

# The Central Task of the Church

---

The chief task of the church is worship—we were redeemed, in the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, that we might “glorify God and enjoy him forever.” **Worship is the central task of the Christian church.**

**But what is worship?** Tim Keller defines worship as **seeing the worth of God and giving God what he is worth**. In all Christian traditions—whether formally or informally liturgical (there is always a liturgy, a shape to the service)—these two core elements exist:

There is **hearing from God**, seeing anew what he is worth. The Scriptures are read, heard, and proclaimed in a variety of ways.

There is **giving to God**, giving him what he is worth. We give him our sins (confession), our substance (offering), our praise (singing, other responses), our needs (prayers of the people). We give him our problems (completely trusting in him), our devotion (recognizing and repudiating our idols), our thanks (eschewing self-pity).

In the words of Jonathan Edwards, **worship is setting our “affections” on God**. Our affections are not merely our emotions, but our motives, the things that drive us, that we truly treasure. Because we were created for worship, when we do not worship God, we worship other, but finite, things; we set our hearts on relationships, careers, money, accomplishments, approval, comfort, power, control. We set our affections on idols, deriving our meaning and sense of self-worth from them. **When we worship God we pull our affections off these things and set them on God.**

## The ‘Cycles of Worship’

### *First Cycle--Praise*

Seeing: preparation, the call to worship

Giving: praise hymns, prayer of adoration

### *Second Cycle--Renewal*

Seeing: Scripture reading, words of encouragement

Giving: confession of sin, prayers of the people, renewal hymn

### *Third Cycle--Commitment*

Seeing: Scripture reading, sermon

Giving: offering, confession of faith

### *Fourth Cycle--Communion*

Seeing: words of institution, invitation to the table, Communion as a "visible Word"

Giving: prayer of thanksgiving, response hymn, personal receiving of Communion