

christian

WORKER



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

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IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

Rick Brumback

What general components are involved in worship? Of course, there must be an object of devotion or worship, and there must be an attitude and state of mind from the supplicant to the object of worship. Many objects of worship have been honored through the centuries. Surely this is because people have always been able to look about them and observe that the universe must have a creator. People have worshipped the sun, moon, stars, seasons, trees, animals, and so many elements of nature. In this process they have neglected the true Creator, but they see the evidence that someone greater has crafted all that is; the psalmist mentions this evidence in Psalm 19:1-6.

Different religions demand different activities by the supplicants. Prayer is often involved, some giving, maybe singing or observance of special times. Some are required to make pilgrimages, while others are expected to offer sacrifices. In the past, human sacrifices were offered. Monks have engaged in self-flagellation or lived in very austere conditions because they thought it would bring them nearer to their gods. But contemplating what others have done in the name of religion reminds us that we want to worship the right God, have the right attitude and state of mind, and worship in the right activities.

The term "worship" is translated from a term literally meaning "to kiss towards." Worship carries with it the idea of reverence or a feeling of unworthiness expressed to someone or something judged or esteemed worthy. The term itself is derived from "worthship," pointing to the worth attached to the object of our worship.

As children of the Most High, we worship the Creator of the universe, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If we take ancient Israel as an example, and this is a good

start, we can see that they had very elaborate forms of worship. They had a special place, special days, special activities, special clothing, etc. Of utmost importance is the fact that God determined these specifics. So we step into the Christian era. Does God give any specifics about how He is to be worshiped in this age? Given His previous desires we might expect "yes," and that would be exactly correct. Some might wonder if there are special places to worship. When Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman in John 4, she noted that the Jews and Samaritans both had particular locations associated with their worship. But the Messiah pointed to a future age, the Christian age, where there would be no specifically assigned location.

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Editor

Cody Westbrook



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

WORSHIP

Cody Westbrook

The great call to worship our God is one that spans the entire scope of scripture. Abel offered of the firstborn of the flock (Gen. 4:4), Abraham built an altar between Bethel and Ai and called on the name of the Lord (Gen. 13:4), and Moses sang praise to God on the banks of the Red Sea (Exod. 15). The Heavenly Hosts worship the Father without end (Rev. 4) and instruct all to "worship God" (Rev. 22:9). The Lord commands, "You shall not fear other gods, nor bow down to them nor serve them nor sacrifice to them; but the Lord... Him you shall fear, Him you shall worship, and to Him you shall offer sacrifice" (2 Kings 17:35-36). David said, "Give the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering and come before Him. Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (1 Chron. 16:29). Over and over again the Bible emphasizes the command, beauty, and privilege of worshipping our loving God. Worship, then, is an action that we should love and desire to perfect.

If we are to sincerely appreciate and grow in our worship, then we must understand something about what it is. The Old Testament uses Hebrew terms such as *saha* (to worship, bow down, and pay homage), *halal* (to praise and exalt greatness or excellence), and *qarab* (to come near and bring an offering) to describe the worship of the Old Testament (see Gen. 24:52, 1 Sam. 15:25, Ps. 22:22, Lev. 1:2, etc.). The New Testament most often uses the word *proskuneo* to define worship. It refers to the action of "kissing toward, doing obeisance, prostrating before, and showing deep respect." It is found in passages like John 4:24, Acts 7:43, and Revelation 4:10.

Worship is defined by action. Read passages such as Genesis 22:5, Exodus 24:1, and Matthew 2:2 and note that worship has a definite beginning and ending point. In the Old Testament the actions of worship included a number of things from singing praise to God to offering sacrifices under the Levitical system. In the New Testament dispensation, worship is defined by 5 actions—

singing (Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16), praying (Acts 2:42, 12:15), giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2), preaching (Acts 2:42, 20:7ff), and observing the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34, Acts 20:7).

Care must be given to ensure that the actions of worship are observed in accordance with God's will. Jesus said, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). There are two principles of note in this command—authority and disposition. Worshipping "in spirit" has to do with our heart. Jesus warned in Matthew 6:1-2,

Take heed that you do not your charitable deeds (righteousness, CW) before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

Continuing through verse 18 He provided 3 examples of piety, which the Pharisees observed but did so with the wrong attitude and motive. The application for us is that in worship, God is concerned with what we do, and also why we do it. "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22) and so we must rend our hearts, not our garments (Joel 2:13). Worship must come from a heart that is sincere and full of joy, admiration, and appreciation for the great God of Heaven.

Truth has to do method, or authority. In every age God has prescribed how He is to be worshipped. Abel offered a "more excellent" sacrifice by faith (Heb. 11:4), indicating that God had given some instruction in regard to worship. Nadab and Abihu disregarded the authority of God in Leviticus 10:1-7 by offering "profane fire" before the Lord, which resulted in their death. Jesus said that we are to worship in truth and truth is found in scripture (John 17:17, Col. 3:17). Therefore, when we engage in the actions of worship we must do so in accordance with what God has authorized in the pages of the New Testament.

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Additionally, we must remember that the rules of worship apply at all times and settings. Whether it's the Sunday morning worship assembly, a Thursday evening youth gathering, or an evening devotional with family, God's rules apply in every circumstance.

Our God is great and it is indeed an unparalleled privilege to come before Him in worship. May we all strive to grow in our desire to perfect our worship.

CW

“I WILL SING THE WONDROUS STORY”

Andy Baker

People love an enthusiastic, joyful song service. There are congregations of twenty that will sound like hundreds because everyone is singing out, and there are congregations of hundreds that will sound like twenty because no one is singing out! Singing is something God commanded to be a part of His worship (John. 4:24; Col. 3:16). It is in part, a demonstration of the unity of believers, Jews, Gentiles, males, females, bond, free – all being one in Christ (cf. Rom. 15:8-13; Gal. 3:27-29). Though we may speculate why exactly God wants singing in His worship, the truth is, it is something He desires. With that in mind, do we think about the way we sing in worship being something that communicates the way we feel about Him and fellow Christians? Said another way, “*Can others tell from the way I sing in worship that I am a person who is passionate about that wondrous story of the Christ?*”

It ought to be that the Lord knows how I feel about Him by the song service. When the “sacrifice of praise” is offered, we do want that sacrifice to be something with which God is pleased (cf. Jer. 33:11; Mal. 1:13; Heb. 13:15). When we offer our worship, God hears the melody of our hearts and the sound from our lips and He knows how much He means to us (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Jas. 5:13). As singers of the wondrous story, we want to *passionately* declare and sing of, and to our Redeemer. We want to *fervently* declare, “*My Jesus I love Thee, I know Thou art mine. For Thee all the follies of sin I resign*” with Him listening and knowing it is the truth.

It ought to be that the church knows how I feel about His church by the song service. Singing praises is vertical first and foremost. That is, it is to God (Rom. 15:10-11). However, horizontally, there are also songs of instruction and songs of admonishment that we sing to His glory

and to each other for their benefit (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Have you ever looked down the pew and sang to your neighbor, “*have thine affections been nailed to the cross, is thy heart right with God?*” Have you ever had your neighbor sing to you, “*blest be the tie that binds, our hearts in Christian love?*” There is a personal nature to our songs, and God forbid that we should divorce our affections for each other from the message of the song (cf. Ps. 133:1-3). As singers of the wondrous story, our neighbors ought to know that we love the Lord *and* each other far more than anything else (Matt. 22:36-39).

It ought to be that I know how the church feels about the Lord by the song service. Would we be tolerant if our own preacher was willfully absent from the assembly because he didn't feel like going? Would we understand if our preacher just opened the Bible and read mindlessly because he hadn't prepared himself for teaching? We wouldn't tolerate that very long. The truth is that Christians have responsibilities on the Lord's Day just as the preacher (cf. Heb. 10:24-25). Can a Christian be “teaching and admonishing” another the way they ought to be if they are absent (mentally, physically, or emotionally) from the assembly? The song service suffers when Christians are not present to sing! As singers of the wondrous story, we are to be present, ready to let the Lord know, to let the church know, and to let our visitors know that “*He's my glorious King, and oh I dearly love Him.*” Can we hear it and know it's the truth? Can He hear it and know it's the truth?

CW

Approaching The Throne Of Grace

Bruce Ligon

Prayer is one of the avenues God has prescribed for our worship. As we pray unto Him, we give praise and adoration to Him, we express thanksgiving, we confess our shortcomings and sins, we beg His tender mercies, we present out our requests, and we seek His providential protection. In a psalm that is ascribed to Solomon, the attentive nature of our Father, when we come to Him, is vividly described, “For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper” (Ps. 72:12). Charles Spurgeon, in *The Treasury of David*, makes this helpful comment: “A child's cry touches a father's heart, and our King is the Father of his people. If we can do no more than cry it will bring omnipotence to our aid.”

In helping us to realize in a greater way the privilege of prayer, the following exhortation should thrill us,

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16).

Our prayers should never be characterized by timidity. We are invited to come before our Father with “confidence.” We do not have to wonder if God desires our coming to Him. We are given the exalted privilege of being a royal priesthood (I Pet. 2:5). One application of this blessing is that we can “draw near to the throne of grace.”

I believe one gauge of a congregation’s devotion to spiritual worship is in the emphasis given to prayer. As the congregation is assembled for worship, the time devoted to prayer should never be seen as rote, routine, or ritualistic. As the assigned brother leads the assembly in prayer, you and I are to involve ourselves by fervent concentration. Each of us has the responsibility of being spiritually and mentally involved in the prayer being lead.

Imagine you were in a small group of people who had an audience with a high governmental official. How attentive would you be to what was taking place and being said in this meeting? Most certainly, you would not be thinking about something that needed to be done later in the day or week. The reason you would be giving your greatest possible concentration would be due to the respect of the office of the governmental official. But I am afraid that sometimes when we come together for worship our great God in the assembly, we may find it easy to let our minds wander as we are being lead in prayer.

The following are some suggestions that I hope will help us as we come together and collectively pray in the assembly:

1. We must prepare ourselves. When we turn on a light switch instantly the light is shining. But you and I do not have a worship “switch” that we can turn on, and instantly we are worshipping. Worship without preparation will result in worship that is mundane and heartless. One helpful exercise is to meditate on the holiness of God. One passage that aids us in directing our thoughts is Psalm 33:20-21, “Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name.”

2. Anticipate the privilege and joy of worship. The enthusiastic attitude of David toward worship is seen in his exclamation, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’” (Ps. 122:1). When we pillow our head on Saturday night, the last thought we have before we drift off to sleep should be on the privilege that awaits us the next morning. Then when we awake

in the morning, our anticipation should be even greater!

3. Enter the worship service with a deep sense of reverence and awe. Psalm 96:4 reminds us, “For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised.” In one of his books on worship, Tom Holland recounts the thoughts of one brother regarding how we should approach worship. The following is a paraphrase of his comments: We should imagine God is seated on a throne at the front of the auditorium, receiving our praise and adoration.

CW

PREACHING AS WORSHIP

Mike Vestal

It not only is essential to restore the acts or elements of New Testament worship; it is crucial to restore the appropriate spirit and attitude as well (cf. Ps. 29:2; John 4:24; Matt. 15:6-9). Worship ought to be the total engagement of those involved in savoring and expressing the greatness and glory of God through the divinely authorized avenues found in the New Testament (cf. Mark 12:30; Ps. 34:3). In worship we ascribe and attempt to describe the awe, adoration and appreciation we have for our God according to what is authorized and prescribed in Scripture.

Preaching is seen throughout the Bible in worship contexts (Cf. Neh. 8:1-13; Acts 2:14-47; 20:7). Tragically, preaching has fallen upon “hard times” - it frequently is downplayed and considered irrelevant. Negative connotations and bad jokes abound concerning it. What can be done to restore and revive preaching as part of worship? The following four considerations are humbly offered to all those who preach and who listen to sermons.

Preaching As Exultation and Praise. The word to remember here is theocentric (God-centered). Preaching ought to be more about God and His will. The word of God is all about the salvation of man to the glory of God through Christ Jesus our Lord. Too much preaching is man-centered, with a verse or two of Scripture thrown in as garnish! Preachers - do you really preach a great and glorious God? Is that what those who regularly hear you would say? Preaching is done in the context of worship, is an avenue or element of worship and is intended to arouse and to motivate even more worship and praise. Too little is said about and practiced relative to this matter in preaching. And it is little wonder that worship is negatively affected when there is little of

the wonder of God consistently reflected in the pulpit!

Preaching As Obligation and Command.

The word is to be preached (2 Tim. 4:2). The “whole counsel” of God is to be proclaimed (Acts 20:20, 27). The breath-taking story of Jesus is to be proclaimed in its amazing richness, variety and beauty. There should be a greater compulsion on the part of those of us who preach to preach this way, and we should be determined to hear preaching that way too (Luke 8:18; Heb. 2:1-3)! It is fitting to ask, “Am I handling God’s word with love, accuracy and care by the way I preach and/or hear” (Cf. 2 Tim. 2:15)?

Preaching As Proclamation and Communication.

Low views of preaching ultimately lead to low views of Scripture and of worship and vice versa. The foundation of preaching is that God has spoken and that people need to hear His joyous message of salvation in Christ. If not, judgment awaits. Real preaching has as its underlying foundation and content the holy and inspired word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Preachers are men with a message, and God and His message are to be seen in our words, character and emotions (1 Thess. 1:5)! Preaching involves the effective communication and application of God’s words to people. We better make sure the message of God does not get lost through our poor translation of it! And hearers must listen to and evaluate sermons on the basis of its Ultimate Source and in view of eternity.

Preaching As Transformation and Renewal. When the word of God is faithfully preached souls are saved, Christians are strengthened and God is praised and magnified. Christ is “formed” in us (Gal. 4:19), we are more “conformed” to His image (Rom. 8:29) and our minds are “transformed” and “renewed” (Rom. 12:2). How fitting! Through the proclamation of Christ in worship, we become more like the One we lovingly adore. We come into the presence of God in worship and no one who thoughtfully enters will come out unchanged.

How we should treasure the privilege of worship and the taking in of God’s word that goes with it, for on such occasions we anticipate the day we will forever be in the presence of our great and glorious God!

CW

NEW TESTAMENT GIVING

Jon McCormack

To be right with God one must give in a right manner. Sadly, New Testament giving is often misunderstood. Consider four mandates that the New Testament gives us.

Giving Must Be Authorized

Each act of worship has been regulated by our King (John 4:24; Matt. 28:18). Giving is no exception. The New Testament pattern of giving is found in 1 Corinthians 16. There Paul teaches,

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

First, the authorized means of gaining funds for the local congregation is by a free will offering. There is no room in the text for bake sales, garage sales, car washes, or the like. God has informed us of what He wants. To give Him anything else would be vain and empty worship. Second, we see the regularity of our giving, “Upon the first day of the week.” This should be no surprise to any Bible student since the New Testament is clear that the first day of the week was the day that God set aside for Christians to worship Him (Acts 20:7). Third, we are authorized to give as we have prospered. When income is earned, God expects us to lay some aside for him.

Giving Must Be Sacrificial

A sacrifice is something that is felt. If it is no bother to me, then I have not sacrificed anything. For example, if two men in the congregation each give \$300 every Sunday one might assume that both were excellent givers. But one is a multi-millionaire the other lives paycheck to paycheck making \$600 a week. In reality only one of these men really made a sacrifice. David gave us an example of true sacrifice when he purchased Araunah’s threshingfloor. Araunah attempted to give the king the threshingfloor but David replied,

Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing (2 Sam. 24:24).

What are we sacrificing for God?

Giving Must Be Purposed

We are a society of planners. We plan parties, vacations,

weddings, and we even plan what to eat for supper. Planning is wise, so long as we include God in those plans (Jas. 4:15). To plan our finances without God in the picture is the mark of a selfish man. Paul wrote, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give..." (2 Cor. 9:7). One who fumbles for his wallet right before the plate is passed is not a man who has purposed to give, but rather a man who does so lazily and greedily.

Giving Must Be Enjoyed

Faithful Christians fully understanding what the Lord meant when He taught, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). In this He teaches true joy comes, not from what others give us, but from our abundant generosity to others. The same is true when it comes to us giving back to God. The devoted child of God is familiar with the bountiful bliss one feels when obeying the command to worship by giving. Paul instructed that we give, "not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:7).

The word translated as cheerful is the Greek word *hilaros*, which means joyous. Giving, along with all acts of worship, must be enjoyed to be done properly. From this same word we get our English word hilarious. In the word *hilaros* is an implication of promptness as well. This means that not only is this something that it is enjoyable, but it is so enjoyable that we wouldn't think of missing our appointment each week to participate. This is all something that an obedient Christian already comprehends, that is, we love God so much that we enjoy sacrificing our finances. In fact, we enjoy it so much that we long for the opportunity to do it again.

Conclusion

We cannot out give God. It is simply impossible. Our benevolent Father has blessed us with innumerable gifts both physically and spiritually. That alone should be cause for us to rise up and be generous in our giving back to Him.

CW

WORSHIP - THE LORD'S SUPPER

Kerry Clark

The Bible tells us that the disciples came together every First Day of the Week to worship God. During this gathering, Christians communed with God and with one another in a memorial feast known as the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20). Dr. Luke records,

"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7).

Obviously, this communion meal was shared every first day of every week because every week has a first day. We now refer to this day as Sunday.

The Lord's Supper is observed as an action of worship. We have shortened the word "action" to simply "act;" but the meaning is still clear. This meal constituted of two simple elements, unleavened bread and fruit of the vine (Luke 22:18 and 1 Cor. 5:8).

Obviously we cannot improve on this simple plan given to us by God, but we can improve our attitude toward, and participation in, those five acts. Please consider these suggestions to help us better understand and participate in this great memorial feast. Please remember these seven suggestions the next time when partaking of the Lord's Supper: One Lord, two thieves, three crosses, four parts to His garment, five wounds, six hours of suffering, and seven sayings. Let's consider each one of these points to more deeply understand the implication of partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Clearly there is only ONE LORD (Eph. 4:5). The apostle Paul wrote,

I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen (1 Tim. 6:13-16).

John, the Revelator echoed these words when he said,

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful (Rev. 17:14).

Concerning the thieves, we read, "Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left" (Matt. 27:38). One of these

thieves became the most well known thief in the world.

The next thought concerns the three crosses. One cross for the sinless Lamb of God (John 1:29); and two more crosses for the thieves. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah predicted this very event (Isa. 53:12). The Bible also teaches us that Jesus' garment was divided into four parts (John 19:23). Again, this was prophesied in the book of Psalms (Ps. 22:18).

Jesus suffered five wounds during His scouring and crucifixion. When we say five wounds, we know that He was beaten unmercifully; but Jesus suffered the wound to His head (Matt. 27:29). He suffered numerous wounds during His scouring. He also suffered three more wounds, two to His hands, and one to His feet when they nailed Him to the cross.

Jesus suffered six hours on the cross. According to Mark's record of the crucifixion, Jesus was on the cross from approximately 9 am (third hour of the day) until 3 pm (ninth hour of the day). See Mark Chapter Fifteen to see this recorded.

Our Lord then uttered seven saying while hanging on the cross.

1. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (Luke 3:34)
2. Verily I say unto thee, to day shalt thou be with me in Paradise (Luke 23:43),
3. Woman, behold thy son. Behold thy mother (John 19:26)
4. Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani (Matt. 27:46),
5. I thirst (John 19:28)
6. It is finished (John 19:30),
7. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit (Luke 23:46).

When a person communes with God during the Supper of the Lord, I hope this article will impress more deeply this precious act of worship.

CW

continued from page 1

Jesus also pointed to two elements so crucial to our approaching God to worship: attitude/spirit and truth (John 4:24). What we do in our devotion to God and the attitude with which we act matter to the Almighty.

One of the great things about the New Testament is that it not only gives us direct instruction, but it also preserves "snapshots" of the early church that reveal the church in action in light of its instruction by God. We see the early church gathering on the first day of the week to worship (Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10). Are there specific activities in which the church engaged? Yes. We are shown images of the early church engaged in a number of worship activities.

- a. Giving (1 Cor. 16:1,2; Phil. 4:18)
- b. Preaching and teaching (Acts 20:7ff)
- c. Singing (Heb. 13:13; 2:12)
- d. Praying (Acts 12:12)
- e. Communion (Acts 20:7; 2:42)

What is important to note is that each of these activities in which the early church engaged were directed and regulated by God. Just as in the old system, the Creator has indicated how He should be worshiped by the creation. Our willingness to accept His direction allows us to embrace His truth coupled with our submissive, loving spirit. It is possible for some to go off in another direction. Jesus identifies that it is possible to engage in activities called "worship" that God does not respect (Matt. 15:9). Paul mentions that some are determined to have their own desires reflected in their worship practices. This is called "will worship" (Col. 2:23). This is "worship one devises and prescribes for self contrary to the faith." (Thayer, s.v.). Our aim instead is to practice what the Lord directs, knowing our highest aim is to please Him with all we do and say. What is at the heart of this discussion is how we, a part of God's creation, can come before Him appropriately, exalting Him in ways that are meaningful to Him. Because of our respect for Him, and knowing our standing in His sight, it is right for us to seek His counsel, to approach Him in a manner He has deemed acceptable, and to do so in loving humility. Involved in our worship are the attitude and content found at the heart of our expression of devotion and praise (John 4:24).

CW

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