

March 19th, 2023
Masterclass: Week 3

I don't think I'm a "master" of anything just yet, but one topic I feel very strongly about is, you guessed it, WORSHIP!

Worship is one of the main themes in the Bible and is extremely important in the life of the believer. Yet, most Christians don't have a clear understanding of the nature of worship.

1.) What IS Worship?

Worship is more than just an action or a behavior- true, authentic worship starts within the heart.

On a higher level, Scripture speaks of SPIRITUAL gifts or sacrifices that He requires His followers to bring Him.

These spiritual gifts are thanksgiving, praise, and worship.

Psalm 100:4 (NIV)

"Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise"

Often used interchangeably; they are distinct in their meaning but also blend into one another. Here's how we can distinguish them:

- Thanksgiving relates to God's goodness.
- Praise relates to God's greatness.
- Worship relates to God's holiness.

"Holiness" is in a class of its own. It's an attribute of God that is most difficult for the human mind to comprehend because it has no parallel on earth.

I believe that worship relates directly to God's holiness, but because it's hard to understand holiness, it can be hard to fully understand and enter into worship.

This means that worship can be the most difficult of these three gifts for us to offer in a way that is acceptable to God. Thanksgiving and praise are primarily utterances of the mouth, but worship is an attitude.

A.) Praise

"Praise" is weaved throughout the entire Bible from beginning to end.

We see praise associated with the earth from the very beginning. In Job 38, God challenged Job with this question: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?...while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?" (*Job 38: 4,7 (NIV)*)

B.) Thanksgiving

Hebrews 12:28 (NIV)

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, **let us be thankful**, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe”

What this shows us is that there is a direct connection between grace and thankfulness.

Three of the world’s Romance languages all reveal a direct connection between grace and thankfulness.

In French, “thanks be to God” translates to this: *grâce à Dieu*

In Italian, the word for thank you is: *grazie*

In Spanish, it is: *gracias*

Psalm 95:1 (NIV)

“Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us **shout aloud** to the Rock of our salvation”

Do I think Heaven is going to be quiet? No! God literally spoke to Job, we read this earlier, and said “the morning stars SANG together and the angels SHOUTED for joy”! So, when we come into God’s house, when we enter his gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise (Psalm 100), LIFT YOUR VOICE! Don’t bring half-hearted praises to God. Honestly, if we are not prepared to praise Him greatly, don’t do it at all.

C.) Worship

When we come into contact with, become aware of, or have a revelation of the holiness of God, there is only one appropriate response: worship.

Without this revelation we cannot really have worship. We can have a song service, but we do not enter into worship until we have a revelation, however big or small it may be, of the holiness of God.

And here’s the thing; the holiness of God cannot be explained. It cannot be defined. It can only be revealed.

Holiness is the essence of what God is.

I. God Is Light

1 John 1:5 (NIV), “This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”

II. God Is Love

1 John 4:16 (NIV), “God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.”

III. God Is Justice and Judgement

Deuteronomy 32: 3-4 (NIV), “I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.”

IV. God Is Anger and Wrath

Nahum 1:2 (NIV), "The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The Lord takes vengeance on his foes and vents his wrath against his enemies."

V. God Is Mercy and Loving-kindness

Psalm 51:1 (NIV), "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions."

VI. God Is Grace

Hebrews 4:16 (NIV), "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

VII. God Is Power

Psalm 93:4 (NIV), "Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea—the Lord on high is mighty."

Holiness is the total being of God; He is light, love, justice and judgement, anger and wrath, mercy and loving-kindness, grace and power.

Holy is the only word that is used three times of God in the same sentence in both the Old and New Testaments. In Isaiah the seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory! (Isaiah 6:4 (NIV))

And in Revelation, the living creatures and the elders fall down and cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (Revelation 4:8 (NIV))

There is a significance in the threefold repetition. Holy is the Father, holy is the Son, and holy is the Spirit.

Our Physical Expressions of Worship

There is no such thing as motionless worship. There is no such thing as worship where our body makes no response. Worship is active.

Every word that describes worship in the Bible also describes a posture of the body without exception!

How we posture ourselves when we worship absolutely matters!

The Head:

- What action involves our head in worship or prayer? We "close our eyes and...."

In Exodus, Moses and Aaron return from the desert to bring word to the enslaved nation of Israel that God had come down and committed to deliver them from the Egyptians. This is what we read, "So the people believed. And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed their heads and worshiped."

Bowing your head before God is a simple but very effective act of worship.

The Hands:

One of the world's greatest worshippers was David, and he gave us two postures of the hands that represent worship.

He shows us the first posture in *Psalm 63:4 (NIV)*, "Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands."

Then in *Psalm 143:6 (NIV)*, "I spread out my hands to you; I thirst for you like a parched land."

There is a significance in these two attitudes of the hands.

When you lift up your hands you are acknowledging God's majesty and sovereignty.

When you spread out your hands you are open to receive.

What's another act of worship you can think of that involves your hands?

Psalm 47:1 (NIV), "Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy."

The Knees:

The king at the time of Daniel's life had made a decree that anyone who prayed to any other God besides himself would be thrown into a lion's den.

This was Daniel's response to the king's decree: Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. (*Daniel 6:10 (NIV)*)

Daniel had a regular practice of prayer and kneeling down toward Jerusalem.

In Ephesians, the apostle Paul wrote, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Bowing your knees is an act of total submission, which is very important.

Many Christians are not totally submitted to God. They submit to Him when God does what they like, but when He does something different they complain, argue, and get upset.

Here's the reality: at a certain point, God is going to insist that every living creature in the universe that has knees will acknowledge His total sovereignty.

Isaiah 45:23 (NIV), "Before me every knee will bow; every tongue will confess."

It's important to worship God with our whole body. Because there is nothing more holy that we can offer the Lord than ourselves.