

Worship

By Ross Callaghan

<http://rosscallaghan.yolasite.com>



Key Scripture: Psalm 95

O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Psalm 95:6,7

Worship is our most important activity (and responsibility)

God wants us to worship Him!

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me. Exodus 20:3-5

Westminster Confession
Q. 1. What is the chief and highest end of man?
A. Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever.

I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.' All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations—a people who continually provoke me to my very face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on altars of brick. Isaiah 65:1-3

A time is coming when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. John 4:23

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. Ephesians 1:11, 12



What is worship?

Old Testament: The Hebrew word *shachah* means to worship, prostrate, bow down, do reverence

New Testament: There are two Greek words used for worship:

- *proskuneo* means to obey, revere, pay homage to ((from pros = towards, kuneo = to kiss))
- *latreuo* means to serve

- **Worship is bowing down before God: surrendering your will to Him and acknowledging His lordship over every aspect of your life. You honour God and ensure He is Lord by loving Him and being obedient to His revealed will.**
- **Worship is active, not passive. It is a decision, an act of the will to serve and follow the Lord.**



- **Worship is a love response to God, a meeting of hearts.**

Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' Matthew 22:37 Compare this with false, religious "worship": 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men'. Matthew 15:8,9



- **Worship is not about a place, or a ritual, or a method**

- The focus must always be on God.

It is easy to make the act of worship the thing that is worshipped! (especially in the pop-culture type of worship we have today).

I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the desert, O house of Israel? You have lifted up the shrine of your king, the pedestal of your idols, the star of your god - which you made for yourselves. Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Damascus, says the LORD, whose name is God Almighty. Amos 5:21-27

- It is an all of life thing

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1, 2

- **Worship involves:**

- all you are

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Mark 12:30



- all you own

David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. 1 Chronicles 29:10-14

- all you do

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Colossians 3:23,24

- all you love

Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Matthew 10:37. (otherwise these things are objects of worship and become idols).

- **Worship is in (with) spirit and in truth**

Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. John 4:21-24

- **in (with) spirit**

Worship takes place as you respond in your heart to the person of God. It starts in your spirit and you express it through your soul (with thoughts, feelings) and body (with things you say or do). This means worship involves all of you: spirit, soul and body, but it starts deep in your spirit, as you interact with God's Spirit.

- **in truth**

It's easy to go through the motions and call it worship! eg. clap, sing, kneel, say 'Praise the Lord'..... when all the time you are not interacting with the Lord, or it's not coming from your heart.

Worship must be an honest and free expression of your heart to God. Sometimes you may have to deliberately concentrate, not sing, replace the words of a song, be still, say it in your own words so that your worship is 'in truth'.

We all have our own personal ways of interacting with God (and they are all different). Only we can know if we are really worshipping God, or just going through the religious motions.

How can we express our worship?

Much of what is called "praise and worship" in modern church services is not worship at all!

We may sing, praise, give thanks, play musical instruments, dance, clap our hands etc, but if these activities are not expressions of the surrender of our will to the will of God they are not worship. We are just having a good time!

However, if we are surrendering our wills to the will of God (i.e. worshipping) then we can express our worship in lots of different ways. Here are some ways that are mentioned in the Psalms.

<i>Psalm 46</i> v10 being still <i>Psalm 47</i> v1 clapping hands <i>Psalm 95</i> v1 singing, shouting v2-4 thanksgiving, music, song, offering v6,7 bowing down, kneeling v7-11 having an open heart	<i>Psalm 96</i> v1 a new song v2 praise v8 bringing an offering v9 trembling before Him <i>Psalm 100</i> v3-5 musical instruments, dancing
---	---

In all of these:

- Recognize you are in God's presence and bow your will to His will.
- Acknowledge God's Lordship over all aspects of your life.
- Focus on Him, and stay focused. Be honest, genuine and real.
- Base your worship on the person of God: Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit.
- Use the Scriptures.
- Actively open your heart in love to Him. Express your love, and do it your way.
- Respond to Him without fear or shame.
- Be obedient to whatever He wants you to do.



What a wonderful opportunity we have to give God pleasure through our worship!

Discussion questions

Is there a difference between “praise” and worship”?

How has the expression of worship changed over the centuries within Judaism and then Christianity? Does this indicate that worship is influenced by culture?

Is there a right way of worshipping God? Who determines what is ‘right’, ‘acceptable’ or otherwise? What would happen if someone started worshipping God in your Church in a way that was culturally acceptable in another country, but had never been seen or experienced in your Church before?

Is worship of God a personal or cultural expression?

If you visit Churches in different parts of the world you will find that “worship” means quite different things. To some it is attending Church services; to others it is singing hymns; to others it is “praise and worship” led by a “worship team”; to others it is artistic expressions through media like dance, art and drama. In some it is quiet and reflective; in others it is noisy; in some it is personal; in others it is corporate; in some it takes place standing up; in others it takes place prostrate on the floor. On the basis of this how would you define worship?

In many Churches “praise and worship” is equated to singing of a number of songs, led by a “worship leader”, singers, and a band. Is this a full expression of worship? Does this line up with Biblical definitions of worship? Can it be limiting for some people? How can worship leaders develop so that worship is more in line with Biblical approaches to worship?

List all possible ways of worshipping God that are mentioned in the Bible. How many of these ways do you use?

How well do you worship God? How well does worship take place in your life or church?