

Title: The How and Why of Worship

Text: Psalm 95:1-7a

Martin Luther, a pivotal figure in the Protestant Reformation, emphasized the transformative power of worship: "To gather with God's people in united adoration of the Father is as necessary to the Christian life as prayer."

Is this true?

According to the Barna Group...

***Church Attendance Decline:** Weekly church attendance has significantly declined, with 36% fewer Americans attending church weekly in 2020 compared to 1993. This shift reflects broader changes in religious engagement and societal trends affecting how individuals participate in faith communities.¹*

So, how do our current statistics square with what Luther claims?

There is an obvious disconnect that true believers in Christ MUST take seriously. Worship of God, which includes corporate worship, must be a priority, not an option.

Main Idea: God Desires Worshipers Who Take Worship Seriously

In order to take worship seriously, one must understand the HOWs and WHYs of Worship

"Worship is an inward feeling and outward action that reflects the worth of God." - Piper

Notice the back and forth that the writer of this Psalm uses to highlight the How's and Why's of worship...

1. The How of Worship - Offer Songs of Joyful Praise and Thanksgiving to God (vs. 1-2)

Angie and I love to watch singing competition shows. Some of the singing talent in the world around us is breathtaking and inspiring.

God has given humanity the beautiful capacity to make music and sing. This ability is a marvel, really.

In a perfect world, all music would be for an audience of One, namely God.

But we do not live in a perfect world. And like everything else, music tends to focus on humanity's wants and desires. Music turns inward instead of Godward.

When one becomes a follower of Christ, there should be a seismic shift in our focus and perspective.

When we become followers of Christ, life becomes about pleasing Him rather than self.

¹ <https://www.barna.com/research/changing-state-of-the-church/>

When we become followers of Christ, our old life is upended, and we begin a new journey of self-denial and Christ exaltation.

This is a radical upending that includes the focus of our singing and music.

Look at verses 1-2

Psalm 95:1–2 ESV

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

As a people of God, the Israelites had a unique and glorious position in comparison to the rest of the world. They had the distinction of being God's chosen people. There was nothing special about these people that they should be chosen.

Deuteronomy 7:6–8 ESV

"For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Why did God choose them? Because He placed his love and favor on them? Because He is God, and he can do this! It was a tremendous act of Grace.

And because they were His people and because He lavished his love and favor on them, they were compelled to worship this God in song.

Verse 1...

"Let us sing" = "make a joyful noise"

"to the LORD" = "to the rock of our salvation"

God's people were to sing to Him. They were to sing joyfully - a joyful racket if you will.

The use of "noise" here conveys that worship isn't limited to a specific form or ritual; it can be loud, exultant, and full of energy, reflecting the inner joy and gratitude of the worshippers. This call to make a "joyful noise" invites worshippers to express their faith openly and loudly, using their voices, instruments, or any means available to celebrate God's majesty and His deeds. It's a reminder that worship is active and participatory, not passive and that it springs from a heart moved by the love and awe of God.

Apparently, a cacophony of singing was acceptable instead of a symphony of praise.

In other words, God is not as interested in the quality of our singing as He is that we do.

For the Israelites, this was not a request from God. It was an expected part of the HOW of worship.

God wants to hear His people sing. After all the creator of all there is, created music, didn't he?

Aslan's creation of Narnia, singing it into existence: *"In the darkness something was happening at last. A voice had begun to sing. It was very far away and Digory found it hard to decide from what direction it was coming. Sometimes it seemed to come from all directions at once. Sometimes he almost thought it was coming out of the earth beneath them. Its lower notes were deep enough to be the voice of the earth herself. There were no words. It was hardly a tune. But it was beyond comparison, the most beautiful sound he had ever heard. It was so beautiful he could hardly bear it...and that it was the First Voice, the deep one, which had made them appear and made them sing". – The Magician's Nephew*

God created music. God created singing. God created you. And he created you to sing praise to him.

Remember, we are talking about the "How" of worship. And the one way we are told HOW to worship is by singing/making a joyful noise, and we are to present that singing to God, the immovable reason for our salvation.

So, do you sing praise to God? I remember when I started following Christ in 1991, a hymn was always going through my head. Now remember, I was not raised a Baptist so I didn't have all these Christians songs in my brain, but God gave me a song.

Psalm 40:1-3 ESV

I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.

And friends, when we have a song in our heart, it needs to come out. And apparently, from [Psalm 40](#), he puts a song of praise in every believer's mouth. And it needs to come out of your mouth.

It says in verses 1-2 that it is not just a noise, but a joyful noise.

Can I encourage you with something simple? Try to consciously look like you have a heart full of joy when you sing.

I know for some who hear that challenge it automatically irritates you. That's okay - allow your irritation to wake you up from your spiritual lethargy and apathy and start to prayerfully make a JOYFUL NOISE to the LORD every time we sing praises to him. This is how we do it!

Review - God Desires Worshipers Who Take Worship Seriously

- Offer Songs of Joyful Praise and Thanksgiving to God

Why should we?

2. The Why of Worship - Because God is the ONLY Great Creator (vs. 3-5)

It is interesting that the Psalmist starts with the How of worship but then moves on to the motivation for proper worship.

The Why of Worship in these verses is that God is the only Creator.

Sure, you create things. Many in this room have amazing abilities and talents...

Things humans create...

Paintings and sculptures, Music, Literature

Buildings and infrastructure

Computers

Clothes and furniture.

Humanity is exceedingly creative.

But did you know that none of these things are created by humans out of nothing?

There is only one being that can create something from nothing, and that being is the Creator God!

All of these things listed require existing ingredients.

But Creator God doesn't need ingredients to create. He creates the ingredients.

And this is a great reason for praise...

It is necessary to apply to Scripture in order to learn the sure marks which distinguish God, as the Creator of the world, from the whole herd of fictitious gods.

John Calvin

Notice what these verses point out as three characteristics of our God...

Psalm 95:3–5 ESV

For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

He is the Great God - Greater than all other gods. By the way, all other gods, if they even exist, are created by Him.

The god of this age -

The god of self -

He is the Immense God - His creation is smaller than Him. His "hand" is bigger than the deepest part of the earth or the highest mountain on the earth.

The deepest known point on Earth is the Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench, located in the western Pacific Ocean. The Challenger Deep reaches a depth of

approximately 36,070 feet (about 10,994 meters) below sea level, making it the deepest part of the world's oceans.

The highest mountain on Earth is Mount Everest, which is part of the Himalaya range in Asia. Its peak rises to an elevation of 29,032 feet (8,848.86 meters) above sea level, according to the latest surveys. Mount Everest is located on the border between Nepal and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China.

From our finite and tiny perspective, these statistics of the lowest and highest places on this earth don't even come close to the immensity of our Creator God.

He is the Creator/Owner God - We've already made this point earlier. But there is an aspect of the creator that we must be aware of as His creation. Creator equals Owner.

The psalmist says that God owns the sea because He made the sea! And the text says he formed the dry ground, which also means He created it!

Genesis 1:6–10 ESV

And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

And because He called all things into existence, He therefore owns all things and thus has authority over them.

By the way, where did you come from? The Bible claims you, and I came from Adam.

Where did Adam come from?

Genesis 2:5–7 ESV

When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

Adam came from the dust of the ground. God formed Adam and God gave Adam the breath of life.

You and I come from Adam. By the way, this is not an Old Testament concept only...

Acts 17:26 ESV

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

We all come from God's creative hand and therefore are responsible to God because He has ownership authority over each one of us.

In light of this, what should our proper response be? We will talk about that in the next HOW of worship.

But first...

What is your view of God? How do you perceive Him? Some view God as a soft and benevolent grandfather type who just accepts everything you do without any fear of correction.

Some view God as an angry despot who is just waiting for you to screw up so he can throw the smackdown on you.

Some view God as an ambivalent force that got everything started but now has nothing to do with creation.

But how do you view God? Where do you get your concept of Him?

I will tell you, for the Christian, there is only one acceptable source from which we can understand God and that is from His Word.

This passage describes God as the GREAT, IMMENSE, CREATOR / OWNER God. There is none like Him and therefore, He is worthy of all our praise.

A dead God is the creation of men; a living God is the Creator of men.

Anonymous

Everything in your purview is a direct result of the creative genius of God.

For the rest of today and as you go through this week, remember this profound thought. It should drive you to worship.

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- Because God is the ONLY Great Creator

3. The How of Worship - Go to God in Reverence and Submission (vs. 6)

And because God is the ONLY Great Creator, we must worship Him in a way he prescribes...

Psalm 95:6 ESV

Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

Our proper response must be to **go** to Him! This is a corporate admonition to the children of Israel that they are to go to God they are to actively pursue the one who pursued them. This is an admonition to believers to gather together to offer Him praise and worship.

This, my friends is not an antiquated, Old Testament, concept. No, it is reiterated throughout the New Testament.

In Acts Luke tells us...

Acts 2:46 NIV84

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,

Not one day per week, but each day of the week.

Hebrews 10:23–25 ESV

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Friends the shocking reality of the American church in the 21st Century stands in stark contrast to the first church.

The Barna Group declares that in the 2000's, regular attendance to a local church was considered twice a month.

In other words, a faithful churchgoer in the first century was everyday and today is two times per month.

So many other activities get into the way of corporate worship. So many other activities keep us from worshiping the God who created us with our fellow believers. May God forgive us.

But notice from the text how the Israelites were to approach God. They were to...

Worship - We come to Him, declaring His Worth

Bow down - A physical sign of submission.

Kneel - A physical sign of submission and reverence.

Joni Erikson Tada – “The first thing I plan to do on my resurrected legs is to drop on my grateful, glorified knees.”

And we are to do all of these before “The LORD God our Maker”

The all-powerful God of creation, the ONE who brought each one of us into existence.

And remember, because He made You, He automatically has authority over you.

How does God get off demanding that we worship Him like this? Is God some sort of narcissist?

Well, I'll tell you that if I asked you to worship me the way God tells His people to worship Him, then, yes, I would definitely be rightly accused of being a narcissist.

But that is because you all know that I am far from perfect and that I am a guilty sinful person.

But God, on the other hand, is perfect in all ways. There is nothing nor no one that is greater than our God.

The proper study of the Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.

C.H. Spurgeon

God's glory is the beauty of His manifold perfections.

John Piper

And because He is perfect in holiness and there is none greater than Him, is there anyone or anything better that we should worship? Of course not. This is why God directs us to worship Him. If there were something better for us to worship, God would direct us there - but there isn't. And so, it is GOOD and RIGHT to bow down and kneel before him, for He is our maker. He is responsible for our creation and our recreation.

What is your habit in corporate worship? What gets in the way of your weekly coming together with the people of God, lifting His Name High, and ascribing the worth that is due only to him? And not doing it out of legalistic ritual but because your heart's desire is to bow down and kneel before God, your maker.

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- Because God is the ONLY Great Creator
- Go to God in Reverence and Submission

4. The Why of Worship - Because We Are His People (vs. 7)

Explanation - The last WHY of Worship is in verse 7. Take a look...

Psalm 95:7 (ESV)

For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Why should we worship God? Because He is our PERSONAL God.

Friends, do not miss the significance of this statement.

You cannot truly worship God unless you are personally connected to Him.

There is only one way this is possible and that is through faith that God graciously offered up Jesus Christ as the sacrificial substitute for your sin.

You and I are sinners. Why can I say this so confidently? Because you and I have broken His Law...

The Ten Commandments [Exodus 20:1-17](#) and [Deuteronomy 5:4-21](#)

1. **You shall have no other gods before Me.**
2. **You shall not make for yourself a carved image.**
3. **You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.**
4. **Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.**
5. **Honor your father and your mother.**
6. **You shall not murder.**
7. **You shall not commit adultery.**
8. **You shall not steal.**
9. **You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**
10. **You shall not covet.**

We are all guilty of breaking God's law in one way or another.

And because God is a just God, He must punish all who have broken His law. If He is not true to His character, He ceases to be qualified to be God. And He cannot do that.

So, in order to be just, He must punish all lawbreakers by sending them to Hell prison for all eternity. Sinning against an infinite God requires an infinite punishment.

You see, God is obligated to punish you for your sin. But He is willing to punish someone else in your place. There is a qualified substitute who can stand in for you.

Do you know who that substitute is?

[John 3:16–17](#) ESV

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

God does not want to punish you but instead save you from His wrath.

He loves you so much He sent Jesus as a substitute to pay your sin debt so you could go free.

But not only does salvation provide you freedom from eternal death in Hell, but salvation in Christ connects you to God by adopting you into His family. A former enemy becomes a son or daughter to God.

[Galatians 4:3–7](#) ESV

In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Do you understand this? If you are in Christ and Christ is in you, then you are now considered a son or daughter of God Himself. And as far as relationships go, this is pretty personal.

The metaphor the Psalmist uses is believers are *"the people of His pasture, the sheep of His hand."*

Again, there is a very PERSONAL implication here. A shepherd knows each one of His sheep. You have to be KNOWN by Jesus to be His Sheep.

John 10:24–30 ESV

So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

So, the question for you is - Are you known by the Shepherd? Are you His, and is He yours? Are you a SHEEP of His HAND?

If you are not His, would you turn to Him right now and repent and purpose to follow Christ?

If you are His, would you purpose to worship Him every moment of your life. Would you give your life to worship Him in all that you do?

That every moment, whether it is washing dishes or memorizing Scripture, feeding your dog, or attending a corporate worship service, playing a sport, or praying on your knees, that each and every activity is an act of valuing your creator?

Remember, if you are His, you have the amazing privilege to worship the One who gave you life and new life in Christ. And you don't have to do it alone!

The person who has experienced God's mercy naturally looks to others to praise God with him. Corporate worship is one of the natural instincts of the new life of Christ in God's people.

James Montgomery Boice

We are His people! We are His sheep! We are His church who, together, regularly, lift High the Name of Jesus.

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- Go to God in Reverence and Submission
- Because We Are His People

Conclusion

Drawing from Psalm 95:1-7, our central message is clear: **God Desires Worshipers Who Take Worship Seriously.**

As we close, let's purpose to carry the heart of this Psalm with us—worshiping God with genuine devotion, recognizing His greatness and our place as His people. Let this spirit of sincere and mindful worship guide us in all we do.

In the words of A.W. Tozer, *"Worship is the missing jewel of the evangelical church."* Let us then rediscover this jewel, embodying the true worshipers the Father seeks, in spirit and truth.

Connection Group Reflection Questions

1. What did we learn about God from the text or Sunday's message?
2. What did we learn about true worshipers from the text or Sunday's message?
3. What can you do to improve in the area of worship?
4. What does God desire from us at ABC, or you personally as a worshiper?
5. If you or WE as a church were to practically apply what we learned from this passage or message, what would that look like? What changes will we or you make this week?
6. Summarize what you learned in one sentence, and how does God want you to respond in obedience?
7. This week, who would benefit from this truth, and who will you share it with?