



Christian Ceremonies

Teaching Notes

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

I. DEFINITION OF TERMINOLOGIES

A. Ceremony

1. Act – A formal act or group of acts carried out by following specific instructions based upon the authority of custom or teaching.
2. Need – Ceremonies are meant to meet some need which a person or group feels or felt at an earlier time.
 - a. Expression- ceremonies express worship clearly and naturally.
 - b. Reminder – ceremonies remind participants of some truth.
 - c. Relation – ceremonies relate important moments in life to God and Christ
 - d. Support – ceremonies offer support of other believers to the individual.
3. Elements – ceremonies often include symbols; composed of purpose, content and form.

B. Symbol

1. Definition – Symbol comes from the Greek word meaning to compare; a symbol is an object or activity which represents or stands for some meaning.
2. Value of Symbols:
 - a. Expression – Symbols give physical expressions to spiritual truth
 - b. Declarations – Symbols declare God's truth to us and our thoughts to God.
3. Dangers of symbols:
 - a. Idolatry – Symbols may become idols, objects of superstition.
 - b. Substitute – Symbols may take the place of what they represent, objects of worship.
 - c. Fellowship – Symbols do not guarantee personal fellowship with God.
 - d. Action – Symbols do not produce righteousness.

II. NATURE AND ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN CEREMONIES

- A. Purpose – This is the reason a ceremony is observed, the need it meets or the job it does or accomplishes. The purpose shapes the content and the form.
- B. Content – This is the meaning or the Teaching or Truths which advances the purpose or which is expressed through the ceremony. Elements usually have much biblical teachings in the proper content. The context must not be changed.
- C. Form – This is the actual Symbol, steps or procedures which make up the ceremony and expresses content. There is limited biblical instructions. The form may be changed to fit the situation as long as the same content is expressed. For instance, in the case of ordination – this can be done individually or all at once.

III. FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENT

A. Definition:

1. Term – This term refers to the activity of completing the same function in a different form.
2. Form – This is the different forms of a ceremony which expresses the same content and meets the same purpose.
3. Requirements – The functional equivalent must not be in conflict with the Gospel or the biblical practice.

B. Uses –

1. Adaptation – This is the adoption of a different ceremonial form which better fits the local situation without changing the content or hindering the purpose e.g. Baptistry, communion cups, musical instruments – drums, or choruses
2. Substitution – This is the adoption of a new ceremony as a substitute for an unacceptable or non - Christian practice. The new ceremony meets the same need in an acceptable way. If not good substitute is provided, conflict and syncretism may result e.g. offering to Agricultural spirits may be replaced by ceremony of prayer for crops.

Review and Discussion

- 1) What is a ceremony?
- 2) How important is the observance of ceremonies in the body of Christ?
- 3) What is a symbol?
- 4) What are the values of symbols?
- 5) Mention four dangers of symbols in worship?
- 6) What is a 'functional equivalent?'
- 7) Give an example of a functional equivalent?
- 8) Why should the functional equivalent not be in conflict with the Gospel or the Biblical practice?

LESSON 1 – The Worship Service

I. WHAT IS WORSHIP AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The English word “worship” means “to attribute worth to something.” The Christians attribute worth to God. Christians of all persuasions agree that:

“Worship is central in the existence of the church” (Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program*, p 166).

“The primary task of the church existence is to worship God” (Watson, *I Believe in the Church*, p 179).

We were saved “to praise His glorious grace” (Ephesians 1:6) that we might be “offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5) and may “declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9)

II. BIBLICAL WORDS USED IN WORSHIP

A. From the Old Testament

1. *Shachah* = “To bow down” – showing honour, respect, reverence
Gen 24:52 “When Abraham’s servant heard what they said, he bowed down to the ground before the LORD”
Ex 34:14 “Do not worship any other god.....”
2. *Abad* = “Serve”
Exodus 3:12 “When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain”
Exodus 20:5 “You shall not bow down to them (Idols) or worship them”.

B. From the New Testament

1. *Latreuo* = “Service” or “Worship”
Philippians 3:3 “... We who worship by the Spirit of God...”
2. *Proskuneo* = used to designate the custom of prostrating oneself before a person.
Matthew 4:10 “For it written: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only”.
3. *Sebomai* = “Worship”, “Worshipper”
Acts 18:13 “This man ... is persuading people to worship God in ways contrary to the Law”

III. PROPER OBJECTS OF WORSHIP

Worship is unto God. During worship, we need to see God. Our focus should be on God. He is the only object of worship. God has revealed Himself in three persons as God the Father, God the son and God the Holy Spirit. This is the trinity. He is one God in three persons.

1. The Father
John 4:23 “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the father seeks.”
2. The Son
Matthew 28:17 “When they saw Him (Jesus), they worshiped Him...”
3. The Holy Spirit
“When we worship, we worship the divine nature. So it is impossible to worship any one person in the Godhead and not worship the whole Trinity. The divine nature in all its infinite excellence, dignity and majesty and as the origin and cause of all things common to all three persons in the Godhead” (John Owen, Communion with God, P 205)

IV. BIBLICAL REQUIREMENTS IN WORSHIP

1. In relation to Man
 - a. A clear and cleansed conscience – 2 Timothy 1:3, Hebrews 10:22).
 - b. Reverence and awe – Hebrews 12:28
2. In relation to God
 - a. Directed to God – Revelation 4:11
 - b. Mediated through Christ – Hebrews 10:19-20
 - c. Done in the power of the Spirit – John 4:24; Philippians 3:3

V. WHO IS INVOLVED IN WORSHIP

1. Angels
Hebrews 1:6 “Let all God’s angels worship Him (Isaiah 6:1-3, Revelation 4, 5, 7)
2. Saints in heaven
Revelation 1:10 “The twenty – four Elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and worship Him who lives forever and ever.”
Revelation 7:9ff “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, tribes, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.... They fall down on their faces before the throne and worship God.....”
3. Men (See previous references)

VI. THE PURPOSE OF THE WORSHIP SERVICE

- a. To offer praise to God – (Hebrews 12:15; Psalms 95:1-7)
- b. To strengthen the Church – (1 Corinthians 14:26; Hebrews 10:24, 25)
- c. To bring believers into God’s presence and to align their concerns with that of God.

VII. WHAT THINGS SHOULD BE PART OF THE WORSHIP SERVICE

1. Call to worship
2. Reading of Scripture (Ezra 8:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:22, Psalms 146, 1 Tim 4:13)

3. Praise, Singing, Prayer, Testimonies
4. Offerings, Preaching, Exercising of Spiritual gifts,
5. Communion, Lord's Prayer, Liturgy, etc.

VIII. THE TIME AND PLACE OF WORSHIP

The New born Church began by meeting daily (Acts 2:46; 5:42) but gradually moved to meeting on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Rev 1:10). They began by meeting in the Temple (Acts 2:46; 5:42), in homes (Acts 2:46, 5:42; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Phil 2) and Synagogues (Acts 22:19). Church buildings did not appear until the end of the 2nd century.

IX. DANGERS IN "WORSHIP"

1. Formalism
2. Focus on receiving as opposed to giving to God
3. Entertainment
4. Utilitarianism
5. Emotionalism / content
6. Traditionalism

X. ATTITUDE IN WORSHIP

Worship is experiencing the presence of God. It is more than expressing appreciation to God. An experience with God renews us to meet the challenges of life and re-enforces an attitude of worship in all of life every day of the week. We do not worship or go to church for what we can get out of it. Also, we do not offer God praises because He is in need of them but we must understand that God is rich in grace towards us and He reaches us to the point of our need. Therefore worship is a means of grace.

XI. SOME CONSIDERATIONS

- a. In what ways are our present worship services conditioned by tradition and culture
- b. In what ways can our worship services be both more biblical and cultural at the same time?

Review and Discussion

- 1) What is the definition of Christian worship?
- 2) What is the central and primary source of worship?
- 3) Who is the proper object of worship?
- 4) Mention some physical expressions of worship?
- 5) Mention some distractions in worship?
- 6) How can you make the most of the opportunity to worship God?
- 7) What is the purpose of Music in worship?
- 8) Mention three acts of worship that you have learned?

- 9) Who is the audience in the worship service?
- 10) What does spiritual fellowship include?

Lesson 2 – Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper

DEFINITION OF TERMS

A. Sacrament (Def.)

1. Term – The term comes from the Latin word “Sacramentum” which at first referred to all rituals, but later to a few special rituals. The Roman Catholic Church has seven sacraments (Baptism, confirmation, penance, mass, marriage, orders, extreme unction)
2. Effect – Sacraments are understood to contain and grant God’s grace to the participants. Baptist do not agree or use the term.
3. Leader – the sacrament must be performed by an ordained priest in order to grant the grace and may not depend on the believer’s faith.

B. Ordinance (Def.)

1. Term – the term refers to an action carried out in obedience to an order (command from Christ). This is the term used by Baptists. i.e. Baptism and Lord’s supper
2. Effect – to declare the gospel and strengthen the church, not to grant grace.
3. Example – Baptists accept two ordinances: Baptism and Lord’s Supper.
4. Leader –Normally, performed by an ordained minister, but can be led by someone appointed by the congregation.

Part 1 - BAPTISM SERVICE

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Old Testament – water was used as a symbol of forgiveness / cleansing in the Old Testament. Gentile converts to Judaism (proselytes) were baptized.
- B. New Testament –
 1. John the Baptist – baptized Jesus and Gentiles as a sign of repentance. Jesus continued the practice as a sign of repentance and commitment.
 2. Essenes – a group which established a community at Qumran and baptised to cleanse followers in preparation for Judgement.
 3. Early church – practices associated with baptism: fasting in preparation, anointing and laying on of hands, gifts of white robe after baptism, hair cut in shape of the cross and the blessing of water.

II. PURPOSE

The Bible presents baptism as a rich and meaningful symbol or sign which serves as a public witness to the believer’s decision to follow Christ through death of Old life and resurrection to new life.

III. DIFFERENT VIEWS OF BAPTISM

1. Baptismal Regeneration

Roman Catholics and Lutherans; Believe that Baptism applies grace to forgive sin and begin eternal life with God.

Roman Catholic say, it has its own power requiring no faith; Lutherans say, it requires faith in the believer or parents.

2. Baptism as covenant

Presbyterians and Reformers; baptism brings the person into a covenant relationship with God as circumcision did in the Old Testament. Baptism has replaced circumcision as entry into covenant. It does not save or wash away sin; it must be completed by commitment (confirmation).

3. Baptism as witness

Baptists and Pentecostals believe that baptism is a public witness to salvation in Christ through death to the old life and resurrection to new life. Both recognize the necessity of personal decision in conversion.

IV. FORM

A. Mode of Baptism (use of water)

1. Any mode- Baptism may be by sprinkling, pouring or immersion. The meaning is entry into covenant and purification which does not require any single mode. The Bible is not clear on the New Testament mode.
2. Immersion – immersion is the only mode found in the New Testament; it acts out the picture of death to the old life and resurrection to the new life. It is the mode used in the New Testament and the Greek term is “*Baptizo*” which means to immerse.

B. Subject of Baptism (who is baptised)

1. Infants or Adults – Baptize children of believers and Adults to cleanse them from the original sin or accept them into the covenant. It’s believed that the Baptism of Philippian Jailer and “his household” included children.
2. Believers – In the believer’s baptism, only those who have made a decision for salvation by faith in Christ are baptized. Infants are excluded. This seems to be the New Testament practice.

C. Administrator

Baptists generally allow ordained ministers to baptize. In cases where no ordained minister, some will allow the congregation to appoint a believer to baptize. Baptism is a public witness to conversion.

D. Baptism and Church membership

1. Membership – Almost all Christian groups require baptism for church membership.
2. Change of Membership

- a. Baptists – some Baptist churches accept only the Baptism of other Baptist churches for a Christian who wants to join.
- b. Other – some Baptist churches will accept believer's baptism by immersion from other denominations (Alien Immersion)
- c. Any – some Baptist churches accept any baptism.

E. Practical matters

1. Worship service – make baptism part of the regular worship service, to involve as many members as possible. Take advantage of baptism as a symbol (visual). Use of evangelism tool to reach families.
2. Instruction – provide thorough instruction beforehand on the meaning of Baptism and the candidate's part in the procedure. This relieves anxiety.
3. Preparation – check to see that location is prepared and change of clothing is present. The committee helps here.
4. Performance – perform the ceremony with dignity. Lower and raise the candidate smoothly.

F. African context

1. Water – avoid the idea that the water has special power; avoid prayers of blessing the water.
2. Site – baptism in the river, ponds, beach takes careful selection of site and may be complicated by the dry season. Functional equivalent may be in a form of a 200 litres drum.

Part 2 - LORD'S SUPPER SERVICE

BACKGROUND

- A. **OLD TESTAMENT** – The first Lord's Supper led by Jesus during the Passover festival was probably the Passover meal. This meal was began by Moses to remind the Israel of deliverance from Egypt. It included:
1. Unleavened bread (haste / sin)
 2. Roasted lamb eaten entirely (Lamb slain and blood sprinkled on door posts / lintels)
 3. Bitter herbs (Bitterness of slavery)
 4. Bowl of salt water (To remind them of the tears shed in Egypt and the salt water of the red sea).
 5. A Paste called *charosheth* of fruits/nuts, which reminded the people of the clay which was used to make bricks in Egypt. A stick of cinnamon was put through the paste to remind them of the straw.
 6. Four cups of wine: The four cups of wine reminded the people of God's promises in Exodus 6:6-7. The four cups are the four promises:
 - a. I will bring you out from under the burden of the Egyptians.
 - b. I will rid you of their bondage.
 - c. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm
 - d. I will take you to me for a people, and I will be your God.

- B. **NEW TESTAMENT** – Jesus related this meal to the promised New Covenant (Jeremiah 31). Blessed bread and wine, commanded his disciples to continue the practice.
- C. **EARLY CHURCH** – probably combined the ceremony with a meal among believers called “Love feast” (1 Corinthians 11); there are various names for the ceremony: Lord’s supper, Communion (Fellowship), Eucharist (Thanksgiving), Mass.

PURPOSE OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

The purposes of the Lord’s Supper are:

- A. To remember Christ’s death and resurrection
- B. To promote Christ’s presence in worship
- C. To proclaim His second coming (1 Cor. 11:24-26)

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

- A. **RELEVANT ISSUES** – Sacrament, Sacrifice, effect / power. “This is.....”
- B. **TRANSUBSTANTIATION** – Roman Catholic view.
 - 1. Sacrifice – Christ’s sacrificial death is literally repeated and the elements give grace of forgiveness to believers.
 - 2. Elements – Bread and wine changes into real body and blood of Jesus automatically.
 - 3. Leader – must be performed by ordained priest, miracle occurs.
 - 4. Summary –it is a Sacrifice, Sacrament and Automatic.
- C. **REAL PRESENCE** – (consubstantiation) – Luther’s view.
 - 1. Sacrifice – Christ’s sacrificial death is not repeated and the believer receives forgiveness through faith in word and strength.
 - 2. Elements – Elements do not change, but Christ’s physical body and blood is present with the elements.
 - 3. Summary - it is a Sacrament, not a Sacrifice or automatic.
- D. **REFORMED VIEW**– Reformed and Presbyterian (John Calvin)
 - 1. Sacrifice – Christ’s Sacrifice is not repeated, believers receive assurance and Christ’s life.
 - 2. Elements – Elements do not change, but Christ is present spiritually but not physically.
 - 3. Summary – not a sacrifice, Sacrament or automatic
- E. **MEMORIAL VIEW** – Ulrich Zwingli / Baptists
 - 1. Sacrifice – Christ’s sacrifice is not repeated, the believer is being reminded of Christ’s death for sinners and strengthened.
 - 2. Elements – Symbols which remind us of Christ’s death and Christ is present in all worship, not uniquely present.
 - 3. Summary – not a sacrifice, Sacrament or automatic

FORM

A. Administration

1. Leader – Church tradition / Custom has called for ordained Minister or Priest. The Bible gives little direction. Some allow un-ordained leader appointed by the congregation if ordained Minister is not available.
2. Gathering – Some Baptists say only a Local Congregation can observe the Lord's supper and no other group e.g. Sunday school class.
3. Frequency – the Bible gives little direction or frequency of observance. Some groups (Roman Catholics) observe it every Sunday or more often. Most Baptists observe it monthly or Quarterly as decided by the congregation.
4. Participants
 - a. Believers – only believers who are able to understand are allowed. The Bible require only self – examination except in case of public sin. Exclusion from the Lord's Supper may be used as a form of church discipline.
 - b. Type of believers
 - i. Closed communion (inner) – only members of the congregation share the Lord's supper e.g. Jesus and the Apostles
 - ii. Close (intra) Communion - only believers baptized in like manner (in other Baptist Churches or believers baptism by immersion).
 - iii. Open Communion – All believers from any church or denomination (the Lord's Table)
5. Elements – original elements were unleavened bread and wine. Many Baptist churches substitute leavened bread and juice as functional equivalents, also communion cups.

PRACTICAL MATTERS

A. PREPARATIONS

1. Elements should be prepared in advance in sufficient amounts. Appoint a person or committee.
2. Customs – Ask about particular customs or practices on the local congregation. Some Baptists practice foot washing with the Lord's Supper and Baptism (1 Cor. 10: 1-4)
3. Instructions – teach the congregation the biblical meaning and oppose any misunderstandings.
4. Practice – leader and the assistants should practice and understand their roles.

B. OBSERVANCE

1. Central – Make the supper the main part of the service. Hymns, sermon and Special music should relate to the Supper.
2. Time – leave enough time so people are not tired before the ceremony begins
3. Order – lead the service in an orderly manner to avoid distractions, use few words and let the service speak for itself.

AFRICAN CONTEXT

- A. Magic – Avoid misunderstanding that the elements have magical power. They are not fetishes.

- B. Elements – use available, appropriate elements. Use functional equivalent if necessary. They should not call attention to themselves.
- C. Harmony – some congregations make time to settle disagreements among members before the supper. This can be helpful, but it can also stir up debate.

POSSIBLE ORDER OF SERVICE

1. Call to observance (1 Cor. 11) may include reading one of the biblical accounts; brief instruction on meaning, warning, call to self- examination and confession (Silent prayer)
2. Removal of cloth (optional)
3. Words on Bread
4. Distribution of Bread
5. Joint eating
6. Prayer of Thanksgiving
7. Words on the Cup
8. Distribution of Cup (Luke 22:14-20)
9. Joint drinking
10. Prayer of thanksgiving
11. Replace the cloth
12. Hymn (optional)
13. Benediction.

Review and Discussion

- 1) What are the two ordinances observed by Baptists and most Christians?
- 2) Mention three modes that has been used by the church in Baptism?
- 3) According to the Greek interpretation of the word 'Baptizo'. What is the right mode of Baptism?
- 4) Define baptism as a covenant?
- 5) Who should administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper?
- 6) What is the purpose of the Lord's Supper?
- 7) Mention four names given to the Lord's Supper?
- 8) How important is the Lord's Supper to the body of Christ?
- 9) What is transubstantiation?
- 10) Define consubstantiation?

Lesson 3 – Funeral Service

- I. **BACKGROUND**; All societies conduct some ceremony in response to physical death. Christian funerals focus attention on Christ and the biblical promises.
- II. **PURPOSE**
 - A. Help us grieve – Grief is a normal reaction which helps us adjust to loss.
 1. Basic stages of grief – Shock, denial, anger, acceptance. It is a process which helps us return to emotional health.
 2. Expression – Grief is expressed in different ways among individuals and cultures.
 - a. Biblical – weeping / wailing, professional mourners, tearing of cloths and sack cloths and ashes (2 Sam. 3:31)
 - b. Western Culture – attendance at funeral, wear black cloths, less public emotions.
 - c. African Culture – wailing and more public emotions, also cut hair, no greetings (in some cases), wearing distinctive cloths, head scarfs by women half covering the head, wearing of Chitenge material etc.
 - B. Helps us express sympathy and respect – This is expressed through attendance, flowers, foods, visit, embrace etc.
 - C. Helps us accept loss – The planning and participation in the funeral, aids in recognition of death.
 - D. Helps us remember positive times – these are recalled and shared at funeral.
 - E. Helps us find hope – Hope is confident that God will do what He promises. Emphasize forgiveness of sin, eternal life, God’s presence, resurrection, reunion. Explain promises and how to receive them.
 - F. Help us prepare for death – reminds us that life is uncertain and short.
 - G. Help the living not the dead – funeral service has no effect on the spiritual condition of the deceased. Avoid unbiblical statements on the eternal destiny of the deceased.
- III. **IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS**
 - A. Gathering – Meet with the family to establish relationship; Gain some personal information for use in the service; pray for the family before leaving.
 1. Names of the deceased - (right pronunciation) plus nick names, also family members
 2. Faith – Spiritual background and beliefs of the deceased – opportunity to witness.
 3. Memory – how they would want to be remembered, “If he could say one more thing, what would it be?”
 4. Death – information on the death, including date, shows concern and may or may not be used.
 5. Work – Job of the deceased, accomplishments, distinctive phrases.
 6. Service – suggested parts of the service (Scriptures, Hymns, Tributes, speeches).

- B. The Gospel – always present the gospel in an appropriate way.
1. Parts of the Gospel – Christ as the son of God; died for sins; raised; and ascended to heaven.
 2. Audience – normally will have lots people, un-churched.
 3. Transition – move from statements on the deceased to Gospel. For a Christian – “if she would speak now, she would say....” Be positive, encouraging; don’t condemn or blame.
 4. Language – use simple terms such as ‘life forever in heaven, peace with God’. Avoid ‘Church jargons’ such as sovereignty, trinity, sanctification etc.
 5. Duration – difficulty time. Be brief (20 – 30 minutes)
 6. Invitation - Extending invitation to profess faith in Christ is acceptable, especially if family requests. Generally, it is better to present the Gospel and look for an opportunity to follow up.

C. Difficult Funerals

1. Non-Christian – Aid the living not the deceased, speak of God’s promises, less of deceased.
 - a. Honesty – be honest, avoid false praise, don’t condemn to hell.
 - b. Opportunity – point out that all have opportunity to know God; the congregation has the opportunity now; God’s judgement is fair, gracious.
 - c. Emphasize – the uncertainty of life (James 4:14) and the certainty of heaven. Describe heaven and its blessings (Rev 21:1-5).
2. Suicide – provide comfort to the living not condemnation to the deceased.
 - a. Death – whether cause of death is mentioned is up to the family
 - b. Sin – the Bible does not describe suicide as unpardonable sin (1 Corinthians 3:17 – “destroy” normally means corrupt; “Temple of God” means congregation – not body)
3. AIDS
 - a. Comfort – provide comfort to the living, whether cause of death is mentioned is up to the family.
 - b. Judgement – AIDS is not always a judgement, can be caused through blood transfusion or other ways apart from immorality.
4. Tragic Death – Children or Murder
 - a. Comfort – don’t try to answer all the questions, but give comfort.
 - b. Children – Jesus called children to Himself and still does (Matt 19:13-14). Bible suggests that Children enter heaven (2 Sam 12:22-23).

IV. **FORM**

A. Basic elements of the funeral

1. Scripture reading – use only those appropriate scriptures to the deceased and the audience. Always appropriate: Psalm 23, Ps 27:7 -14; Ps 46. For Believers: John 14: 1ff; John 11:21 – 27; 1 Cor. 15. For devout believers: Psalm 116:15 “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints”.
2. Obituary – Brief biography of the deceased to be prepared and read by the family or minister: optional
3. Eulogy – statement (Tribute) about the deceased by friends or family. The value is debated; optional.
4. Prayers

5. Sermon – present the Gospel, comfort the living. Be brief.
- B. Location – Service may be held at Church, at Hospital mourners' shelter or at graveside. Follow the family wishes.
- C. Possible order
 1. Call to worship (Prov. 3:5-6; Ps 27 etc)
 2. Opening Hymn
 3. Prayer
 4. Old Testament reading (Ps 103: 11-18; Ps 23 ; Ps 27:7-14; Ps 46). For devout Christians Ps 116:15).
 5. Music (optional)
 6. Obituary
 7. New Testament reading: for believer-(John 14:1ff; John 11:21-27; 1 Cor. 15)
 8. Sermon & Prayer
 9. Body viewing (optional)
 10. Departure to the cemetery.

At the Graveside

1. New Testament reading (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 21:1-5)
2. Lord's Prayer
3. Committal
4. Burial
5. Vote of thanks
6. Benediction
7. Dismissal

V. AFRICAN CONTEXT

- A. Functional equivalent – unchristian traditional practices should be avoided. However, seek to meet the same need with a Christian practice.

Review and Discussion

- 1) What is the biblical view of death?
- 2) Mention four purposes of a funeral service?
- 3) What is the focus of a Christian funeral service?
- 4) Does the funeral service have an effect on the spiritual condition of the deceased?
- 5) What is meant by an obituary?
- 6) What are some expressions of grieving?
- 7) What are the four stages in the grieving process?
- 8) Define the term 'Eulogy'?
- 9) How do people express sympathy and respect when a funeral occurs?
- 10) How does the Pastor gather information about the deceased person that may be used during the funeral service?
- 11) Is it a must that the bereaved family should always disclose the cause of death?

Lesson 4 – Wedding Ceremony

I. PURPOSE

1. To meet the legal and biblical requirements of a genuine marriage.
2. To provide the setting for acts and words of commitment between bride and groom.
3. To promote understanding and establishment of a Christian family.
4. To lead all people present in an act of worship.

II. IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

1. Character

- a. Biblical – the ceremony must be composed of biblical teachings on marriage, though many wedding practices are based upon custom and tradition. All customs and traditions must be consistent with the Christian teaching. If Christian practices are not acceptable, advise a circular wedding.
- b. Worship - The wedding ceremony should not be a performance to impress others, but it should be a service of worship which:
 - Reveals God
 - Responds to God
 - Reaches out to non – Christians
- c. Family – include the biblical understanding of the family. Use biblical passages in the marriage service and / or sermon.
- d. Commitment – Primary attention should be given to the commitment; the ceremony provides opportunity for words and acts of commitment in a public setting. These should be the centre of attention.

2. Elements

Discuss with the couple before the ceremony. This may be modified.

- a. Call to worship: emphasize the worship purpose (Ps 9:1-2; Ps 118:24)
- b. Affirmation of Marriage: declare the couples love and desire to share their commitment before others. Explain the biblical origin and understanding of Marriage (Genesis 2:21-24; Ruth 1:16-17)
- c. Blessings by Parents – optional, express approval by Parents as the child leaves parents for the mate (Gen 2:24). Often, Bride's Father responds to the minister's question of who presents the Bride.
- d. Marriage Sermon – optional. Appropriate for larger, longer wedding. Emphasize the Christian view of Marriage.
- e. Vows – begin with a few words about the importance of these vows in a strong marriage. Couple may write out the vows. Encourage couple to repeat the vows in full, in short phrases following the minister. Often begin with a public action by couple to signal their desire to exchange vows (e.g. joining hands and stepping forward).
- f. Ring ceremony – not a biblical element but useful and popular. Words about the ring as a symbol can include:
 - Circle without end like the love God gives
 - Rare, precious metal like this love and
 - Gift – love can only be given
 - Grows more precious with age.

Encourage the couple to repeat the words of commitment.

- g. Prayer of blessings – this will be done by the Minister or someone else; emphasize commitment and God’s aid in the Marriage. May use a biblical benediction (Numbers 6:24-26; 1 John 1:3)
- h. Declaration of Marriage –read in full using names.
- i. Other elements – these may be inserted as needed. Congregational hymns; repetition of Lord’s Prayer by the congregation; musical selection.

III. FORM

- A. Pre- Marital Counselling – these are counselling sessions with the couple before the wedding ceremony.
 - 1. Value
 - a. Ministry – this allows establishment of a relationship to encourage further ministry.
 - b. Short notice – discourage requests for weddings at short notice.
 - c. Discussions – allows discussion of important issues for marriage and ceremony.
 - 2. Subjects –
 - a. Roles – of men and women in the home; use biblical passages as they relate to the local custom.
 - b. Plans – discuss vocational and educational plans for each person; are they in agreement on further education and Jobs
 - c. Finances – discuss current income and budget planning ; biblical stewardship
 - d. Religious beliefs – are they both Christians? If not 1 Cor. 7; if different churches, where will they worship and train their children? Evangelistic opportunity.
 - e. Children – discuss expectations and plans for children; the role of any existing children; educational and vocational plans
 - f. Legal issues – traditional and government licences, get information on your region; property ownership.
 - g. Wedding ceremony – discuss elements of the wedding ceremony; any changes must be consistent with the biblical teaching and nature of worship.
- B. Rehearsal
 - 1. Value – large weddings benefit from a rehearsal involving all the participants.
 - 2. Direction – someone you choose should direct the rehearsal as already planned.
 - 3. Elements – practice the ceremony including entrance, exit, vows, and music.
 - 4. Reminder – concerning bringing licence, rings, arrival time.
- C. Ceremony
 - 1. Time – be there early.
 - 2. Direction – give simple, clear directions to each person as the ceremony continues. For statements to be repeated by couple, use short phrases. Speak clearly.
 - 3. Attention – should be upon the couple, not the minister.

Review and Discussion

- 1) What is the biblical view of marriage?
- 2) What is the value of pre-marital counselling?
- 3) What are some subjects to be covered in pre-marital counselling?
- 4) Mention four purposes of the marriage service?
- 5) What do you understand by the phrase 'Christian Marriage'?
- 6) What do you consider as the 'place' or 'role' of the husband and the wife in the home?
- 7) What do you understand are some legal aspects of marriage?
- 8) What is a vow?
- 9) How important is a marriage vow in a marriage relationship?
- 10) What is the purpose of a wedding ring?

Lesson 5 – Ordination, Child Dedication Services

INTRODUCTION

The church has always seen the need to set aside persons and objects for use by God. Most common dedications is blessing food before a meal. Food is dedicated that we may see it as God's gift and its benefits used to serve God.

I. ORDINATION CEREMONY

DEFINITION:

- A. Term – The term 'Ordain' used in Titus 1:5 and 1Timothy 2:7, means to commission, Consecrate or dedicate. The meaning is shaped by the task of those ordained.
- B. Object – Always refers to persons and not things
- C. Ceremony – It's a public act in which the church identifies and initiates persons into a specific Ministry, usually Pastoral Ministry.

BACKGROUND

- A. Old Testament Background
 - 1. Priests – the Priests were identified and initiated through anointing. They then served as mediators between God and the People.
 - 2. Council – of elders was formed to assist Moses in leading the Hebrew people (Numbers 11:16-17)
- B. New Testament Practice
 - 1. Mediators – Christ alone is shown in the NT as mediator between God and Man. In the Book of Hebrews, He is the High Priest (Hebrews 4: 14 -16, 1Timothy 2:5). Therefore, Christians do not have priests who serve as a mediator between God and mankind today.
 - 2. Leaders – Set apart by ordination were to serve the Church. Acts of ordination included laying on of hands as a sign of calling the Holy Spirit's blessing upon those ordained.
- C. Early Church Practices
 - 1. Simple – Early records of ordination showed it to be a simple setting apart of someone for a particular function. Later became more elaborate.
 - 2. Public – Earliest record of public ordination ceremonies comes from the third century.
 - 3. Offices – By the third century, offices requiring ordination had been restricted to deacons, Presbyters (Elders), priests and Bishops. All were subject to the Bishop.
 - 4. Priests – eventually became the one to lead in the sacraments. Their ordination came to be seen as an act of special empowerment and not simply initiation.

PURPOSE

Baptists view ordination as an act in which the church identifies those called by God and commissions them for public ministry. This may follow granting of a licence which allows early training.

BIBLICAL TEACHING

A. OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

Note: The Old Testament practice of ordaining priests in Israel is useful for background understanding, but it does not guide the practice or meaning of ordination in a New Testament church.

1. Aaron – Leviticus 8 and 9 record the ordination of Aaron and his sons by Moses. These chapters provide the basis for the meaning of ordination.
 - a. Congregation – The Congregation of Israel was present; today the congregation gives authority to ordain and should be present.
 - b. Duration – Aaron's ordination was a seven day process, so ordination today should not be rushed.
 - c. Guidance – Aaron was given The Urim and Thumim for guidance, as those that are being ordained today are given a Bible and a Hymn book.
 - d. Benediction – Aaron gave the closing benediction, so the ordained does the same today.

B. NEW TESTAMENT GUIDANCE

The Bible in Acts 13:1-3 records the ordination of Paul and Barnabas in Antioch.

Guidance for ordination in this passage include:

- a. Councils – those who acted are the Pattern for Ordination councils.
- b. God's initiative in the process is stressed.
- c. Activity – Involved was the laying on of hands, related to earlier OT, anointing of priests and Kings by prophets. This is the precedent for allowing only ordained persons to participate in the laying on of hands (No biblical command).
- d. Task – Paul was ordained to a specific task, so ordination is normally done only for those selected for a specific ministry.

C. THEOLOGY

1. Sacramental Approach – some churches declare that ordination is a sacrament which actually grants special grace or power. Such power is usually traced back to the original apostles (Apostolic succession). The power is passed on through the laying on of hands.
2. Functional approach – Baptists declare that the ordained is initiated into ministry and blessed. However, no special power is granted.

FORM

A. PREPARATION

1. Beginning – Congregation selects a person for the ministry task. The congregation invites local Pastors to form an ordination council or they contact an Association ordination council; or the congregation asks another church to ordain the candidate.
2. Interrogation – the council meets, elects officers and questions the candidates on:
 - a. Conversion Experience
 - b. Call to ministry
 - c. Views on the Church and other Bible doctrines
 - d. Relation to denomination

3. Report – The council decides whether to recommend ordination, reports to the Church during the service, participates in the ordination service.
4. Finish – If the council was formed by the ordaining congregation, the council disbands.
5. Note – the council acts only with the authority from the congregation.

B. POSSIBLE ORDER OF WORSHIP

1. Call to worship (Joshua 1:4-10)
2. Hymn
3. Old Testament scripture
4. Greetings and authorisation
5. Host Pastor
6. Ordination council report and recommendation
7. Church secretary / Pastor leads in vote (Optional)
8. Charge to the candidate (Encouragement)
9. Charge to the Church (To support those ordained)
10. Ordination prayer
11. Laying on of hands
12. Presentation of the Bible and Hymn Book
13. Benediction by the ordained

II. CHILD / PARENT DEDICATION BACKGROUND

This is relatively a new practice, observed by churches which do not practice infant Baptism; do not believe that Parents can claim the Kingdom of God for their children; they do see the need for parents to make a commitment to raise children in the Christian home; do see the need to ask God's blessings upon the child.

A. PURPOSE

1. Parent dedication – announcement and acceptance of parental responsibility to establish a Christian home.
2. Child dedication – Appeal for God's blessings and reign over the life of the child.
3. Church dedication – announcement and acceptance of the church's responsibility towards parents and the child.

B. BIBLICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Value - The service does not provide salvation for the child until maturity. God's guidance provides this (2 Samuel).
2. Eternity – The service does not provide salvation for the child for eternity. We trust that the child will make a Personal decision when mature.

C. ELEMENTS

1. Prayer – A prayer by the minister or others asks God's blessings upon the parents and the child.
2. Scripture – Scriptures which include a theology of children (Luke 18:15-17), a theology of Parenting (Ephesian 6:1-4)

3. Response – congregation can respond by repeating words of commitment and support

D. FORM

1. Age – any age is acceptable until the time of personal decision. This allows participation of new converts and new members
2. Frequency – scheduled as often as necessary to avoid a single service including many families. This makes the ceremony less meaningful for the individual.
3. Personal – make the service personal. Introduce the parents and the child.

E. SUGGESTED ORDER

Opening Prayer
Scripture reading
Hymn
Homily
Prayer to dedicate the child / Parent
Repeated words of commitment by parent / church
Hymn and hand of fellowship
Closing prayer

Review and Discussion

- 1) What does the term 'ordain' mean from the original Greek language?
- 2) Mention four areas that the ordination council will interview the candidate(s) for ordination?
- 3) What is the purpose of the installation service of a minister of God word?
- 4) Define child dedication?
- 5) Mention three purposes of child dedication?
- 6) How important is child dedication to the Lord?
- 7) Give examples of the objects that can be dedicated to the Lord for religious usage?

CHRISTIAN CEREMONIES

FINAL EXAM

SECTION A: (CIRCLE THE CORRECT ANSWER)

1. Which statement is true about Christian ceremonies?
 - a. Ceremonies express worship clearly and naturally.
 - b. Ceremonies remind participants of some truth.
 - c. Ceremonies relate important moments in life to God and Christ.
 - d. All of the above

2. What are the dangers of symbols in worship?
 - a. Symbols may become idols
 - b. Symbols may take the place of what they represent.
 - c. Symbols do not guarantee personal fellowship with God.
 - d. All of the above.

3. What are the two ordinances observed by Baptists and most Christians?
 - a. Baptism and Lord's Supper
 - b. Christmas and New Year
 - c. Prayer and Fasting
 - d. All of the above

4. Which of the following is the purpose of the Lord's Supper?
 - a. To remember Christ's Death and resurrection
 - b. To promote Christ's Presence in Worship
 - c. To proclaim the Lord's Second Coming
 - d. All of the above

5. What is transubstantiation?
 - a. A belief that Christ's death is literally repeated and the elements give grace of forgiveness to the believers.
 - b. A belief that Christ's Physical body and blood is present with the elements.
 - c. A belief that Christ is present in the elements spiritually but not physically.
 - d. None of the above

6. Which one is not a purpose for a funeral service?
 - a. It helps us to grieve
 - b. It helps us to express sympathy and respect
 - c. It helps us remember positive times with the deceased
 - d. It helps us to have a decent meal at the funeral home.

7. Three of the following are the purposes of a wedding service. Which one is **not**?
 - a. To lead all people present in an act of worship
 - b. To promote understanding and establishment of a Christian family
 - c. To meet the legal and biblical requirements for a genuine marriage.
 - d. To show off to all friends and relatives who are not yet married.

8. What does the term 'ordination' mean from the original Greek language?
 - a. To commission
 - b. To Consecrate
 - c. To dedicate
 - d. All of the above.

9. There are various names given to the Lord's Supper. Which one is not?
 - a. Holy Communion
 - b. Eucharist
 - c. Mass
 - d. Passover

10. We glorify God in many ways. Which one is not a way to glorify God?
 - a. Confessing sins
 - b. Living an unrighteous life
 - c. Producing abundance of fruit.
 - d. Showing willingness to suffer

11. What is meant by 'God's glory?'
 - a. Something worth of praise or exaltation
 - b. Something of beauty or renown
 - c. Something brilliant
 - d. All of the above.

12. According to the New Testament scriptures, which mode of Baptism best describes the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ?
 - a. Pouring
 - b. Sprinkling
 - c. Immersion
 - d. Fusion

13. The wedding ceremony should not be a performance to impress others, but it should be a service which:
 - a. Reveals God
 - b. Responds to God
 - c. Reaches out to non-believers
 - d. All of the above

14. Why do we go to church?
 - a. To offer praise to God
 - b. To strengthen the church
 - c. To give witness to the world.
 - d. All of the above.

15. Three of the following are purposes of child dedication. Which one is **not**?
 - a. To call for God's blessings upon the child.
 - b. To appeal for God's reign over the life of the child.
 - c. To allow Parents to accept the responsibility to establish a Christian home.
 - d. To enable the child to be a Christian

SECTION B: (WRITE TRUE OR FALSE)

- 1)Symbols in Worship do not produce righteousness
- 2)Baptism cleanses people from all their sins.
- 3)Memorial service should focus attention only on God and not the dead.
- 4)A believer should not marry a non-believer.
- 5)Ordination means giving special power and anointing to the recipient.
- 6)The other term used for Lord's Supper is Eucharist.
- 7)The Passover meal was a meal of remembrance.
- 8)The funeral service helps us to prepare for death
- 9)Pre-Marital Counselling has no value to the couple getting married.

SECTION C: (MATCH THE FOLLOWING)

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| A. Transubstantiation | Difficult Funeral |
| B. Ordinance | Tribute or Statement about the deceased. |
| C. Suicide | Roman Catholic View of Lord's Supper |
| D. Obituary | Agreement |
| E. Ordination | Nearby. |
| F. Eulogy | Command |
| G. Covenant | Laying on of Hands |
| H. Eucharist | Brief Biography of the deceased. |
| I. Immanence | Far beyond |
| J. Transcendent | Lord's Supper |

CHRISTIAN CEREMONIES

FINAL EXAM – MASTER COPY

SECTION A: (CIRCLE THE CORRECT ANSWER)

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- 2) FALSE Baptism cleanses people from all their sins.
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SECTION C: (MATCH THE FOLLOWING)

