



# THE GOSPEL FLOW OF BIBLICAL WORSHIP

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## PLANNING WORSHIP SERVICES

Have you ever wondered how we go about planning our weekly worship services? Consistent with a Reformed theology of worship, we focus on a steady diet of the ordinary means of grace: Word, Sacrament, and Prayer. This is the call of God to worship him in the way he has prescribed and graciously invited us to do so. In our liturgy, we seek to infuse every element of worship with the Word of God. We read the Word, sing the Word, pray the Word, preach the Word, and “see” the Word (in the visible Sacraments). In this Bible-centered dialogue between God and his people, we receive his Word and give it back to him and one another.

As God’s Word directs our worship, each week we structure the service to reflect the flow of the Gospel, the grand narrative of Redemption. As we walk through this framework, the sermon passage gives us the particular verbiage and themes to highlight. I like to think of weekly worship planning at this intersection of the Gospel framework and the sermon passage. This keeps our liturgical flow anchored in the Gospel while we explore a diversity of themes directed by the exposition of Scripture.

## MAPPING IT OUT

GOSPEL

ARC

SERMON

PASSAGE

The horizontal axis reflects the Gospel Arc in both the content and our proper response. In this way our service order walks through the Gospel Narrative of Creation > Fall > Redemption > Consummation. This calls for our responses of praise, adoration, confession, lament, faith, repentance, assurance, thanksgiving, and commitment. The elements of worship reflecting this flow will help us keep this trajectory in view and tell the story of Gospel. We see this general pattern in the broad Scriptural message, as well as passages like Isaiah 6, Deuteronomy 5, Romans 11-15, and Revelation 4-21. Generally, we start with a praise-oriented call to worship and first song. In light of God’s holiness, we recognize our sin, so we sing songs, read Scripture, and pray to confess our sin and cry out for God’s mercy. Focusing on the grace of salvation, we sing of the work of Christ on the cross and his glorious resurrection. Then we receive God’s Word preached, respond through feasting on and with Christ in the Lord’s Supper, which prepares us for a final song of sending and commitment, followed by God’s blessing in the benediction.

The vertical axis seeks to locate the Gospel message using the specific focus of the sermon passage. Because of the richness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the sermon passage may lead us to focus on a variety of different aspects from week-to-week, such as God’s law, our sin, the life, cross, and resurrection of Christ, walking by faith, living as God’s witnesses to the world, and the hope of glory. So, our elements of worship will reflect the particular theme God is pointing us to in his Word. It is our prayer that this intentionality in worship planning will help us feast on God’s Word, that it may take root and bear fruit in our lives.