



SEVEN
BIBLICAL
RHYTHMS OF
CORPORATE
WORSHIP

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Seven Biblical Rhythms of Corporate Worship

Intentionally or unintentionally, in every service of worship, there is always a functional theology at play. We can unwittingly chase the methods and music of worship and miss the Person and purpose of our weekly gatherings. In this session, we will be looking specifically at seven theological rhythms of corporate worship that serve as guardrails in designing and facilitating biblically-grounded, theologically-rich corporate gatherings.





INTRODUCTION

Fundamental Paradigm for Any Ministry

Our *Theology*

Informs 

Our *Philosophy*

Which Informs 

Our *Methodology*



What Happens When We By-pass Theological Foundations and Run First to Methods?

1. We unwittingly condition our people to equate worship with music.

Music styles fracture the congregation.

The church was never meant to gather *around music*. And it's becoming more difficult for churches to find *the musical magic bullet* that will draw in crowds of younger people and at the same time keep the older folks happy.



What Happens When Theological Foundations are By-Passed?

2. When our theological framework is by-passed, all too often, the Word of God is **missing** during the worship service.

Dr. Chuck Lewis found that over 60% of larger SBC churches he surveyed didn't use Scripture in the corporate gathering time at or near the beginning of a worship service.

Charles T. Lewis, "Far and Near: Christian Worship of the Transcendent and Immanent God of Wonders" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 114.

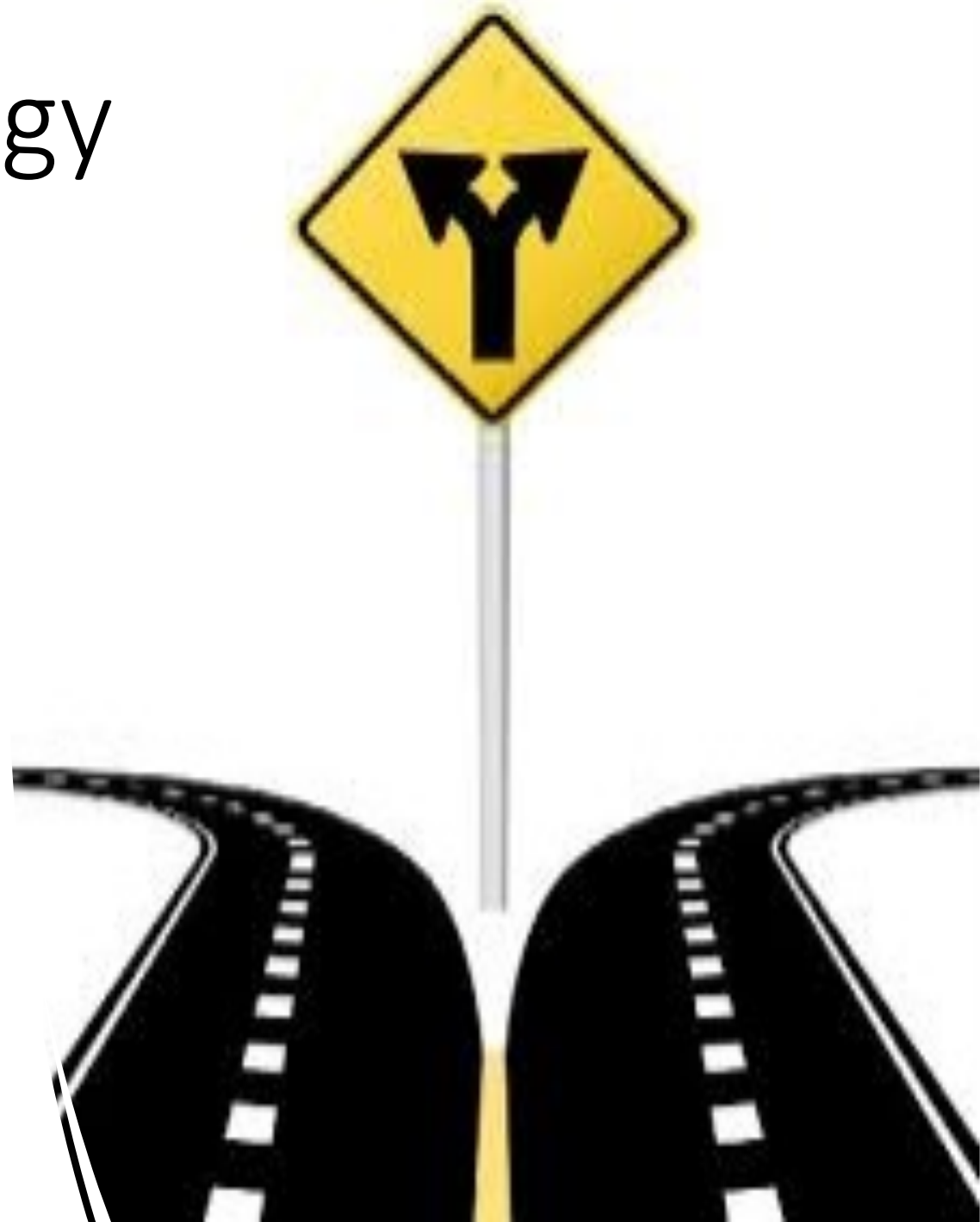
What Happens When We By-pass Theology?

- 3. The church views worship as an experience or a production.



Bypassing Theology

- Many worshipers think they've worshiped when they *feel* something, and the corporate experience is either good or bad, based on their own emotional temperature.
- In many instances, worshipers are completely unaware that they have gauged the gathering *with themselves at the center* of the "experience."



What Happens When We By-Pass a Theological Framework for Worship?

- 4. Church leaders have been duped into thinking that the worship leaders, accompanying technology, or production are responsible for the “presence” of the Holy Spirit and ultimate effectiveness of the corporate gathering.

The reality is that *self-actuated worship is no more possible than self-actuated salvation.*



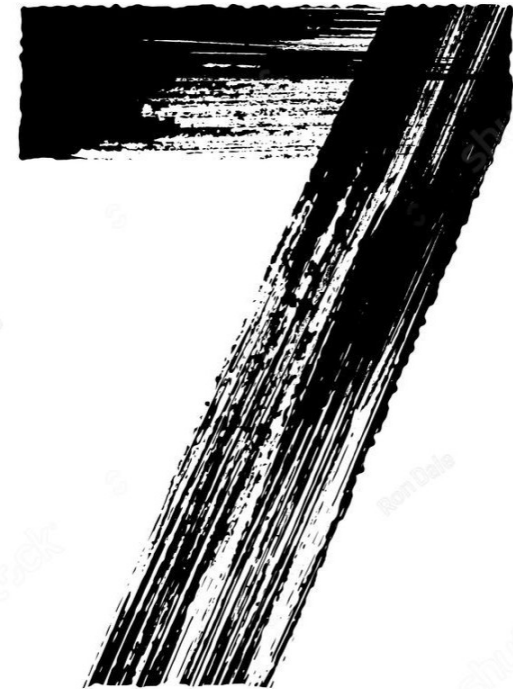
What is the Theological Foundation for Worship?

If worship is essentially a rhythm of *God revealing*
and His *people responding*, then His *revelation* is
fundamentally indispensable.

God is self-revealing



Seven Rhythms of Corporate Worship





Worship: People Seeing What is Real

- Think of the rhythms as guardrails in designing and facilitating corporate worship.

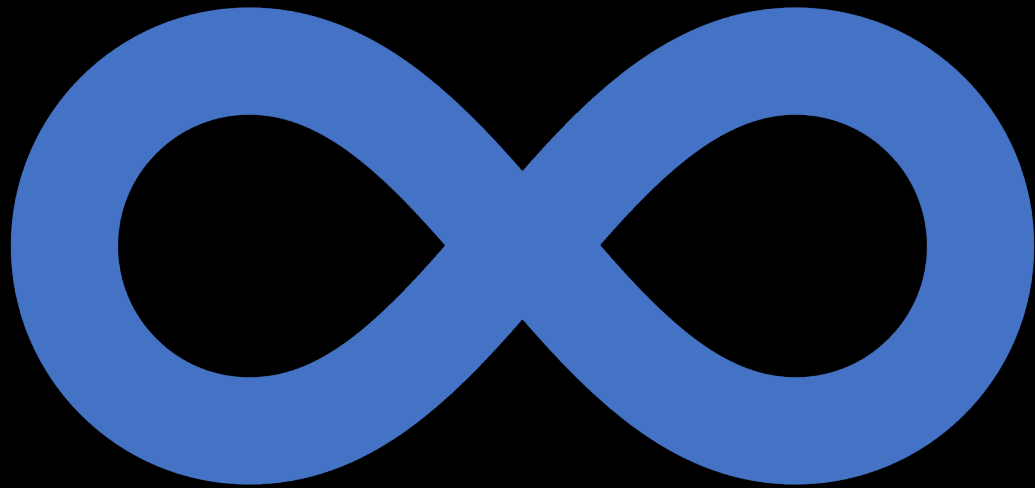
Seven Biblical Rhythms

- **1. The Rhythm of the Trinity in Worship: The Triune God-Man Rhythm**

- Redeemed human beings actually join the divine communion already established and ongoing in the eternal love between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.



The Essentiality of the Trinity



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- The Trinity is the governing center of all Christian belief, the truth that shapes and beautifies all others.

Michael Reaves, *Delighting in the Trinity*

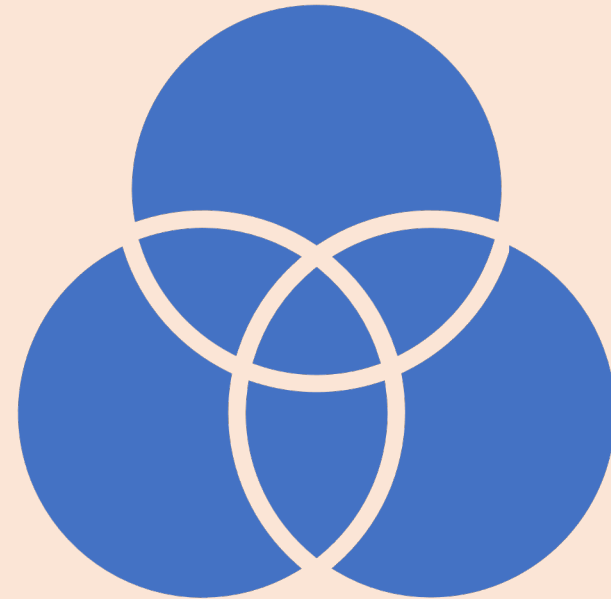
Potential Pitfalls When We Ignore the Reality and Necessity of the Trinity

Human leaders become “mediators” on behalf of the congregation.

Music can become “sacramentalized.” Our access to God the Father is through Christ the Son and Him alone, through the power of the Holy Spirit!

Worship is carried on the “cart” of experience rather than Christ Himself.

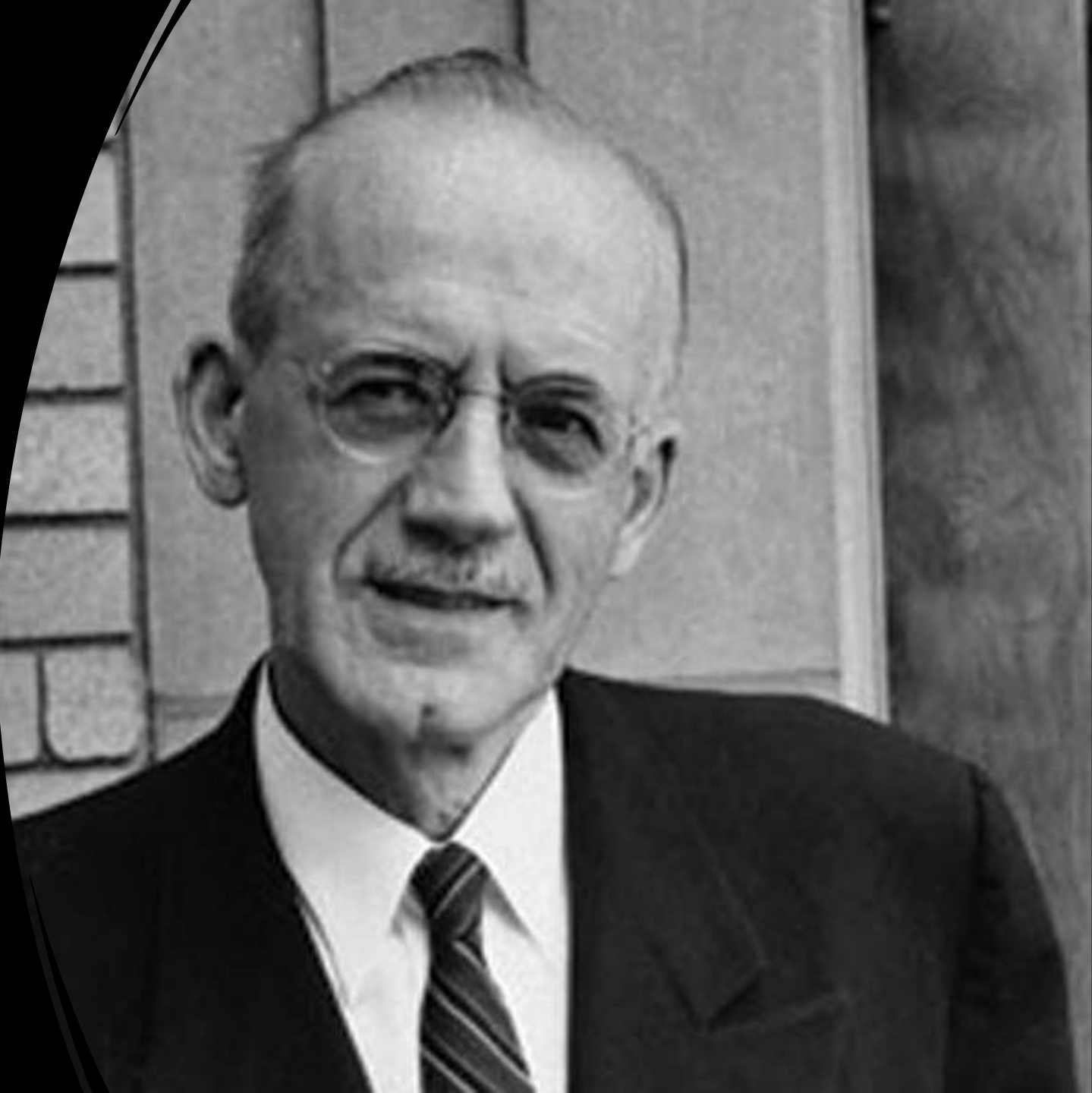
2 Samuel 6



2. The Rhythm of Transcendence and Immanence

- “The church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low, so ignoble, as to be utterly unworthy of thinking, worshiping men. This she has done not deliberately, but little by little and without her knowledge; and her very unawareness only makes her situation all the more tragic.”

A.W. Tozer



TRANSCENDENC E

- If in corporate worship people are directed to think *first of themselves* and the love that God has for them, then God's grace may not seem amazing at all.

Amazing Grace

Sts. 1-5 John Newton, 1779
St. 6 John Rees, ca. 1859 American folk hymn, 19th c.
harm. Edwin Othello Excell, 1900

1. A - maz - ing grace! How sweet the sound that
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and
3. Through man - y dan - gers, toils, and snares, I
4. The Lord has prom - ised good to me, His
5. Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail, and
6. When we've been there ten thou - sand years, bright

saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but
grace my fears re - lieved; how pre - cious did that
have al - read - y come; 'tis grace hath brought me
Word my hope se - cures; He will my shield and
mor - tal life shall cease, I shall pos - sess, with -
shin - ing as the sun, we've no less days to

now am found; was blind, but now I see.
grace ap - pear the hour I first be - lieved.
safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
por - tion be, as long as life en - dures.
in the veil, a life of joy and peace.
sing God's praise than when we first be - gun.

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Isaiah 6

- Without an intentional acknowledgment of God's transcendence at the beginning of a worship service, we limit our congregations' ability to respond rightly to who He is.

3. The Rhythm of Revelation and Response

- “Since God is the Inviter, the Host, and the Guest of Honor, shouldn’t we hear first from him? Isn’t it infinitely appropriate to hear a Word of invitation and welcome and testimony from God himself as the one who has made our gathering both possible and meaningful? Let us hear first from God through his Word, and then respond to Him with our songs, prayers, and words of praise.”

• Ron Man



Who Initiates Worship?

- **Congregational singing does not initiate worship, God does.** Songs don't call people to worship, God does – through His Word. He speaks, we listen. He commands, we obey. He calls, we answer. He invites us to worship Him, we attend and respond.





In Corporate Worship, Who or What Carries the Burden of Effective Revelation?

- When the Word of God is absent from the corporate gathering, worship leaders place an incredibly heavy burden on a humanly-composed song to express both God's revelation of Himself and an appropriate congregational response.

4. The Rhythm of Spirit and Truth

- Define Spirit and Truth Worship

- John 4
- John 6
- John 17
- Col. 3:16
- Eph. 5:19





Worship “in Spirit...”

- We cannot worship apart from the Holy Spirit. In fact, as believers, we can do nothing of any eternal significance apart from the Holy Spirit.

Worship in Spirit

- “Please join me in prayer. Father, it is a joy to be here to celebrate with brothers and sisters in Christ by the power of the Spirit the victory of Jesus. And for us to have through the Spirit a foretaste of that heavenly glory. Father, I pray now that you would send forth your Spirit again, for we are continually dependent on His ministry. Apart from His work we can do nothing. We cannot understand the Scripture, I cannot rightly divide it, and we cannot rightly understand it or interpret it. But you have not left us, Lord Jesus, as orphans, but you have sent forth your Spirit, so be with us again, we pray, in Jesus’ name. Amen.” Dr. Andy Davis



“Truth” – Two-fold Fulfillment

“Truth” as intended by Jesus and as demonstrated in the New Testament consists of a two-fold fulfillment. John 17:17-19

Truth is **Propositional** – Empowered, informed, and grounded in the Word of God

Truth is **Christological** – Truth is a Person



Worship in Spirit

- “You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him” (John 4:22-23).

Scripture Interpreting Scripture – Analogy of Faith

• Ephesians 5:15-21

• Colossians 3:16

5. The Rhythm of the Law and Gospel

- “Be gracious to me through your law,” Psalm 119:29.
- Creation
- Fall
- Redemption
- Consummation





Through the Law Comes Knowledge of Sin

- “Whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.” (Rom. 3:19-20)
- In his letter to the Galatian church, Paul wrote, “Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24 NASB).

The Law is our “Tutor” or “Guardian”

- We get the word, “pedagogy” from this word.

- Pedagogue – one hired to “mature” a son.
- Jesus did not ignore the OT. We proclaim the essence of the “Law” as our “Guardian” to lead us to Christ.



AUGUSTUS M. TOPLADY, 1776.

THOMAS HASTINGS, 1830.

1. Rock of A - ges, cleft for me! Let me
 2. Not the la - bor of my hands Can ful-
 3. Noth - ing in my hand I bring Sim - ply
 4. While I draw this flet - ing breath, When mine

hide my - self in thee; Let the wa - ter and the blood,
 fil thy law's demands; Could my zeal no res - pite know,
 to thy cross I cling; Nak - ed, come to thee for dress,
 eyes shall close in death, When I soar to world's unknown,

From thy riv - en side that flowed, Be of sin the
 Could my tears for - ev - er flow, All for sin could
 Help - less, look to thee for grace; Foul, I to the
 See thee on thy Judgment throne, - Rock of A - ges,

doub - le cure; Save me from its guilt and pow'r.
 not a - tone; Thou must save, and thou a - lone.
 Foun - tain fly, Wash me, Sav - iour, or I die.
 cleft for me, Let me hide my - self in thee.

The Double Cure...Save from Wrath and Make Me Pure...

In gospel-centered, gospel-focused worship, the worshipers are reminded that to stand justified before God, they must have a complete and perfected righteousness attained through a perfect obedience to the law.

Each person in the gathering knows they have sinned and fallen short of God's perfection and glory. (Rom.3:23).

6. The Rhythm Vertical - Horizontal

- There is the vertical (Godward) and the horizontal (congregation-ward) element in worship.
- The horizontal often seems underestimated among worship leaders.

Fellowship

Singing

Praying

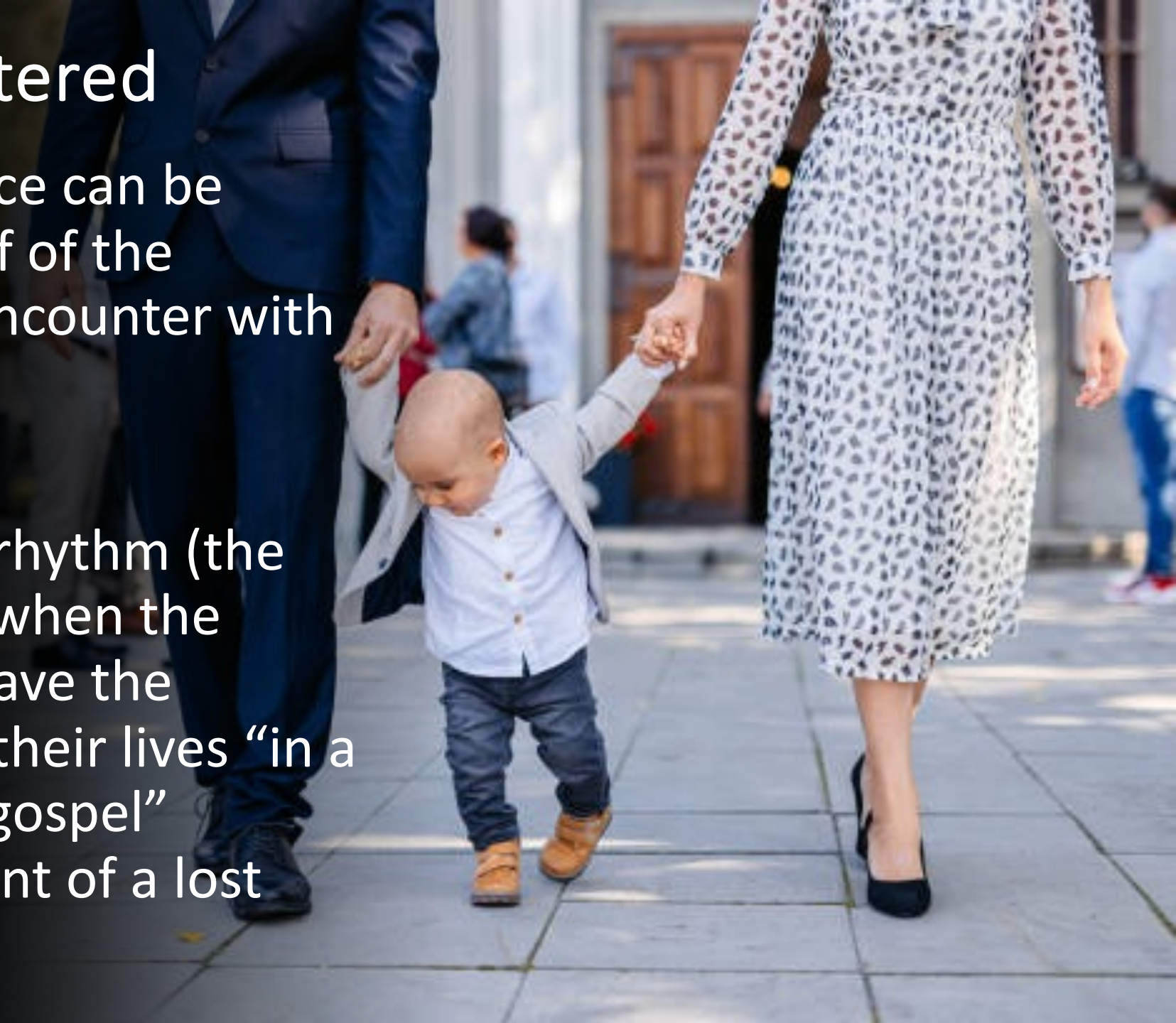
Lord's
Supper

Baptism

- No one else on the planet can offer praise to the Lord for you.

Gathered and Scattered

- The entire church service can be considered the first half of the vertical rhythm as an encounter with the Triune God.
- The second half of the rhythm (the horizontal) is manifest when the gathered worshipers leave the worship service to live their lives “in a manner worthy of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27) in front of a lost and dying world.



A long, straight staircase made of dark steps leads upwards from the bottom center towards a bright, glowing light source in the distance. The sky is filled with large, billowing white and yellowish clouds, and the overall atmosphere is one of hope and ascent.

7. The Rhythm of the Already – Not Yet

- The doctrine of inaugurated eschatology describes the kingdom of God as having “already” begun because the first coming of Jesus Christ, but “not yet” been consummated as believers await his second coming.

Already, Not Yet...

Already adopted in Christ (Rom 8:15), but not yet adopted (Rom 8:23)

Already redeemed in Christ (Eph 1:7), but not yet redeemed (Eph 4:30)

Already sanctified in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:2), but not yet sanctified (1 Thess 5:23–24)

Already saved in Christ (Eph 2:8), but not yet saved (Rom 5:9);

Already raised with Christ (Eph 2:6), but not yet raised (1 Cor 15:52).

Therapeutic Deism...

- “When you are trying to sell a product like therapeutic transformation, there can be no ambiguity, no sense of anxiety, tension, or struggle.”

- Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church*



There is Still Work to Be Done!

- “Overstated declarations of “God is with victorious me” can degenerate into efforts to achieve spiritual victory on believers’ own terms...Christ still has work that remains to be finished in their world and in their own hearts.”
- In other words, pay close attention to the lyric content of the songs you put in your people’s mouths.



• - Matt Westerholm PhD Dissertation SBTS

7 Rhythms...Are They Evident in Your Weekly Gathering?



- Use the rhythms as a “rubric” in evaluating past services

- Employ the rhythms as guardrails and guides in service planning and song selection.
- Think through the rhythms as you write songs for your congregation.
- Notice the rhythms as you read and study Scripture.