

Worshipping the Lord  
An Ideal Disciple, Part 5  
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Our picture of an Ideal Disciple shows an individual with arms raised while holding a Bible. Those arms are not a signal for “don’t shoot” or “the field goal is good.” Rather those raised arms are a symbol for worship. The point the picture is making is that worshipping the Lord is something those who trust and follow Jesus do, and something they encourage other believers to do.

Now, I will note that many times, especially in the Old Testament, we are told that God’s people raised or lifted their hands as they worshipped or prayed. For example, **Psalm 63:4** says **I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.** It is certainly appropriate for anyone at Chisholm Baptist Church to raise their hands when they are worshipping the Lord. Yet, I don’t think this is something we are necessarily commanded to do. You can engage in God honoring worship while raising your hands, folding your hands or even sitting on your hands. It is not the position of your hands, but of your heart that really matters in worship.

Let’s pause and pray that as we explore various dimensions of worship this morning, the Lord would use His word to help us have hearts that are in the right position when we pray.

There are six points I want us to ponder:

**#1** An ideal disciple worships the Lord. I already said that, but what exactly does “worship” mean? Well, in the Bible both the primary Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament) terms mean to “bow down.” In the ancient and often in our modern world this means to give homage or honor. In the Old Testament the Hebrew term “shachah” is sometimes translated into English as “worship,” but other times as “bow down.” Worship certainly includes expressions of praise and adoration. Yet, often worship implicitly includes acknowledging and submitting to God’s authority. One definition of worship I like is this: *Worshipping God means acknowledging and celebrating His power and perfection in gratitude.* Now sometimes Christians say, “all of life is to be worshipped because all of life is to be loved for the glory of God. Thus, someone can worship while pouring cement, baking a cake, playing pickleball or taking a nap.

As long as you are doing the activity with the right attitude, which means with gratitude and for the glory of God, it is worship. Well, that is true. In **Romans 12:1** the apostle Paul tells us: **present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.** Yet, when the Bible speaks of worship, it almost always involves being focused on acknowledging and celebrating who God is and what He’s done. So that is what we mean by worship today.

**#2** An ideal disciple worships in private, as well as in public. Our focus today is on corporate worship, but worship was never intended to be a one hour a week activity. Again, we are not talking about gratefully taking a nap and calling that worship. We are to be expressing our adoration, praise, gratitude, and love for the Lord through prayer, through song, or through other ways that we might express our thoughts and emotions. Certainly, your devotional or quiet time is a great opportunity to worship the Lord as you offer prayers of praise and thanksgiving.

Singing when you are by yourself, singing hymns and praise songs, can be a great way to worship the Lord. Some of you may be more comfortable singing when you are in the shower than when you are in this room where other people can hear you. When I was in school, I used to sing hymns when I was milking the cows. Yes, I might have been a little eccentric. It was part of my worshipping the Lord and I actually read that singing can help cows relax and produce more milk.

Folks, my point is, there are a variety of ways you can worship the Lord privately. And if you love God, as disciples of Jesus should, that is something you will do.

**#3** Corporate worship is important to an ideal disciple. During the past 3 ½ years, Covid and all that surrounds it, has caused both churches and individual Christians to re-evaluate the importance of gathering with other believers.

Here at Chisholm Baptist, our worship services have been available through local cable TV for almost 30 years. Providently we had made updates to our

video equipment before covid hit and were prepared to do virtual, on-line church, for those weeks in the spring of 2020 when we were not gathering for “in-person” services. During that time, we learned a couple of things.

First, it is a wonderful thing to have online church available for folks who are shut-ins, working weekend shifts, or fighting a head cold. Some people have also found it beneficial to occasionally go back and listen to a sermon a second time, on maybe Monday evening to figure out, “What was Pastor Dan trying to say on Sunday morning?” Online worship services are also a great way for people not familiar with our church to find out what happens here on Sundays. Believe it or not, some folks in our community are actually afraid to be in a Baptist church on a Sunday morning. Yet, I think 92.7% of people who watch a Chisholm Baptist Church service on-line, in the privacy of their home, will realize there is no reason to be afraid to come to this church. And as they’re watching, maybe just out of curiosity, they will hear God’s word and the gospel, and the Lord may use that to change their lives. It is a wonderful thing to have an online church available.

But the second thing we learned in the spring of 2020 is that on-line church is not substitute for an in-person gathering of Christian believers. When the Lord tells us, **Hebrews 10:25a Do not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some.** He intends that we be in the same room with other Christians.

Now, yes, when it comes to sermons, you can listen on-line or on the radio and have basically the same experience. What you cannot have, however, in virtual church is fellowship and the encouragement and accountability that comes from true fellowship. Typing a few words in a chat box doesn’t do it.

Another component when we gather on Sunday morning is corporate worship. Yes, the sermon and fellowship are part of the overall worship experience, but again I am referring to when we are focused on acknowledging and celebrating who God is and what He has done. This is what is meant by corporate worship. And yes, you can sing along with the worship songs when you are watching online. That is a good thing to do. But it is not the same. Gathering with other Christian believers, singing songs of praise, hearing others express adoration and thanksgiving to the Lord through

their prayers, is something you cannot do in front of a screen.

So, it is important for a disciple of Jesus to gather with other Christians for corporate worship on a regular basis. What is “regular?” I think once a week is good. Gathering on Sunday mornings to worship the Lord is not commanded by scripture, but it is a long-standing tradition. Christians have been doing so for almost 2000 years, gathering on the first day of the week to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection and worship Him.

Now, there is nothing wrong with gathering for worship more frequently. In fact, it can be very good for your soul to do that. But I think meeting with other Christians at a minimum of once a week is a good goal for you to have if you are a disciple, someone who believes in Jesus and is seeking to follow Him. This is also what you should be encouraging other believers to do. It is not just the pastor’s job. All of us should be encouraging each other to be regular participants in corporate worship. Don’t nag but encourage each other.

**#4** The goal, especially in corporate worship, should be to worship in spirit and in truth. In John 4, we read about a conversation Jesus has with a woman who was a Samaritan. It is a remarkable conversation for a number of reasons. There was a long history and a lot of tension between Jews and Samaritans.

In their conversation the woman brings up the fact that the Samaritans gathered to worship God on Mount Gerizim, while Jews believed one needed to go to the temple in Jerusalem to truly worship the Lord. The Jesus says, **John 4:21,23, 24 “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father... But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”**

The first thing this text tells us is that worship does not depend on where you are. I just talked about the importance of participating in corporate worship. But there is no particular place that you need to be to worship. This room is not some sacred space, but a meeting place, a place for all of us to

gather to worship the Lord. However, worship is not about this or any other place.

Second, this text tells us that worship is to be done in spirit and truth. That is a very important statement, but unfortunately there is some disagreement about what those words mean. Some say the spirit in which worship is to be done is genuine, sincere, godliness, rather than in the hypercritical legalism of the Pharisees. Others say, no, the word “spirit” should be capitalized because it refers to the Holy Spirit, who enables us to worship as we ought.

As far as truth, there are a variety of suggestions as to what particular truths should be the focus of worship. I think most of these understandings reflect part of what Jesus means, but I believe the key is what Jesus says in **verse 23**. “**The hour is coming and is now here.**”

He is talking about the end of old covenant worship, which was done at the temple in Jerusalem, and the beginning of new covenant worship, which can be done wherever God’s people gather. New covenant worship is indeed empowered by the Spirit, capital “S,” who enables us to worship with a new spirit of love for the Lord.

New covenant worship is certainly built on the truth of who God is and what He has done, and most significantly what He has done for us in Jesus Christ. In other words, new covenant worship is a celebration of the gospel, of the rich salvation that is ours through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Thus, I cannot go along with my friends who want to use only God inspired songs in worship, meaning the Psalter or Book of Psalm. Yes, those are the songs composed by God, but they are rooted in the old covenant. It is still very appropriate to sing those psalms, but it is also important to sing hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19) that celebrate the new covenant, and all the blessings and promises God gives us through Jesus.

So, as you may have noticed, we sing a lot of those type of songs here at Chisholm Baptist Church. Old hymns, new hymns, worship songs, are sung on Sunday mornings not because they have cool melodies, or because they are popular on a Christian radio station, or because they are Pastor Dan’s favorites. We sing these songs because they celebrate the new covenant and enable us to worship in spirit and in truth.

**#5** Singing songs is an important part of corporate worship. It is something God’s people are expected to do. **Psalm 96:1-2 Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name: tell of his salvation from day to day. Psalm 46:7 sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!**

In those three verses we are commanded to sing seven times. The Bible contains over 400 references to singing, including 50 direct commands to sing. That includes two passages from the New Testament. **Ephesians 5:19** says we are to be **addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart**, and **Colossians 3:16** says **Let 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.**

Why does the Lord command us to sing? Bob Kauflin of Sovereign Grace Music notes the Bible tells us that God sings. Zephaniah 3:17 says the Lord exalts over His people with loud singing. He also notes that the gospel accounts tell us that Jesus sang.

Yet, I think the primary reason we are instructed to sing is that the Lord recognizes the impact music has on our minds and hearts. Martin Luther put it this way. *“Music is a gift and grace of God, not an invention of men. The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to man that he should proclaim the Word of God through music. The devil flees before the sound of music almost as much as before the Word of God.”*

I would note two things. First, in all the Bible instructions about singing there are no instructions about using or not using any particular type of musical instruments. That seems to be left up to the worshippers. There is also nothing about any style of music, other than perhaps each song should have a melody (Ephesians 5:19). It is the lyrics, not the music or instrumentation, that usually makes some songs better than others.

Second, the Bible indicates that everyone should participate in singing. The commands to sing are not just for the musically gifted. Now, those who are unable to carry a tune in a bucket probably

should sing a little more “discreetly” than others, a love for your neighbor may indicate that, but all of us are called to participate and sing to the Lord.

In the medieval church, trained choirs would sing or chant the worship liturgy, while the congregation would just listen. Because the liturgy was in Latin the ordinary people usually didn’t even understand to what they were listening. Martin Luther recognized this was “silly,” (my word, not his) and reintroduced congregational singing and a liturgy in the people’s language.

That is why the second quality of a good hymn or worship song, after having lyrics that are soaked in truth, is that the song is singable. We want to use songs in our worship services that you as a congregation can sing. This doesn’t mean there is not a place for the Chisholm Baptist choir or an occasional soloist or a Christian concert. But worship is not about performance, it is about participation.

A worship service is not about listening to people on the stage singing praises to God. Those on the stage should be encouraging the congregation to sing and participate in worship. Yes, it is nice if the worship team on the platform sounds good. But far more important is whether the people in the congregation are engaged in expressing awe and love for the Lord through their singing.

When I hear you folks doing that on Sunday mornings, which I often do, that warms my heart and I believe it pleases God.

**#6** Worship should involve emotion, but not emotionalism. John Piper says that worship is about directing our mind’s attention and our heart’s affection to the Lord. That is true. Affections or emotions are an important part of worship. Emotions like awe, love, joy, gratitude, hope, should be part of worship and should be expressed through songs, prayers, and scripture readings during a worship service.

One reason why music is an important part of worship is because it is the language of the heart. It reaches and expresses our emotions in a way that word alone usually don’t you really cannot have genuine, God honoring worship, without emotion. When eyes are dry and hearts are cold worship is, at best, shallow. At worst, it is a case where the Lord

says, **Matthew 15:8 these people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.**

Yet, especially in our day, we need to be wary of emotionalism that masquerades worship. This happens when people get all hyped and really excited about the worship experience but are giving little thought to God. When people “worship,” but don’t think about how great and good the Lord is, there is a problem.

It is great to have feelings of love and joy when you worship, but you should be able to identify why you have those feelings. What is there about the triune God and what He has done that makes you feel that way? If you cannot answer that question, it indicates a shallowness or emptiness in your worship experience. And folks, this is not just a problem with contemporary forms of worship. A few years ago, a man said to me at the door as he was leaving, “Pastor Dan, I am so glad we sang ‘Great Is Thy Faithfulness,’ this morning. That was my mother’s favorite hymn. Every time I hear it, I just have these wonderful memories of my mom.”

Well, folks, that is nice. Everyone should have good memories of their mom. But, for that fellow, “Great is Thy Faithfulness” didn’t really seem to help him worship the Lord. His mind’s attention and heart’s affection were directed toward his mom, not toward God.

Friends, when an ideal disciple is worshipping, both mind and heart are engaged and are focused on the Lord. Thoughts about God, by themselves, do not constitute worship. But thoughts and emotion can work together in a way that leads to expressions of love, joy, and praise. That is the type of worship an ideal disciple wants to experience, and it is the type of worship he/she wants others to experience as well.

Okay, these are some points to ponder about worship. I pray the Lord would use them to help you grow as a disciple who worships in spirit and in truth. This morning we are going to seek to do that as the worship team comes to lead us in expressing praise, adoration and love to the Lord.