

A Study in the Essentials of Authentic Christian Worship

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I. Why should we worship and when should it start?

Psalm 8:2

What is the essence of authentic worship?
Why did God choose a people for Himself?
We too have been chosen by God in Christ?
What is the fundamental fruit we are to bear?
What is the fundamental purpose for our lives?
What is a reasonable expression of worship?
What is the reason for our redemption?

Deuteronomy 6:4-5
Exodus 19:4-6
John 15:16
Hebrews 13:15
I Peter 2:9-10
Romans 12:1
Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14

II. Who should we worship?

II Corinthians 13:14

A. The Father

Worthy of Worship

Baptist Hymnal 2008 #3
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Stanza One

Worthy of worship, worthy of praise (Although worship and praise are synonyms,
Worthy of honor and glory they do suggest the expression of opposing,
Worthy of **all** the glad songs we can sing yet complementary, emotions. Compare
Worthy of **all** of the off' rings we bring. Psalm 95:6 with Psalm 100:4)

Stanza Two

Worthy of reverence, worthy of fear (One explains the other)
Worthy of love and devotion (One clarifies the other)
Worthy of bowing and bending of knees (The action of "worship")
Worthy of all this and added to these ...

Refrain

You are worthy, Father, Creator (Contemplate his providence and power)
You are worthy, Savior, Sustainer (Meditate on his love and concern for all)
You are worthy, worthy and wonderful (Not only objectively worthy,
Worthy of worship and praise but personally dear)

Stanza Three

Almighty Father, Master and Lord (Our emotional, vocational and spiritual authority)
King of all kings and Redeemer Psalm 95:3, Rom 5:6-11, Revelation 15:3-4

"Redemption means deliverance from some evil by payment of a price. The characteristic New Testament word for redemption is *apolytroisis*, a comparatively rare word elsewhere. It is found ten times in the NT but apparently there are only

eight occurrences in all the rest of Greek literature. This may express the conviction of the early Christians that the redemption wrought in Christ was unique.” L. L. Morris, *New Bible Dictionary* 3rd ed., IVP

Wonderful Counselor, Comforter, Friend John 14:18, 26 NIV, 15:31-36, 16:13
Savior and source of our life without end Acts 4:12, 17:28, I Cor 8:6, Rev 22:13

We must not only worship God for “Who He Is” but what He has done.

“It is precisely the recital of, and engagement with, a particular history bound up with a particular Jew, in a particular land, at a particular time, that is the basis of Christian worship.” Paul Hoon, *The Integrity of Worship*, Abingdon 1979

“In worship there is a summing up of [the] events in history that constitute the source of the church’s salvation. In worship we rehearse the Gospel story. We rehearse the Creation, Fall, Incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, and the consummation of all things. Therefore, our worship, whether baptism, preaching, or Eucharist, proclaims Jesus Christ and his saving reality again and again.” Robert Webber, *Worship Old & New*, Zondervan 1994

B. The Son

We worship the Son because He is the object of God’s good pleasure.	Matthew 3:17
We worship the Son because He was co-creator of all things.	John 1:1-4
We worship the Son as the only-begotten Son of the Father.	John 1:18
We worship the Son who takes away the sins of the world.	John 1:29
We worship the Son as the only means of access to the Father.	John 14:6
We worship the Son because He loved and chosen us for His own.	John 15:16
We worship the Son as the Judge of the living and the dead.	John 15:21
We worship the Son as the focus of God’s eternal plan.	Ephesians 1:7-10
We worship the Son for His humility and obedient sacrifice.	Philippians 2:5-8
We worship the Son whose name is above every other name.	Philippians 2:9-11
We worship the Son as the only mediator between God and man.	Book of Hebrews
We worship the Son as the one who intercedes for us by name.	Hebrews 7:25
We worship the Son as the conqueror of sin, death, and the grave.	Revelation 1:18
We worship the Son as the first born among all creation.	Revelation 1:5
We worship the Son as the King of kings and Lord of lords.	Rev. 19:11-16
We worship the Son because He is the beginning and end of all things.	Rev. 22:12-13

C. The Holy Spirit

We worship the Spirit because He was the catalyst for all things created.	Genesis 1:2
We worship the Spirit as the one who anointed Jesus Christ with power.	John 1:32
We worship the Spirit as the one who awakens us from death.	John 6:63

We worship the Spirit as the one who teaches us and confirms our faith. **John 14:26**
 We worship the Spirit as the one who convicts the world. **John 16:8**
 We worship the Spirit as the one who guides us in all truth. **John 16:13**
 We worship the Spirit as the one who raised Christ from the grave. **Romans 8:11**
 We worship the Spirit as the one who interprets our prayers. **Romans 8:26**
 We worship the Spirit as the guarantor of our eternal inheritance. **Ephesians 1:13**
 We worship the Spirit as the one who empowers us in daily life. **Eph. 1:19-20**
 We worship the Spirit as the one who inspired the Scriptures. **II Peter 1:21**
 We worship the Spirit because He is the light and life of The Church. **Revelation 2:5**

If we ask the New Testament authors, "What is the nature of the Spirit's work?" we receive a plethora of information. It is the Holy Spirit, for example, who is the one who makes God's love real for us--"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5). In a sense, it is he who stands at the threshold of the Christian life, for only he can enable us to embrace Christ as Savior and Lord--"no one can say, "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). Then, it is the Spirit who gives us the boldness to come into the presence of the awesome and almighty Maker of heaven and earth and call him "Dear Father"--"God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal. 4:6). It is the Spirit who enables believers, from various racial, social and religious backgrounds, to find true unity in Christ and together worship God (Eph. 2:18).

In fact, without the Spirit, worship and the glorification of Jesus Christ cannot take place (Phil. 3:3). And it is the Spirit who is the true Guarantor of orthodoxy (2 Tim. 1:14).

An excellent summary statement of the range of the Spirit's work is Galatians 5:25, which speaks so plainly about the Spirit as the Source from which we are to live our lives: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." The Spirit thus undergirds and empowers the entirety of our lives as Christians. To paraphrase John 15:5: apart from the Holy Spirit, we can do nothing of any true eternal value. Michael A. G. Haykin, *The God Who Draws Near: an Introduction to Biblical Spirituality*, Webster, NY: Evangelical Press USA 2007

III. What is authentic biblical worship?

A. Primary Old Testament Word for Worship

Shachah - "...the most widely used Old Testament word for worship. The literal meaning of the verbal root is the act of falling down and groveling or even wallowing on the ground before royalty." A. E. Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise*, Baker 1993

1. Genesis 18:2

Abraham “bowed himself to the earth” before men who visited him in the desert. He later learned that one of the individuals was God. **Ironically, the first word translated as “worship” is *the same word*.**

2. Genesis 22:5

Abraham says to his servants, “I and the lad (Isaac) will go yonder (to Mount Moriah) and we will *worship (shachah)* and return to you.”

3. Significance – What was Abraham going to do on Mount Moriah?

Abraham was going to sacrifice his only son, who represented the physical fulfillment of God’s covenant and the very essence of his life. The significance of his entire journey to the land of Canaan, the reality of God’s promise to make him the father of many nations, and every hope he had for a meaningful future were all embodied in the person of Isaac. In a metaphorical way, Abraham was sacrificing himself.

B. Primary New Testament Words for Worship

1. *Proskuneo*

One of two words used most frequently for worship in the New Testament. The word literally means to bow and “to kiss toward” – touching the hand to the lips and extending it in obeisance toward the honored individual.

a. Matthew 4:9

Satan tempted Jesus with the wealth of the world saying, “I will give You all this domain and its glory for it has been handed over to me, and I will give it ... if You *worship (proskuneo)* before me ...”

b. Luke 4:6-8

The passage in Matthew alludes to the **submission and devotion** implied by *proskuneo*. Satan did not simply ask for a *display* of obeisance from Christ. Rather, he requested a definitive expression of submission and devotion – a visual commitment to serve. This fact is evident in Luke’s account of the temptation of Christ. There, Jesus responded to Satan’s request with a quotation from Deuteronomy 6:13 saying,

“It is written, ‘you shall worship the Lord your God, and *serve* Him only.’”

2. *Latreuo*

In Jesus’ quotation of Deuteronomy 6:13, the word *latreuo* was employed. This word is the second word most frequently used for worship in the NT.

a. Definition

“*Latreuo* originally referred to ordinary work rendered perhaps to the state, and later came to mean *service to God*. So then, we use the word “Liturgy” (from *latreuo*) to denote that worship is *for God* – it is the “work,” the “service” of *all the people, for God*.” Donald Hustad, *Jubilate II*, Hope 1993

b. Revelation 7:15

Possibly the most poignant example this word is found in Revelation chapter 15. There the 144,000 who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, stand before the throne of God waving palm branches and crying aloud,

“Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

Moreover, the angels, elders and beasts surrounding the throne fall on their faces in response to this song and sing a doxology of their own. When asked to explain the purpose of the 144,000, the angel says to John,

“For this reason (that they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb), they are before the throne of God; and *serve (latreuo)* Him day and night in His temple ...”

C. Significance of Words for Worship

1. Old Testament Perspective

The essence of worship in the Old Testament is submission to God out of reverent fear. This submission involves the whole person – actions, intent and spirit; a totality that is clearly summarized in **Deuteronomy 6:5**

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

Consider Abraham.

- a. Worship was a physical expression of reverence before the Lord.
Genesis 17:3
- b. Worship was the intent to serve or minister unto the Lord.
Genesis 18:2-5
- c. Worship was the spiritual surrender of life to the Lord.
Genesis 22:5

2. New Testament Perspective

The essence of worship in the New Testament entails active adoration and a commitment to serve. Both are of necessity in the authentic expression of love.

Consider James 2:23

Concerning Abraham James said: "... 'and Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,' and he was called the friend of God." Abraham's acts demonstrated his commitment of love and confidence in God and Abraham was rightly known as the friend or loving companion of God.

3. Implications for Worship in Contemporary Culture

- a. Pastors, Preachers, and Worship Leaders must intentionally strive to promote a biblical understanding of worship to those they lead and live it themselves.
- b. Worship is a *life* of submission, surrender and service to God. If worship is relegated only to a particular place, at a particular time, performing particular religious acts, it is not worship in a biblical sense.

IV. How should we worship?

A. According to the commandments of Scripture

- "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." Deuteronomy 6:5 (When Jesus quotes this commandment he uses the word *agapeo* – and includes the command to love God with the mind. Matthew 23:37)
- **"You shall fear (reverence) only the Lord your God; and you shall worship (serve) Him, and swear by His name."** Deuteronomy 6:13
- **"Sing for joy in the Lord, O you righteous ones; praise is becoming to the upright. Give thanks to the Lord with lyre; sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy. For the word of the Lord is upright; and all His work is done in faithfulness."** Psalm 33:1-4
- **"Clap your hands, all peoples; shout to God with the voice of joy (a ringing cry). For the Lord Most High is to be feared, a great King over all the earth."** Psalm 47:1-2
- **Shout joyfully to God, all the earth; sing the glory of His name; make His praise glorious. Say to God, "How awesome are Thy works!" ... All the earth will worship Thee, and sing praise to Thee; they will sing praise to Thy name."** Psalm 66:1-4
- **"Sing for Joy to God our strength; shout joyfully to the God of Jacob. Raise a song, strike the timbrel, the sweet sounding lyre with the harp. Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day. For it is a statute for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob."** Ps. 81:1-4

- “It is good to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praise to Thy name, O Most High; to declare Thy loving kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness by night, with the ten stringed lute, and with the harp; with resounding music upon the lyre. For Thou, O Lord, hast made me glad by what Thou hast done, **I will sing for joy at the works of Thy hands.**” Ps. 92:1-4
- **“Come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.”** Psalm 95:6 (See also Psalm 138:1-2)
- Psalms 96-100, 103-107, 111-113, 117-118, 134-136, & 145-150
All contain commands or exhortations to praise, shout, sing, thank, etc.
- **“You shall worship** (*proskuneo* – to kiss; to do reverence before) the Lord your God, **and serve** (*latreuo* – the work of a servant) him only.” Matthew 4:10
- **“But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth;** for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is *a Spirit*, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” John 4:23-24
- “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice**, acceptable (well-pleasing) to God; **which is your spiritual** (rational/reasonable) **service of worship**. And do not be conformed to this world (age), but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is (“trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord” Ephesians 5:10), that which is good and acceptable.” Romans 12:1-2
- “When you assemble, **each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation.** Let all things be done for edification.” I Corinthians 14:26
- **“... be filled with the Spirit** (like John the Baptist – see Luke 1:15), speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father, and be subject to one another in the fear (out of *reverence* for) of Christ.” Ephesians 5:18b-21
- “...for we are the true circumcision (true Jew/servant of God – see Romans 2:29), who **worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus** and put no confidence in the flesh ...” Philippians 3:3
- “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and **admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.** Colossians 3:16
- And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” Colossians 3:17
- “Through Him then let us **continually offer up a sacrifice of praise** to God, that is, the fruit of lips that **give thanks (confess) to His name.**” Hebrews 12:15
- “Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.” Hebrews 12:28

B. According to the Models of Worship

1. II Chronicles 5:1-7:3
2. Nehemiah 8:1-12
3. Isaiah 6:1-9a
4. Acts 2:42-47
5. I Cor. 14:26-33
6. Revelation 4-5

C. According to the Methods of Scripture

1. Scriptural Proclamation

Deuteronomy 6:4-9	Nehemiah 8:3-4, 8	Luke 4:16-21
Acts 2:14-40	I Corinthians 14:26	Colossians 3:12-17, 4:16
I Thessalonians 5:27	I Timothy 4:13	II Timothy 3:16
	Hebrews 4:12-13	

2. Preaching / Prophecy

Matt 10:7	Mark 16:15	Luke 9:2
Acts 2:42	Acts 4:33	Acts 5:20, 42
Acts 9:20	Romans 12:6	I Corinthians 14:3
I Timothy 4:13	II Timothy 4:2	I Peter 4:11
	Revelation 14:6	

3. Corporate Song

- a. **Psalms** – including metricizations, paraphrases or adaptations of Old Testament Scriptures, particularly the Psalter; also includes the New Testament *Canticles*, which were based on Old Testament models
- b. **Hymns** – for the first Christians, these would have been new songs expressing the revolutionary doctrines of Christianity (many of which were recorded in the New Testament Epistles); throughout history this category of song has been distinguished by its systematic presentation of Christian theology, structured style and poetic sophistication
- c. **Spiritual Songs** - some scholars have suggested that these were wordless songs of spiritual jubilation, similar to vocalises or melismatic treatments of “alleluia”; others have proposed *odes pneumaticas* represent spontaneously sung prayers similar to those heard in contemporary, charismatic, worship settings today; from a hymnological perspective the designation of “spiritual song” has been historically given to emotionally and personally provocative texts such as “Amazing grace ...” and “Just as I am ...”

4. **Confessions of Faith**
5. **Corporate Confession**
6. **Prayers of All Kinds**
7. **Congregational “Amen”**
8. **Manifestations of the Spirit**
9. **Laying on Hands**
10. **Expressions of Affection**
11. **Symbolic Feet Washing**
12. **The Lord’s Supper**
13. **Various Offerings**
14. **Testimony of Baptism**
15. **Benedictions**

V. **How should we plan authentic worship?**

A. **Presumptions**

1. **Planned under the Inspiration and Supervision of the Holy Spirit**
2. **Focused on the *Full and Finished* Work of Christ on the Cross**
3. **Cognizant of the Comprehensive Ministry of Christ**
4. **Attentive to the Engagement and Edification of All**
5. **Committed to an Offering of Excellence**

B. **Principles**

1. **Scriptural Saturation**

“I charge you ... have this letter read to all ...”
 “All scripture is inspired by God”
 “The word of God is living and active”

Luke 4:16-21
I Thessalonians 5:27
II Timothy 3:16
Hebrew 4:13
2. **Commendable Preaching**

Fundamental not Supplemental
 Exemplary Exposition
 Centrally Balanced

II Timothy 4:1-2
II Timothy 2:15
I Timothy 4:13
3. **Musical Diversity**

Psalms, Hymns, Spiritual Songs
 Historic and Contemporaneous
 Traditional and Popular
 Simple and Sophisticated
 Instrumental and Vocal

Eph. 5, Col. 3
Romans 11:33-36
Lukan Canticles 1-2
I Timothy 3:16
Revelation 5 & 15

- 4. Stylistic Consideration** **Ephesians 5:15-21**
 Blended by Biblical Mandate
 Corporate Need vs. Congregation Preference
 Concerned with but Cautious of Contemporary Trends
- 5. Educational and Edifying** **I Corinthians 14:1-26**
 Are we joining the Church universal in song?
 Are we singing a “new song” to the Lord?
 Are we singing the songs of eternity?
 Are we instructing the saints how to sing?
 Are we encouraging participation or creating spectators?
Revelation 7:9-17
Revelation 5:6-14
Revelation 4:8-11
Colossians 3:16-17
- 6. Purposeful Participation** **Nehemiah 8-9**
 In Leadership
 In Corporate Prayer
 In Scriptural Proclamation
 In Congregational Song
 In Spiritual Response
- 7. Aesthetic Inspiration**
 Consider Beauty and Glory **Exodus 25-31**
 Consider Structure and Symmetry **I Kings 5-7**
 Consider Symbolism and Simplicity **Luke 22/John 13**