

A Biblical View of Worship

What is Worship?

The Bible uses *many* different terms to convey the idea of worship. The reason is that worship is such a multifaceted, all-encompassing part of life that no single term can convey all it entails. We will consider just two groups of terms (each group has one Hebrew and one Greek term, which convey the same idea; that is, the Greek term is used in the same sense as the Hebrew term).

1. *Shachah* and *proskuneo*: these terms have the basic sense of 'bowing down' and prostrating oneself. To worship is to bow down. To worship is to lay yourself low before Someone mighty and awesome.

2. *Avad* and *latreuo*: these terms essentially mean 'to serve', such as a slave serving a master.

If we put these terms together, we would picture a servant who is bowed as his Master's feet waiting for instructions.

Definition of worship

From these terms, we can suggest a tentative definition of worship:

Worship is bowing all that we are before all that God is!

I love how William temple defines worship:

"Worship is the submission of all of our nature to God. It is the quickening of the conscience by his holiness; the nourishment of mind with his truth; the purifying of imagination by his beauty; the opening of the heart to his love; the surrender of will to his purpose--all this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable".

Misconceptions about worship

The first popular misconception is that 'worship is singing'. We treat 'worship' and 'singing praises' as synonymous terms. We speak as if they are the same thing. To reduce worship to singing is to dilute the biblical concept of worship in a way that is grossly irresponsible. It reduces the richness of biblical worship to one of its components. Yet when many Christians today commonly speak about worship, they mean nothing more than 'singing'.

There are probably many ways this misconception has crept into our language and our thought. One key factor is that we have tended to label Christian music as ‘worship’, and we often call the person who leads the singing in our churches ‘the worship leader’. Unfortunately, this has caused us to equate worship with singing.

A second misconception is that ‘worship is something we do on special occasions’. Worship is what we *do* when we gather with God’s people. The activities that make up our Sunday services, such as the preaching, singing, offering, and communion *are worship*. This too is a serious misconception. Although it adds a few extra activities to singing, it is an inadequate understanding of worship. The biblical view of worship cannot be reduced to a set of activities we do at certain times and places.

Principles of worship

1. Worship always involves both revelation and response.

All worship involves these two things in a dynamic relationship: revelation and response. Worship is initiated by God, who graciously reveals himself to us, and we respond to his revelation in faithful ways. God’s revelation initiates the worship experience; we respond to what God reveals of himself. Thus, worship is our faithful response to God’s gracious revelation. How does each of these texts confirm the idea that worship is our response to God’s revelation?

a) Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Deut 6:4-5 AMP

"Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one [the only God]! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and with all your soul and with all your strength [your entire being].

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 gives a fundamental revelation about God—he is the one and only God. If he alone is God, our proper response is to love him with all that we are, to bow all that we are before all that he is.

In Romans 12:1-2, Paul makes a similar point.

Rom. 12:1-2 AMP

Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies [dedicating all of yourselves, set apart] as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God, which is your rational (logical, intelligent) act of worship. And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs], but be transformed and progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of

your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you].

Romans 1-11 presented the revelation of God's mercy in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Then Paul calls his readers to respond to God's revelation: 'in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices' (v. 1).

Isaiah's encounter with Yahweh is a graphic illustration of the principle that worship involves revelation and response. First, Isaiah has a revelation of God's holiness (vv. 1-4). As a result, he realizes his own sinfulness and hopelessness, and he responds: "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty" (v. 5). Next God reveals his mercy by cleansing Isaiah (vv. 6-8). Once again, Isaiah responds: 'And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (v. 8). Why don't we live more like Isaiah? Perhaps it is because, unlike Isaiah, we have not been overwhelmed with the depths of the mercies of God. And why have we not been so overwhelmed? Well, perhaps because, unlike Isaiah, we have not been overwhelmed by the depth of our own sinfulness. And why have we not been overwhelmed by the depth of our own sinfulness? Perhaps it is because, unlike Isaiah, we have not been overwhelmed by the awesome holiness of God (Parrett 2008, lecture 2).

In each of these passages, we see men responding to God with true worship—they receive a gracious revelation of his mercy, and respond by giving themselves wholly to Him.

2. Worship is something that we do both individually and in community.

We need to speak both in terms of worship as:

- individuals and
- in terms of worship as communities.

Similarly, we can speak about worship both as:

- something habitual and ongoing in our lives,
- and as specific, intentional acts of worship.

Corporate worship events express the overflow of a lifestyle of worshipping God 24/7. When there is a radical disconnection between our daily lifestyle and what we do when we gather for corporate celebration, we have a problem of hypocrisy. We should primarily think of worship as a lifestyle commitment to live for God, offering our bodies

as living sacrifices to God, but we should also set aside specific times to worship God, both individually and corporately.

What do you think God values more:

- (a) our lifestyle commitment to worship or
- (b) our specific worship acts?

Although both are important, we believe God values the lifestyle commitment to worship even more than he values intentional worship acts. We believe this because it seems to reflect the weight of the Bible's emphasis when talking about worship.

3. Habitual lifestyle worship is more important than our intentional actions of worship in religious settings.

a) Isaiah 1:10-18

Hear the word of the Lord [rulers of Jerusalem], You rulers of [another] Sodom, Listen to the law and instruction of our God, You people of [another] Gomorrah. "What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me [without your repentance]?" Says the Lord. "I have had enough of [your] burnt offerings of rams And the fat of well-fed cattle [without your obedience]; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls or lambs or goats [offered without repentance]. "When you come to appear before Me, Who requires this of you, this trampling of My [temple] courts [by your sinful feet]?" "Do not bring worthless offerings again, [Your] incense is repulsive to Me; [Your] New Moon and Sabbath [observances], the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure wickedness [your sin, your injustice, your wrongdoing] and [the squalor of] the festive assembly. "I hate [the hypocrisy of] your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts. They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. "So when you spread out your hands [in prayer, pleading for My help], I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you offer many prayers, I will not be listening. Your hands are full of blood! "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Get your evil deeds out of My sight. Stop doing evil, Learn to do good. Seek justice, Rebuke the ruthless, Defend the fatherless, Plead for the [rights of the] widow [in court]. "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be like wool.

b) Amos 5:21-24

"I hate, I despise and reject your [sacred] feasts, And I do not take delight in your solemn assemblies. "Even though you offer Me your burnt offerings and your grain

offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fattened animals. "Take the noise of your songs away from Me [they are an irritation]!

I shall not even listen to the melody of your harps. "But let justice run down like waters. And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream [flowing abundantly].

c) Micah 6:6-8

With what shall I come before the Lord [to honor Him] And bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves? Will the Lord be delighted with thousands of rams, Or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my acts of rebellion, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you Except to be just, and to love [and to diligently practice] kindness (compassion), And to walk humbly with your God [setting aside any overblown sense of importance or self-righteousness]?

In Isaiah 1, God rebuked his people for their hypocrisy.

Why did he rebuke them? Because their public worship acts did not line up with their daily lives. God rejected their acts of worship because the people's hearts were far from him and their hands were full of blood. The Lord called for a lifestyle of justice and mercy first (Isa. 1:17). Only then would he enjoy their public acts of worship.

In Amos 5, the Lord says the same thing. He hates their religious feasts. He does not accept their offerings. He does not listen to their music or their songs! Why? Because he does not see in them a heart after justice and righteousness (Amos 5:24).

Micah asks how a true worshipper should approach God. He concludes that God is not primarily looking for external, formal worship. Instead, the Lord wants us to treat our neighbours with justice and mercy, and to walk humbly with God:

Mic. 6:8

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

In each of these passages, God rejects his people's intentional acts of worship because they have no lifestyle commitment to worship Him. God welcomes acts of worship from those whose lifestyles show that they love God and love others, who walk humbly with the Lord and show justice and mercy in their relationships with other people.

These things are more important than all our external acts of worship. Whereas the Old Testament saints offered animal sacrifices as part of their worship, as New Testament believers we use different offerings. We offer the Lord our songs of praise (Heb. 13:15), our prayers, our money offerings, and so on. God is pleased with these when they are the overflow of a lifestyle of loving and worshipping him at a heart level. Our acts of worship are the outward tokens of a deeper, inner, spiritual reality.

4. Individual worship and congregational worship inform and strengthen one another.

When we gather for intentional worship acts, we do not suddenly become worshippers at the point of entering a church building. We have been worshippers throughout the week. We have worshipped in our homes, at our jobs, in our communities, and as citizens (by acting justly and showing mercy). Then we gather on the Lord's day for intentional, formal worship. There is nothing about that celebration that transforms us magically into worshippers. There are no magic doors at the back of the sanctuary that suddenly transform us from non-worshippers into worshippers as we walk through them, so that we can worship God for an hour or two. *We are worshippers (in the world), and as worshippers we gather to celebrate Him.*

When true worshippers gather to express their love for the Lord, something beautiful happens—the Lord inhabits the praises of his people. He is present in a special way. The worship experience is intense and powerful. Similarly, because we participate in such a wonderful worship experience, we are strengthened to be better worshippers when we leave.

5. Corporate worship requires participation; it is not a spectator sport.

Participating in a worship service should not be like attending a sporting event. Sadly, many church services are set up as spectator events. Believers watch a professional performance. They watch performances of preaching, singing, or putting on dances and dramas. Their entire participation amounts to little more than watching, singing along for a few songs, giving to an offering ('paying for the show'), and so on.

By contrast, Old Testament worship was fully participatory. The worshipper brought and participated in offering a sacrifice. Even the way they sung was participatory— many of the Psalms were sung responsively, in a way that involved the worshipper in active response to the leader.

1 Cor. 14:26 NKJV

How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

- a) Who did Paul expect to participate in when the church gathered?
- b) What did he see as the goal of their participation?

We should respond when the Word of God is read and preached. We see a beautiful picture of participation in Nehemiah 8:1-11.

Nehemiah 8:1-11

Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month. Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.

So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose; and beside him, at his right hand, stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Urijah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah; and at his left hand Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God.

Then all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place. So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.

And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn nor weep." For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law.

Then he said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, “Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved.” And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them.

6. Worship involves the participation of our entire being.

Worship that engages only one part of our being is inadequate. In some churches, worship focuses almost exclusively on the mind, that is, on explaining the meaning of the Word of God, engaging people’s minds, and challenging them to respond to the truths of scripture. In other churches, the worship is very emotional, and the mind seems to be disengaged. Still other churches focus almost entirely on service, worshipping God by doing things and running programs in the community. Each of these are valid forms of worship, but if we focus so much on one that we neglect the others, we miss out on the fullness of true worship, which involves bowing all that we are before all that he is.

What does Mark 12:30 indicate about the way Jesus expects us to worship (see also Psalm 103:1)?

Mk. 12:30-31

“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Ps. 103:1

Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!

We should engage our whole beings in worshipping God. We should express worship with our bodies (bowing, clapping, kneeling, raising hands, shouting), our emotions (rejoicing, mourning, celebrating), and our minds (thinking about the songs, the sermon, the greatness and goodness of God).

7. The substance of our worship is always more important than the style or form of our worship.

God is more interested in the heart of the worshipper than in the style or form of our acts of worship. It is sad that the church has been divided over what we call ‘worship wars’. These worship wars have been waged over choices such as:

- organ *or* guitar?
- hymnal *or* overhead projector?
- quiet, still, cognitive, contemplative *or* loud, expressive, jubilant?

What interests God? Surely it is the substance of our worship more than the style of it, the heart of the worshippers more than the form of expression! In fact, many of our worship styles simply reflect personal preferences and prejudices, or cultural and generational experiences and tendencies. These things will change from time to time, but the heart of the worshipper and the content of our worship are timeless. These are what matter most to the Lord.

The form of worship we prefer—contemporary, conservative, traditional, liturgical—is a secondary consideration. What is of primary importance is whether our worship has substance. Is the revelation from God through Jesus faithfully represented through our worship, and is there opportunity for the people to respond in appropriate ways?

8. When we worship as a community, we are participating in something larger than ourselves.

When we worship as a community, we are participating in something larger than ourselves, something much bigger than ‘just me and Jesus’. One of the troubling misconceptions of our day is that worship is primarily about *me*—how I feel, my own experience of God. When we come together to worship, however, we must ‘discern the Lord’s body’ (1 Cor. 11:29).

In 1 Corinthians 11, we see that the Corinthian church was celebrating the Lord’s Supper in a way that did not show appropriate concern for the unity of the body of Christ. The Corinthians would celebrate the Lord’s Supper around a shared meal in the home of one of the wealthy members of the congregation. It seems that the homeowner might have been inviting his rich friends to share a sumptuous meal before the rest of the believers arrived. Instead of amplifying the beauty and unity of the church, they were tearing it apart. They were acting selfishly instead of showing love for God’s people. Paul rebuked them harshly, saying ‘your meetings do more harm than good’ (v. 17) and ‘it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat’ (v. 19). In other words, because they were so self-centred, although the outward form was the Lord’s Supper, the way they were doing it

was not real worship. God did not receive it as a proper celebration of the Lord's Supper.

When we come together, we must always 'discern the body' out of reverence for Christ. When we come together, we are not just a collection of individuals gathered to do the same things in the same room. Corporate worship is the gathering of the body. We need to recognise this.

Think about the songs you sing in church. How many of them are written in 'I' language as opposed to 'we' or 'You' language? What does this suggest? We need to have a proper balance between 'I' songs, and 'we' or 'you' songs. When churches used to file overhead transparencies in alphabetical order (usually by the first letter of the first word of each song), the largest section used to be 'J', because of all the songs starting with 'Jesus'. Now, however, many of our songs the largest section tends to be 'I', because so many songs start with 'I love you ...', 'I thank you ...', 'I need you ...', and so on.

Dr Gary Parrett, whom many of these principles are taken from comments that when he sits in services, especially services with contemporary worship, and listens to the songs, his experience is that about 90 percent of all the songs that we sing in church are I-focused. About me and Jesus (Parrett 2008, lecture 6). It is entirely appropriate to sing worship songs that use 'I' language. There is nothing wrong with telling the Lord, 'I love you' or 'I need you'. Many of the Psalms, which served as ancient Israel's songbook, use this kind of language. But not all! Many of the Psalms use 'we' language. They were designed for use in corporate worship, so that the people of God could *together* express their praise towards Him. Many others use 'You' language, focusing entirely on the Lord, his goodness, his great deeds, and so on.

Sadly, much contemporary worship today is infected with the same selfish spirit as Western culture. We are radically individualistic; we are self-absorbed, self-focused people. One of the most obvious evidences of this self-centred culture invading the church is our I-centred singing. We need help to become conscious of the body of Christ, that is, aware of the fact that we all belong to one another. We need to balance our I-songs with a healthy number of songs that remind us that *we are the people of God*.

We also need to be aware of the words of the songs that we sing. Many of the songs we call "praise songs" are not praise songs, but rather songs that minister to our own hearts. These are ministry songs and have a place, but they are focused on ministering to our hearts. This is not praise towards God. (e.g., singing about how I am loved, how I am special, how I am loved by God, how I am a friend of God. These are songs towards me. Not God!)

9. When we worship as a community, our concern for individual freedom and self-expression must be balanced with the need to ‘prefer one another in love’ and ‘consider others more important than yourself’.

This principle is based on Philippians 2:1-4.

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

When you gather for worship, do not think only about what you like, what you prefer, what you need, what is most meaningful and fulfilling to you. Do not think only about yourself. Discern the body. Consider the needs of others in the community. We should not be self-absorbed.

Need to acknowledge the presence and needs of others who are different from us.

What a difference it would make to our corporate worship if we approached it with the mindset Paul encourages in Philippians 2:4, considering others’ needs more important than our own. Imagine if the young people considered the older people more important than themselves, the adults considered the needs of the children, and so on. In our worship services, we must be conscious of the needs of all members of the body.

We must at some point acknowledge the worship needs of different types of people who have different preferences when it comes to expressions of worship. Some of our personal worship needs can be better met in our private prayer closets when we are alone with God (1 Cor. 14:18-19). Worship is bigger than ‘what makes me feel good’.

The issue is complicated by the fact that we spend so much time ‘shopping’ for a worship service that meets our needs, and maybe that whole approach to church hopping and church shopping needs to be revisited.

10. Worship is first and foremost for God and about God; its benefits in forming believers and in reaching unbelievers are secondary.

Every church must engage in three great tasks: worship, nurture, and outreach. Worship is oriented towards God, nurture towards believers, and outreach towards unbelievers. When we come together for worship, it is not *primarily* to reach out to unbelievers, although this can and does happen, and it is not *primarily* to nurture believers, although formation does take place. Worship is first and foremost *for God* and

about God. The priority is to be in God's presence, give him honour, receive his revelation afresh, and respond faithfully. Our agenda is not to accomplish anything except to worship God. Our focus is on revelation from God and faithful response to Him.

This is not to say that spiritual formation and outreach do not take place when we gather for worship. They certainly do. Believers are instructed, comforted, refreshed, restored, and so on. Unbelievers may be present and encounter God in our presence (1 Cor. 14:24-25).

11. God is both the Subject and the Object of our worship.

God is the subject of worship in the sense that it is he who initiates the worship encounter by graciously revealing himself, his work, and his will to us. God is the subject of worship because he initiates it. He calls us into relationship with himself and calls us to faithful response.

God is the object of worship because it is *to God* that we respond with love and praise and service and obedience. All good things come from him and all good worship goes to him (Rom. 11:36).

In short, then, worship must be God-centred from first to last!

What does it mean to worship in Spirit and in Truth?

John 4:20-26

Jesus sharing with the Samaritan woman at the well spoke of worship.

“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”

Worship “in Spirit” can mean several things.

1. It can mean that worship is to be spiritual in nature.

That is, it is not about the externals of worship such as buildings, stain glass windows, altars and external forms. It is not about a specific holy place (the temple). It is a sincere action of the heart toward God and, therefore, it can occur anywhere.

All that is needed for spiritual worship to take place is the heart and the voice. Everything else is merely an enhancement of the heart and the voice.

You can have instruments playing and people can be singing, but if the heart and the voice are not engaged, it is not spiritual worship.

2. It can mean that worship is to be done “in the Holy Spirit.”

That is, our worship should come from a human spirit that is infused with the Holy Spirit. This is worship that is inspired by the Holy Spirit within and may at times consist of “singing in the Spirit” which Paul tells us is singing in “tongues” (1 Cor. 14:15).

What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.

Worship “in truth” can also mean several things.

1. Worship “in truth” is worship that is without falsehood.

It is sincere worship offered without hypocrisy. It is not something that is done for show. It is not just an outward form containing words of constant repetition. When you study the worship of David he was blatantly honest with God in his worship.

2. Worship “in truth” is worship that is “according to truth,” that is, according to the Word of God which is truth (John 17:17).

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

What can we glean from the Bible about the form our worship takes?

God had a prescribed form of worship in both the Old and the New Testaments.

1. He had a prescribed way in the Old Testament—the proper order (Leviticus).

King David discovered that God cared about the way they worshipped not merely the spirit with which they worshipped (1 Chr. 15:13).

1 Chronicles 15:13

For because you did not do it the first time, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order.

For because you bore it not [as God directed] at the first, the Lord our God broke forth upon us--because we did not seek Him in the way He ordained.

- Amplified Bible

2. God has a prescribed form in the New Testament as well.

If we want the full blessing of God we must do God's things God's way. It is not a matter of worshipping God in any way that we want. True worship, which is a reflection of true submission to God, must be done in the way that God desires it to be given to Him.

What is the New Testament order of worship?

1. New Testament worship is according to the Davidic order.

- David was the architect of worship in the Bible.
- David's order of worship is reflected in the Psalms.
- David seems to have jumped out of his dispensation of law into our dispensation of grace when he erected the Tabernacle of David on Mount Zion (Heb. 12:18-22).

"For you have not come to [Mount Sinai] ... but you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God..."

The worship of David was completely opposite from the Old Testament order established by God under Moses on Mount Sinai.

Tabernacle of Moses	Tabernacle of David
No Singing	Singer with Singing
No Music	Instruments and Music
No Recording	Recording (Psalms)
No Thanksgiving	Sacrifice of Thanksgiving
No Clapping	Clapping to the Lord
No Shouting	Shouts of Joy
No Dancing	Dancing before the Lord
No Lifting Hands	Lifting of Hands
No Access to Ark	All Levites before the Ark
Animals Sacrificed	No Animals Sacrificed
Natural Sacrifices	Spiritual Sacrifices

It should be noted in the Temple of Solomon both forms of worship were combined (See: I Chronicles 15-16).

The Early Church used the Psalms of David as a hymnbook because it was descriptive of their order or manner of worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

Eph. 5:18-20

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...

Col. 3:16-17

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

2. The New Testament describes three levels of singing.

a. Psalms

The Psalms of the Old Testament were the song book of the Early Church. Why? Because they reflected the New Testament order of worship. You cannot sing about clapping without clapping. You cannot sing about dancing without dancing. You cannot sing about lifting your hands without lifting your hands.

b. Hymns

These were most likely composed songs that were designed to instruct in the truths of God.

c. Spiritual Songs

These were most likely songs that came straight from the heart and were spontaneous or prophetic in nature. Some of them may have been adopted as congregational songs, but they were birthed from a spontaneous expression of love to the Lord.

What characterizes worship after the Davidic order?

The Davidic order involves the exuberant, full-bodied worship reflected in the Psalms.

Most of the Psalms were composed in relation to worship in the Tabernacle of David. Many were spontaneous expressions from the heart of the singer (this is why they needed recorders).

The Davidic order is characterized by the following:

- 1. Praising God with our voice or mouth (Ps. 42:4).** This includes:
 - SPEAKING (Ps. 51:15; 63:5; 66:8; 71:8; 109:30; 145:21)
 - SINGING (Ps. 7:17; 9:1-2; 33:3; 40:3; 100:4; 135:3)
 - SHOUTING (Ps. 5:11; 32:11; 35:27; 95:1-2; 132:9, 16)

2. **Praising God with our hands.** This includes:
 - LIFTING (Ps. 28:2; 63:3-4; 88:89; 134:1-2; 141:2; 143:6)
 - CLAPPING (Ps. 47:1; 98:8)
 - PLAYING INSTRUMENTS (Ps. 33:2; 43:4; 92:3; 97:4-6; 150)

3. **Praising God with our bodily postures.** This includes:
 - STANDING (Ps. 24:3; 33:8; 134:1; 135:1-2)
 - KNEELING OR BOWING (Neh. 8:6; Ps. 95:6-7)
 - DANCING (Ps. 149:3; 150:4; II Sam. 6:14)

The Davidic order involves the singing of a new song to the Lord.

1. **David continually referred to singing a new song (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; Ps. 96:1; Ps. 98:1; Ps. 144:9).**

Ps. 33:1-4

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful. Praise the LORD with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy. For the word of the LORD is right, and all His work is done in truth.

Ps. 40:3

He has put a new song in my mouth-- praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD.

Ps. 96:1-4

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless His name; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples. For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.

Ps. 98:1

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.

2. Isaiah encouraged the singing of a new song (Is. 42:10).

Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise from the ends of the earth...

New songs that are sung from the heart reflect new and up-to-date experiences with God.

3. Worship in heaven involves singing a new song (Rev. 5:9; 14:3).

Rev. 14:1-3

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

The “new song” referred to in this passage is a song that only the redeemed can sing.

4. A new song is a fresh, unknown song that is sung personally out of one’s heart to the Lord to extol Him for His greatness, His attributes and His redemptive work in our lives.

5. The reasons for singing a new song can be summarized in the following passages:

- Psalm 33 – Because of His upright Word, His faithful works, His steadfast love, His marvelous creation, His absolute sovereignty, His grace manifest in choosing us.
- Psalm 96 – Because of God’s name, His salvation, His glory, His greatness, His majesty, His honor, His strength, His beauty and His righteous judgment.
- Psalm 98 – Because of God’s marvelous accomplishments, His supremacy, His revelation, His love and faithfulness, His impartial judgment.
- Psalm 144 – Because God defends and delivers from enemies, He provides victory over oppressors; He desires our personal prosperity and blessing.
- Revelation 5 – Because of Christ’s universal redemption, His creation of the church and His servants.

This kind of worship creates faith in our own hearts and lives.

What might hinder us from worshipping according to the New Testament order?

One of the greatest hindrances to worshipping God according to the New Testament order is our traditional concepts of reverence and worship. Jesus indicated that we by our traditions can make the Word of God of none effect (Mt. 15:1-6). What do we do when our traditions say one thing but the Word of God says another?

If our tradition says that silent worship is reverent and pleasing to God...but the Word of God says sing, shout, dance and clap your hands, what do we do?

Ps. 95:1-3

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods.

Ps. 98:4-8

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises. Sing to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of a psalm, with trumpets and the sound of a horn; shout joyfully before the LORD, the King. Let the sea roar, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell in it; let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the LORD...

If our tradition says that we must be very serious in the house of God and be careful not to get too excited...but the Word of God says to rejoice and make a joyful noise to the Lord, what do we do?

Ps. 100:1-2

Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing.

Ps.9:2

I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.

Ps. 32:11

Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

What do you do when the Word of God says one thing but your religious tradition says another? The answer is, "You change." You conform your life and experience to the Word of God. The truth is that "reverence" is "obedience." We revere and honor God

when we worship Him way that he desires to be worshipped. He indeed is looking for those who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

Ps. 47:6-7

Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding.

Conclusion

Our worship must be God-focused and Christ-centred! It must include elements of revelation and response that are biblically informed and biblically faithful. It should be in accordance with his pattern and preference. God is seeking worshippers who will worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). We need to balance those concerns for ourselves and for others. For worship to be 'spiritual', it must be (a) directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit; (b) the 24-7 lifestyle commitment of the believer; (c) offered with the totality of our being. We also need to be lovers of the truth. It is impossible to be an authentic worshipper, and at the same time be apathetic about the truths God has revealed about himself. If we are not committed to understanding God's revelation, we cannot respond appropriately to him in worship.

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Reflection Questions

1. What has shifted in terms of your view of worship after going through this teaching?
2. To what extent is your corporate worship an overflow of your lifestyle of worship?
3. What are the major hindrances to your lifestyle of worship?
4. What are you going to do differently after going through this lesson?
5. What steps can you take in order to ensure that you have a lifestyle of worship?
6. When do you think your worship is most pleasing to God?

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