

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

1. Various definitions of worship.
 - a. Worship is conversation between God and man, a dialogue that should go on constantly in the life of a Christian.
 - b. Worship is giving to God and involves a lifetime of giving to him the sacrifice he asks for: our total selves.
 - c. Worship is our affirmative response to the self-revelation of the triune God.
 - d. Worship was the outcome of the fellowship of love between the creator and man and is the highest point man can reach in response to the love of God.
 - e. Worship is one's heart expression of love, adoration, and praise to God with an attitude and acknowledgment of his supremacy and Lordship.
 - f. Worship is an act by a redeemed man to God whereby his will, intellect and emotions gratefully respond in reverence, honor, and devotion to the revelation of God's person expressed in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, as the Holy Spirit illuminates God's written word to his heart.
 - g. Worship means "to feel in the heart." Worship means to express in some appropriate manner what we feel.
 - h. True worship and praise are "awesome wonder and overpowering love" in the presence of our God.
 - i. Worship is the ability to magnify God with our whole being--body, soul, and spirit.
 - j. The heart of true worship is the unashamed pouring out of our inner self upon the Lord Jesus Christ in affectionate devotion.
 - k. Worship is fundamentally God's Spirit within us contacting the Spirit in the Godhead.
 - l. Worship is the response of God's Spirit in us to that Spirit in him whereby we answer, "Abba, Father," deep calling unto deep.
 - m. Worship is the ideally normal attitude of a rational creature properly related to the creator.
 - n. Worship is extravagant love and extreme obedience.
2. Differences between praise and worship.
 - a. The outward forms of praise and worship are often identical. It is almost as difficult to separate praise and worship as it is to divide soul and spirit.
 - b. The four expressions known as prayer, thanksgiving, praise, and worship are very closely related.
 - c. Worship is an attitude of the heart; praise is an outward testimony.
3. Hypothetical differences.
 - a. God does not need our praises; we need to praise him. The Father seeks worshipers, not worship.
 - b. Praise can sometimes be distant, but worship is usually intimate.
 - i. Drunkards witness to one another.
 - ii. Jesus said the rocks would cry out if his disciples did not praise him. Rocks do not have a relationship with God; no interaction of personalities.
 - iii. Relationship is a requirement for worship. It brings us close to the heart of God.
 - c. Praise is always seen or heard; worship is not always evident to an observer.

- i. Praise is obvious to others.
 - ii. There is only one who knows whether or not we are truly worshipping.
 - d. Praise is largely horizontal in its purpose, while worship is primarily a vertical interaction.
 - i. Horizontally, we speak to one another and we declare his praise before each other.
 - ii. Praise does have some vertical functions.
 - iii. Praise is often preparatory to worship.
 - iv. Praise can be conceived as a gateway to worship. We sing in order to enter into praise, and sometimes we praise in order to enter into worship.
 - v. Music is a catalyst for worship. It in no way guarantees or even denotes worship.
 - vi. Worship is not a musical activity but a function of the heart.
 - e. We sometimes need to plunge into praise with an aggressiveness. Our spirit is willing to worship, but our flesh is weak and reluctant. Since praise is expressed through the flesh, it requires a stirring up of the flesh. Worship is more a function of the spirit; what is needed is not a stirring up of the flesh but an unlocking of the spirit.
- 4. Worship is not necessarily superior to praise. Sometimes it is appropriate to remain at praise for a period of time or to bring a service to an apex by concluding with high praise.
- 5. What matters to God is that we enter into sweet communion with him, regardless of whether the song is written in the first, second, or third person.
- 6. Get focus off the mechanics and concentrate on pleasing the Lord by simply expressing our love to him.
- 7. Many of the bodily activities employed in praise are employed in worship also.
 - a. Shouting, clapping, singing, dancing can be used in worship.
 - b. But worship can also transpire without any outward activity, whereas praise is always characterized by some form of physical manifestation.
 - c. The highest of these two expressions is whichever is inspired by the Holy Spirit for the occasion.
- 8. When we praise, the Holy Spirit begins to stir our hearts, and we become more conscious of God's presence.
 - a. His presence never comes and goes. We are the ones who change.
 - b. Our awareness of his presence changes.
- 9. Some services will begin with worship and end with a glorious sound of praise.
- 10. Worship is not just a response to God's presence. There are times when we feel very far from God, and yet we need to worship him. Ex: Abraham offering up Isaac. "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship (Gen. 22:5).
- 11. The essence of worship.
 - a. Worship can happen when we are in our darkest hour and we affirm his sovereignty regardless of our circumstances.
 - b. The fundamental essence of worship is: regardless of negative circumstances or complete emotional turmoil, I bow my heart and life before God Almighty, acknowledging his supreme Lordship.
 - c. The bottom line on worship is confessing his Lordship when everything that

surrounds one's life screams, "God is unjust! He doesn't love you! He has forsaken you!"

- d. Worship is learned. Ps. 89:15.
 - i. Our ability to worship is developed through application and experience.
 - ii. Like the art of prayer, worship is learned by doing it.
 - e. There are times when our worship will not constitute the forming of words and phrases but will involve the humble prostration of our souls before God, revering his greatness in silence and stillness. Since worship is an expression of love, it frequently functions very similarly to marital love. Love does not need to be verbalized in order to be expressed or appreciated.
12. The Holy Spirit and worship.
- a. Unregenerate man will never be able to worship in love.
 - b. The Holy Spirit is an integral part of our worship, and congregational worship is successful only as we submit to him as our divine Worship Leader.
13. Worship in spirit and truth. John 4:21-24.
- a. Jesus was showing that worship would no longer be bound to a certain time or place (neither in Jerusalem, where the Jews worshiped, nor Mount Gerizim, where the Samaritans worshiped).
 - b. It was going to be a function of the spirit of man reaching out to the Spirit of God.
 - c. Jesus knew the time was shortly to come when Mosaic sacrifices at Jerusalem would be outdated, and worship would occur within the New Testament temple, man himself (1 Cor 3:16).
 - d. As a function of the spirit, true worship is more than just an outward ritual. Worship is our spirit corresponding with God's Spirit.

Under the old covenant, worship was a series of outward ceremonies that did not necessarily involve the heart response of the participants.

Is 29:13. These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.

Under the new covenant, our worship become more than merely the mouthing of empty cliches but can be the upright expression of a pure heart.
- a. Jesus further showed that our worship would be greatly enhanced through the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
14. Worship in truth.
- a. Distinction between ignorant worship ("you Samaritans worship what you do not know" and intelligent worship ("we worship what we do know). Jesus spoke of worshiping in truth meaning that worshiping must involve the mind. The more we exert our minds in worship, the more meaningful our worship is likely to be.
 - b. The second application of worship in truth is that worship must be through Jesus Christ, who is the truth (Joh 14:6).
 - c. Third, we are to worship out of a heart that is true to God, with a life that displays truth and purity. Worship with integrity.
 - d. True worship is to be distinguished from hypocritical worship. Put on good "front."
 - e. Finally, in saying we should worship in truth, Jesus intends that we worship in accordance with the truth of God's word, for "your word is truth (Joh 17:17). It is

not enough to worship in sincerity; we must also worship in truth. Millions worship in sincerity, but they do not worship according to the revealed truth of God in his word. Muslims worship Allah, believing they are worshipping the one true God. We can know we are a worshiper of the true God by getting to know him through the Scriptures. Worship flows out of relationship, and our relationship with God is strengthened by learnign of him throug hhis word. Our worship is no higher than our knowledge of God.

- f. Worship inevitably works a changing and purifying within. Intimate fellowship with God will of a certainty bring a refining in our lives; the inner recesses of our hearts will be illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and the dross will be purged, for “our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb. 12:29).

15. The simplicity of worship.

- a. Worship should be renewing, invigorating, therapeutic. We must relax if we are to enjoy the simplicity of worship.
- b. Every congregation should experience “high” times in God, but not every worship service is titillating and ecstatic; in fact, most are not. We may as well relax, delight in being with God, and enjoy the degree of glory we rpresently know. If we derive our fulfillment from the intensity of each worship service, we are sure to be frustrated. If we must attain some spiritual “high” in order to be at peace with ourselves, then everything we do is tainted with energy, concern, effort, and worry. If the service does not “take off” according to our expectations, we increase our level of exertion or “hype.” We must find our joy and peace in something other than the intensity of praise and worship attained in a service. Our peace must be drawn from Christ and from a personal relationship with him that is not affected by the vicissitudes of worship services. We must find contentment in a “simple” expression of praise and worship and rest on the unmoving Rock, Christ Jesus.
- c. Praise can be characterized by strenuous intensity as we seek to declare his glories with enthusiasm and energy; but not so with worship. Worship can be intense, but it is an intensity initiated by God rather than by man. Intense times of worship just “happen” without any human manipulation or effort. Worship should not be a function of straining and striving in the sense of trying to enter into something climactic, but it should be characterized by relaxation, enjoyment, celebration, ease, enthusiasm, and rejoicing.
- d. Ivan Q. Spencer, the founder of Elim Bible Institute, once said, “When you work, God rests; when you rest, God works.”

In worship, we partake of the very river that flows from the throne of God.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God. Ps 46:4.

As the river of God begins to flow during our times of worship, it brings life, a bundance, a nd healing, washing over broken hearts and restoring parched souls.

- 1. It is one thing to know what worship is--it is quite another thing to become a worshiper.