

Worship: What, How, and Why

Talking with Cooper, my 7yr old this week, "I'm going to be teaching at church this week!" He said, "Is Buddy going to be doing the music? *I don't know this song...*" He asked what I'd be talking about, and I told him Praise and Worship. I said, "Do you know what it means to worship?" He said, "praise!" So I asked, "What's praise?" "Singing and stuff!"

I wonder how many of us might default to similarly vague and nondescript notions if asked, "What is worship? What is praise?" We devote nearly half of our time together every week to praise and worship God, but today we stop and ask, what's the point of all this anyway?

British author Nick Page has a new book about the state of modern worship, and it's called, "And now let's move into a time of nonsense." I haven't read it, but I love it already! Is this a time of nonsense? Is this just a waste of everyone's time?

I believe that praise and worship matters. I believe it matters to us, and more importantly, it matters to God. And I believe this: **God has created, redeemed, and called us to be a people of worship and praise.** We are to be worshipers! The Father is seeking worshipers, not just worship, but worshipers! We're all in this together, and we're all on the same journey of learning and growing into fuller understanding and expression of our worship to Jesus. And so the invitation this morning is for you, wherever you are in your own journey, to take a few steps further down the path.

I grew up in an independent Baptist church, full of people who loved God, esteemed his Word, and yet I never would've considered myself to have really worshiped Jesus in any of our services. I didn't even know such language really. We sang a few songs, listened to a polished sermon, sang a closing hymn, and went home. It ran like clockwork! But if you let the service go too far past the sacred noon hour, you could rest assured that someone's roas in the oven was turning into a burnt sacrifice!

It's amazing that we can watch a 3 hour movie, without thinking twice about it, but if the worship service goes 5 minutes long we start itching to get out. Football games, concerts, they all take time to enjoy. Why not then allow the Lord some extended, prolonged time to linger and worship. We offer it every Sunday night.

I remember a select few Sunday mornings when Pentecost would just about break out. •Shine Jesus Shine -- everyone would lock hands, somebody would start raising them, but nobody dared disconnect! Haha. (More cultural than biblical.)

That was how I grew up; I went off to college and started seeing different ways that people would worship, and it launched me on a journey that I'm still on, some 12 years later. Learning to worship, learning to praise. With as many opinions as there are on what worship should and shouldn't be, the only guide I know for this journey is the Word

of God. And when it comes to worship and praise, the word of God invites us to a loving admiration, joyous celebration, and reverent veneration of Jesus, our Savior. The Bible is replete with admonition, direction, teaching and inspiration on how and why we are to worship our God.

To start simply, think of how it addresses these questions:

Where? Everywhere (Ps113)

Who? Everyone (Ps150, Ps100)

When? All the time (Ps34)

What is worship and praise

Praise: Halal, Yadah, Shabach, Towdah, Barak, Gil, Zamar: Illustrated Action Pictures!

Worship: Shachah, Proskuneo

How to worship and praise:

There's enormous freedom in this! Joyfully, Reverently, Expressively, and Publicly. Wildly, Humbly, Loudly, and Quietly. With our whole being, and with authenticity. We see Dancing & bowing, Shouting and kneeling, Rejoicing and Trembling, Singing and Silence. We see hands outstretched, and faces in the ground. We see clapping hands and raised heads!

If we got nothing else right, but followers of Jesus would make a joyful noise, the gospel might just be unstoppable. In the sorry state of our broken world, people are starving to death for a joyful noise. We should be willing to clap our hands and shout to God with a voice of triumph!

Of course it's all about our hearts.

Isaac Watts: "The Great God values not the service of men, if the heart be not in it: The Lord sees and judges the heart; he has no regard to outward forms of worship, if there be no inward adoration, if no devout affection be employed therein. It is therefore a matter of infinite importance to have the whole heart engaged steadfastly for God."

But the Lord has **hard-wired our hearts** to express themselves through our bodies! The Bible gives far more importance to the human body than most of us have been taught. It is viewed with dignity and is really quite inseparable from one's essential person. It's never viewed as an unnecessary addendum to the spirit. Man is not a pure spirit like God. He is, and will always be, a body person. So much so, that in the resurrection, 1Cor15 says, "If the body is not raised, nothing is left." So in worship, give him everything, every part of your being. Body, Soul, Spirit.

Don't hide in personal reservations when God wants you to burst out in dance and celebration! Concerning physical expression: Permission is granted!

Studying OT clearly shows that God's people were emotional and vocal in their expressions of praise and adoration; may it not be said of us that we're too sophisticated or modern to rival their enthusiasm; **we have a gloriously dynamic God who deserves our energetic acclamation.**

Why worship and praise:

1•Well, He commands it. (ps150)

2•Also, He's present and enthroned in it. (ps22:3)

3•And, there's great power in it!

- For Spiritual Warfare (Ps149:6-9, 2Chron.20, Isaiah 30:30-32)

- For Protection from Attrition (Romans 1:21-24: *"For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks...For this reason God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity..."*)

- For Becoming more like Jesus (Ps.115:1-8, 2Cor.3)

- For Releasing the full work of God in our lives. (Luke 17, Jesus "cleanses" 10 lepers; one comes back to give thanks and worship, and this one is "made whole.") I wonder how much of God's mighty working in our lives is forfeited by our failure to kneel before him and give thanks and worship.

4•Psalm 92 says it's a good thing to do, pleasant and fitting.

5•He's worthy of it, meaning He deserves it.

6•It's partly why we were saved in the first place.

- 1 Pet.2:9 *We're a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a chosen nation... that we may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

- Isaiah 43:21 speaks of *"The people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise."*

7•Worship gets my mind off myself. (Acts 16:25-30, Paul&Silas in prison; Ps100)

If I'm thinking about God, who am I not thinking about? Myself.

Since WW2, depression has gone up 1,000%. 10X more prevalent in our day than it was not even a lifetime ago. It's an epidemic. Why? Primary theory from most prominent psychologist in our day: Martin Sullivan: "As a Society, we've lost a sense of connection to something that is greater than ourselves, something transcendent and good, something that can command our devotion and allegiance..."

In other words, something worth our worship. "We've reduced all of life to the single lowest common denominator, ie, the self." It's too small a package to carry the weight of the human hunger for meaning, glory and transcendence.

We're made to have minds that are enthralled with God, thinking hope-filled, lovely thoughts about God. How do we bring ourselves to love that which is lovely?

Stop and smell the roses.

A rose is a lovely thing, but easy to overlook. To enjoy it, I must focus on it. When I do that, I delight in it; it's the nature of a rose. When we bring it before our senses and mind and linger there, it produces delight. This is what worship involves. It's possible to grow in love for God, but it won't just happen to you. It's not burdensome anymore than it's burdensome to love a sunset or rose. Who thought that up? Why should there be such beauty?

What a good God our God must be.

8•Worship cultivates unity. (2Chron.5, One Voice went up; the Glory came down)

9•Worship produces a spirit of gratitude within me. (Ps.100)

God's given me life, he didn't have to. He's given me body, a mind, and senses, gifts I didn't ask for; He didn't have to do that. It's all bonus.

10•Worship is why I exist. (Rev.4, Col.1:16 All things created by him and for him.)

The best reason to worship? Because it delights the heart of God.

Precious card or gift from one of the boys--It's card-stock and fingerpaint

Do you think I'd take \$10,000 for this card? Well of course I would; he could draw another one...

There's no price, no words; that's it, it's life.

Best reason to worship: God's not a robot or a cosmic force; He feels, he can be grieved, he delights, he experiences anger and knows deep, heart-wrenching sorrow.

God knows--not less, but more than we do--how it feels to experience rejection, compassion, mercy, joy, and love. The best reason to worship isn't what it does for us at all; it's because it's a gift to God. It gives God joy! Best reason to worship is that what God wants most from us isn't our service or all the stuff we have or what we do; it's just our hearts!

Where to Start:

Start with who He is (his Nature), and what He's done (his Works).

His Nature: (We'll never reach the end of this.)

Ps145 The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love; the Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.

Ps117 Praise the Lord, extol him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love towards us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!

Ps21:13 Be exalted in your strength! We will sing and praise your power.

Ps99:3 Let them praise your great and awesome name! Holy is He!

On this side of the incarnation and pentecost, we can see even more of his greatness! We worship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who are **eternally co-existent, coequal, and co-glorious**. We magnify his **endless glories, perfections, and beauty**. There's no limit to his **holiness, glory, and sovereignty; no end to his riches, wisdom, and righteousness**. All his attributes exist in **perfect harmony, perfect balance, perfect cooperation, with no contradiction, no confusion, and no diminishing of their glory forever**.

No wonder Paul breaks into worship as he describes God's greatness: (Romans 11:33) *"Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"*

His works:

The Psalms resound with detailed praises of God's wondrous works. Our worship should too. We must not be like those who *"do not regard the works of the Lord or the work of his hands."* (Ps28:5)

Ps105:2 Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works!"

Ps.111:2 "great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them."

God created everything from nothing and spoke the universe into existence; he sustains all living creatures and non-living matter; His power holds all things together and keeps them from exploding or disintegrating. AND The greatest of all of his works

by far is **the giving of his Son at Calvary**; in the cross we find a **perfect reconciling of God's blazing holiness, holy justice, incomprehensible wisdom, omnipotent power, and unfathomable love.**

***Jesus served as our mediator** when he willingly endured God's wrath against our sins at the cross, even though he himself was completely innocent.

***Jesus served as our mediator** when he became our substitute to receive the punishment we deserved, after which the Father raised him from the dead, demonstrating the **sufficiency of his sacrifice.**

***Jesus served as our mediator** when he embraced the torment of separation from God so we could live as sons of God forever!

And now when we approach God through Christ, We have boldness and confidence (Eph.3:12). For centuries prior to the coming of Christ, the high priest represented God's people once a year as he entered the Holy of Holies to make atonement for their sins. The Holiest Man from the Holiest Tribe offered the Holiest Sacrifice in the Holiest place for the Holiest people on earth. To attempt to draw near to God in any other way or by any other means would result in certain death (Leviticus 16:2). Now Jesus has entered a Holier place, the heavenly sanctuary, having atoned for our sins and torn down the veil separating us from God (Heb.10:19-22). Now we are accepted "In the Beloved (Eph.1:6) and need have no fear of rejection as we come before God's throne.

It's not the excellence of our offering that opens the presence of God; it's the blood of Jesus.

What a God we worship! *"There is none like You among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours!" (Ps.86:8)*

Ps.34:3 Oh magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

Magnifying and cherishing his greatness is at the heart of biblical worship.

Magnify

He never changes in size, it just seems that way; when we magnify God, he doesn't change, we do. Astronomy class at Furman. To the naked eye the stars look like **tiny pinpoints of light**, barely visible against the **black backdrop**. Massive planets appear as **Twinkling dots suspended in vast darkness**. We can walk outside and barely notice them. But then you look through a telescope: **spheres of raging fire**, millions of times larger than our world, brighter than our eyes can even bear, surrounded by orbiting moons and rings. The sky didn't change, our vision did.

John Stott: All true worship is a response to the self-revelation of God in Christ and scripture, and arises from our reflection on who He is and what He has done. The worship of God is evoked, informed, and inspired by the vision of God. True knowledge of God will always lead us to worship.

It's about engaging our hearts.

If praise and magnifying God begins with proclaiming objective, Biblical truths about God, then it could end with the expression of **deep and holy affection** towards God. We aren't simply reciting facts about God, like students reviewing a multiplication table. God wants us to delight in him. (Ps37:4)

John Piper: "The engagement of the heart in worship is the coming alive of the feelings and emotions and affections of the heart; where feelings for God are dead, worship is dead."

It's proclamation and passion; Biblical truth and strong affection.

And of course, we're to be **worshippers in life**, not just in meetings. It's hard to sustain stamina of worship in corporate settings unless you have a worship foundation in your private devotion. We can't fulfill the greatest commandment in song and neglect the the 2nd greatest commandment in life.

God is : bigger than our problems and pains
greater than our sorrows and successes
more significant than our tests and triumphs.
Greater than our trials, and Kinder than we could ever imagine

The Son of God, the King and Redeemer
The Alpha and Omega, the First and Last
Our Mediator and Intercessor
The Lord our Banner, the Lord our Shepherd
The Lord of Hosts, the Lord our Righteousness
The Mighty One, the Holy One
The Judge and the Deliverer
Our Shield, and the Sun of Righteousness
The Ancient of Days, the Everlasting One,
Our Strength, the Mighty God
The Wonderful Counselor, the High Priest
The Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace
Our Counselor and Advocate
Our Baptizer and Sanctifier
Our Father and our Savior
Our Provider and our Healer
Our Peace and our Shepherd
The God who sees, and our God of covenant

Closing

By his grace and for his glory, let's be who we've been saved to be! He's created, redeemed, and called us to be a people of worship and praise.

Lord restore to us the wonder of worship, and the joy of your presence in praise.