

THE WORSHIP OF GOD

Danny Sherman PLSAL.ORG

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

In the Old Testament, worship is related to the act of bowing down before something or someone to show reverence (Genesis 18:2, Isaiah 44:15, Genesis 24:26, Exodus 34:8). In the New Testament, it is connected with an act of reverence that can include the concepts of devotion, honor, and service (John 4:21–24, Acts 16:14, Romans 1:25, Philippians 3:3).

WHO CAN WORSHIP GOD?

Psalm 15 gives us some ideas:

- someone who walks in integrity — their lifestyle cannot be reproached
- someone who practices righteousness — obeys God, does God's will
- someone who speaks the truth — not hypocritical; honest, does not deceive or lie
- someone who does not slander — does not speak badly of others, gossip, or falsely accuse
- someone who does no harm — does not cause pain or misery to others
- someone who does not take up a reproach — does not provoke, bother, or anger others
- someone who distinguishes between good and evil — rejects and avoids evil, accepts and promotes good
- someone who honors promises — keeps their word, even when it brings loss or pain
- someone who does not charge interest — does not take advantage of the unfortunate
- someone who does not accept bribes — does not remain silent or lie for personal gain

Many people think they can worship God with an indifferent and uncommitted lifestyle. God does not respond positively to that (Revelation 3:16). Some continue practicing a sinful lifestyle. Even some leaders hide habits that do not please God. Do you think their worship will be accepted by God? (Jeremiah 14:10–12)

HOW SHOULD GOD BE WORSHIPED?

John 4:23 says: “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

This implies that there is true worship and false worship (Matthew 4:8–10; Jeremiah 1:16; Romans 1:25; Isaiah 1:11–17; Amos 5:21–27). False worship is done in ignorance, without considering what God has taught about worship. True worship is based on what the Word of God says about worship. False worship is external (worldly), following customs and rules invented by people, centered on certain activities. True worship is internal (spiritual), centered on an intimate and personal relationship with God.

True worship is a lifestyle, not an event or activity. It can be individual or in a group. It is centered on God, not on entertaining people. Many people think they are worshiping God when in reality they are only creating a euphoric feeling within themselves. In that case, the focus is not truly on honoring God.

THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE WORSHIP IN THE BIBLE:

1) Physical posture of bowing down

The normal position in the Bible for worshiping God is to bow down. This demonstrates humble submission (Romans 14:11, Ephesians 3:14, Philippians 2:10, Psalm 95:6, Luke 17:6). It also seems to be the normal posture in heaven for expressing worship to God (Revelation 5:8, 14; 19:4). We should worship only God and bow down before Him (Exodus 20:5, Daniel 3:1–18, Matthew 4:8–10). Revelation 22:8–9 clearly illustrates this:

“I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. But he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.’”

2) Attitude of fear and reverence

We must come before God with fear and reverence, recognizing that He is the one and almighty God. It is an attitude of deep respect, in contrast to irreverence (Deuteronomy 4:10, 1 Samuel 12:24–25, Luke 1:50, Revelation 15:1–4).

This will motivate us to live in holiness before Him (2 Corinthians 7:1).

3) Service exclusively devoted to God

The word “serve” often accompanies the word “worship.” It is necessary to give our lives completely to God, without reservation, to serve Him exclusively (Romans 12:1, Luke 4:8).

SOME THOUGHTS ON PRAISE

A leader of a large church once commented: “A person’s resistance to being persuaded is very strong when you speak to them or preach to them, but when you use drama and music, their resistance fades. We communicate the truth through the back door. They don’t even realize what is happening.”

This quote raises an important question: Are we persuading people with our own methods, or are we facilitating the work of the Holy Spirit?

The topic of praise comes to mind here. Two main ways of praising God are **prayer** (1 Chronicles 29:10–20) and **singing** (Psalm 100, 135:3). In the Bible, praise is sometimes expressed by lifting hands (1 Kings 8:22). It can also be accompanied by musical instruments and dancing (Psalm 150). However, there must always be order, without drifting into unbalanced emotionalism (1 Corinthians 14:40). We should seek practices that build up the Body of Christ, rather than simply pursuing a euphoric feeling for ourselves (1 Corinthians 14:13–17). Praise can be offered while lying down, kneeling, sitting, or standing. It can be individual or in a group.

I read in a report that in 2004, Christians in the U.S. spent 800 million dollars on Christian music, and another 800 million on concerts and related items (such as shirts, caps, etc.). Is it possible that music has, in a sense, become like a drug to give us a feeling of euphoria? Does it truly contribute to the praise of the one true God, or is it an addiction that simply makes us feel good?

Some application questions regarding praise:

- Is what we are doing biblical, or does it violate principles established in the Bible?
- Does our praise truly focus on God, or on ourselves?
- Is there order, or is there disorder?
- Does it allow the Holy Spirit to lead, or does it lead to frantic emotionalism?
- Does it engage my mind, or only my emotions?
- Does it build up and contribute to maturity, or create confusion and promote immaturity?