

“Anyone who has worked in the ministries of worship leadership has faced the need to invest into the spiritual lives of those entrusted to one’s pastoral care. This gem of a book does that, and more. Wally Horton brings more than fifty years of pastoral experience as a church musician to these devotional writings that reflect on the theological, formational, spiritual, and practical issues and challenges each of us must face as we grow in our understanding and practice of true worship. That worship of God through his Son Jesus Christ in the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit embodies the truth, goodness, and beauty of God, inspiring worshippers into God’s mission in the world. Dr. Horton writes and lives with a profoundly nurturing heart of an encourager, along with a strong sense of inspiration built on a solid theological foundation. I highly recommend this book.”

—James R. Hart, *President*  
*The Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies*

“Windows on Personal Devotion and Prayer” from *Windows on Worship* reminds me of conversations with Wallace Horton when we worked side by side years ago in parish ministry. He reminds us that when worship leaders experience Jesus working in their personal lives through his Word every day of the week, they expect him to be in the house on Sunday morning, too. That’s how a leader’s quiet time with the Lord can change the culture of a church. Dr. Horton has given us a tool needed for our spiritual tool boxes.”

—John R. Denninger, *Bishop/District President*  
*Southeastern District, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*

“*Windows on Worship* collects the lifetime reflections of a thoughtful worship minister—a planner, teacher, leader, and fellow worshipper. Each of these small essays is like a drop of dew, long and quietly condensed, able to clear the worship air and water the worshipper’s heart.”

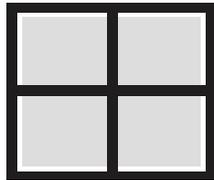
—Carla Waterman, *Founding Professor*  
*The Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies*

“*Windows on Worship* should be titled *Wisdom on Worship*. In an age when worship has been both rediscovered and cheapened at the same time, this book brings us an encounter with an authentic man of God who knows what it means to worship the living God with head, heart, and hands, and how to lead others as well.”

—John Yates II, *Rector Emeritus*  
*The Falls Church (Anglican), Falls Church, Va.*

# Windows on Worship

*52 Devotional Readings for Those Who Lead, Plan,  
and Engage in Worshiping God*



Wallace W. Horton

Foreword by Daniel Sharp

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## Webber Institute Books

Webber Institute Books (WIB) serves as the publishing arm of the Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies (IWS). The Institute was founded by the late Robert E. Webber for the purpose of forming servant leaders in worship renewal with the perspective that “the way to the future necessarily runs through the past.” IWS is the only school in North America dedicated solely to graduate education in biblical foundations, historical development, theological reflection, and cultural analysis of worship. Its vision emphasizes that its graduates will “participate intentionally in the story of the Triune God” to “bring renewal in the local and global church by shaping life and ministry according to that story.” In scope it is “gospel-centered in nature and ecumenical in outlook, embracing and serving the whole church in its many expressions and variations.” Those interested in obtaining further information concerning the Institute should consult [www.iws.edu](http://www.iws.edu).

Webber Institute Books are published by agreement with Good Faith Media ([www.goodfaithmedia.org](http://www.goodfaithmedia.org)) to provide a means for disseminating to the general public varying and differing views concerning the many aspects of worship and Christian life. The ideas expressed in these published materials wholly remain the views of the authors themselves and are not necessarily those of IWS or the publisher.

It is the prayerful concern of both IWS and WIB that the information contained in these works will stimulate further reflection and discussion. The results of such exchange of ideas hopefully will enhance worship renewal within the various segments of the Christian church. Moreover, in keeping with the hopes and dreams of Bob Webber, may all that is done through this publishing enterprise enable Christians to reject the narcissistic patterns prevalent in contemporary society and give the glory to God who sent Jesus, the Christ, to provide for human transformation and in concert provided humans with the divine triune presence through the Holy Spirit.

Robert Myers      James Hart  
General Editor      President

Gerald L. Borchert  
Founding Editor



## **Dedication**

*It is with deep affection and love that I dedicate this book to  
Dr. William Lock, professor emeritus at Biola University,  
who has taught me, guided me, loved me, and shown me what it means  
to be a man who loves Jesus and is a true worshiper of God.*

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## Foreword

Wally Horton has given all of those involved in the worship of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—a most practical and thought-stimulating gift. Be it pastor, worship leader, musician, worship committee, or lay person, there are many valuable insights into humankind’s most significant engagement on earth, the worship of God.

Reading *Windows on Worship* is very much like sitting down and having a one-on-one conversation with a seasoned master. In casual but substantial writing, Dr. Horton shares in a devotional manner, spiritual insights borne of many years of personal experience as to the nature of worship in congregational settings. There is no sugarcoating in his words: he’s a realist. Most of us worship leaders have had people come up to us after a worship service with “suggestions” as to where we can improve the service. In this book you will find wise advice: the author does not shy away from discussing difficult moments that occur from time to time as we are involved in worship.

In the 52 insightful essays covering five areas—personal devotion, worship theology and practice, preparing for worship, the church year and worship, and worship that transforms lives—we see the depth of Dr. Horton’s heart, his great love for the church, and his passion for worship. This combination makes for compelling reading. The book could be an excellent resource for a weekly study for a team of musicians, a choir, a worship committee, or source of topics for a pastoral staff discussion.

As a teaching church musician his whole life, Dr. Horton challenges those in worship leadership and everyone else to take those hours of corporate worship seriously, offering our very best. Rather than simply making a statement and moving on, he shares the importance of examining our worship perspective. For example, Horton addresses the significance of having children in adult worship or looking at funerals through the eyes of worship. He offers us a challenge to think the bigger picture of worship rather than repeatedly settling for the week-to-week planning. Whether you minister in a contemporary or praise band situation, or a liturgical worship setting, or places in between, you will find valuable insights and thought-provoking ideas from one who has served in all of those situations.

—Daniel Sharp, DMA  
Professor, The Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies

## Acknowledgments

A ministry of 50 years does not occur unless there are hundreds of individuals who support, encourage, and pray during the course of those five decades.

God has richly blessed me with my family, colleagues, friends, and congregational members who have guided me, loved me, and participated with me in various ministry settings and circumstances. It is partially because of these blessings that I have been able to reflect upon and write about areas of worship that are so important to me.

I am thankful to God for the congregations of believers at Bethany Lutheran Church, The Falls Church (Anglican), Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, and Living Savior Lutheran Church. The men and women, and girls and boys, in those settings have been an inspiration to me and a joy to lead and guide in the worship of God. The senior pastors of those congregations—the late Nathan Loesch, John Yates, John Denninger, Ralph Wiechmann, Pete Alexander, and Andy Lissy—have encouraged me and been true colleagues and partners in our shared ministries of worship. I have learned so much from them. The trust and confidence they have placed in me through the years has been one of God's many blessings to me.

Compiling essays, articles, devotional thoughts, and other writings from a ministry that began in 1970 and shaping those works into a collection that is helpful to worship leaders, planners, and participants in the 21<sup>st</sup> century does not occur in isolation.

I am very grateful to Bob Myers who has served as my general editor throughout the entire process of producing *Windows on Worship*. Without his guidance and encouragement, this project would not have taken place. I am very appreciative of Jim Hart, Dan Sharp, and the entire editorial committee of Webber Institute Books for their encouragement, perspective, and guidance.

Editing, proofreading, and approaching a topic from more than one direction has always been a challenge for me. Every writer needs a special person who can fill this role and provide proper assistance without compromising the overall vision of the writings. Meghan Benson has been that person—a blessing beyond words.

Finally, no person navigates through a half-century of ministry without the love and support of their family. My dear wife Joan has loved me; provided wisdom, insight, comfort, and guidance; and been at my side throughout our life together. Her witness and love for Jesus is an inspiration to me, our children and their spouses, our grandchildren, and all who know her. Joan is a treasure for whom I thank God every day.

## Introduction

Those persons who have devoted their lives to something they are passionate about generally have quite a bit to say about the topic. As one who has spent the past 50 years devoting myself to a ministry of planning, shaping, and leading Christian worship, I can certainly identify with that!

Of those 50 years, I spent 45 in full-time ministry at a large Southern California Lutheran congregation, an influential Episcopal/Anglican congregation in Northern Virginia, and a large Lutheran congregation in Northern Virginia. I have had the privilege of serving as a Bible study leader, classroom teacher, minister of worship and music, organist, and occasional preacher. Although I retired from full-time ministry in 2015, I continue to plan worship and serve as a musician on a part-time basis for a modest-size Lutheran congregation in Northern Virginia.

I am not the person I was when my ministry began 50 years ago! The opportunities and experiences that God has afforded me throughout the years have shaped my theology, my worship practices, my understanding of worship, and most importantly, have deepened my walk with the Lord. God's shaping hand has given me opportunities to serve and contribute to my congregations and the greater church in ways I pray have been positive and helpful.

From 1995 to 2015, I was asked to share my thoughts on worship in a series of articles and essays titled "Window on Worship" for *The Journal*, the official periodical of the National Association of Church Musicians (NACM, now disbanded), an organization comprised of representatives of many denominations who served in the areas of worship and choral music and in other areas of ministry in the church. Membership ranged from full-time ministers to those who worked as part-time worship leaders and musicians. The essays written for NACM were designed to help those serving throughout the church who had a wide variety of experience and theological and musical training.

In addition to sharing my thoughts with the NACM membership, I have also had the opportunity to provide devotional writings and meditations for the congregations in which I have served and continue to serve. In both settings, I wrote from a perspective of sharing my personal thoughts and reflections with a varied audience of clergy, church professionals, musicians, and lay people who all shared a love of Christian worship.

My life has been influenced and blessed by Robert Webber, William Lock, Paul Manz, Wilbur Held, and others. In thinking about these personal "giants" in my life, I have recalled that so much of what they shared and taught me came when they were in their late 60s and 70s.

Now that I am well into my 70s, I find myself reflecting on how the Lord has led, allowed, equipped, and taught me over a lifetime in ministry. It is my desire to share

some of those reflections and thoughts with you—my friends and colleagues, known and unknown—who are in one way or another a part of the glorious actions and ministry of Christian worship. Whether you are a pastor, a minister of worship and music, a choir member, a praise team member, a lay person in the pew, or serve in some other capacity, you will find devotional thoughts and suggestions that address a variety of topics related to worshipping God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I wrote each of the “windows on worship” in this book with one of the following objectives:

- to help you strengthen your personal devotional life
- to provide greater awareness of a biblical theology of worship
- to better prepare yourself as you come to worship
- to develop a deeper appreciation for the church year
- to help you recognize how our Triune God transforms lives through worship

Although the essays in this book could be read in one or two sittings, it is my hope that you will read and meditate on one essay per week. Each one includes a passage taken from *The New American Standard Bible* that is intended to serve not only as the basis for each reading, but also as a springboard that may assist you in considering and applying what is shared to your own life. I encourage you to meditate on each Scripture passage prior to reading its corresponding essay. Let the Lord help you focus on what he may want to say to you. Over the course of a single year, you will have completed a journey that will allow you to “connect some of the dots” in your own personal devotion to, application of, and participation in Christian worship.

I offer this book to you as one who has received the benefits and blessings of a lifetime of learning and leading and of planning and sharing worship with God’s people. Perhaps not all of the essays and thoughts shared in this book will specifically apply to you in your current ministry, congregational setting, or personal situation. Yet it is my hope and prayer that as you who read this book and use it as a part of your daily walk with Jesus, you will be stretched, encouraged, inspired, and strengthened as you discover fresh and new ways to honor our God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—in your worship.

May the Lord open the many “windows on worship” he desires to show you as you read this book.