

Worship Fuels Mission by Mike Ruhl

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WORSHIP FUELS MISSION

Several weeks ago, my dear wife Carolyn and I were nestled into padded pews at our new home congregation in Lake Forest, California. Positioned above the altar is a huge cross -- simple but stately, to say the least. As the worship team led the congregation in reflective, spiritual hymnody (Call to Worship) prior to the start of the service, my eyes continued to be riveted to that large cross. And the cross of Christ itself became a parable, a metaphor of what God wants to happen in this war-torn, sin-sick, tired world of ours.

THE *VOLUNTAS DEI* (Purpose of God)

I could not help but observe that the vertical beam of the cross was considerably longer and taller than the horizontal beam. That suggested to me that the purpose of God (*voluntas Dei*) is that all men, women and children of the world would know, embrace, worship and glorify Him as Lord and Savior. The purpose of God is *doxological*: to honor and glorify God. Purpose has **God**, not people, as the focus and the Actor. Purpose is also very broad in scope, and it is used both inside and outside the church.

THE *MISSIO DEI* (Mission of God)

Then the eyes moved laterally, following the shorter, but still significant horizontal beam. Both “arms” of the horizontal beam extend outward. That suggested to me that the mission of God (*missio Dei*) is the divine, strategic intent of the Lord for His church on earth: *Go! Make disciples of all the nations!* Mission has **the People of God**, not the Lord, as the focus. Mission is much narrower in scope, and its primary use and application is internal (*inside the church*), ever holding up the question: “What does God want US to accomplish here on earth?”

But the pulse truly quickened as the “healthy tension” between Worship and Witness became so clearly illustrated by the shape of the cross. It is Worship that “fuels” Mission! The Great Commission to “make disciples of all the nations” is not an end in itself. Instead, the mission flows out of the high purpose of God that *all would repent and come to the knowledge of truth, and then worship Him in spirit and truth.*

This is a *mystery* indeed. Worship fuels mission. Like law and gospel, they must not become isolated or ends in themselves. Both are vitally connected in the Cross of Jesus Christ.

7 Questions for Reflection

by Glenn A. Lucas

1. How much of your church's resources is being invested in worship each week?
2. As you reflect on what is being invested in worship at your church, are you seeing the outcomes your church desires? Are people drawing closer to God? Are they growing in the faith? Are they experiencing the conviction of sin and the sweet grace of forgiveness through faith in Jesus? Are they leaving energized and equipped to live sanctified lives?

Consider this quote from researcher George Barna: "... even though churches build their primary weekly event around the concept of worship, and call the event a "worship service," less than one out of every five churches rated worship to be a top ministry priority, and that most of those in attendance say they did not experience the presence of God during the service." --Barna Reviews Top Religious Trends of 2005 (<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=214>)

3. If worship fuels mission, how's the fuel source in your church? How does your church emphasize mission in worship?
4. What steps can you take to ensure that each worship service in your congregation first achieves the *Voluntas Dei* (purpose of God) and, second, fuels the *Missio Dei* (mission of God)?

Barna goes on to say, "The limited significance we assign to the act of worship, as opposed to putting on and being present at a worship event, is found in our data showing that less than one out of every ten church attenders spends any time during a typical week worshipping God, other than when they are at a church service."

5. What steps will your church take to encouraging and equip attenders for personal worship/devotion during the week apart from the church service?

Check out this October 12, 2005 posting titled "Please, no more doing church for 'them'" by Ryan Bolger on his blog, *BolgBlog*: Ryan Bolger's musings about following Jesus within post-Western cultures (<http://thebolgblog.typepad.com/thebolgblog/worship/index.html>). Ryan suggests that worship is primarily not for them, i.e. outsiders/unchurched/never churched, but for those already in the faith. While he does not use the terminology, the article points the church to move outside of the worship into the community to fulfill the *missio Dei*.

6. How does your church encourage and equip attenders to be about the mission of God during the course of their daily lives, i.e. as living sacrifices?

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. – Romans 12:1 (NIV)

7. How does your church corporately, through individually-fueled saints, fulfill the mission of God in the community which God has placed at your doorstep?