

The Wonder of the Word in Corporate Worship

July 13, 2014

- by [Matt Boswell](#)

- Topics: [Corporate Worship](#)



As a child, I loved to sing in church. When we opened our hymnals, I understood, there was an emotional connection to what we were doing in song. I felt it. Glorious truth paired with stirring melody was a combination that connected with me deeply.

Some of the older women of the church would shed tears as they sang songs of God's faithfulness. I remember the joy on my father's face as he would bellow out truth, eyebrows raised on his forehead.

But when the singing concluded and we opened our bibles, I had difficulty feeling that same kind of connection. The Bible was much more complex than three verses of hymnody. The pages of Scripture didn't seem to ring with the same raw emotion as a folk melody. I believed in inerrancy from childhood, and upheld the authority of Scripture, but I rarely felt deeply when we heard God's word read or taught. Maybe you have experienced the same thing.

A Commanding Invitation

Psalm 119 stands as an invitation to us to approach God's word with our whole minds ([Psalm 119:113](#)) and our whole hearts ([Psalm 119:2](#)). It commands us to think rightly and feel deeply about God's word. It leaves no room for a clean division of the intellect and emotions, but rather demands a response from both the mind and the heart.

Whether we hear God's word in a call to worship, a confession of sin, an assurance of pardon, an exposition, or in the benediction — every time we hear the words of Scripture, God is speaking to his people. There is no space for yawning when God is speaking. His word commands our attention, our affection, and our obedience.

We see in the 176 verses of Psalm 119 an unbreakable chain of knowing and feeling. The psalmist has tasted the word of God, and has developed an

unquenchable appetite for it. His passions have been fixed on knowing and experiencing God's word. He has what Harold Best would describe as a "thinking heart and a feeling mind."

Thinking Rightly

I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules.

([Psalm 119:7](#))

Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourning. ([Psalm 119:54](#))

My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word. ([Psalm 119:81](#))

We must think rightly about the word of God. Did your eyes skip over those verses, rushing on? Those were not a collection of fonts merely arranged on a computer screen — they are God's eternal words.

Notice how the right thinking of the psalmist also communicates such depth of emotion being expressed here. His salvation and hope have been fixed on the word of God, and have resulted in a continuation of longing, hoping, singing, and praising. Each of these feelings is built not on a base of human experience, but on the foundation of God's perfect word. The psalmist thinks rightly about the word of God.

God's word commands that we believe its authority, its sufficiency, its finality. God's word is the first and last word. We cannot worship God with our whole hearts if our minds are not also transformed by his word. There is no right praise without right doctrine. For us to respond to the word of God,

we must know it and immerse our lives in it. We must think rightly about the word of God.

Feeling Deeply

Your testimonies are my delight. ([Psalm 119:24](#))

My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times. ([Psalm 119:20](#))

Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life. ([Psalm 119:40](#))

We also want to feel deeply regarding the word of God. Theology runs its full course when doxology is its aim. God's word is meant to work through our emotions, to cause us to feel deeply, to love what we learn about God.

There is a grave difference between knowing about God and knowing God. As John Piper has noted,

If we just know him in our minds, we're not doing anything different than the devil. The devil may be one of the most theological, orthodox beings in the universe. He just hates what he knows about God.

The next time you hear God's word in corporate worship, listen. Whether in the call to worship, or the sermon, or the benediction, let your heart be warmed by the flame of God's voice. Allow your heart to tremble at the reality and veracity of God's word.

May we be a people marked by thinking rightly and feeling deeply about the perfect, sufficient, enduring word of God.

More on corporate worship from Desiring God:

- [Worship God!](#) (sermon)
- [Gravity and Gladness](#) (seminar)
- [Kindle the Fire in Corporate Worship](#) (article)

Matt Boswell ([@MattBoswell](#)) is a pastor at [Providence Church](#), Frisco, Texas and editor of [TGC Worship](#). He hosts the [Doxology & Theology Conference](#), a biennial conference focused on corporate worship.