

Topics in Practical Theology – Lesson 3 – Worship

Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School

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Many people view worship as attending a service like perhaps a Sunday “worship” service or a special music time where they sing “worship” songs. Phrases like “that was so uplifting” or “that really spoke to my heart” or “what an incredible experience” may be used to describe the “worship” experience.

... when the average person speaks of “worship,” it is usually the external things that are in view—liturgy, ceremony, music, kneeling, and other formal issues. I recently read the testimony of a man who left evangelical Christianity and joined Roman Catholicism. One of the primary reasons he gave for abandoning evangelicalism was that he found Roman Catholic liturgy “more worshipful.” As he went on to explain, it became apparent that what he actually meant was that Rome offered more of the accoutrements of formal ritual—candle burning, statues, kneeling, reciting, crossing oneself, and so on. But those things have nothing to do with genuine worship in spirit and truth. *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, John H. Armstrong, gen. ed. Chapter 10 HOW SHALL WE THEN WORSHIP? John F. MacArthur, Jr.

The Definition of Worship

Dictionary.com – reverent honor and homage; adoring reverence or regard.

To ascribe or attribute worth to something or someone. Honor paid to a superior being. To give homage, honor, reverence, respect, adoration, praise, or glory to a superior being.

Worship is a consuming desire to give to God, and it involves the giving of ourselves, our heart attitudes, and our possessions. “True Worship” Study Guide by MacArthur

Worship is the submission of all of our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness, nourishment of mind by His truth, purifying of imagination by His beauty, opening of the heart to His love, and submission of will to His purpose. William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury (1942–44).

Everyone in the world worships something. From the most religious to the most secular, all people value something high enough to build their lives around it. John Piper in “What Jesus Demands from the World” p99

There are several words used to describe worship:

Worship (proskuneo) means to kiss the hand, to bow down, to prostrate oneself. The idea of worship is that one prostrates himself before a superior being with a sense of respect, awe, reverence, honor, and homage. Paying God the glory due His superior character. An attitude of devotion demonstrated by actions.

¹⁴And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen " And the elders fell down and worshiped. Rev 5:14

³³And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!" Matt 14:33

⁹And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. Matt 28:9

Worship belongs to God alone:

"I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images. Isa 42:8

¹⁴--for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God-- Ex 34:14

"You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name. Deut 6:13

Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.' " Matt 4:10

Praise (aineo) means giving joyful, verbal praise to God. The praise of God is declaring the attributes of God to be true. Praise gives glory to Him. Praising God is part of our worship here and now (Heb 13.15). It has occurred in heaven in the past (Isa 6.3). Praise will be given to God in heaven in the future (Rev 4.11). It should be continual and produces the giving of thanks to Him (Heb 13.15). Praise is used of:

Humans

³⁷As soon as He was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, Luke 19:37

Angels

¹³And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God ... Luke 2:13

Individuals

²⁰The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them. Luke 2:20

Corporately

⁴And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen Hallelujah!" Rev 19:4

⁴⁶Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. Acts 2:46-47

Glorify (doxa) means acknowledging that God is transcendent and majestic and worthy to receive worship from His creatures.

⁵Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, ⁶so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom 15:5-6

²⁵Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. Luke 5:25

⁴³Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God. Luke 18:43

⁴"Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED." Rev 15:4

²⁰For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. 1 Cor 6:20

Serve (latreuo / latria) means service flowing from a pure heart and refers to good works that we do for God resulting from a heart of gratitude for what He has done for us.

¹⁴"But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; Acts 24:14

⁹For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, Rom 1:9

¹Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Rom 12:1

⁵who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN." Heb 8:5

¹⁵"For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. Rev 7:15

The Source of Worship

Only those that have a saving relationship with the Father through the Son are true worshipers of God. Worship begins with or is initiated by God, not with us. That initiation is our salvation for which we were elected to from eternity past.

¹⁹The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." ²¹Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for **such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers**. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:19-24

¹⁰"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10

The Object of Worship

Since worship is paying God the glory due Him because of who He is, then we need to understand who God is. The attributes of God can be categorized multiple ways, but are generally broken into two main groups – those that belong to God alone (incommunicable or divine) and those that are in some way found in man (communicable or personal).

Divine attributes:

1. Simplicity – God is not a composite or compound being in essence, He is spirit only (John 4:24)
2. Self-existence – God is independent from everything; His being is in no way dependent upon anything outside Himself and exists forever in Himself alone (Ex 3:14; Psa 90:2; Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16-17)
3. Unity – God is one in number, indivisible, and unique. (Deut 6:4)
4. Infinity – God has no bounds or limits. He is not limited by time-space. He is transcendent (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:28)
5. Eternity – Free from succession of time. He exists endlessly from eternity past to eternity future. All past, present, and future events are equally vivid to Him (Gen 21:33; Psa 90:2)
6. Immutability – God is unchanging and unchangeable; never inconsistent, growing, or developing (James 1:17)
7. Omnipresence – God is everywhere (Psa 139:7-12)
8. Sovereignty – God is the supreme ruler. He is in control of all events (Eph 1)
9. Omniscience – God knows all actual and possible things (Matt 11:21)
10. Omnipotence – God is all powerful and can do anything consistent with His nature (Rev 19:6)

Personal Attributes:

1. Justice – Moral equity, “no respect of persons” (Acts 17:31; Col 3:25)
2. Love – God seeking the highest good of displaying His own will (Eph 2:4-5, 1 John 4:8; John 3:16; 14:23; 16:27; Rom 5:8; 8:37; 9:13)
3. Truth – Agreement to and consistency with all that is represented by God Himself (John 17:3, Titus 1:2, Rom 3:4, Heb 6:18)
4. Freedom – Independence from His creatures (Isa 40:13-14)
5. Holiness – Pure and separate from sin (1 John 1:5)
6. Lovingkindness – Benevolent goodness (Psa 6:4; 51:1; Isa 54:8-10; Rom 2:4; Col 3:12)
7. Compassion – Goodness to those in difficulty (2 Sam 24:14; Neh 9:19; Lam 3:22; Psa 103:13; Eph 2:4; 2 Cor 1:3)
8. Grace – Goodness applied to undeserving people (John 1:14; Rom 5:15; Eph 2:8; 1 Pet 5:10)
9. Longsuffering – Patience toward those who deserve to be punished (Rom 3:25; 9:22; 1 Tim 1:16; 2 Pet 3:9, 15)
10. Wrath – Holiness and the application of justice (Ex 20:5; 34:14; Deut 32:3-4)

The Priority of Worship

We have many responsibilities in our relationship with God, but our primary privilege is to worship Him. Let's look at the account of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42. Mary sat at Jesus' feet worshipping while Martha was distracted by the cares of the world. Worship is the one priority that supersedes all other activities in our lives.

³⁸Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. ³⁹She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." ⁴¹But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; ⁴²but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42

The Pattern of Worship

The pattern for true worship is found in John 4:19-24.

¹⁹The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you {people} say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." ²¹Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²²"You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in **spirit and truth**; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in **spirit and truth**." John 4:19-24

Spirit here has two implications. One is the human spirit as in Rom 1:9 "serve (worship) in my spirit". Not in religious trappings, but with our entire being (Deut 6:4-5; Psa 51:5-17). The other is in the Holy Spirit as in Phil 3:3 "worship in the Spirit of God". Only those who are born again can be true worshipers of God.

Truth has to do with worshiping God with knowledge and correct understanding based on His word.

²³"For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. Acts 17:23

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁵For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. Romans 1:18-19, 25

¹⁷"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. John 17:17

¹⁶⁰The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting. Psalm 119:160

⁶And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. ⁷BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.' ⁸"Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." Mark 7:6-8

Preparing for Worship

¹⁹Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²**let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.** ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Heb 10:19-25

The writer of Hebrews tells us to “draw near” not in our own worth, but through the “blood of Jesus”. When we come to draw near there are four areas in which we should examine ourselves:

1. Sincerity – Is my heart true? Is it divided in affection? Am I worshipping with my whole heart? Do I have ulterior motives?

2. Assurance – Am I fully given over to God? Do I have doubts about His revelation, character, or works?

¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Heb 11:1

⁶And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. Heb 11:6

3. Humility – Am I reminded of the depth of my sinfulness? Do I have a proper view of myself as unworthy before God? Do I understand His character in relation to my sinfulness?

¹In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. ²Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." ⁴And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. ⁵Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." Isa 6:1-5

⁸But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" ⁹For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; ¹⁰and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." Luke 5: 8-10

4. Purity – Have I dealt with today's sin? Do I harbor iniquity in my heart? Have I confessed all known sin before God?

⁷Submit therefore to God Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸**Draw near to God and He will draw near to you Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.** ⁹Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. James 4:7-10

The Practice of Worship

God centered

¹⁰Then I fell at his feet to worship him But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Rev 19:10

⁸I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. ⁹But he said to me, "Do not do that I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God." Rev 22:8-9

²⁴"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other You cannot serve God and wealth. Matt 6:24

Obedience

²²Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 1 Sam 15:22

Gratitude motivated service

²⁸Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; ²⁹for our God is a consuming fire. Heb 12:28-29

Continually praising God

¹⁵Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. Heb 13:15

Presenting our bodies a living and holy sacrifice

¹Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Rom 12:1

Placing no confidence in the flesh

³for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, Phil 3:3

Making melody with our heart to the Lord

¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; Eph 5:18-19

Thankfulness in our hearts to God

¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. Col 3:16-17

Sacrificial giving

¹⁸But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. Phil 4:18

Spiritual Sacrifices

⁴And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, ⁵you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Pet 2:4-6

The Bottom Line

Worship does not just happen on Sunday mornings or at Growth Group when we sing a few songs. Worship is a continual action or ascribing worth to God as we meditate on His majesty, placing the worship of Him before everything, worshipping Him with our entire being with correct understanding from and in a manner consistent with His word.