

# Oak Grove Church of Christ Newsletter - 2024.01.07

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## Sermon recordings

Click or type the short URL, or visit oakgrovecofc.org/Sermons.

**Speaker-AM:** Steve Helterbrand

**Title:** Kingdom, Church, Body

**Recording:**

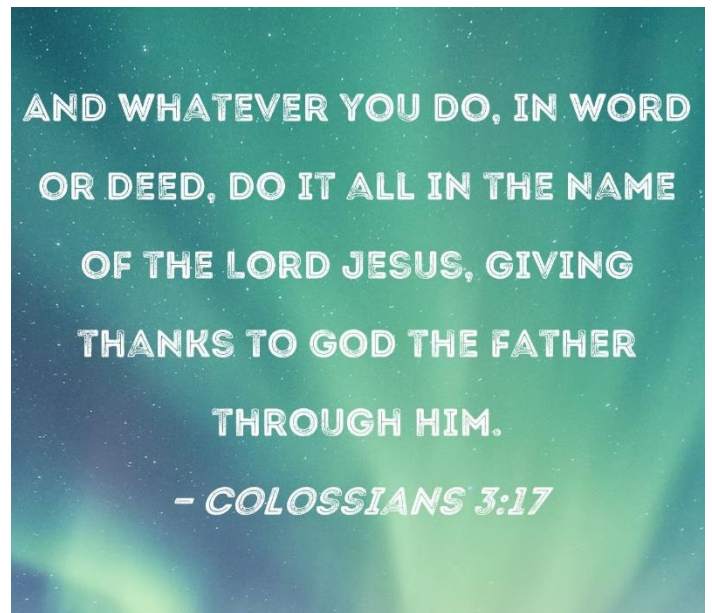
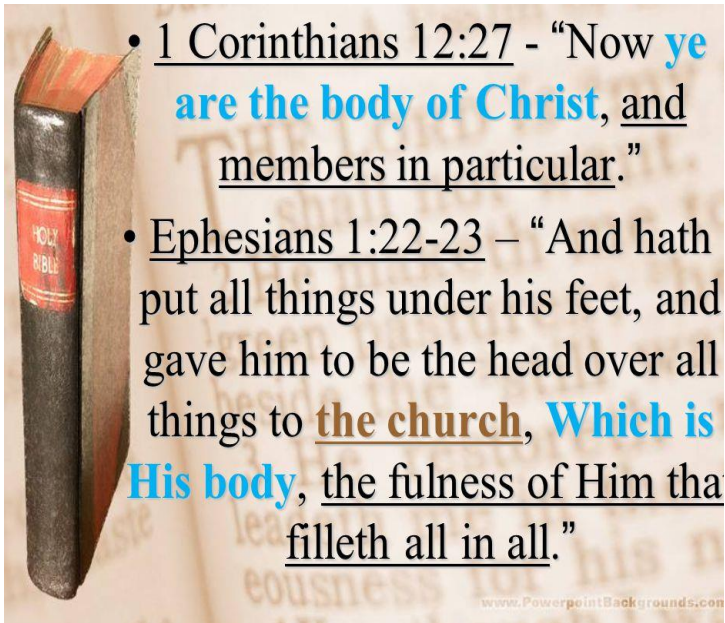
[oakgrovecofc.org/sermons/kingdom-church-body](http://oakgrovecofc.org/sermons/kingdom-church-body)

**Speaker-PM:** Kraig Benney

**Title:** Genuine Thankfulness

**Recording:**

[oakgrovecofc.org/sermons/genuine-thankfulness](http://oakgrovecofc.org/sermons/genuine-thankfulness)



### Things to Bring to Worship, 1/6/2024 by Mike Wilson

It's another Sunday morning, and you are fighting to get everything and everyone ready on time. The kids are screaming, and someone is honking the horn. Most families know the feeling. As you come staggering to the car at the last second, did you forget anything? Do you have a checklist of things you must bring to church?

Most of us would do well to ponder every day, and especially every Lord's Day, what it means to worship God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. If we listen to the word of the Lord reverently, we will find many reasons to be humbled at the very thought of the awesome grandeur of the One who is the object of our adoration. We will not approach Him lightly or frivolously. And when time for worship approaches, whether it is collective or private, we must take certain attitudes with us to His heavenly throne.

#### **A Willing Spirit**

King David wrote, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'" (Psalms 122:1). The psalmist's attitude stands in stark contrast to that of the begrudging priests addressed in the book of Malachi. God charges them with despising His name, offering blemished animals, and saying to themselves, "My, how tiresome it is!" (Malachi 1:6, 13-14). Amos rebukes the Israelites of the mid-7th century BC because of a similar disdain for worship. They couldn't wait for their religious obligations to be satisfied so that they could get on with business: "When will the new moon be over so that we may buy grain, and the Sabbath, that we may open the wheat market, to make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, and to buy with dishonest scales...?" (Amos 8:5). If you have any inclination to be spiritually minded, read Psalms 63 and make this prayer your own. With these words alive in your heart, you will never be able to permit the service of God to degenerate into a burdensome chore again. Worship time should invoke a spiritual adventure: "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law" (Psalms 119:18). Going through the motions without heart involvement produces worship that is "vain" (Matthew 15:8-9).

## **A Reconciled Heart**

Jesus says, “If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering” (Matthew 5:23-24). If there is hatred and strife in your heart as you look horizontally down the pew, how can there be love in your heart as you look vertically up toward God? (I John 4:20-21). Dietrich Bonhoeffer comments, “If we despise our brother, our worship is unreal, and it forfeits every divine promise. When we come before God with hearts full of contempt and unreconciled with our neighbors, we are, both individually and as a congregation, worshipping an idol” [The Cost of Discipleship, p. 144].

## **Holy Hands**

“Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension” (I Timothy 2:8). Although Paul’s words might have implications for a common posture of prayer for early Christians, they say more about the posture of the heart. “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (James 4:8). There will always be hypocrites in God’s church, but their prayers are not heard. How can any child of God devote himself to filth on Saturday night and then sing “Purer in Heart, O God” on the Lord’s Day morning? It is an abomination! We are all sinners, but God has graciously given us the opportunity to repent and confess our sins (I John 1:8-9) rather than continue in the lie (I John 1:6).

## **Absolute Submission**

True worship must be “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). It not only must express the genuine intents of the heart, but it must accord with “reality, which men grasp on the basis of revelation” [Dictionary of New Testament Theology, p. 891]. God will look “to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word” (Isaiah 66:2). Every true worshiper experiences inexpressible joy when he praises God for the marvelous blessings He has so graciously given to us. However, this joy does not rely on artificial stimulation or anything external that is intended to induce a certain mood. It comes from trust in God and hope in His precious promises. These promises are made only to those who are willing to humbly follow His word, as laid down in the New Testament (John 8:31-32). This is why we do not burn incense, dance, clap, or blow trumpets in our church assemblies, even if all these things were done in the Old Testament period. The Old Law was only a shadow of what we now have in Christ (Hebrews 10:1; John 1:17). We are now obligated to remain within the parameters of the New Testament, as mediated through the apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2; Acts 15:24).

When you worship God, do you bring these things with you?