

Series: **Worship** (The Christian's blessing and duty) - week 1

CDOBC – beginning on 1/10/16

Today's Title: "**Become a Great Worshiper**"

*January 10, 2016 ~ Selected verses*

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OBJECTIVE: To help believers understand worship is not a Sunday experience, but a life of obedience.

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I've always been physically active and have exercised by lifting weights and running. I do this in an attempt to stay physically healthy.

About 7 or 8 years ago, a friend of mine invited me to run in a race at Catalina State Park. It's held on a Saturday around Easter every year – and is always sold-out with the maximum of 500 runners.

I remember the first race I ran in, and I was excited and feeling good about finishing near the top of my age group. However, I was humbled that day.

A trail run is not easy, and I remember being at the finish line – breathing heavy and in a bit of pain or discomfort that is common for a minute or two after you cross the finish line – and I was feeling pretty good about my effort – wondering how I compared to the other men in my age group – when I look at the finish line and I see a lady about 7 or 8 months pregnant crossing the finish line – only about 2 minutes after I finished!

I immediately realized:

a) I'm not a very fast runner

- b) I did not finish very high in my age group
- c) I should have signed up as a woman in my early 30's – 8 months pregnant to compete with runners of my ability level!

Preparation...

I can remember back when I was a student – and an important test was scheduled for that day, and I had failed to finish reading the book the test was based upon.

I didn't do so well on the test.

I can remember entering a meeting, only to discover I forgot to read through some material which was sent out prior to the meeting – and I was unable to participate with any sense of competency in the discussion.

I can remember a Valentine's Day where I did not prepare appropriately to communicate my love to my wife – my flippant and selfish attitudes the days prior to Valentine's Day caused this culturally mandated special day for lovers to be less than ideal for me personally!

Preparation...

Let me ask you...how have you prepared to meet God this morning?

You ask, “*What do you mean: How have I prepared to meet God this morning? I’ve made it here – and my family is here. Get on with it man...I’m waiting to be blessed.*”

You see, we have a big challenge in today’s American church...we have a big challenge because so many in the church have lost the true meaning of worship.

- So many come to church wanting to be entertained.
- So many come to church wanting to be satisfied with what happens in front of them.
- So many come to church with a critical spirit ready to criticize and complain about what they didn’t like in the service.
- So many come to church expecting a great spiritual experience.
- So many come to church expecting (Dare I say: demanding) to be moved by the songs, the prayers or the preaching.
- So many come to church expecting a great worship experience...**but they have it all wrong.**

The consumer mentality has slowly, but certainly engulfed the American church – and the result is many people filling the seats in church look at a church service in much the same way they look at a restaurant or the latest Star Wars movie – they come and expect to be served and have their expectations met by those serving in the restaurant - or the big screen – or the pastor.

So many Christians act as consumers instead of converted sinners.

They are hungry for entertainment instead of craving the nourishment from God's Word.

They sacrifice holiness on the altar of humor.

They want to hear about a Savior, but not about their sin.

Today I begin a 4-week series on the topic of worship.

Disclaimers:

1) I cannot cover everything about worship in this series.

2) Worship is more than music (incl. prayer / offering / preaching, etc.)

Over the past 30 years, worship has been a confusing part of church life which has often led to conflict within a church.

My hope and prayer is these 4 sermons will help us understand the biblical importance of worship, and we will begin to have a biblical understanding of worship – instead of an understanding which is rooted in our own experience or formed by cultural influence.

This week, we will look at Scripture to see how to “Become a Great Worshiper”.

The next 3 weeks we will look at the bible and discover:

**“The New Era of Worship”**

**“Heavenly Worship”**

**“United in our Worship”**

Opening prayer

Allow me to go back to my question of a few minutes ago...

How have you prepared to meet God this morning?

What have you done, prior to walking through the doors of this building, to prepare your heart and mind to worship God?

Let's begin by defining worship.

Let's make sure we know what we're talking about and what the goal is.

Definitions abound for worship – and many of them are right and biblical, and the variations in the definitions reveal the grandness of the topic!

Trying to define worship of the infinite and holy Creator God in a sentence or two is an impossible task.

I am not interested in a generic definition of worship.

Everyone – Christian and non-Christian – everyone worships. So I don't want a definition that covers both Christian and non-Christian worship.

I want to focus on biblical, Christian worship...so our definition will reflect that special focus.

#### **DEFINITIONS:**

*“Worship is the believer's response of all that they are – mind, emotions, will, body – to what God is and says and does.”* (Real Worship, Playground, Battleground, Holy Ground, by Warren Wiersbe, p. 26)

*“Worship is the response of God's redeemed people to His self-revelation that exalts God's glory in Christ in our minds,*

*affections, and wills, in the power of the Holy Spirit.”* (Article:

Defining Worship, part 1, May 2, 2014, by: Bob Kauflin)

I like both of these definitions – but I want to use Kauflin’s because it includes the work and power of the Holy Spirit.

**Notice**, biblical worship is limited to Christians. Biblical, Christian worship can only be done by Christians – those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ.

**Notice also**, it’s our response to who God is and what He has done – and what He will do.

We are not spectators of the worship service.

We are not consumers of worship; God is the sole consumer of worship.

Worship is about what you can give to God – how you are responding to God – not what you are receiving from God in a worship service. Our worship must be God and Christ centric.

**Notice** our worship involves our total being – our minds, affections (emotions/feelings), and our will (choices) [Matt. 22:37-38].

**Lastly, notice** the Holy Spirit’s presence and work in biblical worship. Biblical worship is Trinitarian.

So there’s a working definition of worship – no doubt incomplete, but certainly sufficient for our needs.

Having a clear understanding of biblical worship is only part of the challenge before us. This is a very important part, but only part of our Christian duty.

Back to my question: How have you prepared for worship this morning?

If you want to become a great worshiper, you must:

**Prepare your mind and heart for worship.** *Ex. 19*

If you expect to have a great worship experience – or you expect to be a great worshiper – you must prepare yourself to worship with God’s people!

I’m afraid many Christians don’t do any preparation prior to walking through the doors of the church, and they expect those leading the service to somehow do and say things which will result in them having a spiritual experience so they can say to one another as they walk to their cars and as they talk over a meal, *“Wasn’t that an incredible service – those songs, that message, that prayer really touched me – it moved me!”* We often expect the pastor to make God’s Word come alive for me...and we often expect the worship pastor to make us worship.

But the reality is if God’s Word isn’t alive Monday thru Saturday...and if you come to church and haven’t worshiped all week...then when you cross the threshold of the church door on Sunday morning, you won’t mystically be made alive to the Word of God – nor will you mystically be inspired by the Spirit of God to

engage in biblical, God-honoring, Christ-focused worship!

Pastor Joseph doesn't make you a worshiper – he doesn't start your worship – it's not his job to bring you to a place of worship.

Pastor Joseph's job is to lead worshipers in their worship.

It doesn't originate with Joseph and the service he has crafted, the songs he has chosen, or the way in which the music is played. He leads those who are already engaged in worship – and his job is to focus our thoughts, affections and wills on God's glory in Christ, so the Holy Spirit can empower the local body of gathered believers to proclaim the truth and promises of God and celebrate the works of God together – in unison – in unity!

It's my job to bring all of us together and focus on the word of God – so we can all reap the blessing of God's truth to be known in our mind, treasured in our heart, and applied in our life.

To be a great worshiper on Sunday morning and to experience great worship on Sunday morning, you must arrive here as a worshiper.

Great worship begins with getting to bed at a decent time on Saturday night – so you are not only awake, but



alert throughout the service. I promise to do my best to keep you awake and alert – but you need to do your part also!

Great worship also begins with what you think about on Sunday morning and what you watch or listen to on Sunday morning. If you expect to focus your thoughts and fill your mind with the latest sports scores and highlights...or with the news updates and interviews...or with some other earthly focus – and you expect to walk into church and have me or Joseph (or God) flip some mystical switch in your mind and heart so you can experience great worship and become some great worshiper – you are terribly mistaken of how this whole thing works.

I can remember growing up, and throughout the week, *News Radio 78* was always turned on Monday-Friday. WBBM radio in Chicago set the mood each day as I was getting ready for school and eating breakfast. However, on Sunday morning...WMBI radio was on – Moody Bible Institute's radio station. The mood was different on Sunday morning. Now, as a young boy – and as a teenager, I wasn't particularly fond of this – nor did I pay much attention to what was being said. However, I wasn't so dull or thick-headed to realize something is different on Sunday.

This was not some hypocritical focus on Sundays – and God was left out of the process the rest of the week. But my parents understood that Sunday was different from the other days because we were going to church on Sunday – and they realized we must prepare for worship before arriving at the worship service!

If you're asking: *“Where you ministered to in the service? Where you spiritually moved in the service?”*

Then you're asking the wrong question.

The right question is:

*“Was God glorified in the service?”*

*“Was God glorified by my singing, my prayers, and my meditation on the Word?”*

There is a great difference between these two questions.

The first question is consumer based, *“What did the service do for me?”*

The second question is God-based, *“Did I glorify God in the service through my singing, prayers and meditation on God's Word?”*

Great worshipers realize they come to worship to give glory and praise to God. They don't come expecting to be filled up, but they come expecting to give all they have to God.

**Steven Charnock** (English Puritan 1628-80)

*“When we believe that we should be satisfied rather than God glorified in our worship, then we put God below ourselves as though He had been made for us, rather than we had been made for Him.”*

If you want to become a great worshiper, you must prepare your mind and heart for worship –before you arrive at the worship service. Come ready to give yourself fully and completely to God!

The second thing you must do to become a great worshiper is:

**Prepare for worship through daily obedience.**

This is the first weekend of the NFL playoffs – *Wildcard Weekend*.

Every team in the NFL has great athletes. A football team doesn't win games solely because they have great athletes or simply because they show up at the stadium on Sunday. A football team achieves greatness because of the preparation and practice throughout the week.

The quality and spiritual experience of your worship has more to do with how you live each day of your life than what happens here on the platform.

There are two aspects of our daily obedience as it relates to worship, for us to take note.

The first aspect relates to **The quality of your personal worship**, and the second aspect relates to God's acceptance of our worship. Let's begin by looking at how our obedience makes or breaks our personal experience of worship.

**Romans 12:1**

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship."

**Ecclesiastes 5:1**

"Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong."

**Psalm 5:7-8**

"But I, by Your great mercy, will come into Your house; in reverence will I bow down toward Your holy temple. **8** Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies-- make straight Your way before me."

**John 14:15, 21**

"If you love Me, you will obey what I command... Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him."

**Psalm 40:6-8**

"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but my ears You have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings You did not require. **7** Then I said, "Here I am, I have come -- it is written about me in the scroll. **8** I desire to do Your will, O my God; Your law is within my heart."

**Amos 5:21-24**

"I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. **22** Even though you bring Me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice

fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. 23 Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. 24 But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”

If you want to experience great worship – if you want to be a great worshiper – you must live each day in obedience to God’s commands.

Worship is a lifestyle, not a Sunday experience.

The second aspect of our obedience and how it makes or breaks our worship relates to: **God’s acceptance of your worship.**

We may crave to know and experience God’s presence, but the truth is God is never away from us. He is everywhere – *omnipresent*.

**Psalm 139:7**

“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence?”

**Acts 17:27**

“...He is not far from each one of us.”

***So the issue is not God’s presence, but how we have presented ourselves to God!***

If we have been obedient in our daily life, we will sense God’s presence and our worship will be acceptable to Him!

God is very clear throughout the bible, if we go through the motions of worshiping Him on Sunday, yet ignore Him the rest of the week, we’re wasting our time!

**Hosea 6:6**

“For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.”

**Malachi 1:8, 10**

“When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?”

**10** “Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on My altar! I am not pleased with you,” says the LORD Almighty, “and I will accept no offering from your hands.”

If you want to experience the presence of God in a corporate worship service, then ask yourself:

*“Am I experiencing the presence of God in my daily life?”*

If you’re not experiencing the presence of God in your daily life, then don’t expect this to be some mystical and magical place where God’s presence is more accessible than elsewhere.

The key to God’s presence is your daily obedience and your daily devotion and prayers – not the kind of service you attend at church.

God doesn’t live in the little compartment of a worship service – don’t belittle His presence or limit His presence to a church service!

## Apply it...

Become a great worshiper by keeping a vertical focus.

Worship is about focusing on God – giving God all your praise and glory. Worship is your response to who God is and what He has done...will do. Give God all your attention in worship.

Don't allow your focus to be horizontal – keep your focus on God and offer Him everything.

Become a great worshiper by preparing for worship.

Prepare your mind and heart...

Prepare by daily obedience.

Worship is about your daily devotion – your daily obedience.

Worship God each day...and you will become a great worshiper!