our lives and see reality more clearly.”

(From “Revelation: The End and the Beginning” by Rev. Dr. Doug Scalise, 10/16/22)

We hope that as you worship here in person and online that you experience these things, that you are inspired, renewed, empowered, and reminded that you are not alone, that you’re part of something greater, that you’re prayed for, that you encounter the living God.

We can worship wherever we are in the world. In fact, the psalmist invites all nations to worship God. Let’s listen to the words of *Psalm 100*:

All Lands Summoned to Praise God

A Psalm of thanksgiving.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, bless his name.

For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

As we take time to honor and delight ourselves in God, we find all we do falling into line with a deep satisfaction in doing and being in the center of God’s will. I imagine that to be the case in Toya Richards’ life.



Today, we have the special joy of hearing from Global Servant Toya Richards. [From the IM Global Servant Webpage,]

“Toya is endorsed to serve in Cape Town, South Africa as a teacher and professor at the Cape Town Baptist Seminary – a ministry of IM partner the Baptist Union of Southern Africa. Drawing upon her extensive career and experience in print journalism and communications, Toya will teach intermediate to advanced English language skills and research methodology, preparing students to meet the demands and requirements needed for advanced seminary studies. She will also be involved in emerging community initiatives through the CTBS Center for Biblical Justice. Toya is currently

building her Mission Partnership Team and raising the funds needed to begin her ministry in South Africa.” <https://www.internationalministries.org/author/t-richards/>

Many of you will recall that our own Marilyn Raatz taught at the Cape Town Baptist Seminary, also in the area of justice, so it is a special joy to have Toya with us today. Please give her a warm welcome.

Welcome, Toya. It is a delight to have you visit this month as we are celebrating World Missions. Since we are talking about worship this morning, I am wondering how you would define worship. Thank you. It is a pleasure to be here.

What does worship look like to you? Worship is all the things you said; it’s our whole being focused on glorifying God.

When did you first sense a call to ministry?

My call has grown from God’s call to “preach” to the call to attend seminary and now teach at a seminary in Africa.

So, you are going to Cape Town South Africa. Why is it called the Mother City?

Cape Town is the largest city in South Africa, and I am eager to respond to God’s call on my life there.

You will be working in the area of justice in theological education. How has your understanding of justice evolved through your life?

I became aware of the need very early in life while. In South Africa, I’ll be serving at Cape Town Baptist Seminary, a ministry of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa, teaching in the areas of research, biblical justice, and peacemaking, helping in a post-apartheid “Reconstruction” era. I will be working with pastors and lay leaders, training them to serve communities on the margins of society, and who are themselves often struggling.

Have you been to South Africa? Is there a language barrier? What are some of the challenges you will face?

The challenges are great. I have been to the country on a discovery trip. More than 5 million South Africans live in informal settlements – sprawling, crowded communities lacking basic services such as clean toilets, running water, electricity, or trash removal. Some 43% of the total population does not have access to clean water. Additionally, Africa is home to roughly 685 million Christians, according to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Yet only 1 percent of all African churches have a trained pastor, said Rev. Dr. Godfrey Harold, CTBS’s principal and CEO.

What are you most eager to do there?

I am eager to be in the education setting, working to equip these leaders for the challenges before them and us.

How can we support you?

First and foremost, you can pray. There’s an opportunity to be the change. You can join this work by becoming a member of my Mission Partnership Network. You can provide support by committing to a one-time or recurring donation to the work. All of IM’s Global Servants must raise their own funding, and I very much appreciate your support.

How is God speaking in your life these days?

God and I are working on trust. I am leaning into God to provide for all that I need, and I am grateful for the opportunity to build a relationship with you. Thank you!

Toya brings with her a love for God and neighbor, for missions, and for the work of justice. She is passionate about educating others and preparing them for the work of ministry. She is engaged in worship, in focusing on God, and in building God's kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven." I hope that you can be inspired through her story about what it means to worship God without holding anything back. Let us pray.

Loving God, we worship and give thanks to your name. You are just, and good, and loving, and we long for your healing among the nations. Our eyes are on you, you who are the same yesterday, today, and forever, through the generations of our families. Lead and guide us into a deeper, daily worship, we pray through Jesus' name. Amen.

Sermon Questions

1. Last week in "Revelation: The End and the Beginning", Pastor Doug shared with us 12 wonderful definitions of and invitations to worship. With which of these can you most easily relate? How would you define worship?
2. How does worship engage all of our senses?
3. Where or when do you feel most worshipful?
4. What gifts can you bring to Brewster Baptist to inspire others to worship and to honor God? What gifts to your home or family life?
5. According to Harold Best in, "Music through the Eyes of Worship," worship means acknowledging that someone or something else besides self is more important. Who or what are you worshipping?
6. St. Augustine understood that worship is framed and defined, in essence, by mercy. Since God is just, God is worthy of our worship. God shows us mercy in order to bring us into a closer relationship. How can we show justice and mercy to others in this manner?
7. Application: What characteristics do Psalm 100 and Isaiah 26:1-13 have in common? How can we live into these realities daily?

Prayer: *O Lord, we give thanks for those who help guide our hearts into worshipping and glorifying you here at Brewster Baptist Church, in our community, and in our lives. Thanks be to God!*