

A History of Christian Worship:

Ancient Ways, Future Paths

Part 6: The Embrace

## A History of Christian Worship: Part 6 The Embrace

*Fade from black. Introduction.*

### **Narrator:**

As Christians, we seek an ongoing relationship with our Creator through various facets of worship. Prayer, whether formal or informal, private or in community, helps us approach God in worship and adoration. Contemplation on the nature of God and on His Word provides us with greater insight for daily living. Ministry is the hands and feet of our worship, the fulfillment of the Gospel commandment to go into the world and serve others. The expression of God's story through worship, whether experienced in the practice of prayer and contemplation or in the sacrificial giving of self through service and ministry, is part of the ongoing story we know today as the history of Christian worship.

*Fade to opening credits: Ancient Ways, Future Paths: A History of Christian Worship. The Embrace: Prayer, Contemplation, Service and Ministry. Fade to black.*

*Fade from black to middle credits: The Embrace: Prayer and Contemplation. Fade to black and then to narrator.*

### **Narrator:**

God's people have always been a people of prayer.

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Fr. Robert Reed (Network Director, Catholic TV):

Our attitude when we worship is, without shame, placing ourselves before God as creatures. Small, not insignificant. In fact, incredibly significant, but small before the One who is so great. Attitude for me in worship is beautifully represented in the posture that I took when I was ordained... That posture, of lying prostrate, face down on the ground, remains in my head as the attitude that I bring, that we must all bring, to worship. If not physically, then spiritually, mentally we prostrate ourselves before the great One, the Creator, the Redeemer, the Sanctifier, God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Dr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

Sometimes I like to describe prayer as basking in God's presence. That term, 'basking', is kind of a nice one in that it brings to mind joy and warmth. Basking brings to mind a wholesomeness and a kind of a relaxation and a being enveloped by God.

**Narrator:**

In the Scriptures, we find prayers of intercession, thanksgiving, deliverance, and confession throughout the Old Testament, and in particular, the Book of Psalms. It is not, therefore, a surprise that worshippers in the New Testament church continued the example of prayer found in Jewish worship, meeting several times each day in public and private to raise their voices in adoration and supplication to God.

Female reading Psalm 55:17:

*Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice. – Psalm 55:17*

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Dr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

It would be inconceivable to think that the early Christian community, with Jewish roots, would not be strongly influenced by the Jewish practices: the Jewish practices of several times a day turning to God in prayer was early on taken into Christian practice.

**Narrator:**

In the early church, daily prayer would also include the reading of Scripture and the singing of Psalms and spiritual songs.

Dr. James R. Hart (President, Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

The ancient structure of prayer, this goes back to the Benedictine structure fifteen, sixteen hundred years ago, actually it goes back before that, it goes back to the Jewish synagogue structure. The ancient structure of worship, of prayer is a threefold structure. The first part of that is Psalms, and by the way, Psalms is the backbone actually for all three parts of prayer...The Psalms are both God's word to us as well as our praise and prayer to God. Second part is the Word: the Word as read and proclaimed...And the third part are the actual prayers proper, including the written prayers like the Lord's Prayer and extemporaneous prayers of our own composition to the Lord.

**Narrator:**

In the Jewish pattern of prayer, a thanksgiving prayer would have three distinct parts: first, it would invoke the name of God; second, it would describe some aspect of God's story as

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revealed in history; third, it would conclude with a petition. This pattern can still be found in the prayer of the church today.

Dr. David W. Fagerberg (University of Notre Dame):

collect prayer on a Sunday, you will hear God named, some characteristic or activity of God recited and then a petition made. That same structure is also the basis of the Eucharistic prayer. Well, the reason for reciting the holy history in the second step is so that we can adjust our petition to what God wants to give. The object of prayer is not to talk God into giving me something He doesn't want to do. The object would be for me to be prepared to receive what He wants to give.

### **Narrator:**

One example of an Old Testament prayer that has influenced Christian prayer is the Shema, which comes from the book of Deuteronomy and is an essential part of both morning and evening Jewish prayer.

Female reading The Shema:

*Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.* – The Shema, Deuteronomy 6:4

Dr. Tom Boomershine (Founder, Network of Biblical Storytellers):

Clip 15 - :18 - :59

The most ancient confession of the religion of Israel was the Shema: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Write these things that I am saying to

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you this day on your heart. Those are the fundamental practices of the worship of God, and the Shema was, and has been, throughout the entire history of Israel, the most foundational confession in prayer each day and in worship.

### **Narrator:**

In the Middle Ages, Christians adapted the form and context of the confessional Shema into what is called The Jesus Prayer.

Female reading The Jesus Prayer:

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.* – The Jesus Prayer

Dr. Tom Boomershine (Founder, Network of Biblical Storytellers):

Clip 15: 1:00 – 1:50

In Christianity, the Shema was not as widely used as a foundational confession. But a central prayer that developed was what has been called the Jesus Prayer. It emerged in the middle ages. I know the Jesus Prayer primarily in Russian: (Russian language spoken). Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. That prayer has been the foundational prayer in the Orthodox tradition, and in various forms it has been a prayer in the Catholic tradition and in various Protestant churches.

### **Narrator:**

The Jesus Prayer is an example of a prayer with ancient roots and, yet, contemporary appeal in many church traditions.

Dr. Tom Boomershine (Founder, Network of Biblical Storytellers):

Clip 17 - :38 – 1:11

The Jesus Prayer, the Shema in some contexts, have been seen as central to the ancient traditions that have been integrated then into modern liturgical practice, and then learned and internalized and spoken by and memorized as forms of prayer by people, both in their personal lives but also in the life of the community.

**Narrator:**

Another prayer with origins in the Scripture, specifically the New Testament Gospels of Matthew and Luke, is what is commonly known as “The Lord’s Prayer,” perhaps the most cited of all Christian prayers. Some refer to this as “The Disciples’ Prayer” since this prayer of Christ was in response to His disciples’ request to teach them how to pray.

Female reading the Lord’s Prayer:

*After this manner therefore pray ye: our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. – Matthew 6:9-13*

**Narrator:**

Disciples of Jesus used this prayer in the early history of the Christian Church, as seen in the Didache, a writing from the late first or early second century, that encouraged Christians to pray the Lord’s Prayer three times each day.

Female reading the Didache:

*And do not pray like the hypocrites, but rather as the Lord commanded in the gospel: Our Father in heaven, holy be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us enough bread day-by-day. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. Pray this three times each day. – The Didache 8:2-3*

**Narrator:**

There are several versions of the Lord’s Prayer in use among Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches. Some traditions use the word “trespasses,” others use the word “debts,” and some traditions use the word “sins.” Additionally, some traditions include the doxology “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever” at the end of the prayer as recorded in some versions of Matthew. What all Christian faith traditions hold in common is the inclusion of the Lord’s Prayer as an essential liturgical prayer, adding to a collection of well known prayers from the Scripture and church history that have become ingrained in the hearts and lives of worshippers throughout the centuries.

Dr. Tom Boomershine (Founder, Network of Biblical Storytellers):

Clip 15 – 3:09 – 3:29

These deeply internalized, remembered prayers have been a primary resource for the prayer of individuals, the prayer of the community, and the liturgical traditions of the church.

**Narrator:**

The practice of Christian prayer modeled upon Jewish prayer and the Scriptures continued with little modification through the early centuries of Christian worship as noted by the early Church Fathers. Clement of Alexandria from the early third century describes the act of raising hands during prayer. Hippolytus wrote about the practice of morning and evening prayer in detail in his early third century *Apostolic Tradition*. Church historian Eusebius and the *Apostolic Constitutions*, both from the fourth century, also write of the practice of daily prayer in the morning and evening.

Female reading Hippolytus:

*Let every faithful man and woman, when they have risen from sleep in the morning, before they touch any work at all, wash their hands and pray to God, and so go to their work... ..Pray before your body rests on the bed. Rise about midnight, wash your hands with water, and pray...And likewise rise about cockcrow, and pray ... If you act so, all you faithful, and remember these things...you will not be able to be tempted or to perish, since you have Christ always in memory. – Hippolytus, Apostolic Tradition, XLI*

**Narrator:**

The most significant change in the early centuries of the Church emerged from the desert of Egypt, where a group of Christians seeking to renounce the world and immerse themselves in the practice of prayer and contemplation gave birth to a new worship movement known as monasticism.

Dr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

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From early on in Christianity, we have a movement that we now call the Desert Fathers, and I suspect there were some others there, too, where those who really wanted to live this ideal of total commitment, a life filled with the idea of becoming totally aware of God's presence to us. They would go off in the desert, which is an image to say they would go away from all the distractions that tend to keep us from God, to live Christianity, to live the Gospel in its fullness.

### **Narrator:**

One significant contribution in the prayer of the church to come from the monastic community was the expansion on the idea of fixed hour prayer. Saint Basil, in the fourth century, crafted a rule that called for prayer at eight times during the day and night.

Dr. James R. Hart (President, Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

The first time I went to a monastery, one of the things that impressed me so much was this community of men who actually met together and prayed four, five, six, seven times a day together as a community...they would pray through the day in their work, in their study. They saw all that as being prayer.

### **Narrator:**

These regular intervals of prayer are what we know today as the daily office or the Liturgy of the Hours. This cycle of prayer reflected the Jewish tradition of the day and Sabbath beginning at sunset. Thus, prayers are offered beginning at the end of the

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workday, at bedtime, during the middle of the night, at dawn, at the sixth and ninth hours of the morning, at noon, and at the third hour of the afternoon.

Brian McLaren (Author, *Finding Our Way Again*):

One of the secrets of the spiritual life is this idea of practice...A practice is something within our power that helps us to achieve something that's currently beyond our power.

Brian McLaren (Author, *Finding Our Way Again*):

One of the most important practices is fixed hour prayer: that at certain times of the day, we pause and we have this awareness, not just that we're praying, but that we're praying with all of our brothers and sisters, and that at certain times of the day there are certain things that we remember and focus on together.

**Narrator:**

In addition to fixed hour prayer, the monastic community significantly contributed to worship practices through the fostering of contemplation and meditation in daily life. Benedict of Nursia in the early sixth century was instrumental in defining the framework, or rule, by which the monastic community could dedicate itself to a life of prayer, work, and contemplation.

Dr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

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Benedict's rule is very simple. It is very pastoral and very fatherly. Benedict's rule is not a burden for the monks, but really frees the monks to try to live this ideal of Christianity that says total commitment to Jesus Christ and living the Gospel.

Dr. Tom Boomershine (Founder, Network of Biblical Storytellers):

Clip 18 – :48 - 2:03

In the monastic communities, people were drawn to those communities as places where they could spend the majority of their time, in many instances, or regularly in the Benedictine communities, five or six times a day for forty-five minutes to an hour, in prayer and worship. They were drawn to the life of contemplation, of sitting in God's presence, and being open to the movement of God's spirit, and of meditation, of meditating and contemplating the word of God. So the Benedictine communities every worship, five times a day, would recite the Psalms, and once they had gone through the 150 Psalms, they would go back and do it again. So in the course of a year, they'd go through the Psalter several times, and over a period of time, those Psalms become deeply learned, internalized, and part of simply their life, their memory, their basic thought.

### **Narrator:**

Monastic life also introduced the idea of private and public silence, in contemplation and worship, as a spiritual discipline.

Dr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

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What characterizes both the Desert Fathers and the monastic movement is most of the day, if not absolutely all of the day, is spent in silence. The difference is in the monastic community, we learn to live this silence together, and it's together as the Body of Christ, rubbing shoulders, rubbing all of the kind of warts off, rubbing together all the knots that we come to perfection together.

### **Narrator:**

While contemplation and meditation are often used interchangeably, the act of contemplation in worship refers to silent reflection, while meditation may comprise a variety of forms.

Dr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

Contemplation, an ancient prayer practice, is not words. Contemplation is simply surrendering one's self, giving one's self over to that divine presence who chooses to be there for us. Meditation, on the other hand, can take many forms, and it's a little bit more of a cerebral kind of an activity.

### **Narrator:**

One type of meditation is *lectio divina*, meaning divine reading, which focuses on God's Word. There are four movements or components to *lectio divina*: to read, meditate, pray, and contemplate the Scriptures. Though this practice dates back to the time of Ambrose and Augustine, Benedict introduced the practice to the monastic community in the sixth century.

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Dr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

So what we would do in lectio divina is take a Scripture passage and slowly read it, preferably out loud, and then meditate on that passage, and ask ourselves, ‘What is God saying to me here? What is Christ really saying to me for my life in this parable?’ So it’s thinking about it, it’s ruminating about God’s Word, it’s taking God’s Word into our heart, and it’s considering how does that Word challenge me? How does that Word comfort me? How might that Word lead me to live the Gospel differently every day?

### **Narrator:**

The practices of daily prayer at regular intervals, contemplation and meditation continued as the church moved into the Middle Ages. As music developed in the church, Psalms and prayers were being set to music, but otherwise the practice of fixed hour prayer continued in monastic communities and local parishes by the clergy. Since public prayer and the daily office was said in Latin rather than the language of the people, it remained primarily a function of the clergy rather than the people.

The 16<sup>th</sup> century brought the greatest reform in worship relating to prayer. Breviaries, which were books that contained the prayers, hymns, Psalms and liturgy of the Divine Office, had existed in various forms since the time of Benedict and could be revised by each bishop for use in the local diocese. The Council of Trent in 1545 designated a single Roman breviary to be used in all parishes, and though it has been reformed since then, it still serves as the basis for the Liturgy of the Divine Hours today.

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At the same time in the Anglican Communion, a movement was underway to devise a universal prayer book for liturgical worship. The resulting Book of Common Prayer, first published in 1549 and edited chiefly by Thomas Cranmer, was the first to include the liturgy in English. The Book of Common Prayer was significantly made up of Scripture and helped to simplify the daily office for the people. Though it has been edited many times since its initial publication, The Book of Common Prayer is still used today in many churches worldwide.

Dr. J. I. Packer (Author, *Knowing God*):

I am asked to cite from memory a sample of the prayer book... Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against your holy laws. We have left undone things that we ought to have done, and we have done things that we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, or You, I should say, You, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare them, O Lord, who confess their faults. Restore them that are penitent; According to Your promises declared to mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of Your holy Name. Amen.

**Narrator:**

The rise of Methodism in the eighteenth century brought with it the concept of a weekly service for prayer and instruction. This formed the basis in America for midweek prayer

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and Bible studies. The frontier revivals of this period also inspired a generation of pioneers to adopt contemplative spiritual practices.

Dr. Tom Boomershine (Founder, Network of Biblical Storytellers):

Clip 18 – 3:20 – 3:53

So in the United States in the frontier period, people learned and practiced a kind of meditation and contemplation by reading the Bible, and reading it to themselves by candlelight at night, and cabins, places on the frontier. That became a central way of experiencing God's presence in what was frequently a very alien environment.

**Narrator:**

The rise of Free Church and Anabaptist traditions has brought a greater emphasis on informal and non-liturgical prayers as part of corporate worship.

Dr. Tom Boomershine (Founder, Network of Biblical Storytellers):

Clip 18 – 4:58 – 5:37

My experience has been that people's desire to be in communication with God, and the ways in which they develop that, has many different forms, but all of them are grounded in meditation on the word of God, on the scriptures, and on sitting in a contemplative mode, being open to whatever it is that God may seek to say to us.

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Dr. James R. Hart (President, Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

You need to have both extemporaneous prayers and liturgical prayers. Liturgical prayers give a structure and a formation to the thoughts that are being expressed within the community and they often reflect hundreds, if not thousands of years, of the history of God's people and the way they approach God in prayer...But then, at the same time, we have needs, we have thoughts, we have our own sensibilities, we have our own emotions that we need to express to the Lord in our prayer time, and I think that the Lord wants us to be very authentic with that as well, so having both, I think, are actually very important.

**Narrator:**

In fact, the practice of public and private prayer is unique to each worshipper and each congregation or parish. Private prayer is important for strengthening our own personal relationship with God.

Dr. Kathleen Harmon, S.N.D.de.N. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

Private prayer is the prayer that I shape, the prayer that you shape. The content of my private prayer is chosen by me. It's connected to what's going on in the circumstances of my life, what's happening today, what's happening in the world. My private prayer is all the forms of conversation I have with God about what's going on in my life.

Dr. J. I. Packer (Author, *Knowing God*):

I start off with adoration and praise as I come into God's presence. I spend time on that. I believe that we, all of us, should. I move to confession, acknowledgement of my sins,

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shortcomings, weaknesses, whatever in which I need God to help me. I move on to petitionary prayers for folk for whom I have a concern, causes for which I have a concern. And I give thanks; I make a point of giving thanks to God for mercies, good things enjoyed since last I prayed.

Dr. James R. Hart (President, Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

I find that sometimes, when I don't know how to pray, when I'm in a situation that I don't know what to do, finding the written prayers of the historical church really helped me to formulate my thoughts and sometimes helped me to form my emotional responses as well...But, at the same time, I also like to have the freedom to be able to express to the Lord directly like I'm talking to you, like I'm talking to anybody, where I can just talk to Him and say, "Lord, you know, I don't understand this. Why is this happening?" Or "God, thank you for what you've done in my life today. This is just tremendous."

### **Narrator:**

While private prayer focuses inward, public prayer focuses outward to the worshipping community. It is vital for uniting the Body of Christ in a common purpose and voice in seeking God's guidance, providence and blessing.

Dr. Kathleen Harmon, S.N.D.de.N. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

Public prayer is really communal prayer. It's the whole community coming together and it has a structure to it that enables everyone to enter together into common prayer.

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Dr. Kathleen Harmon, S.N.D.de.N. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

Private prayer is the way I choose to connect to God individually. Communal prayer is the whole family of the church coming together. If I don't have enough private prayer in my life, I'm going to be angry when we gather for communal prayer 'cause I'm feeling I'm not getting my time with God. But when my private prayer is in place, my public prayer with the family of the church is very nourishing and very satisfying.

Fr. Ted Bobosh (St. Paul Orthodox Church):

And so we have the history of salvation and all the things that God has done intersect with the daily lives of people, and here we bring into the church our concerns and our worries. We pray in our liturgy for the president of the country, for the weather, for the abundance of the fruits of the earth, that we have good crops. We pray for the sick and the suffering and the travelers and we pray for all the things that people are worried about and concerned about in their own lives, and as I said, that intersects with the history of salvation and all that God has done. I bring my own concerns and I encounter God here.

Lester Ruth, PhD (Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies):

I believe one of the most essential capacities in order to be able to pray well in a Christian congregation is to know the Bible well, especially Bible stories... We often assume that the Bible stories should just be taught to children, but if you look at the history of Christian worship, one of the recurring features of public Christian praying is the continual recitation of God's mighty acts of salvation... So I think to be able to pray well

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in a Christian congregation involves not only knowing your own heart well, but in knowing the story of God according to the Scriptures well.

### **Narrator:**

In today's church, there are a variety of prayer books, missals, devotionals, and resources for strengthening the public and private prayer of the church. The challenge for worshippers is finding the still, small voice in prayer and contemplation rising above the noise and distraction of today's busy culture and lifestyles.

Fr. Robert Reed (Network Director, Catholic TV):

One thing that I don't do enough is to very simply place myself before God in silence. I think the world that we live in today, life being so fast paced, so much stimulation, it makes it very difficult for any one of us to stop and be silent.

Dr. Tom Boomershine (Founder, Network of Biblical Storytellers):

Clip 19 - :36 – 1:41

I think there is an impatience with silence, with apparently nothing happening, that is a challenge for people in this age in which we are so busy, and in which our media are just coming at us all the time with constant stimulation. So we come to expect that from our religious experience. You know, we can turn it on at any time and get that. I think there is a sense in which there is a need to withdraw from that kind of constant bombardment with new efforts to stimulate us, to do something, to buy something or sell stuff, and to

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simply learn the practice of sitting and being with God and of listening to what it is that God may have to say to us.

Brian McLaren (Author, *Finding Our Way Again*):

I love to be outdoors. I love trees and plants and wildlife. So, for example, I'm very interested in birds. Well, if you want to learn, let's say see or hear, a rare bird, you've gotta spend a lot of time walking and listening. You can't guarantee that the bird you're looking for is going to be there when you're looking, but unless you get out there and you're listening and you're attentive, you're never going to experience it. And I think it's this way with the grace of God as well. God might want to give us some insight. God might want to help us see or hear some new thing, and we have to develop the practice of getting out with our eyes and ears open so we'll be ready when that moment comes.

**Narrator:**

Just as the apostles encouraged early believers to “pray without ceasing” in preparation for the return of the Lord, so the Church continues in its ongoing dialogue with God through prayer, contemplation and meditation, with eyes and ears open and hearts ready and attuned to God's grace and insight for His people.

*Fade to black.*

*Fade from black to middle credits: The Embrace: Service and Ministry. Fade to black and then to narrator.*

**Narrator:**

Worship inspires us to pursue holiness and right living in our daily lives as we grow closer in relationship with God. The outward sign of our transformation of heart and mind, and an essential part of the Christian life, is how we serve and minister to our neighbors and our world.

Brian McLaren (Author, *Finding Our Way Again*):

One of the passages in the New Testament that I think is most important for understanding worship comes in Romans 12. And there the Apostle Paul says, “In view of God’s great mercy for us, I beg you to present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, and this is your spiritual service of worship.” And the picture there is not that we worship God primarily in a building, in a meeting, at a fixed hour on a Sunday morning, but that the worship that really God is after is the worship that comes in our daily lives. And then it’s explained later in the chapter. It has to do with whether we try to get revenge on people, or whether we do good to those who do evil to us, whether we show hospitality or not, whether we give generously or not. So the worship that God’s interested in is a worship that’s shown in our daily lives, in this way of life.

**Narrator:**

From hospitals to food pantries and soup kitchens, from prison ministries to foreign missions, the ways in which believers serve the world are steeped in the earliest history of Christian worship.

David Neff (Editor, *Christianity Today*):

There's traditionally in Christian worship a sending forth...When we walk out the door, the worship continues. It takes us into love and service in our workplaces, in our families, in our communities where there may be needs that aren't directly touched by work and family, which consume most of our time, most of our energies as natural to us as human beings. But then we break out of that and get involved with food pantries and other kinds of service. But the worship service is always designed with daily life in mind.

**Narrator:**

The essence of service and ministry has not changed much since Biblical times. Charity has always been a hallmark of the religious life. In the Old Testament, the prophet Zechariah proclaimed that God's people were to show mercy and compassion and were not to oppress the widow, the fatherless, the stranger, or the poor. Food was distributed to the needy from the temple storehouses and grain was left in the field to be gleaned by the widows. Strangers were taken in and water was given to thirsty travelers. The work of God's house was performed by dedicated servants in the temple, both in collecting its treasure and in performing sacrifices and burnt offerings according to the Law. Even the

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missionary zeal of the New Testament church was first found in earlier Old Testament prophets who traveled from town to town, bringing words of encouragement, or admonition, from the Lord to the people. Yet the prophets acknowledged that their good works and offerings and sacrifices were not all the Lord required of His children. They must also do what is good and just and show mercy to others.

Brian McLaren (Author, *Finding Our Way Again*):

The prophets again and again say, speaking for God, “I’m sick of all your sacred assemblies. I’m sick of all of your songs. I’m sick of all of your sacrifices. I want you to do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.”

### **Narrator:**

To understand the motivation and development of service and ministry in the history of the Church, we first have to look to its most perfect example as found in the life of Jesus. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, comforted the grieving, and offered forgiveness, redemption, and hope, not just to the righteous and upstanding members of society, but to the poor, the physically and mentally ill, and the broken and outcast people of His day. In his sermons and teachings, Jesus established the standard by which His people should treat and serve others.

Female reading Luke 10:27:

*And he answered and said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” – Luke 10:27*

**Narrator:**

Jesus defined for His followers, and consequently the Church, the idea of neighbor by telling the story of the Good Samaritan, in which a man is beaten and robbed by thieves and left for dead along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho but is helped by a man from Samaria who treats the stranger's wounds and pays for his care. The parable reflects the teachings of Christ found in the Gospel of Matthew, in which His followers are instructed to feed the hungry, give hospitality to the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit those in prison because whatever we do for the least of our brothers and sisters, we do to Christ as well.

Mike Slaughter (Pastor, Ginghamburg Church):

If you're truly worshipping Jesus, you'll be involved in the things that are the passions of His heart. And what are the passions of His heart? I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was in prison and you visited me. I was sick and you ministered to me. That, Matthew 25, that is true worship. So, it's why for me, God truly comes alive when I connect to the people that are closest to God's heart.

**Narrator:**

Even as Christ prepared to give His life on the cross, He was still focused on serving others.

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Brian McLaren (Author, *Finding Our Way Again*):

This is what Jesus said to His disciples. He washed their feet at the Last Supper and then He said, “I set you an example.” In other words, I’m not just interested in giving you information. I really want you to learn to live this life of service that I’m modeling for you.

**Narrator:**

The disciples followed the servant leader model of Christ as they spread the Gospel to the world. Early Christians, in turn, practiced communal living so that the needs of all were met and so that the emphasis of their work and lives could remain focused on building the body of Christ and not on the gathering of material possessions.

Female reading Acts 2:44-47:

*And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. – Acts 2:44-47*

Dr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

We read in Acts chapter 2 and chapter 4 how in the Christian community there was a common sharing and there was no one among them in need. While on the one hand, this injunction in Acts is surely an ideal, on the other hand, it needs to be more than an ideal. It needs to be a way of life that we act upon.

**Narrator:**

The disciples followed the servant leader model of Christ as they spread the Gospel to the world and brought the invisible love of God to others through visible acts of ministry. The book of Acts records the calling of the first deacons of the early church in Jerusalem. Seven men were chosen for the purpose of serving tables, caring for the poor and to tend to the charitable acts of that church. The apostle James describes the act of anointing the sick with oil and praying for their healing. Today, many churches and denominations offer anointing with oil as a form of ministry or sacrament to those who are ill or in need of special prayer.

Second century Christian bishop Polycarp wrote of presbyters who were charged with showing compassion and mercy and to visit the sick, widowed, orphaned and poor. In the fourth century, Chrysostom wrote of the church at Antioch and its hospitality to travelers and care for the poor, sick and unmarried. He noted that although the Antioch church was of modest means, it cared for over 3,000 widows and virgins daily as well as others imprisoned or infirm. Also, by the mid-fourth century, Saint Basil had founded what many considered to be the first hospital because of its dual role as a caregiving and teaching institution, fostering a long tradition of the Church's philanthropic role in caring for the sick and dying. By the Middle Ages, it was clear that acts of service and ministry in worship were enmeshed in the identity of the Christian Church.

Dr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S. (Institute for Liturgical Ministry):

For us Christians, who share the risen life within us and among us, to see another in need and not respond, is to somehow be unfaithful to our own identity. It is really to be unfaithful to ourselves.

**Narrator:**

As the church moved from the Middle Ages and the Reformation to the Age of Enlightenment, charitable acts remained a staple of daily worship. What changed was a greater emphasis on social issues and their place in the worship of the church, a trend that continues today. George Fox and the Quakers, in the seventeenth century, emphasized the abolition of slavery, women's rights, and pacifism in war. John Wesley and the Methodists in the eighteenth century took up the causes of the abolition of slavery and prison reform. Jesuit scholar Luigi Taparelli first coined the term "social justice" for this growing movement in the mid nineteenth-century, influencing a number of encyclicals in the Catholic church on a variety of issues including working conditions, the dignity of human life, the care of the poor and marginalized, and the stewardship of God's creation.

Even the missionary work of the church changed in its focus. Organizations such as the Salvation Army combined evangelism with ministry to the poor and needy. The modern missionary movement, spearheaded by William Carey, Adoniram Judson, and Hudson Taylor, among others, echoed the earliest work of the apostles and thousands of others in later centuries in spreading the Gospel message to other nations and cultures. However, Carey also addressed the caste system in India and the murder of infants and widows. Judson and

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Taylor addressed illiteracy in Burma and China, respectively, and taught thousands of natives to read in mission-run schools.

In the modern church, as in centuries past, service and ministry in worship involves taking the Gospel message and love for others to unconventional people and places. For Pastor Sue Nelson Kibby, this need to share Christ with others led to the start of a unique ministry geared to reach the biker subculture.

Sue Nelson Kibby (Broken Chains Biker Ministry):

Clip 54 - :40-:58

I'm a pastor, and at the church where I serve a group of people attended who rode motorcycles, and as time went on they would gather together, they would meet to ride right after church, would go out to lunch, and so on and so forth. And we decided to gather them together and create a biker ministry.

**Narrator:**

The ministry is called Broken Chains and its purpose is to help create a community of bikers where safety is promoted and personal relationships with other riders are formed.

Sue Nelson Kibby (Broken Chains Biker Ministry):

Clip 55 – :06 - 1:23

People usually begin to come to a biker ministry looking for people to ride with. It's as simple as that. They enjoy riding. They're looking for people who want to obey safety

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rules, where it's organized, where the people they meet are friendly and great to make friends with. And so that's the initial draw to a biker ministry. People are looking for other people to ride with. What happens in a biker ministry is that we make sure those needs get met. Rides are organized and well planned. That the people in our biker ministry are friendly to newcomers and strike up acquaintanceships. But there's something different about us, because you see, we're all about loving people with the love of Jesus. And inviting people to ride on to church after the ride, and come in and worship with us. To go out for dinner with us afterwards, or lunch, and before you know it, bikers have moved beyond just the need for nice people and safe people to ride with and they've been drawn into the powerful, powerful magnetism of community, the kind of community that can only happen through the mission of church.

### **Narrator:**

Broken Chains is a success because of its members and supporters in the local church, who not only welcome but heartily embrace the bikers into the worship community, just as they are.

Sue Nelson Kibby (Broken Chains Biker Ministry):

Clip 55 – 1:38 – 2:19

Many people who ride motorcycles would never dream that they would be welcome to walk into a church to worship right off the motorcycle. They would believe that they needed to go home and change out of their leather clothing, that perhaps cover up any tattoos, or any other signature styles of people who ride motorcycles. But the fact of the

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matter is when you church welcomes everybody just as they are, it's this incredible invitation to bikers to walk right in and to be able to bring all that they are to everything that they know God to be.

### **Narrator:**

One of the highlights of the ministry is the group's annual Blessing of the Bikes.

Sue Nelson Kibby (Broken Chains Biker Ministry):

Clip 58 - :32 – 1:34

Every year our church hosts something called a bike blessing, or a blessing of the bikes. Now that might sound like a crazy idea to people outside of the biker community, but people who ride motorcycles have a kinship with nature and a profound sense of a greater Creator than themselves through the beauty of that. So the idea of coming to have a bike blessed for safety for the ride season makes all the sense in the world. And we have hundreds of bikers who otherwise never would have been to church bring their bike where we anoint it with water, pray for the rider's safety, the bike's safety, and also that the rider and the motorcycle would be used for a greater purpose than just themselves. And through that blessing of each individual bike, and the praying for the biker riding it, we have built more relationships and begin to include more people into our biker ministry than I can even count.

**Narrator:**

Perhaps the greatest testimony to the effectiveness of the Broken Chains ministry is in the lives that have been changed through its outreach efforts.

Sue Nelson Kibby (Broken Chains Biker Ministry):

Clip 57 - :11

I can think of so many stories of motorcyclists, people who ride bikes, who have been met and invited by the bikers in our community, and through that invitation, have experienced life transformation. For example, I can think of Carl and Darcy who our bikers met on a poker benefit ride. They were completely unchurched. They had nothing to do with church and our bikers not only befriended them and took them to lunch, but invited them to come to Saturday night worship in their biker clothing. Carl and Darcy would have never dreamed it possible to walk into church and not be stared at, but they came and had a true worship experience, that environment where there were no distractions, only invitation and presence. And Carl and Darcy committed their lives to Christ. They became members of the church. They became leaders in the biker ministry, and now they're out on those community poker and benefit runs inviting other people to come to church and to know the powerful message of God. It's just a gift that keeps on giving.

**Narrator:**

It is important that service and ministry do not become rote acts of obligation, but rather the fruits of a vital and meaningful worship experience.

Mike Slaughter (Pastor, Ginghamburg Church):

I believe that, again, that we can fall into the same trap that religious folks did in Jesus' day and that make worship of God a temple, limited to the temple kind of endeavor and measure our faithfulness by attendance rather than sacrificial participation.

Mike Slaughter (Pastor, Ginghamburg Church):

For me, I feel closest to God when I'm amongst the poor in the camps of Darfur, in the suffering. And so I can relate, like it says in Romans 12, to offer our bodies a living sacrifice, which is true and holy worship to God. So for me, I best experience God in serving others, and especially the marginalized.

**Narrator:**

We can take comfort that as we serve the Body of Christ, we are following in the footsteps of Christians throughout the history of the Church, who have changed their world by sacrificial acts.

Dr. Tom Boomershine (Founder, Network of Biblical Storytellers):

Clip 14 – 3:04 – 3:49

Worship is for me, personally, a time of re-invigoration, of being able to get things in perspective again. I often come to worship more or less depressed, and am reenergized and given a broader perspective and come out of it both with hope and joy and a conviction of remembering things have always been difficult, but the church has made an enormous difference by its faithfulness, by its ongoing action through the ages.

**Narrator:**

For the past two thousand years, the ways in which God's people connect to each other and their Creator are limitless. From prayer, meditation and contemplation to service and ministry, these intimate acts of worship are part of an ongoing dialogue with God and the world, revealing the joys, struggles, insights and blessings of the Christian life for present and future generations.

*Roll Credits, fade to black.*