

# When is Worship, **Worship?**

All of us have been in church services and events that have been called “worship services” or “worship events.” We have attended these gatherings and entered into some wonderful times with the Lord. However, recently I have been experiencing some troubling thoughts as we gather to come into His presence. There seems to be a pattern developing in the “worship” environment and experience that has settled into many of our worship times. In this discussion I would like to share some of my thoughts on this.

As we go forward, let’s review what the term “worship” actually means and what it was meant to be as found in the scriptures and in the eyes of God. The first thing I would like to address is that in our times of gathering together or even in our own individual times, worship should not and does not only refer to music, song, dance, flags, banners, etc. These are just a few of the many forms and expressions of worship.

The Hebrew word translated to the English term “worship,” is the word “shachah” (shä•khä’). It means to lay down prostrate in homage to a deity, a person or something. It also means to bow down to a deity, a person or thing that is held in the highest regard to the person bowing down to it. Notice that I did not necessarily mention “God” in my definition. The term “worship” is generic. It is neither good nor bad in itself. It changes its connotation when it is directed to someone or something. Worship unto the Lord becomes true worship unto Him when it is directed towards Him and Him alone.

The Greek word translated into the term “worship” in the New Testament is an interesting one. The word is “proskyneō.” It means to “turn towards” in acknowledgement of a deity, person or thing for the purpose of paying homage to or giving reverence (respect) to them. It means to adore and to “kiss towards” a deity, a person or thing that is held in the highest regard by the individual. It infers that there must be an act of lying down prostrate or bowing down. It also means to “draw near to” the one that you desire to be with. An interesting aspect of the Greek word, “proskyneō” is that figuratively speaking, it refers to being, “Like a dog licking its master's hand.”

What this implies is that just as a dog looks to its master for its very source of life, so should we be viewing God as the absolute source of our lives. The dog expresses its heartfelt love, appreciation and gratitude the only way it knows how – by licking the hand of its master. They give their highest praise with a “doggy heart attitude” of gratitude and love by licking you so much that you have to push them away and tell them to stop because it was getting to be too much for you. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we all would kiss towards our Heavenly Father with such a heart attitude of gratitude and love, so much so that He would have to tell us to stop because it was too much for Him to take?!!!

Worship is an attitude of the heart, which is then expressed outwardly in many different ways but most importantly it should be expressed within the believer’s lifestyle. It is a lifestyle that acknowledges, turns toward, and kisses towards God for who He is, not just for what He has done. We bow down in total submission, homage, and reverence to the God of our salvation. Ultimately, as we can see - worship must be all about God!!! There was a wonderful song that came out a few years back entitled the “Heart of Worship” by Matt Redman. The chorus of the song concludes with and declares that, “...it’s all about You, Jesus.” We all have heard this song and we most likely have sung this in our gatherings. Yet after a while it seems that we forget about what we have just declared and instead of making our times of worship “all about God” it has become “all about me.”

Saint Augustine wrote in his book "Confessions" that he was getting disturbed within himself because he started to realize that when he was in a church service, "he was getting more enjoyment out of singing, than the words of worship that he was singing." In other words his fulfillment came from his own enjoyment of singing and hearing everyone else sing. He began losing track of the actual words and what they were really meant to do and who they were really for – the worship of the One and only true God. Could that be happening to some of us today? Hmm!!

What I am seeing is that there seems to be a very subtle, slow moving mentality that seems to be penetrating our times of both corporate worship and individual times of worship. I sense a shift happening that our times of worship are becoming more about "me" and "us" and "I" rather than what the essence of true worship must be - all about Him. In some of our times of gathering we delight in the prophetic and delight in hearing how God loves us, what He has done and what He desires and will do. This is all wonderful and there is nothing wrong with that. However, if we are so blessed to hear those things from our God, just imagine how blessed our God would be if we first take the time to "love on Him."

The essence of true worship is expressed by Jesus in Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10 27, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind...*" I love my God not because I **must love** Him, but simply because **I love Him** with all that is within me and my desire is to bless the heart of my King. This is the essence of true worship. It is all about God and not about me. This was the purpose for why Jesus declared that the "*the hour cometh, and now is, (in and through Jesus) when the true worshippers shall worship the Father (love Him the way we were created to love Him) in spirit and in truth*" - John 4:24.

Michael Card once wrote, "The purpose of any worship experience is that God is worshipped. What we feel or receive from it is of a secondary nature." Wow!!! That is the heart of the true worshipper. Unfortunately, we have allowed the "me attitude" to creep into our times of what we call worship. Worship, true worship, has nothing to do with me other than me yielding my heart and all that I am totally unto Him. I am to come as that "living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to Him." (Romans 12:1) That is and should be the "attitude" of the believer's heart in worship. This attitude of heart leads to a worship of God not just with music, song, dance, flags, etc., but it leads to a lifestyle of worship in all that we do - 24 hours/ 7 days a week, all the days of my life. (Psalm 27:4)

In many cases, unfortunately, we have placed worship leaders and the music aspect of worship on a pedestal. None of us would admit to this but in reality, if we were honest with ourselves, we have. In the past it was pastors and evangelists that were placed on pedestals. Nowadays, it is the worship leaders and musicians. Many times we go to churches, ministries and other places just to "worship" with a particular worship leader. Now it is true that there are wonderful worship leaders, however, we all must check our motives and intent. Are we going to the place where this worship leader is leading because we love their music, we love their voice, or we love how they make us feel? We may think and say that they "lead us into the presence of God" but is that really truthful? This is not necessarily the worship leader's problem. Nor is it just the worshipper's problem. It may be a combination of both. Remember what we discussed about what St Augustine was questioning and having difficulty with.

We must never forget what truly leads us and allows us to enter into the presence of God and into His Throne Room - "nothing but the Blood of Jesus." If you are born again and washed with the Blood of Jesus, you have access into the presence of God, period. Through the Blood we are in His presence. What we do in His presence is what determines if we are truly worshipping Him. Once we have access into His presence through the Blood of Jesus, is it all about Him or are we making it all about us?

The result of entering into times of true worship is that the true worshipper will begin to experience change within their life and lifestyle. Let's look at Moses as an example of this. In Exodus 24:20, we see that

the countenance of Moses literally changed as He was in the very presence of God. His face was glowing. So much so that he had to place a veil over his face. This is ironic because earlier in this account we read that Moses asked to see God's glory but was not allowed to look upon His face or Moses would die. Here, we now see that Moses' face was shining so bright from the glory by just being in the presence of the King of Glory that others were blinded by it. He had to place a veil over his face because the people could not look at Moses because of the glory that was now transferred upon him. Isaiah had a similar experience. He experienced God's presence in the Temple (Isaiah 6) and immediately realized his frailties ("Woe is me for I am undone..."). He came out of that encounter with God's presence much different than when he went in. Moses and Isaiah experienced an outward change. Every time we enter into God's presence it will change us. We as His people will experience inward change for the purpose of preparing us as His beloved Bride.

Another aspect of our worship is that we are called to be His "priests" and together we make up His Holy Priesthood. 1Peter 2:9 tells us, *"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people: that you should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."*

The term "priest" comes from the Hebrew word "kahan" (kā•han'). It literally means to "officiate; to mediate between a supernatural being and His people." Figuratively speaking the term "priest" means, "to put on regalia", "to be clothed regally, to wear the priestly garments." In Exodus 28:2, 3, 5, 29, we see that Aaron and his sons were to be wearing "holy garments." These were specifically designed and made to be dedicated clothing, coverings, or raiment to be worn whenever they were to be **ministering unto the Lord**. They were to put on these regal garments in recognition of the One they were to minister unto. The priesthood needed this material covering to cover their "filthiness" that was inside. Through the blood that Jesus shed on the cross, and His resurrection, we are now "clothed" with a "Robe of Righteousness." It is sometimes portrayed in the scriptures as, "white raiment." God gives us the "priestly garment" of righteousness to be able to come into His presence and effectively minister **unto Him**. Our filthy garments that are stained with sin are exchanged with a new, clean garment, washed by the Blood of the Lamb - the "garment of righteousness," the "official" garment of praise.

Recognizing our role as priests will help us in our worship of our God. This is what a priest is supposed to do – **minister unto the Lord**. It is all about Him. It is all about the Lord our God. It is all about the "Lover of our soul." When we gather to worship, we gather as His priesthood. As priests we gather to minister - to minister unto Him, first and foremost. As we please and bless the heart of our King, He will then use us to be His vessels that will then minister His Kingdom to others. As we realize our place as priests unto the Lord in the function of a worshipper, we will be giving to God the very thing that pleases Him the most - our heart that is filled with love for Him.

Ultimately, this is what we will be doing in eternity. We all will be continually, worshipping our God. In God's heart, we are already there. The marriage feast between the Bridegroom, Jesus and His Bride, the Body of Christ, is the consummation of our relationship. When we are with Him forever, our worship is to be continually all about Him. So why don't we start doing that right now in our times of what we call worship.

I am not saying that in our times of true worship that God will not pour out Himself upon us. I am not saying that He will not speak to us, prophetically, nor will He not pour out His love in and through us. What I am saying is that when we gather to worship the One and only true God, our worship should be what worship really is - all about Him!!! When we gather the attitude of our heart should be such that all we desire to do is "bless the heart of our King." As we do, our God cannot help Himself but to pour out His fullness and His Kingdom upon those He delights in. He will speak and he will rejoice over us with His song (Zephaniah 3:17). He will heal; He will deliver; He will pour out His Kingdom. That is just who He is.

When is worship, worship? - When it is all about Him and only Him.

## "The Heart of Worship"

*When the music fades  
and all has slipped away  
and I simply come.  
Longing just to be  
something that's of worth  
that will bless Your heart.*

*I'll bring You more than a song,  
for a song in itself  
is not what You have required.  
You search much deeper within,  
through the way things appear,  
Your looking into my heart.*

*I'm coming back to the heart of worship  
and it's all about You, it's all about You, Jesus.  
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it  
when it's all about You, it's all about You, Jesus.*

*King of endless worth,  
no one could express  
how much you deserve.  
Though I'm weak and poor,  
all I have is Yours,  
every single breath!*

*I'll bring You more than a song,  
for a song in itself  
is not what You have required.  
You search much deeper within,  
through the way things appear,  
Your looking into my heart.*

*I'm coming back to the heart of worship  
and it's all about You, it's all about You, Jesus.  
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it  
when it's all about You, it's all about You, Jesus.*

**- Matt Redman**