

What is Worship?

Worship—(*noun*) reverence, homage or honor paid to God; an utterly devoted admiration; (*verb*) to be full of adoration.
Praise—(*verb*) to speak of with approval; to glorify.

A. Worship and praise are major Biblical themes and refer to glorifying God. They are often used in conjunction with music and singing, but not always. The Bible even describes non-living created things praising God—in essence telling us that we can praise and worship God merely by being who and what God created us to be.

- Psalm 96:11-13—*Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar and all it contains; let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the Lord, for He is coming.*
- Isaiah 55:12—*The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.*
- Luke 19:37-40—*And as He was now approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" And some of the Pharisees in the multitude said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." And He answered and said, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out."*

B. Worship is an action, but also an attitude or mindset (not a feeling and not based on feelings)

- In the general sense—how I live my life, how I use the gifts/talents God's given me, who's on the throne of my heart, is my focus on pleasing myself or pleasing God, having an attitude of serving and giving.
- In the specific sense—focusing on God on Sunday mornings during the corporate worship time.

C. Worship as spiritual warfare

- In the Old Testament, God at times instructed Israel to send the singers and musicians ahead of the army when going into battle—2 Chronicles 20:21-22—*He (Jehoshaphat) appointed those who sang to the Lord and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, "Give thanks to the Lord, for His lovingkindness is everlasting." And when they began singing and praising, the Lord set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; so they were struck down.*
- In the New Testament, Paul says in 2 Cor. 10:4: *For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses;* and in Ephesians 6:12: *Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*
- Praise & worship 1) keeps our focus on God—Romans 12:1—a sacrifice of praise; and 2) invites God's presence with us—Psalm 22:3—*O Thou who dost inhabit the praises of Israel...*

What is Worship at Way of the Lord?

A. An extension of the worshipping life of each believer.

- The Sunday morning worship time is never meant to be the only time, or even the main time during the week when I am focused on God and His attributes, and offer praise and worship because of it.
- How worship is incorporated into my daily life has a direct effect on the corporate worship of the body—if worship is a regular part of my Christian life, I can take ownership of it in the corporate setting; in other words, I don't rely on others or outward circumstances to make the worship time a meaningful experience for me.

B. Biblical—incorporating worship articles and actions

- Raising and clapping hands—Psalm 47:1—*O clap your hands, all peoples; shout to God with the voice of joy.*
- Dancing—2 Samuel 6:14—*And David was dancing before the Lord with all his might.* Psalm 149:3—*Let them praise His name with dancing.*
- Banners & flags—symbolic of various aspects of God's character and His care for us. Psalm 60:4—*Thou hast given a banner to those who fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth.* "Jehovah Nissi," the Lord our Banner, is one of the Old Testament names of God
- Shouting—Psalm 35:27—*Let them shout for joy and rejoice, who favor my vindication.* Psalm 95:1-2—*O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.*
- Bowing down—Psalm 95:6—*Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.*

C. "Spirit-filled"

- 2 Corinthians 14:15—*I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also.*
- John 4:24—*God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*
- 2 Corinthians 2:4-5—*And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.*
- 2 Corinthians 14:24-25—*If all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted (or unversed in spiritual gifts) man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.*
 - a. This is very significant! An unbeliever will recognize when the Spirit of God is present in our midst.
 - b. Zechariah 4:6—*Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.*
 - c. Philippians 3:3—*We are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.*
 - d. It's not our wisdom, our powerful words, our musical excellence or anything else from us that brings conviction to the unbeliever—it's the Spirit of God!
 - e. Therefore, we need to hold this goal before us: the presence of the Spirit of God, and our allowing Him freedom

D. God-centered

- Revelation 4:8-11—there is worship in the throne room of heaven going on day and night.
- Our purpose for worship at WOTL is to be part of what's going on in the heavenlies
 - a. While we want the worship to be meaningful and culturally relevant to the people, our main purpose is not to please the people, but to please God.
 - b. It's not just a song service and the worship team is not a performance group. We are called to lead the congregation into the throne room. Because music is, by definition, a performing art, there always seems to be tension between true worship and performance. We believe the difference lies in our heart attitude and the end goal. In performance, the music is the goal. In worship, the music is only the means to the goal—the goal is honoring God and inviting His presence. In either case, the pursuit of excellence is warranted, but for different reasons. In performance, excellence honors the performer. In worship, excellence honors God. (Exodus 31:1-6; 1 Samuel 16:18, 23; Psalm 47:7; Matthew 25:14-30)
 - c. A worship service can be "seeker-sensitive" or "God-sensitive." Can it be both? Who are we seeking to feel comfortable and welcome? We believe our most important "guest" is the Lord, and will always seek His presence as a higher priority than the presence of people. The Spirit of God is well able to attract those He wants to attract.