



Worship



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WHAT IS WORSHIP?

It is easy to have a limited understanding of “worship”. We may think that:

- We go to a church service to worship.
- We have a worship time at the start or end of a meeting.
- Worship involves singing quiet songs, often repetitively!
- Worship is an emotional state we enter into through singing.

Outside of a church community setting we may come across phrases such as “he worships the ground she stands on” or “she worships that football team” and get the impression that this is some over the top emotional, irrational, and possibly unhealthy reaction of one person to another or to an object. However the term is used in the modern idiom, what is important is what the Bible says about worship.

Whereas we use one word to encompass the idea of what worship is, there are several words used in different contexts within the Bible but they all add up to the idea that worship is our heart response to God and this is more than what occurs in a church meeting. Worship is more than a 20-minute slot at the start of a meeting, and by that we mean more in essence rather than more in time! We do not go to church to worship, we are the church, a worshipping people. Singing songs is one expression of worship, an outworking of what is happening internally and corporately in the life of God’s people and His church. Worship transcends culture and releases us into freedom.

SOME BIBLICAL WORDS FOR WORSHIP

This is not an exhaustive word study but here are some key Biblical words and meanings in respect of worship:

- Proskuneo (e.g: John 4 vs 20-24, Hebrews 1 vs 6). This word means “to move forward with a kiss, to revere, to adore”. This is a combination of intimacy and wonder. It depicts the relationship with God that we have received through Jesus. We worship God as friends.
- Latreuo (e.g: Acts 7 vs 42, Acts 24 vs 11). This word means, “to minister to God, to serve”. This speaks of a love response to God and to do His will as a decision on our part.
- Sebomai (e.g: Matthew 15 vs 19, Mark 7 vs 7). This word means “to revere, to adore, to be devout”. This speaks of a people who by their very lifestyles are worshipping God.
- Eusabio (e.g: Acts 17 vs 23). This word means “to act piously”.
- Shachah (e.g: Genesis 22 vs 5, Exodus 34 vs 14). This word means “to bow down, to prostrate, to fall flat” and is the most commonly used word for worship in the Old Testament. This speaks of acknowledging the Lordship of God in our life, and a humbling of ourselves before Him.
- Abad (e.g: Genesis 2 vs 5, Genesis 2 vs 15). This word means “to work, to toil” and the implication is that work can be seen as service and worship and this expands worship to something that touches our everyday lives.

SOME BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF WORSHIP

There are many examples of worship in the Bible, here are some that enable us to understand what worship is about:

- Genesis 22 recounts the story of Abraham being asked by God to sacrifice his son Isaac. When asked where he was going, Abraham replies “my son and I are going up the mountain to worship”. That worship represented the laying down of all of Abraham’s hopes and dreams for his family.

- Matthew 2 tells of the wise men who visited the child Jesus. They are wealthy and intelligent men who, when they saw Jesus, gave their gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. That worship represented an act of humility on their part as wise men humbled themselves before a new born child.
- Mark 14 tells of Mary who, ignoring all the criticism and mis-understanding of the others present, poured out very precious and costly perfume on the feet of Jesus, not only sacrificing the expense but also her own dignity and reputation.
- Romans 12 tells of our need to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. Worship in this context is an act of choice on our part. We lay down our whole lives for God acknowledging that He is Lord of all we are and all we do.

WHY WORSHIP?

Having looked at what the Bible says about worship we can see that worship is a heart response of love and obedience to God that is a creative act of individuals and a community who have given all that they are and all that they have. Worship is a key part of Christian life because it:

- Satisfies the heart of God (Luke 19 vs 40).
- Is an expression of our freedom (Exodus 3 vs 12).
- Is an expression of those who have been filled with the Spirit (Acts 2 vs 11).
- Attunes us to hear God's voice (Psalm 95).
- Heralds the coming King (Luke 19 vs 40).
- Hastens the return of the King (Acts 15 vs 16).
- Is a foretaste of heaven on earth (Revelation 1 vs 17).

Above all, worship is part of who God made us and when we worship Him we satisfy a longing within us that strengthens us and helps us to stay in tune with God. Worship is self-affirming because of who we worship and the value that God places on us.

LOVING COMMUNITY

Worship is a vital part of community life, it is a precious and wonderful thing but our ability to worship can be hindered by our attitudes towards others, especially if our relationships with each other are not those of love (1 John 3 vs 10). We each have responsibility to ensure that our relationship with one another is right, that there is no bitterness and no relational barriers. We also have a responsibility to live our own lives as we should. Worship involves integrity at both an individual and corporate level. When we work out our relationship with God and each other in love, then God pours out His blessing on the whole body (Psalm 133).