

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues
Topic 6 – Worship and the Ministry of the Holy Spirit

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Introduction

Mankind, just like the rest of creation, was created to worship its Creator. Therefore, as believers, we need to make it our ultimate priority to worship God with our lives.

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. (Psa 19:1)

Everyone who is called by My name, And whom **I have created for My glory**, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made." (Isa 43:7)

When people do not worship God, they are not fulfilling their ultimate purpose and are in sin. This is called the sin of idolatry, and it is a serious offense in the eyes of the almighty God. Idolatry is the worship of anything or anyone other than God. When we worship our careers, money, family, sports, fashion or anything else we commit this sin. Since God created us for his glory, he expects us to worship and honor him as he deserves. When we do not we offend him in our sin.

You shall not worship them or serve them; for **I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me... (Exo 20:5)

For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can My name be profaned? And **My glory I will not give to another**. (Isa 48:11)

You shall fear only the LORD your God; and **you shall worship Him** and swear by His name. You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, for the LORD your God in the midst of you is **a jealous God**; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth. (Deut 6:13-15)

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

Clearly, God desires us to worship him and him alone. Moreover, he is angered when we give our worship to another person or thing. The word worship has been variously defined. The etymology of the English word comes from the root word "worth" and the suffix "-ship". So, the English word carries with it the sense of the object of worship being worthy of that worship.

Definitions:

1. "show reverence and adoration for a deity; honor with religious rites." – e.g., The Maya built jungle pyramids to worship their gods (Google)
2. "Worship is to honor with extravagant love and extreme submission" (Webster's Dictionary, 1828)
3. "True worship ... is defined by the priority we place on *who* God is in our lives and *where* God is on our list of priorities. True worship is a matter of the heart expressed through a lifestyle of holiness" (Delesslyn A. Kennebrew, Christianity Today).

4. “Worship is the activity of glorifying God in his presence with our voices and hearts... Worship is therefore a direct expression of our ultimate purpose for living, ‘to glorify God and enjoy him forever’” (Grudem, 1003-4).

The role of the Holy Spirit in worship is vital to a proper, biblically-based understanding of worship as a whole. God desires to be worshiped in a specific way, and it is our responsibility as his servants to know what that is.

“Pneumatology” – Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

First, we need to correct a common misconception. The Holy Spirit is a person or a personality, not a thing. After New Testament times, Neo-Platonism became a popular syncretizing belief that threatened to derail the orthodox beliefs of Christianity. One of the many heretical sects influenced by Neo-Platonism was Arianism. Arius of Alexandria was an Egyptian priest who promoted several incorrect theological ideas, and one of them was that the Holy Spirit was an emanating influence from God the Father. His beliefs have continued to have an adverse effect on biblical thinking and practice as can be seen in the many Unitarian groups and the Jehovah’s Witnesses. At the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, Arianism was officially identified as heretical, though not for his beliefs about the Holy Spirit.

The personality of the Holy Spirit can be seen in his attributes, works, and position.

1. *Attributes*: Who He is¹
 - a. He has an intellect (1 Cor. 2:10; John 5:39)
 - b. He has knowledge (1 Cor. 2:11)
 - c. He has a mind (Rom. 8:27)
 - d. He has emotions (Eph. 4:30)
 - e. He has a will (Acts 16:6)
2. *Works*: What He does²
 - a. He teaches (Jn. 14:26)
 - b. He testifies (Jn. 15:26)
 - c. He guides (Jn. 16:13)
 - d. He convicts (Jn. 16:8)
 - e. He regenerates (Titus 3:5)
 - f. He intercedes (Rom. 8:26)
 - g. He commands (Acts 13:2)
3. *Position*: What is done to him³
 - a. He can be grieved (Eph. 4:30; Is. 63:10)
 - b. He can be blasphemed (Matt. 12:32)
 - c. He can be resisted (Acts 7:51)
 - d. He can be lied to (Acts 5:3)
 - e. He can be obeyed (Acts 10)

¹ Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, New ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 257-260.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Evidently, the Holy Spirit possesses personal attributes that confirm his personhood. As we think about how the Holy Spirit is actively engaged in the life of the Spirit-filled believer there are a few important actions that require mentioning.

1. *Regeneration* (Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:23) – When a fallen sinner turns in repentance and through faith to God, the Holy Spirit is actively at work regenerating their soul. This is the spiritual equivalent of being born; it is being born *again* though.
2. *Intercession* (Rom. 8:26) – When a believer prays the Holy Spirit serves to take our prayers and make them presentable before God the Father.
3. *Sanctification* (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2) – As a believer fights sin, this must be done in the power and under the control of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us.
4. *Help* (Jn. 14:16) – The word “helper” is used of the Holy Spirit when Jesus tells his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come after he left. That word (παράκλητος – *paraklētos*) consists of “called” and “alongside”, and paints a beautiful picture of the nearness of God in the believer’s life as they seek to walk with God.

This Helper, who sanctifies us and intercedes for us once we are regenerated, is the key element in worship. Without Him, there is no worship. Often in our striving to live godly lives, believers can forget the wonderful benefits of having the power of the Holy Spirit at their disposal. We should keep in mind that the Holy Spirit is who God chose to help us along after Christ returned to God the Father’s presence. To ignore his presence and work in our lives is to ignore the very presence and work of God.

Difference between Personal and Corporate Worship⁴

There is a difference between personal and corporate worship, but at the same time there is actually no real difference. In the Old Testament, Israelites gathered at designated times throughout the year for corporate worship. Though this practice was mandated, it became ritualistic and spiritually dry. David recognized the importance of genuine worship in his repentance from his sin with Bathsheba.

For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. (Psa 51:17)

In the New Testament, believers gathered for corporate worship as well. In fact, the word (ἐκκλησία – *ekklesia*) that has been translated as “church” literally means “assembly” and was a word used for a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, usually for political business. In Hebrews, this meeting together was commanded.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not 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 10:23-25)

⁴ Gerry Andersen, “Worship”, Valley Bible Church, 2013.

Believers should not think that living the Christian life can be done apart from fellowship with the body of Christ in the context of the local church. God has established his church to be the pillar of truth and the primary vehicle through which he works to reach the world for his glory in this present age.

Even though corporate worship is extremely important, it is only as good or genuine or glorifying to God as the individuals' hearts gathered. Essentially, corporate worship is simply the coming together of believers as they continue to worship. In light of this reality, Wayne Grudem has said, "Because God is worthy of worship and seeks to be worshiped, everything in our worship services should be designed and carried out not to call attention to ourselves or bring glory to ourselves, but to call attention to God and to cause people to think about him."⁵ Obviously this does not diminish the importance and beauty of corporate worship services since they are commanded by God.

Personal worship is a matter of the heart as we yield our spirits to the power and influence of God's Spirit, and it is based on truth. This balance between spirit and truth can be found in John 4:21-24. From this passage of Scripture, we can make several observations about genuine personal worship.

1. *Not based on location* – "Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.'" (Jhn 4:21) – Jesus was pointing out that the debate between Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim as the Jews center of worship did not matter. The same is true for us today. We can worship God no matter where we are.
2. *Depends on God's word* – "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews." (Jhn 4:22) – Jesus was making the point that their worship was more authentic because it was based on genuine knowledge. This is where genuine worship needs to start. We should be brought into worship of God when we ponder truth about him.
3. *It balances spirit and truth* – "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. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (Jhn 4:23-24) – God desires and seeks those who worship him in spirit and truth.
4. *It is consistent with the rest of God's word* – Nothing in our worship should contradict other parts of God's word. Paul urged the Roman believers to offer acceptable worship. The acceptableness of that worship depended on the renewing of their minds as they pondered the mercies of God, and this occurs when we know and meditate on God's word.

Therefore 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**. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:1-2)

The implications of Romans 12:1-2 are vital to deepening our understanding and genuine expression of worship.

⁵ (Grudem, 1005).

1. It is internal with external manifestations (that are culturally-based)

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but **be filled with the Spirit, speaking** to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing and making melody with your heart** to the Lord; always **giving thanks** for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; (Eph 5:18-20)

2. Easy to become attached to the culturally-based, external manifestations

3. It cannot be assisted by others, except through instruction of God's word

- a. Romans 11:33-36 – The preceding verses to Romans 12:1-2 are a response to Paul's theological explanation of many weighty matters for the first eleven chapters of Romans. He responds to that truth in praise.
- b. Philippians 4:19-20 – After mentioning that God will supply all the Philippian saints' needs, Paul bursts into praise.

And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. **Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.** (Phl 4:19-20)

- c. 1Timothy 1:12-17 – After considering how God had shown mercy to him while he was still a sinner, Paul again interrupts himself with praise to God.

It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world **to save sinners**, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason **I found mercy**, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. **Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.** (1Ti 1:15-17)

Equally vital to understanding worship is Ephesians 5:18-21.

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but **be filled with the Spirit**, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. (Eph 5:18-21)

1. To genuinely worship God is to be filled with the Spirit.
2. To be filled with the Spirit is to be yielded to and controlled by the will of God in our lives

Entering into Genuine Worship and its Evidences⁶

Being filled with the Spirit has many misconceptions in Christianity today. In short, when a believer is in a state of submission to God and his will, the indwelling Holy Spirit is active in controlling that

⁶ Dale Whitehead, "Worship: The Key to Living the Abundant Christian Life", 2012, www.valleybible.net (accessed 3/26/2014).

person's thoughts, attitude, speech, and actions. There are many evidences that this has taken place, but here are just a few:

1. Those who bow before God in worship will experience *joy*.

How lovely are Your dwelling places, O LORD of hosts! My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD; **my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.** The bird also has found a house, And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O LORD of hosts, My King and my God. How blessed are those who dwell in Your house! They are ever praising You. Selah. (Psa 84:1-4)

2. Those who bow before God in worship will experience *satisfaction*.

My soul is **satisfied** as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips. (Psa 63:5)

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like a great deep. O LORD, You preserve man and beast. How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. **They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.** (Psa 36:5-8)

3. Those who bow before God in worship will experience *strength*.

When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches, for You have been my help, And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to You; **Your right hand upholds me.** (Psa 63:6-8)

4. Those bowed before God in worship and who remain bowed before God in worship will be progressively *transformed into Christ's image*.

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being **transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2Co 3:18)

If these things are not present in our lives then we are not bowed before God. When struggling with a host of sins and difficult circumstances, believers often forget their duty to worship their Creator and Redeemer. When this perspective is front and center, many of the other things of this world fade away. Helen Howarth Lemmel's 1922 hymn, "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus, sums this concept up well:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.*

Results and Benefits of Genuine Worship⁷

God is a loving God who desires our worship. When we yield to his Spirit in us and worship him appropriately, he blesses us in many ways.

1. *We delight in God*

One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD And to meditate in His temple. (Psa 27:4)

You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever. (Psa 16:11)

2. *God delights in us*

For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. (Psa 51:16-17)

3. *We draw near to God*

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **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. (Heb 10:19-22)

4. *God draws near to us*

Draw near to God and **He will draw near to you**. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (Jas 4:8)

5. *God ministers to us*

a. Through other believers and their Spirit-filled edification

What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. **Let all things be done for edification.** (1Co 14:26)

...speaking **to one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; (Eph 5:19)

b. Through God strengthening our faith

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that **we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.** (Heb 4:16)

c. Through the acceleration of our sanctification

⁷ Outline taken from Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, pp. 1005-1009.

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being **transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2Co 3:18)

6. *Unbelievers know they are in God's presence* – When Paul instructed the Corinthian church how to use their spiritual gifts in an orderly way that edified the other members of the church, he explained what effect this would have on an unbeliever who enters a church service.

But if all prophesy, and an **unbeliever** or an ungifted man enters, he is **convicted** by all, he is **called to account** by all; the **secrets of his heart are disclosed**; and so he will fall on his face and **worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you**. (1Co 14:25 NASB)

Conclusion

We have been created to worship, and if we worship anything other than God we commit the sin of idolatry. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the trinity. As such, he regenerates, intercedes for, sanctifies, and offers help to us as God's children. As we seek to worship God, it is important to remember the difference between personal and corporate worship since corporate worship begins with the individual worship of a group of people, and that individual worship begins with a heart that right before God. Proper understanding of God and his word generates genuine, Spirit-filled worship when we are bowed before him in our hearts. When we do this we will experience joy, satisfaction strength, and we will be transformed into the image of his Son. Additionally, we will delight in God, he will delight in us, we will draw near to God, he will draw near to us, he will minister to us, and non-believers will know they are in the presence of God.

Q: How do you remain bowed before God so that you can worship in Spirit and in truth?

Q: What truth have you learned recently that should lead you to worship God?

Q: What idols lure you away from worshipping the only One worthy of your worship? What can you do to remove those idols in your heart and life?

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues

Topic 6 – Worship and the Ministry of the Holy Spirit – Additional Study

1. How does the Bible describe the Holy Spirit?
 - a. John 14:16-17

 - b. John 14:26

 - c. John 15:26-27

 - d. John 16:7-15

 - e. 1 Corinthians 2:9-16

 - f. Titus 3:5

 - g. Rom. 8:26

 - h. 1 Pet. 1:23

2. What does Romans 12:1-2 say about genuine worship?

3. Ephesians 5:18 speaks of believers being filled with the Spirit. What has this looked like in your life when you have been filled with the Spirit?

4. What usually prevents you from being filled with the Spirit. What are steps you can take to remove these obstacles?