

## **Episode 32. "The Power of Spiritual Worship."**

**Tuesday, March 29, 2022. 38 Minutes Long.**

*A follow-on to Episode 31, this episode continues discussing the unusual Spirit-guided supernatural worship that the Early Christians experienced – and that today's Christians should experience too. John and Owen discuss this issue boldly, and give examples from Early Christian writing and Christian writing today. This episode should not be missed*

### **John (00:00):**

John Shields opens the episode by saying:

### **John (00:12):**

Well hello, friends! This is Episode 32 in our bi-weekly series of the "Saving Christianity" podcast. We're the podcast for Christians who want to return to the same kind of peace, healing, and hope that the first Christians had when Christianity was founded. And we're coming to you from Christian Family Online, and we are bringing you a new episode every-other-Tuesday. I'm your host, John Shields. I'm here in the studio with our co-host, Owen Allen, and our producer, Shannon Wolfe. And today, this is the *second* of our two episodes that tell you how the Early Christians worshiped, and tell you why the "design" they used for worship was the *reason* they were so Spiritual.

### **John (01:00):**

Now, our previous episode – that was Episode 31 – talked about the problem of *unspiritual* worship in today's Christianity. And it told how the improper *design* that Christians use for worship today is the reason they don't grow much Spiritually. So this second episode has the title, "The Power of Spiritual Worship." That's ... this is very exciting, "The Power of Spiritual Worship." And in this episode, we're going to talk about how the design of original Christian worship created so much Spiritual power, and how we can use that same design today to get the same results. And so, this is one of the most important episodes we've ever recorded. So let's bring in our co-host, Owen Allen, and let's get started. Welcome to episode 32!.

### **Owen (02:02):**

Thank you, John! I'm happy to be here in the studio always, talking with you, our intrepid producer, Shannon, and all of our worldwide friends. As you said, John, the previous episode we just recorded two weeks ago told *why* today's worship design leaves Christians *unspiritual*. Think about (it), that's a terrible thing. We said the reason is that if Christians worship without the *proper* design for worship, they won't grow Spiritually. And that's why the Gallup polls say and show that today's average Christian is no more Spiritual than a *non-Christian*.

**Owen (02:48):**

But John, listen: It's God's will for Christians to be *Spiritual*. It's not God's will for Christians to be *unspiritual*. And the only way Christians can be Spiritual is by worshipping Him in Spirit, and in truth. And that means Christians must worship God with a design ... a worship design, a worship structure ... that allows Spiritual experiences to develop. Think about it. But sadly, today's worship design *doesn't* do that. So this episode tells our friends how to worship with the original Christian design that permits – that allows, that empowers – Spiritual experiences.

**John (03:41):**

Yeah, Owen. And I was thinking about that. You know the saying, "You don't know what you don't know!" And I'm not sure people have ever really thought about how the actual design, or structure, as it relates to Spiritual worship. So I am fascinated. In our previous episode, you may recall, we compared *today's* worship design to the *original* Christian worship design, which is ... which we've been trying to do since Episode One. And we highlighted the *differences* between the two.

**John (04:15):**

And for our friends who haven't heard Episode 31 yet, here's a summary of it. We said that the *original* Christians, their worship design was – listen to these words:

**It was spontaneous. It was informal. It was participating. It was a small group design that met in private homes. And in that context, it *permitted* the free flow of Spiritual emotions, gifts, and experiences by the worshiper.**

And now, to complete the comparison, Owen, why don't you give our friends a summary of *today's* worship design and that congregations are using.

**Owen (05:02):**

Great, John. Glad to. And here it is. And we'll notice this is very, very *different* from what you just said. Now today, you go to worship ... go to a worship meeting, or so-called worship "service" ... anywhere in the country and just sit and look at the *structure* of it. And you'll see that it's:

**Pre-planned. Everything that's happening is pre-planned. It's very formal. It's an "observing" structure. The people are spectators. They're observers. It's a large group design that meets in large buildings. And the design, by its formality and by its structure does *not* permit – does not easily permit, does not allow, the free flow of Spiritual gifts, and emotions, and experiences by the worshipers.**

**Owen (05:57):**

And so, John, we can see that how very *different* those designs are. Compare spontaneous to pre-planned. Informal to formal. Participating to observing. Small group to large group. And go right through the steps. And what is the *big* difference between the two? And here it is:

**Too much human control.**

**Owen (06:23):**

In other words, the big difference is that today's worship structure has too much human control. And that's not a good thing. That's not a proper thing. Because, listen, one of Christianity's founding principles is this: *The Holy Spirit never overrides human will power*. A lot of people have never thought that one through. The Holy Spirit never overrides human will power. And so here's the way I like to say it and think about it:

**"The Holy Spirit is the greatest gentleman in the universe. He never *interrupts* when someone else is talking."**

**John (07:09):**

That's right. And that's a big, big difference. The Early Christians let the Holy Spirit *guide* their worship. And today we allow humans to *plan* our worship. And that use of *human control* is a biggie.

**Owen (07:25):**

Well it *is*, John. But it's also a problem and a challenge for us. Because if you tell Christians today that they need to start worshiping without – without – their traditional human controlled design, they look very uncomfortable. And they say, "But how do we do *that*? We don't know *how* to worship without a bulletin ... and a choir ... and announcements ... and an offering ... and a sermon ... and all the rest of it. We don't know what to *do*."

**John (08:00):**

Yeah, we've both heard that a lot. But that's because Christians have worshiped with the human control design since the Fourth Century. And that's all we've known. And now it's hard to imagine – outside of *that* box – any other way to do it, any other way to worship.

**Owen (08:22):**

And boy, John. That is a tragedy. Think about this.

**John (08:26):**

For sure!

**Owen (08:26):**

Many, many, many Christians will worship in this human controlled design their whole lives, and they'll never know the peace, and the healing, and the hope, and the miracles that they missed.

**John (08:43):**

Yeah, and we've always ... we'll always have the human controlled design. It's too entrenched in our culture. It's too embedded in our society to be changed. And they can't be uprooted. And we don't want to uproot it. Because some Christians are content with it. And they're comfortable with it. And don't want to change. So when you think about it like that, *where* do we go?

**Owen (09:14):**

Well, all that's true, you know, John. But on the other hand, let's look at the flip-side. This podcast was designed and created ... and we go to the trouble to record every two weeks ... because it's designed for Christians who *want* what's called the – quotes – "Deeper Walk." It's for Christians who *want* what's called – quotes – "Something More." It's for Christians who *want* more Spiritual emotions, and gifts, and experiences in their everyday lives.

**John (09:51):**

Yeah, okay. But for our friends who want the "Deeper Walk." Owen, let's tell them the next *step*. Let's talk about how to start *finding* it.

**Owen (10:02):**

Yeah, that's a biggie. Well, I guess to start, John, in our book, *Saving Christianity*, and in this podcast, we talk about two ways – two *different* ways – for our friends to start worshipping in the original Christian design. And here are those two ways:

**Number One.** First, if our friends *don't* actively attend a Christian congregation at this point in time, they can form a small group for Early Christian style worship that's separate from, and independent of, any other congregation. And that's very common, and many Christians do that.

**Owen (10:46):**

**But Number Two.** Secondly, if our friends *do* actively attend a Christian congregation, they can form a small group for Early Christian worship that's affiliated with that congregation. But – and it's a big *but* – the small group cannot be humanly controlled by that congregation. So we call that a "Para-Group." And

that means one that operates alongside a congregation but is not controlled by that congregation.

**John (11:24):**

Gotcha. But Owen, what about our friends who might be asking themselves, "But is all that *worth it?*" In other words, they might be wondering whether the time and the energy needed to form a small group is really worth it. After all, I'm sure that many of our friends have never seen Spiritual worship. And so it's hard to imagine what it would feel like, or what would happen in it, what would that actual experience be.

**Owen (11:59):**

You know, John, that is absolutely true. And it's a little bit scary. I know a time in my life when I'd never seen it and couldn't imagine what it would be like. But here's a good point. We *do* have two records. Our friends do have *two* records telling what it feels like and what happens to have Spiritual worship. The first record, obviously, is the letters that the Early Christians wrote. And we call those today the New Testament. And then, the second record is the writings of Christians today who have experienced Spiritual worship. And a good example of that is our book, *Saving Christianity*. As far as I know, it's the best present day record of Spiritual worship that I know about.

**John (12:55):**

Yeah, okay. Then let's give our friends some examples of Spiritual worship. And one of my favorites is in the New Testament. It's in the record of what happened to two individuals, Paul and Silas. They were in the Turkish city of Thyatira ("thigh-uh-TIRE'-uh"). Paul and Silas were falsely imprisoned, and they were chained to the floor of their cell. And here's what happened next. I just want to read part of their story from the new Testament. And this is what it says:

"About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God. And suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken and all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. And the jailer called for lights, rushed in, and he fell trembling before Paul and Silas. And he asked them, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' And they replied, 'Well, believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and all your family.' And the jailer took them and washed their wounds. And immediately he and all his family were saved. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them. And he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God, he and his whole family."

**Owen (14:29):**

Wow. You know, John, that is a beautiful story. It's one of my favorites, too. But you know, while we're talking to our friends here, let's look at two *lessons* in that story that we would tend to overlook, just reading through the excitement of it. First, Paul and Silas were *singing*.

And second, their singing produced a *miracle*. So the first lesson is that the original Christians worshiped by prayer and singing – but mostly by *singing*. We know that God rejoices over us with singing. We know that Jesus worshiped by singing. We know that the angels worship by singing. We know Paul and Silas worshiped by singing. So here's the principle in all of that: Spiritual worship is a special attitude of humility ... tenderness ... openness ... and sensitivity. And *singing* produces that special attitude. Let's say that again. Worship is prayer and singing – but mostly *singing*. And singing creates the attitude of humility... openness ... and sensitivity that Christians need for Spiritual worship and for experiencing miracles like Paul and Silas experienced.

**John (16:09):**

Yeah. So God sings. Jesus sings. The angels sing. And Paul and Silas sang. So today's Christians need to be comfortable with a spontaneous singing in order to worship in the Spirit. And Paul verified that when he told the Christians at Philippi, "We are the ones who *worship* in the *Spirit*." (Repeats.) So Owen, let's talk about the second lesson.

**Owen (16:45):**

Well, I think the second lesson in the Paul and Silas story is that their singing produced a *miracle*. Spiritual singing always produces wonderful supernatural miracles. That's the *power* that we're talking about in the title of this episode. Which you remember is, "The Power of Spiritual Worship." (Repeats.) And to the Early Christians, the word "power" (*dunamis* in Greek) didn't mean political power. Or military power. Or financial power. It meant the ability to have supernatural experiences. It meant the ability to express supernatural emotions, gifts, and experiences while you're worshipping.

**John (17:43):**

Yeah. So let's think about it this way. What if Paul and Silas had been *crying, and moaning, and feeling sorry for themselves* in their cell. Would God still have sent the miracle that released them? Well, we don't know. But what we *do* know is that their Spiritual singing opened the door for the miracle. And we do know – what we *do* know – is that Spiritual singing still opens the door for miracles today.

**Owen (18:17):**

You know, John, that's totally true. That's totally true. And let's say it again, to be sure our friends don't miss it. When Paul wrote about Spiritual worship in his letters ... people don't think about this ... he always emphasized *singing*. For example, we've got three letters here that he wrote to the Christians in three different cities. And here's what Paul wrote in those letters. These are excerpts from those letters in the paragraphs where he was talking about worship. And here's what he said:

**"When you meet in your small groups for worship, each one of you should contribute a hymn ... and you should speak to one another in psalms, and**

**hymns, and songs from the Spirit ... and you should encourage one another with psalms, and hymns, and songs from the Spirit ... singing to God with gratitude in your hearts."**

Wow. So Paul is saying that Spiritual worship is built on spontaneous *singing*. The kind of singing that's not based on rehearsals, having a trained voice, staying on key. It's a kind of singing that's based on that attitude we're talking about of humility ... tenderness ... openness ... and sensitivity. *That's* what produces Spiritual growth.

**John (19:56):**

Let's just recap. So worship, we're saying – or better yet, the *scripture* is saying – is spontaneous singing. And then enjoying the benefits, if you will: The Spiritual emotions, and gifts, and experiences that are produced when that singing releases the power of the Holy Spirit within us. But I think, Owen, it's time for another example of worshiping in the original Christian design. And this time, let's give our friends an example of how Christians use that original Early Christian design *today*.

**Owen (20:39):**

That's right, John. Because a lot of people may not realize that there are Christians around who are doing it the original way. So but, I think maybe the best way to do that, John, is to quickly read a passage from our book, *Saving Christianity*. And that's in Chapter 15 of the book. And interestingly, the title of Chapter 15 is "The Spirit-Guided Worship." (Repeats.) And what I'd like to do here, if our friends would like this, is to start on about Page 250 of the book and read a few paragraphs through part of Page 254. Most of this, John, that I want to emphasize here, is in a section of that chapter that has the title, "The Spirit-Guided Worship at the Smith's." That's a false family name. But we've got that here, "The Spirit-Guided Worship at the Smith's."

**Owen (21:50):**

So, let me open my copy of the book here, and I'll just start reading:

"Before we see our example, a word of caution. We said earlier that Christians should never come to worship with preconceive notions about what's going to happen. We said that true and free worship is participative, surprising, and spontaneous. Because of these principles – think about this now – no *two* Spirit-guided worship sessions are exactly alike. Isn't that interesting. The Holy Spirit never does exactly the *same* thing in exactly the *same* way. Under His guidance, some worship is mostly singing. Some is mostly teaching. Some is mostly testimonies, or prayer, or visions, or healings, or other gifts. Sometimes it's mostly a holy quietness. Most frequently, it's a mixture of *all* these things and *more*. So since the Holy Spirit guides each worship session differently, it's not possible to give a "*typical*" example of Spirit-guided worship.

**Owen (23:12):**

"So instead, let's create a generic snapshot. But, and this is important, let's base our snapshot on a small group that's made up of Spiritually *mature* Christians. Let's base it on a group

that worships with a true and free flow of Spiritual fruit, gifts, and experiences. And with all that agreed, let's now visit the fictitious Smith family, as they host a Spirit-guided small worship group in their home. And since small groups don't have names, the participants in this group will normally just refer to their *hosts*. They might say, 'I worship at the Smiths.' Or 'My group meets at the Smiths.' And so, let's turn to the Smiths now. And here we go. And this section is called, 'Spirit-Guided Worship at the Smiths.' And here's how it starts. As the time for worship approaches, the participants began arriving at the Smith's home. Much hugging, cheek-kissing, hand-shaking, shoulder-patting goes on as the participants gather, since they're expressing Spiritual behavior, what we call the supernatural love, joy, peace, *et cetera*, and since they're anticipating what the Spirit is going to do during worship.

**Owen (24:40):**

"So as the participants enter, they gather in a room where they can all sit in loose order facing one another on couches, arm chairs, folding chairs, and so forth. And listen, participants of all ages and both genders all sit together. Some might sit on the floor or on stools. Everybody's talking, laughing, joking, hugging, putting away coats and handbags as they settle down. And some of the participants may even carry dishes of food to the kitchen if the group plans a meal afterwards. But here's something interesting, John. As the time for worship draws near, the room grows *quieter*. Laughing and joking start to fade away. Some participants close their eyes, a smile on their faces, hands resting comfortably in their laps or on Bibles. Here and there participants may start to hum softly. A *stillness* gradually settles over the room like a warm blanket.

**Owen (25:56):**

"This feeling of peace means the Holy Spirit's ready to start guiding the worship. And here we go. The first thing that often happens is that one of the participants starts to sing. Remember, we talked about spontaneous singing. He or she does that because a melody is clear and his or her mind, meaning the song is being prompted by the Holy Spirit. The other participants join in and sing along. After a verse or two, the participants sense that the song is over and the singing automatically stops. But within seconds, another worshiper starts another song, and the group joins in again. The singing is relaxed and informal. There's no pressure to do anything but enjoy it. Some participants sit with their eyes closed and just listen. Others hum. Others keep time with a foot, or tapping a finger. Participants who don't know the words will soon learn them. In the meantime, they hum, or mouth the words.

**Owen (27:08):**

"There's no sheet music. There are no song books. There are no instruments. And the participants don't miss any of these and don't notice if anyone is off key. The group's entire focus is on God and on worshipping Him. There's that attitude we've been talking about. The singing is interspersed with scattered prayers and participants whispering, 'Thank you, Jesus.' 'Bless you, Jesus.' 'Praise you, Jesus.' There are also scattered moments of silence – we sometimes call these 'Holy Hushes' – that last a few seconds. And then the next song or prayer begins. As the worship continues, a *oneness-in-the-Spirit* develops that can't be understood in human terms.



Some of the participants start to sense – *think* about this now – what the Holy Spirit is going to do next. Some even sense what other participants are thinking.

**Owen (28:21):**

"For example, one participant might start a song and as he or she does, *other* participants might chuckle aloud. These other participants did that because they had *sensed* that this participant was going to start this song. And when the participant did, they couldn't hold back a happy chuckle. And so it continues like this. This oneness is possible because the participants are so *filled* with the Spirit that their thoughts have become supernaturally *unified*. As we saw in the apostle Paul's description of Spirit-guided worship earlier, the participants are not limited to songs and Bible verses. Spiritual gifts of all kinds are expressed, including visions, teachings, healings, revelations, prophecies, words of knowledge, words of encouragement, and all the rest. The Holy Spirit expresses these gifts *through* the participants and they're, you could say, *conduits* of His power. He knows what needs each participant has. He knows what needs the group has. And He uses the gifts of the Spirit in the same relaxed, informal, way that the singing and Bible readings were expressed.

**Owen (29:53):**

"And so, again, this continues as the participants have this oneness in the Spirit, understanding what one another are thinking about. All the many kinds of supernatural behavior are expressed as the worship continues. Here's something interesting. Some participants have *joint* experiences. Remember, they're mentally unified, so they have *joint* experiences in which several may receive different parts of a vision, and each one describes the part he or she sees. Or they may have different parts of a teaching, and each one tells the part that he or she has been given. But eventually, a time comes when the worship begins to lighten. It's almost as if that warm blanket is being *lifted*. This means that the Holy Spirit is bringing the worship to an end. And as this feeling spreads around the room, participants start to open their eyes, smile at one another and chuckle with happiness. They might glance around the room and nod to one another in satisfaction.

**Owen (31:11):**

"Frankly, some might wipe away tears – wipe away tears of happiness. Others may pat one another's arms or shoulders in pleasure. Soon the participants start to stand up and move around the room. And the Spirit-guided worship session is over. Sometimes, then the group has a meal or refreshments. So they may move to a kitchen or a dining room. Or if they're not having a meal, they may just relax and chat in the worship room. Either way – *either* way – worship at the Smith's is one of the most fulfilling, life-changing experiences any Christian can ever have. And John, I believe that *all* Christians are meant to have that kind of experience and are meant to worship *that* way."

**John (32:11):**

Yeah. I certainly agree with that, Owen. And that is a very moving story and passage that you just relayed to us from the book. I think our friends can hear from that the *power* of Spiritu-

al worship in the *original* Christian design. That's an example of what we've been talking about. And that passage also answers the question we asked earlier about whether it's "worth it" to form a small group for Spiritual worship. Because I think the answer is "Yes." It *is* worth it by all means. The incredible supernatural experiences produced by Spiritual worship are definitely worth having. Paul and Silas had supernatural experiences in the First Century, and *we* can have supernatural experiences in our century.

**Owen (33:08):**

Amen. And dare I say, we *should!* (Chuckles.)

**John (33:10):**

Yeah, for sure!

**Owen (33:11):**

Well, let me just say this to our friends that are listening, John. We've said this a couple of times. The last four episodes that we recorded are sort of a "package" with the same theme. All four of them are all about forming *small groups*, and having *Spiritual worship*. Episodes 29 and 30 are about small groups. And this Episode 31, and next Episode 32, are both of these all about Spiritual worship. And so, because small groups and Spiritual worship are *tied together*, you can't have Spiritual worship without a small group. That's hard, but that's a clear experience and a clear rule. It's necessary, then, to understand *both* of those. So we urge our friends to go to these four episodes on our website. Now, you'll mention this later, John. But (go to): **goSCpod.com** and read the transcripts while listening to the recordings. And repeat that process until you've really got these principles nailed down.

**John (34:29):**

Yeah, and don't forget to read – or re-read – Chapter 14, 15, and 16 in our book, *Saving Christianity*. They cover these same subjects, but give more details than we can cover here. But I think it's a good way to summarize these podcast episodes and these book chapters to realize that small groups and Spiritual worship are a "hub" around which Spiritual growth revolves. Small group worship is the "core" of the Early Christian Lifestyle and that all Christians are meant to live, even now.

**Owen (35:10):**

That's what I think, John. And that's what we experience and believe. And that's also why we're developing the new "retreat" experience that we've mentioned on these podcast episodes. We plan to launch that in mid-2022. We can't wait for that. And they can read about that new plan on our website's home page by clicking, "The Experience."

**John (35:39):**

Yeah, we think that our new retreat's going to be one of the most unusual Christian retreats ever offered. And by the way, Owen, why don't you mention the development needs we have for the retreat.

**Owen (35:52):**

Well, thank you, John, for reminding me. We mentioned this in one other episode, but our friends know this is our *second* year of the podcast. We're just deeply, deeply touched and moved that we were voted in 2021 as a "**TOP 50**" podcast by our directories. And what they probably may not know is that our friends can all make *tax-exempt donations* to support the podcast and the new retreat. You know, Christian Family Online was founded in the year 2000. It's a 501(c)(3) *public charity*. But we don't use advertising and fundraising campaigns. So we'd like to ask our friends to go to our website at **goSCpod.com**, and click the link labeled, "Donate Here." And we'd like them to make a tax-exempt donation to help us keep the website going, and help us keep developing our new retreat. Any amount they can donate will be very, very, greatly appreciated. But John, it's the "Tyranny of the Big Clock." I see it on the wall now, the hands moving, and it's telling us that our time is up for this episode.

**John (37:24):**

Yes, Owen. I see it, too. So friends, let me remind you that this is Episode 32. There is a script and a recording of it on our website at: goSCpod.com. That's G-O-S-C-P-O-D.com. It's very important to review the recordings and transcripts of these most recent two episodes.

**Owen (37:49):**

That's right, John. This has been a really big "shew," as the man used to say. And I can't wait, frankly, until we meet again here in the studio with all of our friends worldwide. I hope every one of them will be back, and will be listening for more exciting facts on how to live the life of a Spiritual Christian.

**Owen (38:12):**

But until then, this is Owen Allen ...

**John (38:15):**

... and this is John Shields, along with Shannon Wolfe, our producer ...

**Owen (38:19):**

... and we're all praying together: May the God of our fathers bless you, and keep you, and guide you, and protect, you until we meet again.

**Owen and John (38:33):**

Owen and John end the episode.

