

WORSHIP

Worship is a familiar term to most of us. We have idioms like “He worships the ground she walks on” or “Hero Worship” or “She worships him.” Churches have the “Praise and Worship Team.”

But, when we think about it, what do we believe and what do we really know about worship? Why should we worship? Is worship important? Should we know more about what it is to worship?

In his Searching the Scriptures study, *The Church Awakening, an Urgent Call for Renewal*, Charles Swindoll wrote, “The purpose of the church is to cultivate worshipers. It’s a place where we learn about God so that our worship of Him becomes deeper, more meaningful, and understandable. Worship turns our full attention to the only one worthy of it. When you have worshiped, there is something so deeply satisfying and gratifying words cannot describe it.”

That’s the purpose of this study: to develop our worship of God and deepen our relationship with God. We want to be true worshipers in spirit and truth. (John 4:23)

As much as I enjoy researching topics and digging into words, I know that knowledge alone doesn’t change a thing. If we approach a study for information, we will walk away with perhaps a better understanding. Period. However, if we approach a study with the goal of learning and applying what we learn, we walk away with a purpose and a plan. I can collect all the Weight Watchers cookbooks and diet plans in the world, but if I don’t actually put them to use, I just have a nice collection. I can watch exercise videos all day, but until I consistently do the work with them, my muscles and body don’t benefit, and my health hasn’t changed.

Intellectual pursuit is good, but nothing changes until the knowledge is put into action. In this study, we want to look at what the Bible says about worship. We want to examine ourselves and our practices and we want to apply what we learn. We want to ask and answer questions.

I’d like to approach this study differently than we have in past studies. We are all different and in different places in our walk with God. Where we are today is not where we were last week, or even yesterday. And isn’t it wonderful that He meets us each where we are?

So, rather than answer scripted questions, I’d like us to read the Scripture references within the study and prayerfully think (meditate) on the ones that “speak” to us personally.

What is God saying to you? What are you learning about God, about yourself, and specifically about you worshipping God? How does He want to grow you? What applications have you made?

Then, let’s talk and share what we’re learning about worship from studying scripture, prayerful reflection, spending time in prayer before God, and putting it into action. Let’s use our conversation to encourage each other to grow to truly worship in spirit and in truth.

Note: Before we begin to read or study the Bible, we must PRAY. Ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten and to lead. As we investigate what the Bible says, it’s important to remember not to take a verse out of context or force it to fit our narrative. Read it in context for yourself. Ask to whom it was written (who and where), when it was written, why it was written, and what it meant to them at that time (context) before making an application to us today.

1 https://insightforliving.swncdn.com/pdf/retail/series/The-Church-Awakening-STS_Studies.pdf

REFLECTIONS ON WORSHIP

To start, let's ask ourselves what we personally think or believe now.

- What *is* worship? Is it the same thing as praise?

- Whom should we worship?

- Why should we worship? Is worship important?

- When should we worship?

- Where should we worship?

- How should we worship? Is there a right or wrong way to worship?

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

Contemporary definition of "worship" is (1) The reverent love and devotion given a deity, an idol, or a sacred object. (2) The ceremonies, prayers, or other religious forms by which this love is expressed. (3) to perform or take part in worship or an act of worship.

The English word worship comes from the Anglo-Saxon *weorthscipe*, which then was changed to *worthship*, and finally to *worship*. Worship means 'to attribute worth' to something or someone."

- God is the greatest possible object of worship. In the Old English sense of the word, anyone worthy of their position could be given the title "your worship" meaning "you are a worthy person." But all humans are only relatively worthy and are always flawed. God is perfect and as such is the perfect object of worship.
- When we worship God, we should recognize the fact that He is the greatest possible being of worth. No being is worth more than God.
- Recognizing the worthiness of God should help us to recognize our unworthiness to come into His presence. *It is a great and awesome privilege to worship God.*
- Worship then is the opportunity, made possible by the cross, for us as unworthy beings to come before the worthiest being and declare His worth to us.

Worship is the contemplation of God. It is being absorbed in Him alone who is of supreme worth and, therefore, worthy of praise. Charles R. Swindoll

In the Old Testament, the primary Hebrew word for worship is *Shachah* (shaw-khaw'), (Strong's #7812). ***Shachah means to "bend or bow down; to prostrate oneself."*** The word *shachah* could mean either "worship" or to physically bow down depending on the context. It appears 172 times in the Biblical text but is only translated as "worship" 99 times in the KJV. Whenever the Hebrew word is used as an action toward God, the translators translate this word as "worship". However, when this same Hebrew word is used as an action toward another man, the translators translate this word as "obedience," "bowed" or "bow down". For example, in Genesis 22:5 Abraham tells his servant what he and Isaac will go up on the mountain and "worship" (*shachah*). In Genesis 23:7, Abraham "bowed" (*shachah*) before the Hittites, physically bowing as a respectful greeting. Same Hebrew word, but different translation and meaning depending on the context. For the Hebrew, there was a close relationship between bowing and worshiping.

In the New Testament, **the most common Greek word translated as worship is "proskuneo."** (pros-koo-neh'-o) (Strong's #4352). According to Strong's Concordance, **Proskuneo means "to kiss" as in to kiss the hand of a superior.** It is commonly associated with bowing down or lying prostrate on the ground with the idea of kissing the ground before someone. Some scholars believe the word is associated with the idea of a dog licking its master's hand in that the idea is to show profound reverence and submission to someone. It occurs 60 times and is defined "to do reverence to" referring to action of fall down/prostrate oneself to adore on one's knees. It suggests the willingness to make all necessary physical gestures of homage.

Worship involves a physical response. Worship is often coupled with the act of bowing or kneeling, which shows humility and contrition. In both, the Hebrew and Greek words for worship we find that worship is directly connected with physically bowing, kneeling or even lying prostrate on the ground.

What we learn about worship is:

1. Worship is about submission. Both the Hebrew word, “shachah” and the Greek word “proskuneo” remind us that foundational to worship is our responsibility to be in full submission to our Master. Bowing before our King is a recognition not only of His superiority but also of His right to command us and our responsibility to obey.
2. Worship is about a servant approaching his Master. Like a dog coming to his owner, we are very much the lesser being. All we have comes from our Master and we approach Him knowing our place. We bow down because we are nothing compared to Him.
3. Worship means to hold something or someone in high respect, to adore, to reverence. It means to physically show reverence. In our modern mindset, we often overlook the importance of physically responding to God. We were created as physical beings and the physical acts often associated with worship—bowing, kneeling, lifting hands—help to create the necessary attitude of humility needed for real worship.
4. Worship is an attitude of the heart. A person can go through the outward motions and not be worshiping (Psalm 51:16-17; Matthew 6:5-6). God sees the heart, and He desires and deserves sincere, heartfelt praise and worship.
5. Worship is a state or attitude of the spirit. Even when we are in church, in a group setting, worship must be individual and personal.
6. Worship is a lifestyle, not just an occasional activity. Jesus said the Father is seeking those who will worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23).

Worship is an active response to God whereby we declare His worth. Worship is not passive; but it is participative. Worship is not simply a mood; it is a response. Worship is not a feeling; it is a declaration.

2 Ron Allen and Gordon Borrer, *Worship: Rediscovering the Missing Jewel*, as quoted in *Making New Discoveries* (Anaheim, Calif.: Insight for Living, 1996), 30.

Aren't worship and praise the same?

Praise is the joyful recounting of all God has done for us. It is closely intertwined with thanksgiving as we offer back to God appreciation for His mighty works on our behalf. Praise is universal and can be applied to other relationships as well. We can praise our family, friends, boss, or even a pet.

Praise does not require anything of us. It is merely the truthful acknowledgment of the righteous acts of another. Since God has done many wonderful deeds, He is worthy of praise (Psalm 18:3).

Throughout the Bible, the commands to "praise the Lord" are numerous. Angels and the heavenly hosts are commanded to praise the Lord (Psalm 89:5; 103:20; 148:2). All inhabitants of the earth are instructed to praise the Lord (Psalm 138:4; Romans 15:11). We can praise Him with singing (Isaiah 12:5; Psalm 9:11), with shouting (Psalm 33:1; 98:4), with the dance (Psalm 150:4), and with musical instruments (1 Chronicles 13:8; Psalm 108:2; 150:3-5). In Scripture, praise is usually presented as boisterous, joyful, and uninhibited. God invites praise of all kinds from His creation. Jesus said that if people don't praise God, even the "stones will cry out" (Luke 19:40).

When the Bible mentions worship the tone changes. We read verses like, "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 96:9). And "Come let us worship and bow down" (Psalm 95:6). Often, worship is coupled with the act of bowing or kneeling, which shows humility and contrition (2 Chronicles 29:28; Hebrews 11:21; Revelation 19:10).

Worship comes from a different place within our spirits. Worship should be reserved for God alone (Luke 4:8). Worship means losing self in the adoration of another. Praise can be a part of worship, but worship goes beyond praise. Praise is easy; worship is not. Worship gets to the heart of who we are. To truly worship God, we must let go of our self-worship. "We must be willing to humble ourselves before God, surrender every part of our lives to His control, and adore Him for who He is, not just what He has done."

"Just as praise is intertwined with thanksgiving, worship is intertwined with surrender." It is impossible to worship God and anything else at the same time (Luke 4:8).

It is through true worship that we invite the Holy Spirit to speak to us, convict us, and comfort us. Through worship, we realign our priorities with God's and acknowledge Him once more as the rightful Lord of our lives. 3

3 " What is the Difference Between Praise and Worship?" <https://www.gotquestions.org/difference-praise-worship.html>

What is Worship?

1. What verses speak to you about what worship is?

2. What is the Lord teaching you or reminding you about worship? What insights have you gained?

3. How do you respond to the statements that going to church, valuing the teaching and loving the singing is not worshipping God, and that it is not worshipping God if I am not focused on God alone?

4. Ask yourself:

- Am I coming to God as His servant?

- Am I willing to submit to His commands?

- Am I willing to physically kneel or bow down before God as I worship and pray?

- How often does my mind wander as I sing a hymn or pray?

- What needs to change? What is your "I will" statement?

WHOM SHOULD WE WORSHIP?

In order to truly worship, we must see and **understand** whom we worship. We must internalize the awe and wonder of God. We must respect and fear God. Proverbs 1:7 states that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Until we understand who God is and develop a reverential fear of Him, we cannot have true knowledge and meaningful worship.

- [Psalm 95:6](#) Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
- Hebrews 12: 28-29 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.
- Deuteronomy 10: 12, 20-21 And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. He is your praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes.
- Chronicles 16:29 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; Bring an offering and come before Him; Worship the LORD in holy attire.
- Psalm 29:2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; Worship the LORD in holy attire.
- Psalm 33:8 Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
- Psalm 95:6 Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.

All too often we have traded awe for familiarity. “Awesome” is a word we use to describe anything that pleases or impresses us. We are comfortable climbing up into our gentle, loving Father’s lap, and I believe we should be. However, in our mantra of “God is Love” we forget that our God is also holy, righteous, and just. Only He is worthy. Only He is awesome.

So, what does it mean to fear God? Should we be afraid of our loving Father who sent his only Son to die on our behalf (John 3:16-18)? Should we be afraid of our Good Shepherd who watches out for us and protects us (Psalm 100:1-3)? Should we be scared of our loving God who will never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5)?

For the unbeliever, the fear of God is the fear of the judgment of God and eternal death, which is eternal separation from God (Luke 12:5; Hebrews 10:31). However, for the believer, the fear of God is something much different. The believer’s fear is reverence of God. (Hebrews 12:28-29). Respect is part of fearing God, but fear of God is much more. For the believer, a biblical fear of God includes understanding how much God hates sin and fearing His judgment on sin—even in the life of a believer. God disciplines whom He loves (Hebrews 12:6). Even when a loving father disciplines his beloved children, that discipline is a fearful thing.

Fearing God means having such a reverence for Him that it has a great impact on the way we live our lives. The fear of God is respecting Him, obeying Him, submitting to His discipline, and worshiping Him in awe. This reverence and awe are what the fear of God means for Christians. This is the motivating factor for us to surrender to the Creator of the Universe.

- Psalm 100: 1-3 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. PSALM 100:1-3
- Hebrews 12:28-29 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.
- Revelation 14:7 He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

Our respect for God’s majesty causes us to honor Him (Psalm 29:2). Our gratitude for His mercy causes us to serve Him well (Psalm 2:11; 107:15). And the understanding that our God of love is also a God of wrath inspires enough fear to help us stay away from evil (Romans 1:18; Proverbs 8:13).⁴

⁴ “How is the Fear of God the Beginning of Wisdom?” <https://www.gotquestions.org/fear-Lord-beginning-wisdom.html>

Whom Should We Worship?

1. What verses speak to you about who God is?

2. How does the Bible describe God? List some attributes of God with the verses.

3. When you worship, how do you envision God? Does your view of God align with scripture?

4. When you worship, do you approach God as an equal or with awe and reverence? Do you see Him as resembling a comfortable buddy who exists to bless? Do you honestly see Him in all His majesty and power?

5. What is the reality of God's true nature based on scripture? Does what you have learned make you want to fall down in worship?

6. What needs to change in your view of God? What needs to change in your approach to worship? What is your "I will" statement?

WHY SHOULD WE WORSHIP?

Why should we worship? The Bible is filled with description, exhortation, examples, and even directions for worship. We are called, indeed, we are mandated, both individually and collectively, to worship – *to focus solely on the Lord our God and to worship Him*.

We are created to worship! We are born with a *need* to worship. We see evidence of this in our own dissatisfaction with our personal endeavors and our achievements. People often struggle to “find themselves” and to find their purpose in life. They (we) look for confirmation of the significance of their (our) lives. The desire to know that we have made a difference in the world is pervasive. We have within us an *innate* need to seek and bow down to someone or something greater, something *more*. Archeologists and anthropologists have shown that *every* civilization engages in some sort of worship. Whether it is a person, possession, activity, ideal, or noble goal placed on a pedestal, *every* human being (even atheist) sacrifices and worships. We don’t all worship God, but we all worship someone or something. Worship is part of who are and how we are created.

The Bible says:

1. We were made to worship God. ([Psalm 29:1–2](#); [1 Corinthians 10:31](#); [Ephesians 1:3–6](#); [Philippians 2:9–11](#)).
2. The central function of the Church is to glorify and worship God through Jesus Christ ([Ephesians 1:4–6](#); [1 Peter 2:5](#); [Revelation 5:13–14](#); [21:1–22:5](#)).

God wants each one of us to worship Him. ([Psalm 99:5](#); [John 4:23](#)). He is the only One worthy of it ([Deuteronomy 10:21](#); [1 Chronicles 16:25](#); [Psalm 96:4–5](#)). When we worship, we acknowledge that there is nothing or no one else worthy. When we worship, we place Him on the throne of our lives and in control of our lives. ([Hebrews 12:28–29](#))

To worship is to recognize, honor, and express the worthiness of God that He is due as our Maker ([Acts 17:28](#); [James 1:17](#); [Revelation 4:11](#)) and our Redeemer ([Colossians 1:12–13](#); [1 Peter 1:3](#)). Worship is part of our daily fellowship with God. For believers, worship is our way of life. The apostle Paul defined worship as an all-encompassing lifestyle, dedicated to glorifying God: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship” ([Romans 12:1](#)).

When we worship our heavenly Father through Jesus Christ, we experience [fellowship](#) and communion with Him ([Philippians 3:3](#)). Worship is how we meet with God and praise Him for His goodness, love, mercy, grace, wisdom, beauty, truth, holiness, compassion, might, and every other aspect of His character. Through worship, we celebrate God’s presence and power. We grow closer to Him as He speaks to hearts. His will becomes our will, and we are transformed.

So, we see, worshiping God is extremely important, and it does have an impact on our daily lives! We are *instructed* to worship God. If we see ourselves and God in proper perspective, we *owe* God our worship.

Read through Romans 1:18-32. See how failure to worship affects thoughts, attitudes, actions, and mindsets. Because we are *created* to seek to know more and to pay homage, if we remove God as the object of our worship, something or someone will take His place. We will seek other things to fill that void, and we will spiral downwards, beginning with our thoughts and progressing through our actions. Indeed, failure to worship God affects every aspect of our lives. True worship is essential to our well-being.

Not only does worship change us, but it also makes God known to others and changes their lives, too. “He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what he has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the LORD” ([Psalm 40:3, NLT](#)). Our worship testifies to what God has done in us and what He can also do for others.

Worship fosters gratitude. It is hard to remain bitter or depressed when we worship.

Yes, God deserves our worship, but we benefit from it. What could be better than to find and fulfill our ultimate purpose—to worship God and live in His presence forever and ever?

Why Should We Worship?

1. What verses speak to you about why we should worship?

2. What do these verses tell you about God, mankind, and worship?

a. Ecclesiastes 3:11 What does “He has also set eternity in the human heart” mean?

b. Romans 1:18-32 What happens if we don’t acknowledge and worship God?

c. Romans 1:21-23 When does a downward spiral begin?

d. Romans 1:28-32 What are some telling characteristics or actions of a person who is not worshiping God? Do you see any of these in your daily life? How do you handle it when you see sin in your own personal life?

e. John 4:23

What does “worship in spirit and truth” mean?

3. Is worship important? Why does our Father, the Creator of heaven and earth, desire and even seek us to worship Him?

4. What is the Lord teaching you or reminding you about the need to worship? What insights have you gained?

5. What needs to change? What is your “I will” statement?

How Should We Worship?

How should we worship? Is there a right or wrong way to worship? Scripture encourages and commands us to worship rightly and warns us against worshipping wrongly.

- We are warned against ceremonial worship that goes beyond what God requires. Legalism and man-made rules or customs are not true worship. Ceremonial rites set up by man are not true worship. Worship driven by pressure is not true worship. (Colossians 2:18-23).
- We are warned not to worship half-heartedly, hypocritically, insincerely, or with unconfessed sin. Isaiah 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 based on merely human rules they have been taught..."

[Matthew 6:5-6](#): "And when you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they will be seen by people. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But as for you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."

Matthew 21:8-9 "Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'"

This is a perfect example of insincere worship. Many of those yelling "Hosanna" will be yelling "crucify him" in a week's time. This is not worship driven by reverence and awe.

- We are clearly taught that worship is an attitude of the heart. A person can go through the outward motions and not be worshiping. God sees the heart and He desires and deserves sincere, heartfelt praise *and* worship. Worship comes from pure hearts, hearts surrendered to Christ. Worship is not confined to the walls of the church building. All our actions reflect our true worship.

[Psalm 51:16-17](#): For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You do not take pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, God, You will not despise.

- We are shown that worship is not confined to a place, a time, or a prescribed activity. Worship should permeate our daily lives.

Romans 12:1: "I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

In the Old Testament we see many examples of various people constructing altars, making sacrifices, placing monuments, and even renaming places to commemorate God's work. God gave Moses explicit and detailed instructions on how, where, when, and even who could conduct sacrifice and worship. BUT, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the temple veil was torn in two from top to bottom. As a result, we Believers, Christ Followers, can enter into the presence of God. We can approach our Heavenly Father anywhere and anytime. Through our High Priest, Jesus Christ, we can boldly approach the throne of grace. Jesus intercedes for us.

The story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4 is a rich lesson on how, when, and where to worship and should be read in its entirety. John 4:23-24 is often quoted: "But a time is coming, and even now has arrived, 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."

Worship is both internal and external. It involves our hearts and our minds individually. Worship is deeply personal. The essence of worship is an individual's response to the source of personal salvation. Worship makes us focus our thoughts and attention *entirely* on God, the only one worthy of our adoration. We see God and ourselves in perspective. Worship (noun) forces our hearts to unite with His, and the result is outpouring of gratitude and expression of worship (verb).

And as we see in examples of worship, the expression of worship is also personal and individual even as we engage in corporate worship. These examples highlight different expressions of worship in the Bible, depending on the person, the circumstances, and the culture:

- Hannah worshiped in prayerful petition. (1 Samuel 2:2).
- David worshiped
 - in gratitude (2 Samuel 7:21-22 and 1 Chronicles 16:31-34)
 - in trouble (Psalm 63)
 - in war (Psalm 68)
 - in his circumstances that make it hard to worship (Psalm 103)
- Nebuchadnezzar worshiped in humility after being chastised (Daniel 4:37).
- Habakkuk worshiped when facing calamity and judgment (Habakkuk 3:17-18).
- Job worshipped in the depths of despair (Job 1:20).
- Mary worshipped when she was unmarried and pregnant (Luke 1:46-55)
- Paul and Silas worshiped in jail (Acts 16)
- **Everyone** will worship at the judgment seat (Romans 14:10-11).

So, how do I go about worship?

Prepare:

- Be still. I must remember Whom I am addressing. Coming before our Holy God is a privilege not to be taken lightly! He is the Creator! The King of Kings! Worship requires respect and reverence. Being quiet and silent before the Lord allows me to begin to adore Him for who He is, not only for what He has done.
- Prepare my heart. Worship is a matter of the heart and comes from the heart. I must let go of whatever is burdening my heart and mind in order to enter a deeper worship of God. I must give it to Him because I cannot focus on God and on my responsibilities and concerns at the same time. He told us to give Him our burdens and to cast our cares on Him. (Matthew 11:29)
- Reflect on my position before Him, recalling His holiness and my sinfulness. I lay bare my sinful self before Him. I am transparent. I let go of any excuse or pride. God desires and values a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17).
- Take and truly accept His loving forgiveness and His unmerited grace. Ponder the incredible honor of being allowed into His presence as His beloved child. His beloved child! Just that thought alone is overwhelming!

Express:

- Express all of this in gratitude to our God. Worship as He leads.

How Should We Worship?

1. What verses speak to you about how we should worship?

2. When and where should we worship? What verses speak to this?

3. What hinders you from taking time to worship? Are you too busy?

4. What is the Lord teaching you or reminding you about how you worship? What insights have you gained?

5. What helps can you share with others to help to worship?

6. What needs to change in your personal worship? What is your "I will" statement?

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