

## Worshipping in the Spirit and Truth

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### Basics

When Jesus was asked which was the greatest commandment, He of course being the exact representation of God, the I AM who had appeared to Moses and who had given the Israelites the 10 commandments knew what the Old Testament Law's true intent was and so He summarised them<sup>i</sup> in a way that Dr Gary Barrett relates as follows to True worship<sup>ii</sup>:

*"True worship is to love the Lord with all your heart (taken from Deut: 6: 5) and Love your neighbour (from Lev 9:18). These are the 2 basic requirements for worship. You should do these, before you do anything else."*

Those who truly worship God in in the Spirit and truth<sup>iii</sup> will understand this principle about worship: God has always been interested in true worship which is a 24/7 life style, not a "Sunday morning" activity and this is why the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write the following:

*In gratitude for all that God has done for you, by the sacrifice of Jesus on your behalf, **offer your body as 'a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.***<sup>iv</sup>

Most of us associate worship with only singing (slow songs) but what are the various elements of true worship that our generation can learn?

### How worship is demonstrated in the bible

#### 1. It starts with being just.

In one of those "tough love" moments when God is angry with his people. He charges:

*"Who asked you to bring me all this when you come to worship me? Who asked you to do all this tramping around in my Temple? It's useless to bring your offerings. **I am disgusted** with the smell of the incense you burn. **I cannot stand** your New Moon Festivals, your Sabbaths, and your religious gatherings; they are all corrupted by your sins. **I hate** your New Moon Festivals and holy days; **they are a burden that I am tired of bearing.** "When you lift your hands in prayer, I will not look at you. **No matter how much you pray, I will not listen, for your hands are covered with blood.** Wash yourselves clean. Stop all this evil that I see you doing. Yes, stop doing evil and learn to do right. **See that justice is done—help those who are oppressed, give orphans their rights, and defend widows.**"<sup>v</sup>*

#### 2. There's physical action (e.g. bowing/prostrating).

In the New Testament one of the words used for worship is the word *proskuneo* which means to bow down to gods or kings.<sup>vi</sup> There are indeed examples in the bible where worship includes a physical act. Has our generation today who seem to for example abhor kneeling down to pray forgotten how the ancients honoured God? A blind man healed by Jesus worshipped him. This presumably meant he fell at Jesus' feet/prostrated.<sup>vii</sup>



Other examples include:

*“Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and **he fell to the ground and worshiped**. And he said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there.”<sup>viii</sup>*

*“Come, **let us bow down and worship him; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!** He is our God; we are the people he cares for, the flock for which he provides. Listen today to what he says.”<sup>ix</sup>*

### 3. There’s singing (loudly).

I asked someone I hold in high esteem (he is also more spiritually mature than me) about ancient vs modern songs. His answer was quite insightful. He said there is nothing wrong with singing old songs/hymns but it is hard to clap, shout, dance, kneel, fall down and raise one’s hands (as commanded to do in scripture) while singing to an old hymn! He is right. When the ancients worshipped, they were over the top. God loves this kind of worship and The Psalms which are the “prayer and worship manual” give an example:

*“**Shout for joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious. Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you. All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing the praises of your name.” Come and see what God has done, his awesome deeds for mankind!**”<sup>x</sup>*

Is it a surprise that David was called God’s friend? The man (he wrote many of the psalms) knew how to worship! When did you last dance for God with all your might like he did?<sup>xi</sup>

### 4. Giving to poor people is worship (surprise surprise).

*“If you oppress poor people, you insult the God who made them; but **kindness shown to the poor is an act of worship.**”<sup>xii</sup>*

### 5. Worship God with Holy Fear.

Our praise and worship songs today are full of joy for “Jesus set us free from our sins” so we shout for Joy. That is well and good and true. But the bible also asks us to have Holy fear of God (the words “reverence” and “awe” reflect this), including when we are thankful. Does your worship enable you reflect on how Holy God is. So Holy you tremble?

*“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, **let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.”**”<sup>xiii</sup>*

### 6. Worship never stops – in good times and in bad times

In the first example above, Job had just been “brought low” by God. What did he do? He worshipped. We are called to worship God at all times.

*“Be glad that we belong to him; let all who worship him rejoice. Go to the Lord for help; and **worship him continually.**”<sup>xiv</sup>*

## Worship in action today

Dr Gary Parrett<sup>xv</sup> (who I mentioned at the beginning) explains that indeed there are various elements of worship when we come together (corporate worship) or when we are alone.

I have covered some of them above but in summary, he says that they include:

- Songs(both traditional and contemporary) – praise and worship, songs of lament, hymns;
- Bible readings;
- Testimonies;
- Sacraments; (e.g baptism, communion);
- Congregational prayer;
- Times of silence;
- Presentation of tithes and offering;
- Faith confession (e.g reciting the apostle’s creed); and
- Use of silence (to contemplate/meditate on what has been said).

## Your turn

What will you now do differently? Examples to think about include:

- What current aspects of your life might hinder you from true worship?
- What elements of worship have you learnt that you will now incorporate in your worship (whether private or in a congregation)?

*Write here*

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Matthew 22: 35 - 40

<sup>ii</sup> Taken from series of “Essentials of worship” from biblicaltraining.org.

<sup>iii</sup> [john.4.23-24.nkjv](#)

<sup>iv</sup> [rom.12.1-3.niv](#)

<sup>v</sup> [isa.1.12-17.gnt](#)

<sup>vi</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worship#Etymology>

<sup>vii</sup> [jhn.9.35-39.nkjv](#)

<sup>viii</sup> [job.1.20-22.nkjv](#)

<sup>ix</sup> [psa.95.6-7.gnt](#)

<sup>x</sup> [psa.66.1-5.niv](#)

<sup>xi</sup> 2 Samuel 6: 14

<sup>xii</sup> [pro.14.31.gnt](#)

<sup>xiii</sup> [heb.12.28-29.niv](#)

<sup>xiv</sup> [psa.105.3-4.gnt](#)

<sup>xv</sup> Dr Gary Paret in his “Implications” series as part of the “Essentials of Worship” lectures from biblicaltraining.org