
Understanding Worship Part 4

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Psalm 150; John 3:30

Do You Know What Worship Is?

When the average Christian thinks about worship, they tend to think about music or how a service is planned out. Perhaps a favorite hymn comes to mind or a praise song that captivated him or her in some moving response. This is sad so to speak, for music, as wonderful and impacting as it can be, is not worship. It is an expression of worship, but it is not worship. Worship is the attitude of our hearts in gratefulness for who our Lord Jesus Christ is and what He has done for you and me, and our commitment to express it with an attitude of gratitude in our daily lives. And, of course, we can use music to do this; however, true worship is meeting with Him, our heart pouring out to His. In application, worship is also the entirety of the church worship service; the reciting of creeds, liturgy, and the administration of the sacraments such as the Lord's Supper, the message, and prayer.

The problem many of us face in understanding and doing worship is we miss the main point. We get so caught up in the mechanics and formal preparations that we miss the reason for our coming together for worship. We, as pastors and leaders, seek to please our congregation with the latest movements in music worship and PowerPoint selections, so we center our worship on pleasing people, captivated by minor things and forgetting whom the main audience is. We place ourselves as the center reason for worship in our wants and desires, and forget its purpose.

Others think that worship is boring, or dread it, and thus neglect it. Do you think worship is boring? Do you dread dragging the kids to church with all the hassles that go with it? "For what?" you say. Perhaps, we become hard or disappointed with God and no longer feel like worshiping Him. Conceivably, we may only be interested in emotional reactions—how we feel and what we get—so there is no real, active, heartfelt participation on our part. Perhaps, the song selection and the melodic, correct, and favored instruments and harmony are not the problem; rather, it is our attitude and limited knowledge of what we are to do and be in worship.

There is no place in Scripture where someone encounters God and says it is not relevant or he or she is bored. If we become bored in our church, possibly it is our reverence and attitude that is wrong; perhaps our passion has disappeared. Worship becomes boring or a hassle because we want to be pleased, or because we yearn for whatever the latest happenings are and we are not receiving them. But, we have to realize that boredom comes from a heart that is detached from the focus and object of the worship, which is Christ. We are not paying attention to the One we should. Our boredom is a personal and spiritual problem of a lost focus, or of carelessness or laziness. It is like an addiction to the latest fad and what moves us rather than what we are to bring. We must reengage our hearts and minds, be renewed to Christ, and be satisfied by what He has done in us. When we worship, we are to respond to Him and only to Him. It comes down to our surrendering our will over to His, so He is more and

we are submitted to Him (Isaiah 59:16; Psalm 34:8; 63:1-4; John 3:30; Rom. 12).

Yes, we can and should strive to make our worship services more engaging, more excellent, and be our best for His highest. But, it is not about *how* we do it; it is about *why* we do it. Good worship is not about the “right things” as we see it; it is about being right in Christ and expressing our gratitude to Him. Our hearts need to be engaged in bringing our joy and gladness to and for Him as the object of our worship. Our desire needs to be satisfied by being in His presence, not by the melodies, the tunes, or the forms and procedures. We come into the Lord's presence with joy and exuberance from a heart of gratitude—not because of the pleasing sounds of the worship band or organ, or getting what we want from it. Never let worship be just an emotional response to the music, how the service is structured, or what we are used to; if this is so, you and your church have missed the point by a very large degree!

The bottom line of effectual, true worship of our Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord comes down to being God—centered and not self—centered, as in only interested in meeting the needs of those who come and not Who we are to proclaim. Worship is more a matter of substance than of form; authentic worship will spill out to all parts of our lives. It helps us focus on Christ and then embrace what we are called to do in life. Worship is not just what we do in the church; rather, it is what we do in our Christian lives. We then allow that attitude to climax in our worship services as we seek Him with our gratitude, delight, and affection.

Real worship is about Jesus as the Giver and the Receiver, knowing and practicing Him, not us. We are not to be selfish or self-centered in how we approach God. We are not to focus on what concerns or satisfies us; rather, our focus should be on how we come to Him and meet with Him—all to please Him. It has been said so well by St. Francis: *it is in giving that we receive*. Church and worship are not about what is offered to us or what we can get out of it; they are about how we offer ourselves to God. If we understand this, we please and honor our Lord and build a healthy, vibrant, Christ—centered church. If we do not get this, we play into the consumer mentality of current church trends and thinking that disrespects God and greatly miss the point of who and why we are Christians.

Questions to Ponder

Read Psalm 150; John 3:30

1. Do you know what Worship is?
2. What does boredom in worship come from? How does your heart and focus of the worship experience come into play with boredom verses excitement?
3. How would you describe what true worship is?
4. How is worship an attitude of your heart?
5. How does your gratefulness for who our Lord Jesus Christ is and what He has

done for you fuel your worship experience?

6. What does it take to increase your commitment to express to Christ an attitude of gratitude in your daily life?
7. How have you seen some churches in doing their worship miss the main point? Have you done so? How and why? How do you feel about it?
8. What does it mean to center your worship on pleasing people? How does this contrast to pleasing Christ?
9. Why do some churches seek to please people over our Lord?
10. What can you do when you feel that worship is boring, or you dread it, and thus neglect it?
11. What do you need to do to reengage your heart and mind to be renewed to Christ, and be satisfied by what He has done in you?
12. Have you ever thought that worship is boring? Have you dread going, dragging the kids to church with all the hassles that go with it? “And felt, *for what?*” What can you do about it?

Principle Passages on Worship: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 50; Psalm 65:13; 79:13; 95:6-7; 100; 150; Matthew 4:10; 2:2,11; 14:33; John 4:23; 9:35-38; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 4

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