

An Understanding of ***Biblical* Worship**

PART ONE: Seeking a *Proper* Definition

1. Defining the term...

Merriam-Webster's definition:

worship, *v.* and *n.* wor·ship | 'wər-shəp

noun:

1. reverence offered a divine being or supernatural power.

verb:

1. to regard with great respect, honor, or devotion.

2. A pretext for Biblical worship.

Romans 12:1-2, NASB – *¹Therefore 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. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

a. Biblical worship is only possible by a **Christian**.

Romans 12:1a, NASB – *¹Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God...*

b. The Christian is asked to do something **impossible**.

Romans 12:1b, ESV – *¹...to present your bodies as a living sacrifice...*

c. But if the Christian does it, that is **spiritual worship**.

Romans 12:1c, ESV – *¹...holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

d. Don't be **conformed!**

Romans 12:2a, NLT – *²Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world...*

e. Be **transformed!**

Romans 12:2b, NASB – *²...but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...*

f. Then you will know **God's will!**

Romans 12:2c, BSB – *²...Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.*

Here's the point: Only a Christian, through God's mercies, can stop allowing the world to control them and have their mind transformed *which is the only correct way to worship God*. If they worship God correctly by becoming a living sacrifice, the result will be that the *Christian will have and know God's will for their life*.¹

3. The problem with defining “worship.”

D. A. Carson outlines three challenges in communicating a clear theology and definition of worship:²

1. There is no “one-for-one” English word for worship that matches the multifaceted Hebrew and Greek words in Scripture.³
2. There is an emotional attachment to certain styles and traditions.
3. The diversity of options within worship leads to unrest and divisiveness.

Our English word “worship” is both too broad and too narrow at the same time to define worship.⁴

4. A Biblical definition of worship.

Before we define worship, there needs to be an understanding: God is a self-revealing God.

a. God has revealed Himself in **creation**.

Psalm 19:1, NASB – ¹⁹*The heavens tell the glory of God; and their expanse declares the work of His hands.*

b. God has revealed Himself in **morality**.

Romans 1:18-20, NASB - ¹⁸*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, being understood by what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

c. God has revealed Himself in **Scripture**.

2 Timothy 3:16, NASB – ¹⁶*All Scripture is inspired (lit. God-breathed) by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness.”*

Worship begins with the reality of who God is!

John 4:23-24, NASB – ²³*But a time is coming, and even now has arrived, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*

“The point that Jesus is making is that in light of His coming as Messiah and Savior, worshipers will not be identified by a particular shrine or location, but by their worship of the Father through the Son...True worshipers are all those who everywhere worship God through the Son, from the heart.”⁵

¹ Dr. Osborne, “Exegesis to Sermon.”

² D. A. Carson, “Worship by the Book.”

³ There are 7 different words for worship in Biblical Hebrew (describing an offering קָרַב, bowing הָנִיף, exalting רוּם, celebrating הִלֵּל, praising הִלְלוּ, and serving עָבַד) and 6 different words for worship in Biblical Greek (describing bowing down προσκυνέω, kneeling κάμπτω, singing δοξάζω, giving respect/reverence σέβω, performing a ritual θρησκεία, and giving God glory εὐλογέω). See the “Lexham Theological Wordbook” for more information on these words.

⁴ Dr. Crider, “Defining Worship.”

⁵ John MacArthur, “The MacArthur Study Bible,” John Chapter 4.

“Genuine worship is the natural and proper response to the revelation of the Holy Lord God of Glory.” – Allen P. Ross⁶

“Worship is like a rhythm...a God-initiated rhythm. He initiates the rhythm by revealing Himself to His redeemed. The redeemed receive His revelation by faith and then respond to Him, acknowledging His infinite glory and perfection through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.” – Dr. Joseph Crider⁷

“I think the point is that when we worship—right worship, good worship, pleasing worship—depends on a right mental grasp of the way God really is, truth.” – John Piper⁸

Pastor Joey's definition of worship: “Worship is the physical, emotional, and spiritual response to the revelation of God—this includes acknowledging who God is, praising God for what He has done, and serving God in what He is going to do. In a practical sense, it is celebrating the creative and provisional work of the Father, looking to the redemptive work of the Son, and serving alongside the work of the Holy Spirit among us.”

PART TWO: *Doing* Worship

1. An Example of a Sunday morning gathering at South Reno Baptist Church.

	Contemporary Service	
	September 25, 2022	Survey of Job
Pre-Service		
Service Start		
Worship Music		
Greeting Time		
Call to Worship - Psalm 100		
Great Things		
Evidence		
God Of Revival		
Sermon		
Sermon Bumper Video		
Pastor Joe		
My Jesus I Love Thee		
Service End		
Closing Remarks Pastor Joe		
Closing Video		

⁶ Allen P. Ross, “Recalling the Hope of Glory.”

⁷ Dr. Joseph Crider, “Defining Worship,” Worship 4323: Theology of Worship (class lecture, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX, August 15, 2022).

⁸ John Piper, “What is Worship?” <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-worship>

2. Why do we do the things that we do on Sunday morning?

The main purpose of the Sunday gathering is to exalt God, edify the body, and evangelize the lost. The Bible does not give a prescription for what the worship gathering should look like. Dan Kimball's essay, "Emerging Worship" (in *Pinson's Perspectives on Christian Worship*) outlines this truth, saying:

First, we have very limited knowledge, of or specific guidelines, on what should occur in a worship gathering. We see glimpses of things such as teaching, prayer, song, Communion, and so forth. However, our knowledge is limited and not detailed. We do not know what sequence of events took place within [the worship gathering], how long they met, or how they set up a room for worship...Second, almost all of the specific ways we worship in most churches today are neither directed nor informed by the Scriptures themselves, but rather evolved from people in church leadership, reflecting the culture of their time. Godly men and women during different periods of church history did their best to design worship gatherings that reflected their culture and values and theology. The various robes pastors wear, the styles of music, the liturgy, the way Communion is served, the format and style of preaching, the order of the service itself, the way people dress when going to a worship gathering, and the musical instruments used do not come directly from instructions in the New Testament.⁹

Why even have a specific order? Paul says regarding worship, in 1 Corinthians 14:40, "But all things must be done properly and in an orderly way" (NASB).¹⁰ We might not have direct instructions, but we can look at the life of the early church and understand what it is they did so we can know what to do when we gather (see Acts 2:42-47).

a. We study God's word.

Acts 2:42a, NASB – ⁴²*They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship...*

2 Timothy 3:16-17, ESV – ¹⁶*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

b. We remember the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 2:42b, NASB – ⁴²*They were continually devoting themselves...to the breaking of bread...*

Luke 22:19, ESV – ¹⁹*And He took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*

c. We pray.

Acts 2:42c, NASB – ⁴²*They were continually devoting themselves...and to prayer.*

Philippians 4:6, ESV – ⁶*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God.*

1 Thessalonians 5:17, ESV – ¹⁷*Pray without ceasing!*

⁹ Kimball, "Emerging Worship," p. 294.

¹⁰ MacArthur notes that the thrust of this text is that everything the church should do in a worship gathering should reflect the nature and character of God, who is a God of peace and harmony, order and clarity, not strife and confusion. If the Spirit moves, do not hinder God's work among you, but desire the *truth*, not an emotional reaction.

d. We fast.

Acts 14:23, ESV – ²³And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

e. We encourage one another.

Acts 2:43, NASB – ⁴³Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

1 Thessalonians 5:11, ESV – ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

f. We fellowship.

Acts 2:44a, NASB – ⁴⁴And all the believers were together...

Romans 1:11-12, ESV – ¹¹For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—¹²that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

g. We sing songs.

Colossians 3:16, ESV – ¹⁶Let 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.

h. We confess sin.

James 5:17, ESV – ¹⁷Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

i. We tithe.

Acts 2:44b-45, NASB – ⁴⁴...and had all things in common; ⁴⁵and they would sell their property and possessions and share them all, to the extent that anyone had need.

Proverbs 3:9, ESV – ⁹Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce.

j. We gather.

Acts 2:46, NASB – ⁴⁶Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.

Hebrews 10:25, ESV – ²⁵Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

k. We praise God.

Acts 2:47a, NASB – ⁴⁷Praising God and having favor with all the people.

Hebrews 13:15, ESV – ¹⁵Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name.

l. We invite others into the body.

Matthew 28:19, ESV – ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

➤ **Why a public invitation?**

Matthew 10:33, ESV – ³³But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in Heaven.

m. And the result of genuine worship?

Acts 2:47b, NASB – ⁴⁷...And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Remember: Worship is simply our response to God's revelation. We acknowledge Him, Praise Him, and serve Him. Everything we do on a Sunday Morning reflects this truth, but it does not begin nor end on Sunday!

3. Worship is not just an activity we do, but it is to be an attitude and a lifestyle we adopt.

Romans 12:1-2, NASB – ¹Therefore 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. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

John 4:21-24, NASB – ²¹Jesus said to her, "Believe Me, woman, that a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. ²³But a time is coming, and even now has arrived, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

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