

ADVANCED BIBLICAL COURSE



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Being a Worshipper

I BEING A WORSHIPPER

I want to tell you something that may surprise you. The Scriptures do not say that God is looking for worship. *“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him”* (John 4:23).

The Lord is seeking people who *“will worship”* – not just worship itself. Why? Because He has had worship ever since angels, cherubim and seraphim were created. He does not have a great vacuum inside Himself that can only be filled with worship. He is not insecure. He is self-sufficient and in need of nothing. But He is our Father, and He desires an interactive relationship with His children.

The Greek word that is translated as *“seeking”* in John 4:23 is ‘zeteo’. In this context it has the added connotation of ‘require’ or ‘demand’. Our Father is requiring or demanding those who will worship Him in spirit and truth. He seeks after them and pursues them. What does He find when He finds you?

II A LIFESTYLE OF WORSHIP

Do you know if you are a worshipper? How can you tell if you are a worshipper in spirit and in truth? Going to church for a few hours a week does not make someone a worshipper. Being a worshipper is more than doing the right things. It is an attitude of life.

Worship is to be continual. It is not to start and stop as songs do, but it is a constant attitude that results in interactive communion with our heavenly Father.

- ◆ David wrote: *“I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.”* (Psalms 34:1)
- ◆ Paul said: *“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.”* (Hebrews 13:15)

Worshippers spend the entire day with their spirits on the Lord, conscious of giving Him praise. *“My tongue shall speak of Your righteousness and of Your praise all the day long.”* (Psalms 35:28) *“I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever.”* (Psalms 145:1-2) Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that the only time we can worship the Lord is when we are with a group of believers. On the contrary, praise is to be private as well as public. One psalm says: *“Let the saints...sing aloud on their beds”* (Psalms 149:5). You can worship in your bedroom, in the living room or in your car.

The issue is not where or when but who and how. Any time or place is suitable for worshipping the Father *“in spirit and truth.”* (John 4:23)

III A HUMAN DESIRE

Every human being created by God has an innate desire to worship. From the Eskimo Indian to the Aztec Indian, all have worshipped something. We are only satisfied when we come to Christ and learn to be wholehearted worshippers. Then we are fulfilling the purpose for which we were created – to worship Him forever.

Just as you would avoid being a “Sunday morning Christian” don’t let yourself become a “Sunday morning worshipper.” Let today be the first day of a lifestyle of worship for you.

IV DEFINING WORSHIP

The worship of God is the primary activity of the church and needs no reason beyond itself. According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, an historic Protestant statement of faith written in 1647, the chief purpose of man is “to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.”

Worship, like love, is hard to define. How can we capture in words the attitude, the passion and the expression of our worship to our champion Saviour?

Worship, in the verb form, means the paying of homage or respect. In the Christian world, the term is used for the reverent devotion, service or honour – whether public or individual – that is paid to God. Webster’s New World Thesaurus lists the following words as either synonyms or analogous

words for worship; adore, admire, celebrate, esteem, exalt, glorify, love, magnify, praise, revere, reverence and venerate.

Worship is totally concerned with the *worthiness* of God and not the *worthiness* of the worshipper.

W.E. Vine defines Christian worship as – “... the direct acknowledgement to God, of His nature, attributes, ways and claims, whether by the outgoing of the heart in praise and thanksgiving, or by deed done in such acknowledgement.” – “Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words,” page 1248.

- ◆ Ascribing worth to God
- ◆ Putting our focus on Him
- ◆ Giving Him all the credit
- ◆ Bringing honour to His Name

V ATTITUDE TOWARDS WORSHIP

Worship is more an attitude than an outward expression, form or passing emotion. Many times these things get mistaken as worship. Just because people are lifting their hands does not mean they are worshipping.

The outward acts of worship are the least important parts of its expression. They can assist the worshipping heart in expressing its love and adoration, but the acts of worship cannot make a non-worshipping heart into a worshipping one. Worship begins in the heart. The danger is that often acts of worship give a non-worshipping heart the sense of having worshipped.

The critical element is the state of the hearts of the people and not the form of worship. The genesis of worship is the heart of the believer. If it does not begin there, then no matter what the believer does, it is not worship. It may have the look of worship, but it is void of the attitude necessary to be worship.

It is not the performance of the act that makes worship. It is the attitude of love. It is not dancing, bowing or lifting hands that makes worship, but the presence of love. Worship is more an attitude than an action.

VI WORSHIP QUALITIES

Worship involves prayer. Prayer births and matures a relationship with the Lord, and out of that relationship we worship the Lord.

Worship is expressing admiration to the One we adore. Worship is an attitude that recognises the superiority of Christ and acknowledges our dependence on Him.

Worship is varied expressions of different individuals loving and reverencing God all at the same time. Therefore, each one can express worship in his or her own manner. Sameness is not our goal in worship services. We are to be ourselves and communicate our own individual expressions of worship.

VII THE LORD HIMSELF CALLS US TO WORSHIP HIM

Worship is the first commandment God gave to Moses for the people of Israel. *“And God spoke all these words, saying: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me”* (Exodus 20:1-3).

God’s second commandment dealt with worship too. *“You shall have no other gods before or besides Me. You shall not make yourself any graven image (to worship it)... You shall not bow down yourself to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God.”* (Exodus 20:3-5, Amplified Bible).

Not only does God claim the first place, but also He reveals His intolerance of everything that would deprive Him of the highest position. Many things in our lives attempt to draw our hearts away from God as the supreme object of our affection. The apostle John warned: *“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”* (1 John 5:21)

Jesus showed the primary importance that worship should have in prayer. *“When you pray, say (Our) Father, (Who is in heaven) hallowed be Your name”* (Luke 11:2, Amplified Bible). When we pray, worship is the first order of business. Exaltation of Him is primary. Then we can make petitions.

VIII WHOLEHEARTED WORSHIP

When I fell in love with my wife, I spent every moment of the day thinking about and planning for her. When we were together, it seemed as if we were the only two people on earth.

I wasn't savvy enough to give away part of my heart and keep part of myself. I gave it all to her. She had my focus, my attention, and my heart. We hugged and held hands as often as we could. We spent as much time as we could together. Our expressions of affection were not mechanical or dutiful but packed with feeling and meaning. We were focused intensely on each other.

Jesus described this kind of love when the scribe asked Him, "*What is the foremost commandment?*" Jesus answered with a question: "*What does the law say?*" The lawyer replied: "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.*" (Mark 12:30) Jesus told the lawyer he was correct. That's all-ways kind of love. It is not long, ongoing love, but all-total-complete love. It's the first commandment of the old covenant and the greatest commandment of the new covenant.

◆ **Four ways we can show the Lord our love: -**

- with all our heart.
- whole-soul worship.
- whole-mind worship.
- whole-strength worship.

IX WORSHIP IS A TWO-FOLD CONCEPT

- A. The assembled body of believers
- B. Our way of life and conduct – not limited to meetings

Both are necessary! 'A' without 'B' is dead, formal and seemingly unattractive, because it is incomplete. 'B' without 'A' is empty, pure noise. It is shallow and false (of Matthew 15:8-9 & Amos 5:21). In 'A' we acknowledge God with our lips. In 'B' we acknowledge God with our actions, thoughts and attitudes.

X HOW SHOULD WE WORSHIP THE LORD

Many times praise is a function of the will. We must will and determine to praise the Lord, even when we do not feel like it. Praise is not contingent upon our feelings – it is based upon God’s greatness, and that never changes!

Notice how David spoke to his own soul: “*Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name.*” (Psalms 103:1). Sometimes we are ‘down in the dumps’ or dry spiritually, and it is at those times that we must serve notice to our soul and say, “*Soul! Bless the Lord!*” Praise must function according to our will and not our emotions.

“But how can I praise,” you may ask, “when I feel completely deflated emotionally?” We can find an answer in the Psalms, for they were written by men who, like us, experienced deep emotional valleys. One psalmist described his feelings in this way: “*My soul is downcast within me.*” So he asked himself, “*Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?*” Then he proceeded to get tough on himself: “Put your hope in God.” His next statement so beautifully shows the discipline of praise: “*For I will yet praise Him*” (Psalms 42:5-6). The Lord wants all of us to come to that same point where we determine to praise Him regardless of our feelings and circumstances. “*I will bless the Lord.*”

XI WHY SHOULD WE WORSHIP THE LORD?

First of all, we praise Him because we are commanded in His word to do so. “*Praise ye the LORD*” (Psalms 150:1, KJV). Have you noticed that God has not asked us to praise him? That is because kings do not ask – they command! “Why does God demand our praise?” you may ask. “Is He some sort of egomaniac who feeds off our adulation?” No, it is not that God needs our praises, but He knows that we need to praise him! Ultimately, praise does not benefit God (He is God, whether we choose to praise Him or not) – God has commanded praise for our own good. Not until we praise Him are we able to come into proper relationship with Him. Without a thankful and praising heart, we will never grow in the grace of Christ Jesus.

A second reason for praising is because God is enthroned in our praise (see Psalms 22:3, NASB). He loves our praise! He is so pleased with our praise that He literally surrounds Himself with and bathes in our praise. We praise Him because He loves it! In this connection I want to focus on a verse that is foundational to much that will be said later in this book. Isaiah 60:18 contains a key that will unlock many passages for us as we study this subject of praise. This verse says, “*But you*

will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise.” The key is this; in many passages that speak of gates we will find a principle relating to praise. Let us fit this key into a related verse: *“The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob”* (Psalms 87:2). The Lord loves the praises (gates) of Zion more than He loves all the abodes of Jacob. There is no doubt that God responds to us when we praise him!

Third, there is power in praise. When we stop trying to fight our battles and simply begin to praise the God who has said He will fight for us, God is free to release His power and provision on our behalf. We will expand this thought in the section on praise as a weapon in spiritual warfare and will see how praise brings victory, power, deliverance and blessing.

Fourth, we also praise God because it is a good thing to praise the Lord (see Psalms 92:1). It is a pleasant thing for the upright to praise Him (see Psalms 135:5). It is fitting for His holy ones to bless Him.

A fifth reason for praising God is simply because He is worthy of our praise. *“Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise”* (Psalms 48:1). *“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created”* (Revelations 4:11, KJV). Consider these beautiful words of Martin Luther: “A person cannot praise God only, unless he understands that there is nothing in himself worthy of praise, but that all that is worthy of praise is of God and from God. But since God is eternally praiseworthy, because He is the infinite God and can never be exhausted, therefore they will praise Him for ever and ever.”

Sixth, we were created to praise Him. The Shorter Catechism expresses this, as “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” This is clearly brought out in the Scriptures. Jeremiah 13:11 shows us that God called the house of Israel unto Himself specifically for His praise, renown and honour. This is echoed in 1 Peter 2:9, which tells us, *“But you are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.”*

We have been chosen of God for the express purpose of declaring His praises! Isaiah capsulised this so beautifully: *“The people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.”* (Isaiah 43:21) Many people in the world today are longing for fulfillment and are searching desperately for it in all the wrong places. They will never find complete fulfillment in their innermost beings until they come into proper relationship with God through praise. A.W. Tozer has so aptly said, “The purpose of God in sending His Son to die and live and be at the right hand of God the Father was that He might restore to us the missing jewel, the jewel of worship; that we might come back and learn to do again that which we were created to do in the first place – worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” Praise should not be a difficult and arduous task to master, but it should flow

from our lives in a most natural way, for it is in fact a normal tendency inherent within our very fibre, placed there purposely by our Creator/Father. Praise is one of the most natural things we can do!

XII WHEN SHOULD WE WORSHIP THE LORD

The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk gave his remedy for times when everything is going wrong: *“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.”* (Habakkuk 3:17-18)

A modern rendition of this passage might read like this; “Though the economy is unstable, and unemployment is rising, though lawlessness may be growing, and terrorism is rampant, though the car is broken down and my wife is stranded in town, though my kid just broke his arm and the medical insurance is gone, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour!” It is not hypocritical to praise to Lord in hard times; that is precisely the time we need to lift our voices in praise to God! It is God’s will that we offer up thanks in every situation in which we find ourselves.

XIII SOME WORD STUDIES

◆ **Old Testament**

- **Halal:** Used ± 100 times. To shine, boast, celebrate, commend, sing loud. (2 Chronicles 31:12; Psalms 23:30; Nehemiah 5:13 & Psalms 107:32.)
- **Yadah:** Used ± 90 times. Thankful expression of praise, from root word meaning to ‘throw out the hand.’ The lifting of hands is one of the most meaningful expressions of praise. (Psalms 134:2; 63:4; 9:1 & 52:9 & 2 Chronicles 20:21)
- **Barak:** Used ± 70 times. To kneel, bless, salute, praise – infers some kind of silence.

◆ **New Testament**

- **Proskuneo:** To come toward, to kiss (the hand of...) an act of reverence. (Matthews 4:10; John 4:21-40 & Revelations 4:10)
- **Latreuo:** To serve, render religious service or homage. (Philippians 3:3)

XIV WHY WORSHIP?

- ◆ It is a command and it's a fitting response to the presence of our awesome God and Father: -
Psalm 95:6-7
Psalm 18:3
Psalm 67:3-4
Psalm 102:18
Psalm 89:5-6
- ◆ We worship God the Father because of Who He is: -
John 17:11 & 25
Ephesians 1:17
John 1:5
2 Corinthians 1:3
- ◆ And because of what He has done: -
John 3:16
Jeremiah 31:3
Ephesians 1:3-4
Colossians 1:12-13
1 Timothy 3:16
- ◆ We worship the Son, Jesus Christ: -
John 1:1
Colossians 1:16
John 1:3
John 1:19
1 Timothy 3:16

XI HOW ARE WE TO WORSHIP?

Participation, getting involved in the key – 'chores'

- ◆ Guidance of Scripture – see Psalms
- ◆ Your personality, cultural background
- ◆ Context
- ◆ Creativity – stemming from your new life

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