

Notes on Worship

- “To worship is to experience Reality, to touch Life. It is to know, to feel, to experience the resurrected Christ in the midst of the gathered community.”
- *²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.” John 4:23-24*
- Worship is the human response to the divine initiative.
- “Worship is our response to the overtures of love from the heart of the Father.”
- “Forms and rituals do not produce worship, nor does the disuse of forms and rituals. We can use all the right techniques and methods, we can have the best possible liturgy, but we have not worshipped the Lord until Spirit touches spirit.”
- Singing, praying, praising all may lead to worship, but worship is more than any of them.
- This helps us recognize that our personal preference for form in regards to worship is literally just that, our personal preference. The New Testament leads us to a distinct recognition that there is freedom in how we worship and that form is much less important than a desire to be connected to the divine spirit.
- “The forms are not the worship; they only lead us into the worship.”
- If we are not careful we can turn our forms of worship into idolatry of adoration of the form itself and not the God to be worshipped
- Matthew 4:10 “...‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”
- “We praise God for who he is, and thank him for what he has done.”
- Jesus’ first commandment calls us to worship...”Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30)
- “The divine priority is worship first, service second. Our lives are to be punctuated with praise, thanksgiving, and adoration. Service flows out of worship. Service as a substitute for worship is idolatry. Activity is the enemy of adoration.”
- “One grave temptation we all face is to run around answering calls to service without ministering to the Lord himself.
- **“And if we long to go where God is going and do what God is doing, we will move into deeper, more authentic worship.”**
- When people in the Scriptures gathered together they did so with “holy expectancy” they gathered expecting to hear a Divine Word from God.
- We cultivate experiencing the divine presence of God by living throughout our days with a heart of inward worship, always listening to the voice of God.
- Brother Lawrence, “I cannot imagine how religious persons can live satisfied without the practice of the presence of God.”
- We must live with an openness to Jesus as our present teacher throughout every day...the more we do that the greater our ability to distinguish his voice from everyday noise (think social media and news)

- “When more than one or two come into public worship with a holy expectancy, it can change the atmosphere of a room.”
- Corporate worship is to be an experience in which we enter into a unity that is greater than our individualism.
- Our greatest danger in our faith being all alone is not that we may not know Jesus, it is that our faith does not reflect Jesus because we have become isolated in our belief system.
- When writing on corporate worship Thomas Kelly wrote these words, “A quickening Presence pervades us, breaking down some part of the special privacy and isolation of our individual lives and blending our spirits within a superindividual Life and Power. An objective, dynamic Presence enfolds us all, nourishes our souls, speaks glad, unutterable comfort with us, and quickens us in depths that had before been slumbering.”
- When we are truly gathered into worship, things occur that could never occur alone.
- Genuine worship has only one Leader, Jesus who is the Christ.
- In worship Christ saves us from sin and its power, by His power. Miracles can happen in worship because Jesus is Lord of all.
- “There is nothing more quickening than the Spirit-inspired preaching, nothing more deadening than human-inspired preaching.”
- Jesus is the ultimate leader of all worship, but there must be human leaders who help lead us into lives of worship.
- Worship is a response to the liberating work of the Spirit.
- “Here is a practical handle to put on this idea. Live throughout the week as an heir of the kingdom, listening for the voice, obeying his word. Since you have heard his voice throughout the week, you know that you will hear his voice as you gather for public worship. Enter the service ten minutes early. Lift your heart in adoration to the King of glory. Contemplate his majesty, glory, and tenderness as revealed in Jesus Christ. Picture the marvelous vision that Isaiah had of the Lord “high and lifted up” or the magnificent revelation that John had of Christ with eyes “like a flame of fire” and voice “like the sound of many waters” (Isa. 6; Rev. 1). Invite the real Presence to be manifest...Next, lift into the light of Christ the pastor and the worship leaders. Picture the Shekinah of God’s radiance surrounding them. Inwardly release them to speak the truth boldly in the power of the Lord...When people begin to enter the room, glance around until you see someone who needs your intercessory work. Perhaps their shoulders are drooped, or they seem a bit sad. Lift them into the glorious, refreshing light of his Presence. See the burden tumbling from their shoulders as it did from Pilgrim’s in Bunyan’s allegory. Hold them as a special intension throughout the service. If only a few in any given congregation will do this, it will deepen the worship experience of all.”

Avenues of Worship:

1. The first avenue of worship is to still all humanly initiated activity.
 - a. This is a life-style decision...every part of our life can be seen as having its root in God.

- b. This includes all of life: work, play, rest, etc.
 - c. Worship is not an occasion but a way of life.
 - d. "...do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." Romans 8:4
2. Praise is another avenue of worship
- a. "The Psalms are the literature of worship and their most prominent feature is praise."
 - b. Singing, shouting, dancing, rejoicing, adoring are all languages of praise
 - c. Hebrews 13:15 "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name."
 - d. 1 Corinthians 14:15 "So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding."
 - e. Singing is meant to move us into praise
 - f. No less than 41 Psalms command us to "sing unto the Lord."
 - g. "God calls for worship that involves our whole being. The body, mind, spirit, and emotions should all be laid on the altar of worship."
 - h. Throughout Scripture we find a variety of physical postures in connection with worship: lying prostrate, standing, kneeling, lifting the hands, clapping the hands, lifting the head, bowing the head, dancing, and wearing sackcloth and ashes."
 - i. Worship is physical
 - j. "What we must see is that the real question in worship is not, "What will meet my need?" The real question is, "What kind of worship does God call for?" (he always calls for wholehearted worship)
 - k. "Often our "reserved temperament" is little more than fear of what others will think of us, or perhaps unwillingness to humble ourselves before God and others."
 - i. *important to note, none of these should be used in manipulative ways.

Steps into Worship:

1. Learn to practice the presence of God daily. Really try to follow Paul's words, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17)
2. Have many different experiences of worship
 - a. Alone, in a small group, in a large group, etc.
3. Find ways to prepare for the gathered experience of worship
4. Have a willingness to be gathered in the power of the Lord (less I, more we)
5. Cultivate Holy Dependency
6. Absorb distractions with gratitude
7. Learn to offer a sacrifice of worship

Fruits of Worship

- "Just as worship begins in holy expectancy, it ends in holy obedience."
- Worship enables us to hear the call to service so we can respond with the words of Isaiah, "Here am I, send me!"

- “Authentic worship will impel us to join in the Lamb’s war against demonic powers everywhere- on the personal level, on the social level, on the institutional level.”
- “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.” Colossians 3:16