

Some Theological Thoughts on Worship (Public and/or Private)

1. When we worship, we are saying that God has worth, that he is worthy. Worship means to declare worth, to attribute worth. Hence, we praise God. We speak or sing about how good and powerful God is. This is a purpose for which we are called: “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

2. Worship should involve the heart, the mind, and the body. There is a worship that is giving praise upward, a worship that is receiving instructions from above, and a worship that carries out instruction in the world around us. We need all these three expressions of worship.

Praise is good, but if all we do is praise God without ever listening to what he says, we have to ask whether we believe the words we are saying. If he is really all wise and all loving, then we need to be attentive to what he is telling us, because he is worth listening to.

Similarly, all talk and no action do not give God the reverence he deserves. Actions speak louder than words, and if our behaviour isn't changed by God, then our actions are saying that God isn't important. When we really believe that God is worthy of every praise, then we will be willing to listen and to change the way we live in response to such a worthy God. Worship should affect our behaviour.

See Psa 86:12; Matt 22:27; Jn 4:24; Rom 12:1-2; Ja 1:22-25.

3. Worship is possible because God first reveals himself to us. We can't know God's worth and much less declare it, unless God reveals himself to us. So God initiates worship by revealing himself to us. Then we respond, and the proper response is worship. The more we grasp his greatness, his power, his love, his character, the more we understand his worthiness, the better we can declare his worth.

See 1 Sam 15:22-23; Prov 3:5-6.

4. We can worship God all by ourselves. But it is also something we do together. God has revealed himself not just to me, but also to other people. God puts us in a community, he reveals himself to a community and through a community, and the community together responds to him in worship.

See Psa 34:3; Acts 2:42-47; Col 3:16; Heb 10:24-25.

5. Music is one of many means we use to worship God. In church, we have someone called a worship leader who leads us in singing hymns and spiritual

songs. So a worship leader is a song leader, and because of that some people automatically think of music when they hear the word “worship”.

Music is important, but worship is not just music. Worship involves our entire relationship with God—all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. In short worship involves all of one’s whole self and one’s whole life.

See Psa 146:1-2; Rom 12:1-2.

6. In our worship services today, where is the worship? It’s in the songs, in the sermon, and in the attentiveness that we have in listening to the sermon. But there is also worship in the work that goes on behind the scenes. People who get the place ready may be making sacrifices to God and they are pleasing to him. Those who help with refreshments may worship as they so serve. When we do good things and share with others, we are giving the kind of worship that God wants.

See 1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17, 23.

7. We no longer live to please ourselves but to serve others. This is a form of worship. Everything should be done in such a way that the church is instructed, edified, built up, strengthened. It doesn’t matter how many songs we sing or what spiritual gifts we have—if we aren’t helping anybody, we are missing the point of gathering together. Songs, sermon, and service—all three are forms of worship, and all three are important.

See Rom 14:19; 1 Cor 14:26; 1 Thess 5:11).

8. Worship is not restricted to a specific place and time. The best thing that has ever happened to us is that we have God the Holy Spirit in our lives. When we live each day praising God in our hearts, it is natural that we praise God when we gather together. We worship all the time, but we also worship together at specific times at meetings designated for that specific purpose.

See Acts 2:46-47; Heb 10:24-25.

9. A simple three-fold test regarding worship practices:

- Does it glorify God?
- Does it build up the body of Christ?
- Does it help us be what God wants us to be in the world?