



The theme of this OakLeaf is "Sunday Worship", one of East White Oak's Pathways of Discipleship. Our three "Pathways" (Sunday Worship, Bible Fellowships, and Small Groups) each make unique contributions to the process of transforming people into worshipers who are maturing in Christ.

Preparing for Sunday Worship

by Pastor Scott Boerckel

At East White Oak, our focus is "seeking to be worshipers, maturing in Christ." In this edition of the OakLeaf, we will share articles about our seeking to be worshipers. This article is about how to prepare for our weekly Sunday worship service.

Warming Up for the Most Important Moment of the Week

If you've ever seen someone do something well, whether it is a sport, a musical performance, or some other kind of artistry, you know that preparation for the action is just as important as the action itself. I have always been amazed at the warm up of performers, whether music groups or orchestra members or professional athletes. They all take their craft seriously! They know that if they do not prepare correctly, their actions will be less than excellent. Similarly, if you've ever watched the "bonus" section of a movie to hear from the director and actors on their preparations for their filming, you know just how much they pour into the preparation, all for making a movie.

So, as worshipers, we should put our best effort into preparing for worshipping together. All too frequently, we do not prepare at all for worship. We think that it

is enough just to show up. Imagine if your favorite sports team or music group or actor gave that kind of effort. You would boo! We have an audience of One as we worship. We should think well upon not only our worship but also upon our preparation for worship.

Here are some ways to prepare for worship:

- 1) Pray each day for God to meet us in power as we worship on Sunday. If all of us prayed this way, imagine our anticipation each week as we gather!
- 2) Pray for readiness to hear God's Word. Ask the Lord to plow the hard ground in your heart to make way for the fresh seed of God's Word to be implanted. Pray that the pastor may be true to the Word of God and that you will be attentive in your worship.
- 3) Give thought on Saturday for the rhythm of that day not to get in the way of Sunday worship. It is hard to be ready for the most important time of the week when we have exhausted ourselves to the point of lethargy the day or night before.
- 4) Come to worship! Whether you attend in person or are needing to livestream, show up. The statistics

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of what churchgoers call “regular attendance” have dropped precipitously in the past decade. You have an appointment with God in the company of His people each week. Do not lightly forego that privilege.

5) Invite others to come to worship with you. Absolutely nothing makes you pay attention to worship like having a guest with you. Your attention is on literally everything that happens. If you doubt that, give it a try and see!

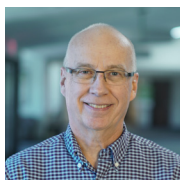
6) Engage people as you enter our place of worship. Instead of talking about nothing, perhaps make a statement of your expectation of meeting God. Then, take a brief moment as you take your seat quietly to offer a prayer to God, “Lord, I’m here, and I want to worship you in Spirit and in truth with your people.”

7) While you are worshiping, distractions come. They are inevitable. Whether it is a song that you can’t stand or a baby that is crying or someone is moving in a distracting way, it is your choice in how you respond. Rather than allowing those distractions to take you from worship, use them to offer this prayer, “Like you, Jesus, I say, ‘Get behind me, Satan!’ And help what distracts me to be a true blessing to others.” After all, that song that you can’t stand might be exactly what God wants for another; that baby that cries has a mom or dad that needs God’s family’s love.

Psalms 92:1-5:

It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
to declare your steadfast love in the morning,
and your faithfulness by night,
to the music of the lute and the harp,
to the melody of the lyre.
For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work;
at the works of your hands I sing for joy.
How great are your works, O Lord!
Your thoughts are very deep!

May the Lord grant that we become worshipers, maturing in Christ. And may our worship together on Sunday mornings create in us a heart of worship that impacts all of life.



Senior Pastor Scott Boerckel loves being a pastor and teaching God’s Word. He is married to Carol, a watercolor artist who knows how to think Christianly about the arts. In his free time, he enjoys cycling with friends, enjoying his ever growing family, and learning from the community of God’s people at East White Oak.



How can Sunday Worship be both a place for Outreach and an encouragement to do Outreach?

How do we first go to our neighbors and attend their events (sports, concerts, parties) before we ask them to come and attend our “church” events? Sam Chan (Ph.D., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is the author of *Evangelism in a Skeptical World and How to Talk About Jesus (Without Being That Guy)* and offers some great suggestions for us!

Matthew 28:19-20 says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Usually, when we try to tell our friends and neighbors about Jesus and the Gospel, we go at it solo. We want to tell people about Jesus and we get fired up and join a football team, a movie club, or a cooking class. But the problem is that often you’re the only person in the room who believes in Jesus and although what you believe in is true, it comes across as unbelievable to those who have not received the truth when you

share it. Never mind if they are guilted into coming to your Sunday Worship service and feel completely out of place and awkward.

First, what we need to do is to merge our universes. Oftentimes Christians have two different universes. On the one side are the Christian friends who go to Sunday Worship together and the other is our non-Christian friends. So when our Christian friends go to the movies we go with them and when our non-Christian friends go to the movies we go with

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them. But instead, we need to merge our universes, so our friends become their friends. So, when our Christian friends go to the movies, we invite our non-Christian friends along. When our non-Christian friends go to the movies, we invite our Christian friends along. And bit by bit we merge our universes so that we're not the only Christian friends our friends have and over time our testimony of Christ becomes more and more believable.

This is a lifestyle change that spills into and out of our Sunday Worship services. Let's say you have a group of work friends in the office, school, or business you're in. Whenever you go out with them, seek to invite your Christian friends along, and when you go out with your Christian friends, invite your office, school, or business friends along. Over several years, your non-Christians friends will begin to see and hear the Gospel more and more. This will make the invitation for someone to come to Sunday Worship much less awkward as the whole group is going together.

This takes about two years to proactively merge these universes and create a trusted network of friends. We often think of Outreach or Sunday Worship as an event we invite someone to. It is like trying

to get fit. Each year we make a new resolution to get fit. We get fired up to go for a 5 am run and we sign up for a gym, but it is unsustainable because it is something we added to our lives. When if we really want to get fit, our whole lifestyle needs to become fit. It is the same with Outreach and inviting folks to Sunday Worship. When we think we need to add an event to our life, or the church needs to add an event to our calendar, we're really asking for a lifestyle change where our whole lives become evangelistic. This is how the Church becomes more evangelistic – when we merge our universes and our Christian friends become friends with our non-Christian friends.

Secondly, we need to go to our friends and neighbors before they come to us. We need to go to their things before they come to our things. Typically, as Christians, we feel pressured by the Church or our impression of Outreach to bring our non-Christian friends and it becomes so hard. However, if we are always going to their things, then the pressure is off from inviting them to our things. So, when our non-Christian friends and neighbor's kids have a youth fundraising night, go to the fundraising night. When there is a sports event, go to the sporting event. If you begin going to their things, they will begin going to your things. Sew yourself into these events and their lives, sign up for their rosters, and throw yourself into their culture, get involved, and bit by bit they will trust you as the de facto chaplain where you can serve them and won't feel put off when you invite them to join you for Sunday Worship.

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Pastor Justin Waples is East White Oak's Outreach and Discipleship pastor. He is married to Abigail and they are blessed with three children. Justin is passionate about equipping the saints for ministry and helping each member reach out and connect with their neighbors and community.

Worship, It's Good for the Soul

by Pastor Jeff VanGoethem

Wow, I have really been enjoying our Worship Services since returning to East White Oak. Put yourself in my shoes for a minute.

For forty years on Sundays, I made that walk from the front row to the pulpit. I was “working,” working all week to get ready and working to do as well as I could to deliver a message from God’s Word on Sundays. I’m not making that walk anymore. Now, I just mosey into the Worship Center, sit next to my dear wife, and take it all in, no longer as a preacher, but “just” a worshiper.

It has been wonderful. Several times I have remarked to myself, “I need this.” “This is healing my soul.” “I’m being blessed.” The music, the praying, the greetings, the fellowship, and of course the message from God’s Word. I need this brethren, big time. So do you.

I write this in the hope that we never ever take our participation in Sunday worship for granted or treat it lightly. It is doing so much for me in this unique and transitional season in my life. I have learned again how important it is to engage in worship on Sundays. Thank you to Pastor Scott, the worship leaders, the singers, the players, the ushers, the greeters, the nursery and children’s workers, the tech guys in the back and everyone and anyone who is doing something up front or behind the scenes. Your work is blessing me, I’m sure it is blessing others.

It can be easy to fall into an overly casual approach to worship. Or to skip it for the slightest reason. Or come late and leave early. I recommend we not do any of that. Rather, we should make a point to savor it. Come early, engage completely, stay and visit. NEVER skip unless absolutely necessary. We need it. For our souls.

As the writer of Hebrews reminds us, we need to take our worship gathering seriously (Heb. 10:24-25). We need to be “stirred up” and “encouraged” by our gathering. If we engage in it like we should, it will do so much for us. I’ve been experiencing that afresh.

How precious is that brief time we assign to weekly worship. God wants us to experience His presence, hear His voice, learn His will, and yield our lives. It will not happen if we are distracted, late, inattentive, or careless worshippers. The old Puritans called weekly worship one of the main “means of grace.” We need grace (God’s gracious help) and the worship-meeting delivers it.

Let’s fan the flame of God’s grace in our lives by being serious participants in weekly worship.

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Pastor Jeff VanGoethem has been in pastoral ministry for 40 years, including nearly twenty as Senior Pastor of East White Oak. He has returned to East White Oak after pastoring for some years in Dallas, Texas to serve as Associate Pastor of Spiritual Development and Missions. He is married to Karen. They have four daughters and four grandchildren.

Music in Worship

by Paul Jones

When I first began leading music in church, I had the great fortune of reading a book written by a worship director named Bob Kauflin, titled “Worship Matters.”

I’d like to share a few significant reasons he gives for why music helps us as God’s people:

1. Music can stir up expressions of God-glorifying emotion. He writes, “Our deepest, strongest, purest affections should be reserved for God himself, and he gave us singing to help us express them.” Our songs are meant to stir up in our hearts a response to who God is and what he has done!

2. Music helps us express our unity in the gospel. When we read the Bible, many of the references we see to singing and music are corporate. Psalm 34:3 – “O magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together.” Singing provides us an opportunity to express the unity we have in knowing / following Christ!

3. Music helps us remember truth about God. When Pastor Traig asked me to write a few words on the place of music in worship, I immediately thought of a recent conversation I had with my Aunt Pricilla at a family Christmas gathering. Anyone who speaks with my aunt knows (in a matter of seconds) that she has internalized God’s word. Every few words during our conversation, my aunt would turn towards me and say, “You know, Paul, there’s a song about that.” At that point, she would break out in a hymn or a song containing words taken directly from scripture (in a country-gospel voice). What is significant about this is, though her mind is failing (dementia), the songs she has learned are always

on the tip of her tongue. What a significant role that songs can play in our lives! Though the songs we sing are first and foremost praise to God, they also help us to internalize those truths about God that we need reminding of as we face trouble, difficulty, or hardships in our everyday lives.

In Paul’s letter to the Colossians, he writes, “Let the word of Christ dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing *one another* with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

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Paul Jones serves on the worship team at East White Oak. He’s been married to Abigail for 16 years and they have 3 children— Mae (13), Teddy (11) and Oscar (9).

Paul works for the Bloomington Police Department in the Criminal Investigations Division. In his spare time, Paul loves to practice a number of instruments, read historical biographies and drink a freshly brewed cup of coffee.

Worship From the Psalms

by Craig Nelson

In our ABF (Acts 2:42) we have been studying the Psalms. Frankly, that can be intimidating. It's a tremendous amount of material addressing many different contexts and situations, from laments to shouts of praise and joy.

Each week our ABF typically begins by reading the Psalm aloud as a group. This practice has led me to consider how I process the Psalms as a believer.

Often when I read the Psalms, I hold it as a close, quiet intimate experience between myself and the Lord. I process my struggles and victories through the words of the Psalmist (often David). Many times, I find the admissions of sin and the personal pleadings of the Psalmist to be raw and transparent, stripping away the trappings of pride and pretense. Equally as moving at times are the unrestrained expressions of joy, praise, and worship.

However, these Psalms were sung by larger groups and their content made public, not kept secret. Many of them comprised the hymnal for Israel and would have been used in worship by the Israelites. Perhaps they were even sung by a 12-year-old boy in Jerusalem about 2000 years ago. What would it have been like for Jesus to hear with his human ears these Psalms being sung aloud? To hear, as He stood in the temple, words of worship being sung to His Father, words provided to the Psalmist by the inspiration of His very own Holy Spirit?

I imagine it brought joy to my Creator's heart. I imagine He smiled as He heard confessions of adultery and unfaithfulness. For in that brokenness, He also heard cries for mercy, promises of repentance, and a plea for the creation of a clean heart. He knew that

all of this was about to come under redemption in the work He was about to complete.

Maybe I can learn from this. Maybe I can read the Psalms not alone, but with my wife, my family, my small group, my ABF, and my church family. Together we – not I – can own the brokenness or joy in each Psalm, processing them as the people of God rather than in solitude. Maybe in this I find another way of worship that makes the heart of my Lord glad.

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Craig Nelson serves as a facilitator for the Acts 2:42 ABF. He is married to Bridget Nelson. Bridget is a cellist and Craig a pianist and they enjoy playing music together. They have two teenage children, Danny and Olivia. Craig is the Director of Information Technologies for McLean County Government, now in his 25th year with the County and is also a certified Project Management Professional. Craig also volunteers as a teacher in the student program for the Men's evening Bible Study Fellowship program which meets at East White Oak on Monday nights.



Parenting in the Worship Service

by Jon and Pam Scott

We believe that, as parents, we are primarily responsible for the spiritual development of our kids.

Being active in our local church body has always been a priority for our family, but it hasn't always been easy.

We wanted our kids to enjoy being "in church", to learn how to worship corporately, and to make a habit of Sunday worship. As parents, we tried to be proactive and set priorities for our family rather than be reactive and let the kids set our priorities. Here are some of our experiences and suggestions that we know Pastor Scott would support.

Preparing for Sunday morning would ideally begin on Saturday (or even earlier). Establishing routines for kids is always helpful, and readying them for church was no exception. We tried to talk about what to expect the next day and make sure we got enough rest (mostly for the parents). We also talked about what time we needed to be ready to go in the morning. Prayer was an essential part of our preparation. We made it a point to pray with our kids at bedtime, and on Saturday night, we would ask God to prepare each of our hearts for Sunday and to meet us in worship. As the years went on, we had to make decisions about protecting Sundays for worship and that meant foregoing things like club soccer. It was difficult at the time to make some of those choices, but looking back, we are glad we did.

Pastor Tom Zobrist shared on this topic to our men at the last Chalk Talk Grille Night. He shared that his son Ben, who became a World Series MVP, did not play on travel teams when they played on Sunday. According to Pastor Zobrist, "If your child is really THAT talented, they won't need to play on Sunday, and if your child is not that talented, no amount of

playing on Sunday will make a difference. In the meantime, by skipping out on worship, you as a parent have revealed your priorities."

Just getting to church on Sunday morning was sometimes a challenge. We had our share of nuclear meltdowns in the van (and the kids had some of their own, too). It often helped to institute some quiet time in the van and pray that God would meet us that morning.

The pastors at East White Oak have encouraged kids to be in the worship service, but sometimes it was a bit unnerving to bring our unpredictable kids with us. Like many parents, we felt like everyone noticed every little sound our kids made. One thing we do not recommend is to give your kids wrapped mints to keep them quiet. One Sunday, we handed mints out mid-sermon only to listen to a symphony of simultaneous crackling wrappers and mint slurping. We recommend unwrapping them at home. Our experience was that the folks around us were not bothered by our children's noises as much as we were. Of course, if our children got out of hand, we would make a quick exit.

To help our kids engage during the worship service, we encouraged them to sing, follow along in their Bibles, and take some form of notes when they were old enough to write. This included things like drawing a picture of something they heard during the sermon, writing down a word that they heard but didn't understand, or copying a key verse from the passage.

During Sunday lunch, we would often talk about what we all learned in our Sunday School class, admire any crafts, and discuss what we remembered from the worship service. As the kids grew older, we would use the questions that the pastors published in the bulletin to initiate a conversation. It is amazing what we parents can learn from our kids.

Sometimes we were embarrassed by our kids' antics, and we certainly made our share of mistakes in par-

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enting, but we decided early to make it a priority to include our kids in corporate worship. Even when they were in high school, we made a point to sit together as a family to minimize distractions and reinforce the idea that we were in church to hear from God and to worship Him.

There are a lot of great resources for parents out there, in addition to Scripture. We gleaned a lot of wisdom and encouragement from *Shepherding a Child's Heart* and *Age of Opportunity* by Tedd and Paul Tripp, and *Parenting in the Pew* by Robbie Castleman.



Jon has served as the class leader for Acts 2:42 ABF, a Deacon, and in the music ministry. Pam serves in the nursery and on the Women's ministry team. They have four children and one grandchild. Jon taught Physics at the high school level for 30 years and now works as a content developer for UWorld, a provider of review materials for a wide range of medical and scientific exams. Pam teaches fifth grade at Cornerstone Christian Academy.

What I Miss About Physically Gathering for Worship

by Janet Schlagel

In 2015 I was afflicted with an autoimmune disease called Dermatomyositis.

My immune system attacks my muscles, skin, and vessels. I take medications to suppress my immune system, which leaves me vulnerable to illness. It was recommended that I avoid sick people, large crowds, and children. I now worship from my home by watching Livestream. I miss being in the presence of God's people to worship Him.

Scripture tells us to "not forsake the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrew 10:25). God wants us to gather together. I personally value having a designated place to gather together. As a college student, I attended a building that had a simple sign in front of it that said "Ontario Bible Church meets here". The church is a group of people who meet together in a designated place to worship the Lord. I appreciated the expository teaching there and continue to be blessed with the same at East White Oak. I love that we have a designated space for teaching-even with AWANA using the sanctuary for teaching. Being at home can be distract-

ing when trying to watch on Livestream. It is easier to focus on the message and singing when you are not tempted with household chores by being at home.

Watching the service on Livestream lacks being with other believers. The beauty of many voices combined and lifted before the Lord is not present when I sing at home. Standing in honor of the reading of God's Word when you are by yourself lacks the unity of being with other believers. I have had the privilege of meeting Pastor Anatoli who was raised in communist Russia. He shared much about the risk of gathering to worship. Worshiping with others is a privilege we may take for granted-unless it is taken away. I encourage corporate worship. May we join David when he says 'I was glad when they said to me "Let us go to the house of the Lord."' (Psalm 122:1)



Janet Schlagel serves on the Missions team at EWOBC. She is married to Dennis. They have four grown children and 7 grandchildren. Janet worked as a Registered Dietitian prior to retiring because of Dermatomyositis. Her interests include quilting and card making.