

Philosophy of Worship
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Christian Worship - More Than Music

Christian worship is often thought of as the music portion of a church service - people singing songs to God, heads back, eyes closed, and hands raised in the air as they sing. Christian worship happens when we sing to God, whether in church or alone - in our cars or in the shower. If our desire is to please the heart of God, it is worship, no matter where the location or how many are involved.

Music affects our emotions and the lyrics can swell our hearts, causing us to become lost in the experience. Christian praise and worship music is a great tool for helping us feel closer to God. It's not uncommon for people to even pick a church because of the style of its worship music. Often people will emerge from a service saying, "The worship was wonderful today," or "The sermon was great, but I was really moved by the worship."

You may be surprised to realize that the entire service is about worshipping God!

Christian Worship - Showing reverence and gratitude to God

Another picture of Christian worship is showing reverence and gratitude by bowing down before God, as in this passage from Nehemiah:

"And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground."

Both singing and bowing down are acts of worship, but they are only part of the picture. Christian worship is so much more than that!

Christian Worship - It's all about the position of our hearts

Christian worship begins with discovering and admitting what we have been worshipping in our lives. All of us worship something, whether we know it or not. We may not physically bow down to it, or offer it songs of praise and adoration, but whatever we devote most of our time and attention to is often what we worship. Consider this Merriam-Webster definition of worship: "Reverence offered a divine being or supernatural power; *also*: an act of expressing such reverence; a form of religious practice with its creed and ritual; extravagant respect or admiration for or devotion to an object of esteem."

Seen in that light, it's easy to see that we can worship God, we can worship money, or power, or a rock star, or we can even worship a lifestyle. Worship is more than an act of reverence. It is an attitude of the heart.

Christian worship is clearly of interest to God. He knows we have an inner need to worship, so He asks us to worship Him. He, being God, can handle the weight of being worshipped; humans cannot. People who are worshipped by others can often be

influenced to think more highly of themselves than they ought. The Bible makes it plain that there is only one God worthy of our worship:

Deut. 6:13-14 -- You shall fear the LORD your God, and serve him, and shall swear by his name. You shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people who are round about you.

Do you love God? Are you thankful for what He has done for you through His Son Jesus Christ?

Psalm 29:2 -- Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

You can follow the admonition of Psalm 29:2 by turning away from what you formerly worshipped and acknowledging the lordship of Jesus. Let the life you live *be* an act of worship to Him. Whether you are called to be a preacher, a singer, a writer, a software engineer, a salesperson, or a truck driver, you can do everything for the glory of God. When you do, you are engaging in Christian worship.

Praise and Worship - A Natural Desire

Praise and worship seems to be universal. Have you ever heard of an explorer finding a new tribe or culture that doesn't worship? Worship is a natural instinct and a basic need for every person. A simple definition of worship is to regard with great devotion or to honor as a divine being. Take a second to think about what you are most devoted to in this life and ask yourself, "Is it worthy of my devotion; do I worship a divine being?"

Everyone worships something or someone. Since we all worship, we should question the reason for this desire. The most logical conclusion is that we were created by a higher being for the very purpose of worship. I just happen to believe that we were created by God to worship Him with every part and fiber of our lives!

The ongoing quest of man is to find answers to the fundamental questions of human origin, human nature, and human destiny. There is one book that has the answers to all these questions, including our questions about worship. The Bible is the wonderful and mysterious book that God has chosen as a way to communicate with us.

God is the focus of our devotion in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In Exodus 20:2-3, God says, "I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me." In Matthew 4:10, Jesus says, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." So, worship is not merely a natural instinct, it's a command from God.

Praise and Worship - Why Should We do it?

God alone is worthy of our devotion, praise and worship. He is God, our Creator, and we are commanded to praise and worship Him. Psalm 96:9 says, "O worship the LORD in

the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth." Psalm 29:2 says, "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."

A.W. Tozer said, "Without worship, we go about miserable." God doesn't want us to be miserable -- He has a perfect plan for our lives. He has done so many things to show us that He loves us and doesn't want us to be miserable. He wants us to have hope for a future with Him -- He wants us to have eternal life in heaven with Him.

A life of praise and worship fills our deepest needs, and amazingly, it also brings great joy to God. Zephaniah 3:17 states, "The LORD your God in the midst of you is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over you with joy; he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

Praise and Worship - How Do We do it?

God tells us how to praise and worship him in His Word. John 4:23 says, "But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him." In order to worship God in truth, we need to know that Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." So, before you can worship in the way that God desires, you have to develop a relationship with Him through faith in Jesus, His Son.

The best way that we can praise and worship God is with our every thought and action. Romans 12:1-2 states, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Praise and Worship - Love from the Heart

Many people think that praise and worship is only singing songs at church, but it is so much more! It is also a condition of your heart -- a willingness to exalt God and yield to His will. Worship is an expression of love and awe to the God who gives us more than we deserve. Whether you express your worship by singing, playing music, dancing or in some other way, remember that you are called to worship God with your every action, every day of your life. God is holy, loving, and worthy of all our worship and devotion.

Deuteronomy 6:5 -- "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."

Worship - Spirit and Truth

True worship is God-centered worship. People tend to get caught up in where they should worship, what music they should sing in worship, and how the worship looks to other people. Focusing on these things completely misses the point. Jesus tells us that true worshipers will worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). This means we worship from a pure heart!

Worship - The Heart of the Matter

Worship can include praying, reading God's Word with an open heart, singing, participating in communion, and serving others. It's not limited to one act, but is done properly when the heart and attitude of the person is in the right place.

Worship and praise are reserved only for God. Only He is worthy; not any of his servants (Revelation 19:10). We are not to worship saints, prophets, statues, idols, angels, or any other false gods. We shouldn't worship for the expectation of something in return, such as a miraculous healing. Worship is done for God, and God's pleasure alone! Worship can be public praise to God (Psalm 22:22, 35:18), in a congregational setting, where we can proclaim through music and praise our adoration and thankfulness to Him and what He has done for us. True worship is felt inwardly, and then comes out through our actions. "Going through the motions" out of obligation is displeasing to God, and is done completely in vain. He can see through all the hypocrisy, and He hates heartless worship (Amos 5:21-24). A powerful example of this is the story of Cain and Abel, the first sons of Adam and Eve. They both brought gift offerings to the Lord, but He was only pleased with Abel's. Cain brought the gift out of obligation. Abel brought his finest lambs from his flock out of true faith and admiration for God.

Worship - The Heart of David

As far as worship, King David was a phenomenal example for all of us. He had a pure and grateful heart towards God and worshipped Him with the entirety of his being. Many of the Psalms reflect David's passionate heart for worship. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto your name, O most High: To show forth your lovingkindness in the morning, and your faithfulness every night" (Psalm 92:1-2). I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised... (Psalm 18:3a). "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable." (Psalm 145:3). David was a man after God's own heart, because he truly glorified God in his heart!

Worship - Glorify and Exalt God!

True worship is not confined to singing in church or open praise (although these things are both good and we are told to do them in the Bible), but it is the heartfelt acknowledgment of God and all His power and glory in the things we do. To truly worship God, we must know Him and not be ignorant of His good and glorious nature (Acts 17:23). In a nutshell, worship is to glorify and exalt God, to show our loyalty and admiration to our Heavenly Father!