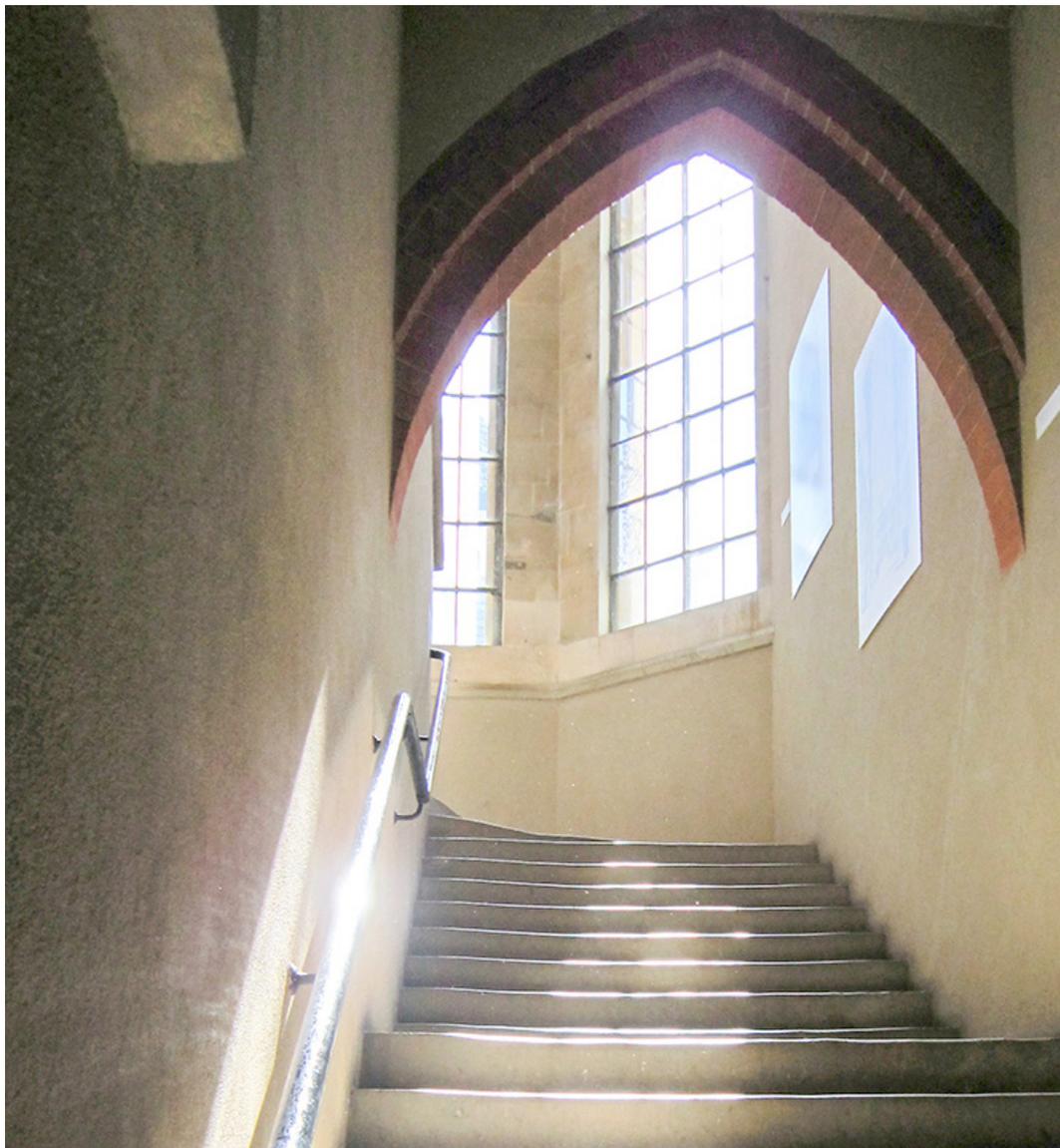


An outline of a service of reverent worship grounded upon Scripture principles

# REFORMED WORSHIP



## Preparing Ourselves to Worship God

At the time appointed for the congregation to meet for public worship everyone should come to join in it. They should come having already sought to prepare their hearts for it. No one should be absent from public worship through carelessness. Neither should they be missing under the pretense of holding separate meetings in private.

Everyone should enter the congregation in a serious and appropriate way, not irreverently. They should take their seats or places without any superstitious gestures or bowing towards one place or another.

*See Introduction for further guidance on how to prepare for worship. The type of dress and behaviour that is appropriate for the public worship of God is also discussed there.*

## Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

The minister solemnly calls the gathered congregation to worship the great name of God. He then begins with prayer.

He acknowledges with all reverence and humility:

- the incomprehensible greatness and majesty of the Lord (in whose presence they are in a special way appearing),
- their own vileness and unworthiness to approach so near Him, and
- their utter inability in themselves to engage in such a great work.

He humbly beseeches God for:

- pardon, help and acceptance in the whole service of worship, and
- a blessing on the reading of a particular part of His Word.

All in the name and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As soon as public worship has begun the congregation should give it their whole attention. They should not read anything except what the minister is then reading or quoting.

Unbecoming behaviour disturbs the minister or people and must be avoided. It also hinders themselves or others in worshipping God. This includes looking around or sleeping. Other disruptions include private whispering and conversation. Greeting people or showing respect to anyone present or coming in during the service is also distracting.

Through necessity some cannot be present at the beginning of the service. They should not begin their own private devotions when they come into the congregation. They should rather compose themselves reverently to join in the part of God's worship which is then taking place.

### *For the Royal Family*

We pray for all in authority, especially the monarch. Our prayer is that God would make them rich in blessings as individuals and in government. We seek that He would establish the throne in religion and righteousness and save it from evil counsel. Thus, the monarch and government would be blessed and glorious instruments for conserving and propagating the gospel. We seek that they would encourage and protect those that do good and terrify all that do evil. The great good of the whole church and nation would flow from this. Equally, we should pray for the religious education of the Princes and the conversion of the whole royal family

“we pray that the Lord would circumcise the ears and hearts of those who hear. Thus they will hear, love, and receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save their souls”

### *For Civil Government*

We must seek a blessing on the Parliaments when sitting in any part of the nation. The Prime Minister and Cabinet, the House of Commons and the Lords, all judges and magistrates are also remembered.

### *For Pastors and Teachers*

We pray that God would fill all pastors and teachers with His Spirit. He can make them examples of holiness, sober, just, peace-loving and gracious in their lives. We desire God to give to all His people pastors according to His own heart. We seek that God would make them sound, faithful and powerful in their ministry. We look to Him to follow all their labours with abundant success and blessing.

### *For Education*

Universities and all schools as well as church seminaries and colleges are in need of prayer. We pray that they would flourish more and more in learning and true religion.

### *For the Local Community and Congregation*

Prayer is also made that God would pour out a blessing on the ministry of the Word, sacraments and discipline in the congregation. We pray for a blessing on the local government and all the families and individuals in the city or district.

We are to pray for mercy to those afflicted by any inward or outward distress. Seasonable weather and fruitful seasons (as required by the time of year) are sought from God’s hand. We also pray about the judgments of which we are conscious or else fear or deserve. We pray that God would avert such judgements as famine, disease, war etc.

## » **Requests for Help**

### *To keep the Lord’s Day holy*

We must express confidence in God’s mercy to His whole Church. We know that He will

accept us through the merits and mediation of our High Priest, the Lord Jesus. Our souls also desire to have fellowship with God in the reverent and conscientious use of His holy ordinances. Let us pray earnestly for His grace and effectual help in sanctifying His holy Sabbath, the Lord's Day. We desire that the day may be celebrated and enjoyed in all public and private duties. This is for ourselves and all other congregations of His people, according to the riches and excellency of the gospel.

### *To Hear the Word with Profit*

We have been unprofitable hearers in the past. The deep things of God and the mysteries of Jesus Christ require spiritual discernment. Thus, we cannot receive them as we ought in our own strength. We call upon the Lord who teaches to profit. We pray that He would be graciously pleased to pour out the Spirit of grace together with the outward means of grace.

We desire such a measure of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord (and in Him the things that belong to our peace) that we may reckon all things but dross in comparison to Him. We seek that we might taste the first fruits of the glory yet to be revealed and may long for a more full and perfect communion with Him. We desire that where He is, there we may be also, to enjoy the fullness of those joys and pleasures that are at His right hand for evermore.

### *To Help the Preacher*

More particularly, we pray for God's servant called now to distribute the bread of life unto His household. We must pray that God would in a special way equip him with wisdom, faithfulness, zeal, and clarity of speech. In this way he will be able to rightly divide the Word of God, giving everyone his portion. We pray that his preaching may be with evidence and demonstration of the Spirit and power.

### *To Hear for Salvation*

Also, we pray that the Lord would circumcise the ears and hearts of those who hear. Thus, they will hear, love, and receive with meekness the engrafted Word which is able to save their souls. We desire that God would make them as good ground to receive the good seed of the Word. Their hearts need to be strengthened against anything that may hinder hearing for their own profit and salvation. These include the temptations of Satan, the cares of the world and the hardness of their own hearts.

All this so that Christ may be formed in them and live in them. All their thoughts need to be brought into captivity to obey Christ. Their hearts need to be established in every good word and work forever.

## » **Concluding Guidance**

In ordinary circumstances this is a suitable order for public prayer. The minister may (as he thinks best) postpone some of these petitions until after the sermon. The reasons for thanksgiving in the prayer after the sermon could also be offered beforehand.

# PREACHING

*“one of the greatest and most excellent works belonging  
to the ministry of the gospel”*

The Word preached is the power of God unto salvation. It is one of the greatest and most excellent works belonging to the ministry of the gospel. It should be performed so that the workman need not be ashamed but may save himself and those that hear him.

## Preparation for Preaching

The rules for ordination should ensure that the minister of Christ is well gifted for this weighty responsibility. His gifts should include the following.

- Skill in the original languages (Hebrew and Greek) and in the arts and sciences which assist theology.
- Knowledge in the whole body of theology.
- Knowledge in the Holy Scriptures above all this. He should have his senses and heart exercised in them more than the average believer.
- The illumination of God's Spirit and other gifts of edification. He should seek these by prayer and a humble heart in reading and studying the Word. He should resolve to accept and receive any truth not yet attained whenever God makes it known to him.

He should make enhanced use of all this in his private preparations before he delivers the sermon in public.

## Sermon Content

Usually, the subject of his sermon should be a text of scripture, asserting a principle or aspect of religion or suitable for a special occasion. Alternatively, he may expound his way through a chapter, psalm, or book of the Holy Scriptures as he sees fit.

## Sermon Introduction

The introduction should be brief and clear. It should be drawn from the text itself, its context, some parallel place or the general content of Scripture. If the text is long (e.g. history books or parables) he should give a brief summary. If it is short, a paraphrase can be given if necessary. In both cases he must consider carefully the purpose of the text and point out the main themes and basis for the teaching or doctrine that he asserts.

## Sermon Structure

In analysing and dividing his text he is to pay more attention to the order of the meaning than of the words. He should not burden the memory of those hearing at the start with too many points and headings. Neither should he trouble their minds with obscure terminology.

## Main Teachings

In establishing the main teachings of the text he must take care that:

1. they are the truth of God;
2. they are a truth contained in or established on that text. This is so that the hearers

may discern how God teaches it from that passage; and

3. they are the truths mainly intended in the text. He also emphasises teachings that best serve to edify the hearers.

He should express the teachings in plain terms. If anything needs explanation it should be clarified together with anything that can be deduced from the text. Scripture cross references which confirm the teaching should be plain and relevant rather than many. If necessary they should be emphasised and applied to the purpose in hand. The arguments or reasons presented are to be solid and (as far as possible) convincing.

## **Persuasion**

Any illustrations must shed light on and convey the truth into the hearer's heart with spiritual delight. The preacher should remove any doubts that may arise in relation to Scripture and reconcile any seeming differences. The preacher should answer any arguments and remove any cause of prejudice and mistake. Otherwise it is not fitting to spend time explaining or answering vain or wicked questions. Since they are endless, this tends more to hinder than promote edification.

## **Application**

The minister is not to stop after providing general teaching even when explained with great clarity. He must bring the message home to his hearers, applying the teaching to their lives. This is a work of great difficulty for the minister. A great deal of prudence, zeal and meditation are required. This would be unpleasant to a natural and corrupt man.

He is to seek to apply the Word in such a manner that his hearers may feel it to be living and powerful and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Thus, if any unbeliever or ignorant person is present he may have the secrets of his heart made plain, and give glory to God.

### *Applying Teaching*

The minister may confirm a truth deduced from the sermon's doctrine. He does this with a few firm arguments from the text in hand. He also argues from other parts of Scripture and the nature of the part of theology to which it belongs.

The minister should take care in refuting false doctrines. He should not raise an old heresy from the grave nor mention a blasphemous opinion unless it is necessary. If the people are in danger from a particular error he should refute it soundly. He must aim to persuade their understanding and consciences against all objections.

### *Applying Duty*

In giving exhortation about duties he should also, where necessary, give instruction about the means that help to fulfil them.

### *Applying Warning and Rebuke*

Warning, reproof and public rebuke need special wisdom. The preacher should not only reveal the nature and greatness of the sin and the misery accompanying it. He should

Nothing is more sacred and more important than the worship of God.

This booklet describes a service of reverent worship grounded upon Scripture principles. It will be helpful for those who conduct public worship as well as those seeking for worship that truly honours God.

It will have a hearty reception where there is a sincere desire to know how to worship God in spirit and in truth.



*Foundations from our Past for our Future*

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