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Flow: An Ancient Way to Contemporary Worship

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Chapter 8: Beatific Flow: Overarching Guidelines

Excerpted from *Flow: The Ancient Way to Do Contemporary Worship* (Abingdon Press, forthcoming, 2020)

You will find below some key guidelines for pursuing an ancient way to contemporary worship. Following the inspiration of others, we are expressing them in the form of beatitudes. To express worship wisdom in the form of beatitudes is a way of stating broad standards for worship without capitulating to excessively rigid checklists or norms.

- ✓ Blessed and wise are worship planners and leaders who respect that good flow is a critical part of the essence of contemporary worship.
- ✓ Blessed and wise are those who realize one needs to look beyond the stylistic veneer of a way of worship to assess what's really going on in the actions of worship.
- ✓ Blessed and wise are those who do not superimpose recent style aspects of “traditional worship” on the ancient church.
- ✓ Blessed and wise are worship planners and leaders who realize more than one thing can be going on at a time.
- ✓ Blessed are the pastors and worship planners who see an order of worship as an unfolding narrative of encounter with God rather than a checklist of objects to get accomplished.
- ✓ Blessed and wise are the worship planners who don't just “plug and chug” independent items in an order of worship but think about what each one does and how they should sequence properly.
- ✓ Blessed and wise are the worship planners who assess each act of worship for its fittingness at that point of the service.
- ✓ Blessed and wise are those musicians who, when leading worship, do not go back and forth between fast and slow songs, but rather create a progression in liturgical energy.
- ✓ Blessed and wise is the church whose music team has a clear plan of how they are starting, ending, and transitioning between songs.
- ✓ Blessed and wise are those musicians who do key changes well in times of extended music so as not to disrupt the flow.
- ✓ Blessed and wise is the music leader who recognizes the church is led in congregational singing more by its ears than by its eyes.

- ✓ Blessed and wise is the church whose music leader sees contemporary worship as offering opportunities to creatively invite the congregation into deeper participation.
- ✓ Blessed and wise is the church whose music serves to engage worshipers in the four-fold structure of worship.
- ✓ Blessed and wise is the preacher who proclaims God's past, present, and future saving works.
- ✓ Blessed and wise is the worship leader who transitions between elements in the service by connecting what just happened and what is about to happen.
- ✓ Blessed and wise is the worship leader whose prayers remember the things God has done.
- ✓ Blessed and wise is the congregation which uses its microphones wisely to avoid unnecessary dead time for speakers to get to a microphone.
- ✓ Blessed and wise are worship leaders who speak and act authentically as if they believe what they are saying is true before God.
- ✓ Blessed and wise is the visual liturgist who only uses images and videos that develop the theme of the service.
- ✓ Blessed and wise is the visual liturgist who selects fonts and colors that are congruent with the emotional tone of the liturgical actions.
- ✓ Blessed and wise is the visual liturgist who smoothly transitions the slides at the optimal time.
- ✓ Blessed and wise is the visual liturgist who remains stylistically consistent throughout the entire service.
- ✓ Blessed and wise are those who are sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit during both the worship planning and worship leading moments.