

## Why We Need the Call to Worship by Zac Hicks

**Call to Worship.** Worship is something we offer to God every day of our lives in everything that we do. If we are worshipping as we come in the church doors, why do we have a Call to Worship? Implied in the phrase is the word “corporate.” When we hear the Call to (corporate) Worship, we are called by God as one community to worship Him *together*. What is unique about Sunday is not that we worship on that day and not others; it is that we worship *together*.

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**Why the Call to Worship is so important.** First, we live in a society that teaches us to think highly of our own ability. Americans are a fiercely independent, self-motivated people. The Call to Worship puts us in our place. We come to worship because God has a summons on our lives. We come to worship because God initiates with us, not the other way around. So the call to worship reminds us of God’s sovereign reign over us.

Second, the earliest word used to describe the Church in the Bible was *ekklesia*. (It’s where we get our words “ecclesiastical” and “ecclesiology.”) Its root is the Greek word *kaleo*, which means, “to call.” The people of God, as the *ekklesia*, are “the called-out ones.” When we hear the Call to Worship, we are being reminded of our identity as those called out and set apart by God for His holy purposes. We are reminded that we are not our own. We are reminded that we are “resident aliens” in this world. We are reminded that we are treasured and loved by God. So the call to worship reminds us of our identity in Christ.

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**The Call to Worship: No Small Thing.** When God is recognized as the central reality on Sunday morning, and when God, not the human being, is seen to be the central actor, to whom all must respond, then the elements of worship can be seen in a different and truer light. In the call to worship we realize that the meeting is no merely human meeting, planned and controlled by our human agendas, but a special meeting called by God, on his divine authority, for his purpose of meeting with his people. In the call to worship God himself is speaking through the human worship leader. We are called to lay aside our personal agendas, to realize where we are and what we are to be doing, to focus our attention on the unseen God, and to yield to him our full awareness and attention. (John Jefferson Davis, *Worship and the Reality of God*, 102-103)

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**Why We Need the Call to Worship.** All throughout the week, we find ourselves tossed about in the “sub-reality” of sin and brokenness. In a sense, we can forget God. We can forget His promises to us in Christ. We can forget who we are. We can forget that we’re designed for union and communion with our Maker. And this forgetfulness allows us to worship lesser things—people, money, possessions, prestige, the “perfect life.” The Call to Worship is a jolt back into reality. It is a bucket of cold water on our world-induced trance. In the Call to Worship, we once again remember, “Yes, *this* is who I am; *this* is what I’m called to do! I am a son/daughter of God Most High, and in Christ, I am His holy temple, His servant, His worshiper, His friend, His Bride, His possession, His love.

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**The Call to Worship and the Benediction.** The Call to Worship and the Benediction are important traditions in the history of Christian worship. As the start and close of the service, they make an important point to us about worship: *God gets the first and last word.* We understand the Call to Worship as *God’s call to us.* If we are ever to have a relationship with God, it is *God* who must first initiate to us. God alone can invite us and draw us in. Likewise, in the Benediction, it is only by God’s blessing (which is what a “benediction” is) and power are we able to go out into the world, to surrender our lives in daily worship, and to live out God’s mission.