

# Week 1 - Defining worship.

It should be appropriate that we start with a good working definition of what worship is as a whole. Let me preface first, that I am no expert on biblical worship. I am guilty of many violations of non-biblical, inappropriate worship but I am here to learn just as you are so that our experiences of worshiping God in our own time, with family members, with friends, or with the congregation can be enriched. We will find that as we flip through the Bible that God seeks to magnify His own worthy name. Our worship is simply our participation in this act. How absolutely phenomenal is that? We are part of our great God's perfect and sovereign plan to worship Him. I feel especially privileged that he has given us the gift of music to do this.

John Williams is especially famous for his compositions in movie scores. Williams is an expert manipulator! He can literally lead you through a movie with just his soundtracks and have you recall, with 3-4 notes in sequence, a particular image you have stored in your mind (Harry Potter? Fox Fanfare? Star Wars?). Music plays a very similar role in worship. We will dig deeper into the biblical role of music and singing is in worship but in short, it can help us remember certain truths about God. It can, but only with spirit and truth, help stir up genuine, heartfelt emotions towards God.

But I digress. We need to first define worship. I am hoping (and you should too) that this description will grow more complete as we go through this CE together:  
*Worship is a heartfelt and genuine act of glorifying God in all of his majesty and magnifying His name above all things with all of our mind, spirit, soul, and body.*

Now, let us talk about worship apart from music.

## First, what worship is not:

**...merely emotions** - Worship can be an emotional experience, that is, evoking feelings like joy and gladness. These feelings can stir the heart and move our spirits yet this is not the requirement of but rather an unavoidable byproduct of true worship. This can be similarly related to faith and action. Ex. While it is true that we are saved by faith alone (Eph 2:8-9, Romans 3:28, Romans 10:9) our works come forth due to a true and genuine faith in Jesus Christ because if we truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God and obey His commandments, we will do good works as an overflow of our faith. So also, true worship inevitably stirs our hearts and evokes emotions that reflect joy in our salvation.

John Piper states this:

*"These are examples of some of the feelings that come from God and move us to God in genuine worship: contrition, sorrow, longing, desire, fear, awe, gratitude, joy, hope. When these feelings are quickened, the heart is no longer far from God. Worship is no longer lip-service. It is genuine and authentic."*

**...for the proud:** What can we be proud of? "For what do I have? If I don't have you Jesus?" (Starfield)... answer: nothing. We cannot be proud *and* worship God!  
*1 Corinthians 3:20-22 - "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.' So let no one boast in men."* If we are prideful in things like our musicality, our status, our achievements, our degree, our grades, or our finances, we subject those things to compete with God's glory. We'll see later on that true worship is no less than giving all of our attention to God.

We need to substitute a proud heart for a contrite heart: *"The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" Psalm 51:17*

**...for the intrepid:** We need to have a healthy fear of God. *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Proverbs 9:10 "I will worship toward thy holy temple in the fear of thee" Psalm 5:7*

**...for the ungrateful:** Remember, we do not deserve any of God's grace or any of his mercies. Part of worshiping God is knowing that we are undeserving. *"Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him, and bless his name!" Psalm 100:4*

**We know that worship is not...**

**...merely confined to music** - Worship is a continual act of glorifying and magnifying God. There are many ways we can do this and only a small portion of this is confined to music. Worship doesn't begin, here at Harvest, at 9:00 or 9:15 and it certainly doesn't end at 9:45 (usually when musical worship ends).

**hence... worship is not a...**

**... concert** - Worship will never be a concert. A concert relies on performance, man-cultivated skill, and perhaps things like lights, effects, and other visual stimulation. True worship is none of these things.

## So, what is biblical worship?

**What the bible says about worshipping: Spirit and Truth**

- Flip to John 4 please
- *John 4:23-24 - But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."*
- True, biblical worship requires (hint, the word *must*) that we worship in spirit and truth.
  - Let's look at the context of John 4. Jesus is in Samaria (John 4:4) in Sychar. Jesus was weary and sat down at a well where a Samaritan woman came to draw water. The woman questions Jesus about the appropriate place of worship.
    - Some background of the Samaritans. They are descendants of the Israelites. They had their own religion and only considered the Torah (first five books of Moses) to be sacred. They worshiped on Mount Gerizim not in Jerusalem which is the basis for the woman's question. The Samaritans and the Jews were also very hostile towards one another at this time which is why the Samaritan woman became surprised that Jesus had asked her for a drink at the well. We can also imply that the Samaritans knew of a coming messiah.
  - So how does Jesus answer? Jesus first dismisses the notion that true worship is binded to a specific place. Instead true worship is an internal act from the heart: "in spirit"
    - *Westminster Confession - "Neither prayer, nor any other part of religious worship, is now, under the gospel either tied unto, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed: but God is to be worshiped everywhere, in spirit and truth; as, in private families daily, and in secret, each one by himself; so, more solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly or wilfully to be neglected, or forsaken, when God, by his Word or providence, calleth thereunto."*
  - What does it mean to worship in spirit?
    - Worshiping in spirit is worshiping from the heart.

- Also Check out what Paul says in Romans 12:1-2:
- Romans 12:1 - *"Therefore I urge you brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."*
- We need to view our worship as a living and holy sacrifice that is also acceptable to God. What a calling! We are to give our all to God. Mark 12:30 says this:
- Mark 12:30 - *"And 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."*
- Worshiping in spirit requires that we love the Lord with everything we have and thus requires us to worship genuinely from the heart.
- What does it mean to worship in truth?
  - Matthew 15:9 says: *"The people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines, the commandments of men."*
  - We can infer from this passage that we are not to worship with false doctrine but in truth. Proverbs 14:12 says this:
  - Proverbs 14:12 - *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."*
  - True worship doesn't get caught up in false doctrine. True worship commands that we worship God based on the revealed will of God.
  - This is why we need to worship God knowing who He is. Therefore it is important that we need to be educated in (especially worship leaders) theology and doctrine! (next week)
- In summary Jesus wants us to worship with our hearts and our minds. We need to know Him intimately as well as love him with our heart. This is true worship.
- Jonathan Edwards says that his duty is to, *"raise the affections of my hearers as high as I possibly can, provided they are affected with nothing but truth, and with affections that are not disagreeable to the nature of what they are affected with."*
- We will go over this in much more detail in the comings weeks.

## What are other characteristics and definitions of worship?

### **John Piper defines worship as an inward feeling & outward action:**

- Piper - *"Worship is an inward feeling and outward action that reflects the worth of God."*
- Piper - *"Worship throughout biblical history always involved action. The main word for worship in biblical Hebrew means "to bow down." Worship was performed in bowing, lifting the hands, kneeling, singing, praying, reciting Scripture, etc. All this can be called worship. But all this can also be done when the heart is far from God."*
- Piper - *"Worship is an affair of the heart. It is an affair of feeling and of emotion."*
- Matthew 15:8-9 - *"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines, the commandments of men."*

**A living & holy sacrifice:** Paul, Romans 12:1 - *"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."*

### **A magnification of God:**

- *Bob Kauflin "A faithful worship leader magnifies the greatness of God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit by skillfully combining God's Word with music, thereby motivating the gathered church to proclaim the gospel, to cherish God's presence, and to live for God's glory."*
- *Piper - "Now I take it as a given that worship, whether an inner act of the heart, or an outward act of the body, or of the congregation collectively, is a magnifying of God. That is, it is an act that shows how magnificent God is. It is an act that reveals or expresses how great and glorious he is. Worship is all about reflecting the worth or value of God."*

**A reflection of who God is:** *John Stott - "All true worship is a response to the self-revelation of God in Christ and Scripture, and arises from our reflection on who He is and what He has done.... The worship of God is evoked, informed, and inspired by the vision of God.... The true knowledge of God will always lead us to worship."*

### **Enjoying God:**

- *Psalm 63:5: "My soul is feasted as with marrow and fat, and my mouth praises thee with joyful lips, when I think of thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the watches of night."*
- *Piper: "For worship is the most hedonistic affair of life and must not be ruined by the least thought of disinterestedness."*
- *Jonathan Edwards: "God is glorified not only by his glory's being seen, but by its being rejoiced in. When those that see it delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it. God made the world that he might communicate, and the creature receive, his glory... both [with] the mind and the heart. He that testifies his having an idea of God's glory [doesn't] glorify God so much as he that testifies also his approbation [i.e., his heartfelt commendation or praise] of it and his delight in it."*
- *Bob Kauflin: "It glorifies God when we delight in him, expressing the joy of knowing him and being known by him." (66)*

**Our highest duty:** *Piper: "The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying him forever." (part of a much more significant quote but more on that later).*

### **The meaning of life:**

- *Piper: "This is the final end of all existence: the worship of God. God created the universe so that it would display the worth of his glory. And he created us so that we would see this glory and reflect it by knowing and loving it - with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength."*
- *Revelation 22:8-9: "I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. But he said to me, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God."*
- *Philippians 1:18-24: "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, 19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake."*

### **A continuous action:**

- *1 Corinthians 10:31 - "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"*
- *Colossians 3:16-17 - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."*
- *Isaac Watts - "We can never be too frequent or too solemn in the general surrender of our souls to God and binding our souls by a vow to the be the Lord's forever: to love him above all things, to fear him, to hope in him, to walk in his ways in a course of holy obedience, and to wait for his mercy unto eternal life."*
- *"The term worship is sometimes applied to all of a Christian's life, and it is rightly said that everything in our life should be an act of worship, and everything the church does should be considered worship, for everything we do should glorify God." Wayne Grudam*

## Conclusion:

We've gone through a few examples of what worship is and what it isn't. Worship is an inward feeling and outward action. Jesus explicitly says we must worship with "spirit and truth" or in other words, with our hearts and with biblical accuracy. Paul tells us that our worship needs to be a living and holy sacrifice. We find that genuine worship is a delight and we are to enjoy Him forever. Most of all, worship is what we were made to do--it is our sole purpose of life.

So we can see that worship is a big topic to dissect and digest. But I can assure you that it is for our good to have a better understanding of true biblical worship and how that intertwines with the gift of music especially when we use it within our church. There is hardly an event that we do at Harvest that doesn't have musical worship (bonfire, senior banquet, retreats, Sunday services, fnf, etc.)! Let's try to understand this better in order that we can worship God the way He wants to be worshiped.