

Blueprints for Belief

Laying the Theological Foundations for Constructing Your Faith

Westminster Confession of Faith 21.1-8 – Worship and the Sabbath

- Our worship should be limited to God and not given to any human, angel, or created thing.
 - Exodus 20:3–5 – “You shall have no other gods before me...”
- God receives our worship only in Christ, the Mediator.
 - 1 Timothy 2:5 – “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”
- God tells us how He wants to be worshipped. We should not invent new ways of worshipping that are not found in the Bible.
 - Deuteronomy 12:32 – “Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.”
- Worship ordinarily consists of Scripture reading, preaching, singing, and the Sacraments. On special occasions, worship may also include oaths, vows, fasting, and special thanksgivings.
 - 1 Timothy 4:13 – “Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.”
- Prayer is also an important part of worship, should be done in the name of Jesus, and in a known tongue.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:9 – “Unless you give speech that is intelligible... how will anyone know what is said?”
- Do not pray for the dead and do not pray for things forbidden in God’s Word. You don’t need to face a certain direction when you pray.
 - John 4:21–24 – Worship is not tied to a place or direction, but “in spirit and truth.”
- Gathering for worship should not be carelessly neglected by staying home.
 - Hebrews 10:24–25 – “Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some...”
- The Christian Sabbath is the first day of the week and was changed by the Church after the Resurrection.
 - Acts 20:7 – The church gathered on “the first day of the week.”
- The Sabbath day should be kept holy for the Lord. We should prepare our hearts for it, and get our everyday affairs ready, so that on the day we can rest from actions, words, and thoughts about our everyday work and leisure. We should spend all our time in the public and private worship of God, as well as doing duties that are necessary or doing works of mercy.
 - Matthew 12:11–12 – “It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

Discussion Questions

1. Why do we often feel tempted to “improve” or customize worship, and what dangers arise when our preferences begin to shape worship more than Scripture does?
2. How does understanding Christ as the only Mediator affect the way we pray, sing, and approach God together in corporate worship?
3. What practical changes might be needed in our weekly rhythms to better prepare for the Lord’s Day and guard it as a day centered on worship, rest, and mercy?

Westminster Confession of Faith – Chapter 21

1. The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.
2. Religious worship is to be given to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and to him alone; not to angels, saints, or any other creature: and, since the fall, not without a Mediator; nor in the mediation of any other but of Christ alone.
3. Prayer, with thanksgiving, being one special part of religious worship, is by God required of all men: and, that it may be accepted, it is to be made in the name of the Son, by the help of his Spirit, according to his will, with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance; and, if vocal, in a known tongue.
4. Prayer is to be made for things lawful; and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter: but not for the dead, nor for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin unto death.
5. The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear, the sound preaching and conscionable hearing of the Word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence, singing of psalms with grace in the heart; as also, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ, are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God: beside religious oaths, vows, solemn fastings, and thanksgivings upon special occasions, which are, in their several times and seasons, to be used in an holy and religious manner.
6. Neither prayer, nor any other part of religious worship, is now, under the gospel, either tied unto, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed: but God is to be worshiped everywhere, in spirit and truth; as, in private families daily, and in secret, each one by himself; so, more solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly or willfully to be neglected, or forsaken, when God, by his Word or providence, calleth thereunto.
7. As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which, in Scripture, is called the Lord's day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath.
8. This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up, the whole time, in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.