

# Worship

What is worship?

The answer to this question often seems so obvious to each of us, but too often we find that though we are certain that we understand what it is, our understanding varies from that of others. As with other matters relating to our relationship with God, the best place to find that answer to the question is in God's word.

One common answer to the question of what worship is would be that it is exalting God in prayer and praise. We see this expressed in scripture in Ps 34:1-3, Ps 99:5,9 and others.

*Ps 34:1-3*

*I will bless the LORD at all times;  
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.  
2 My soul shall make its boast in the LORD;  
The humble shall hear of it and be glad.  
3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me,  
And let us exalt His name together.  
NKJV*

*Ps 99:5*

*5 Exalt the LORD our God,  
And worship at His footstool--  
He is holy.  
NKJV*

*Ps 99:9*

*9 Exalt the LORD our God,  
And worship at His holy hill;  
For the LORD our God is holy.  
NKJV*

No matter where we look in scripture, we find that the focus of worship is on the object of worship. This may seem obvious, but it is not always so obvious in practice.

In scripture there are references to worship of the true God, but God is also clear that when the focus is not on Him, that it is not worship of the true God, but rather worship of false gods, idols/objects (either natural or created by men) or self. Examples are:

*Deut 4:15-16*

*15 "Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, 16 lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, 1  
NKJV*

*2 Kings 5:18-19*

*18 Yet in this thing may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand, and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon--when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD please pardon your servant in this thing."  
NKJV*

*2 Chron 32:12-15*

*12 Has not the same Hezekiah taken away His high places and His altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, "You shall worship before one altar and burn incense on it"? 13 Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of other lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands in any way able to deliver their lands out of my hand? 14 Who was there among all the gods of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed that could deliver his people from my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand?  
NKJV*

*Ps 81:8-12*

*8 "Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you! O Israel, if you will listen to Me!  
9 There shall be no foreign god among you; Nor shall you worship any foreign god.  
10 I am the LORD your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.  
11 "But My people would not heed My voice, And Israel would have none of Me.  
12 So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, To walk in their own counsels.  
NKJV*

*Matt 15:8-9*

*8 "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.  
9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' "  
NKJV*

*Rev 22:9*

*9 Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."  
NKJV*

## How Do We Worship?

No matter how we worship, worship must, as shown previously, be for the purpose of exalting God. The methods typically used for worship are:

- Praise (Ps 34:1-3, Judges 5:2-3, 9)

*Ps 34:1-3*

*I will bless the LORD at all times;  
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.  
2 My soul shall make its boast in the LORD;  
The humble shall hear of it and be glad.  
3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me,  
And let us exalt His name together.  
NKJV*

*Judg 5:2-9*

*2 "When leaders lead in Israel,  
When the people willingly offer  
themselves,  
Bless the LORD!  
3 "Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes!  
I, even I, will sing to the LORD;  
I will sing praise to the LORD God of  
Israel.*

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*9 My heart is with the rulers of Israel  
Who offered themselves willingly with  
the people.  
Bless the LORD!  
NKJV*

- Singing (Ps 66:3-4)

*Ps 66:3-4*

*3 Say to God,  
"How awesome are Your works!  
Through the greatness of Your power  
Your enemies shall submit themselves to You.  
4 All the earth shall worship You  
And sing praises to You;  
They shall sing praises to Your name."  
NKJV*

- Acknowledgement of who He is. (Ps 99:5-9)

*Ps 99:5-9*

*5 Exalt the LORD our God,*

*And worship at His footstool--  
He is holy.*

*6 Moses and Aaron were among His priests,  
And Samuel was among those who called upon His name;  
They called upon the LORD, and He answered them.  
7 He spoke to them in the cloudy pillar;  
They kept His testimonies and the ordinance He gave them.*

*8 You answered them, O LORD our God;  
You were to them God-Who-Forgives,  
Though You took vengeance on their deeds.  
9 Exalt the LORD our God,  
And worship at His holy hill;  
For the LORD our God is holy.  
NKJV*

- Thanking Him for what He has Done. (1 Chron 16:8)

*1 Chron 16:8  
8 Oh, give thanks to the LORD!  
Call upon His name;  
Make known His deeds among the peoples!  
NKJV*

- Offerings (Mark 12:41-44)

*Mark 12:41-44  
41 Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. 42 Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. 43 So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; 44 for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."  
NKJV*

### **The Role of Music in Worship**

Music plays an important role in all kinds of worship. For instance, we have the book of Psalms in the center of the Bible demonstrating the key role that the Old Testament believers placed with respect to worship. Music can include singing alone, instrumental music, or a combination of singing plus instrumental music. Music is therefore an important part of true worship.

As with anything else, something intended for good can also be used in other ways. Music also plays an extremely important role in all types of propaganda, advertising and motivational efforts and events. The reason is simple. Music is emotional, not rational. When people listen to music, they tend to put the rational part of their mind to sleep, and they then use the emotional portion of the mind. The effect of this is:

- Allows the ideas to bypass our normal mental processes and filters.
- Causes the thoughts to become more ingrained whether we agree or not (How often does an annoying jingle play through your mind when you are not thinking about anything in particular?)

When music contains only a simple theme and is repetitious, the impact is more pronounced and the ability of the music to influence our thinking is more effective. Such an approach, used properly and with numerous repetitions can further shut down the rational parts of the minds, puts one into a form of a light trance, making the person more open to suggestion.

For this reason alone, Music plays an more important role in leading a person or a group into error than wrong teaching by itself and the message in the music much be considered with equal or greater concern. This is one reason why feelings and emotions are one of the least reliable indicators of truth.

Music is a defined part of the process used to influence congregations in movement such as the New Apostolic Reformation (i.e. Charismatic, Vineyard, Holy Laughter, etc.) churches where emotion is emphasized over doctrine. Vineyard music, for example, is generally acknowledged to be a different form of worship music, and is used to influence people towards the Vineyard worship style. Further, these churches often perform repetitive singing of these choruses.

Doctrine is therefore important for three reasons:

- 1) It is important if we are to honour God to honour Him in truth
- 2) If repetitive chorus contain false doctrine, it can affect the listeners and we do not wish to mis-lead visitors or members of the congregation with false teaching.

### **What Role does music play in the church?**

Praise to God (Worship) is the role that we see in scripture (2 Chron 23:13, 2 Chron 29:27-30, Nehemiah 12:46, Psalm 81:1, Rev 4:8, Rev 5:9, Rev 15:3-4).

Definitions (Reference – Websters Dictionary)

- Psalm: a sacred song or poem used in worship
- Worship: reverence paid to a divine being

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- Praise: to glorify (a god or saint) especially by the attribution of perfections

Therefore during praise and worship, our focus is to be towards God and focused on Him, and not on ourselves. We should focus on the majesty and glory of God and the great things he has done, especially with respect to the gospel!!!

Worship which is man centered is off the mark. If it is about us being entertained or feeling good, then it is off the mark.

### **Focus of Worship in the Movement**

Today we see large segments of the church moving away from worship as we find it described in scripture to a more emotional man-focused form of worship. A strong driver in the effort is the New Apostolic Reformation and C. Peter Wagner.

The following list compares aspects of true worship to changes which are being promoted by C. Peter Wagner and the New Apostolic Reformation which he leads. The impact of his effort can be seen in many or most churches in the western world today. (Note: Reference to “Churchquake” refer a book authored by C. Peter Wagner. C. Peter Wagner is the key figure behind the “New Apostolic Reformation”, which is a movement which incorporates the “Church Growth Movement” and the Apostolic, Prophetic and Charismatic Church involved in the Holy Laughter movement, The Vineyard, and similar movements/denominations)

#### ***1) True Worship focuses on God.***

Today this is changing to the focus on the person and entertainment.

One proponent of the movement describes it like this – *“People now choose churches in the same way they make all other choices - as consumers (not necessarily as believers). They go where the action is - where their needs will be met - regardless of the denomination, apparent doctrine, or location. For consumers, the worship service is one of the major reasons for choosing the church.”*

(Tim Wright quoted in “Churchquake”<sup>(1)</sup>)

*“The best way to determine if you're worship is on the experiential track is to videotape your worship service and play it on a VCR side-by-side with a television tuned to MTV.”* (William Eassum and Thomas Bandy, quoted in “Churchquake”)

#### ***2) True Worship portrays the awesome nature of the Almighty God.***

Today this is changing to treat God almost in the same way as a boy-friend-girlfriend relationship, or as one the proponents of the movement says, worship is moving *“from awe of God to intimacy with God”*. If you don't have a realization of God and thus an awe of God, how is it possible to

have intimacy with God? (Ref: Churchquake, C. Peter Wagner).

### **3) True worship of God focus on the truth and is doctrinally sound.**

Today this is changing to viewing to a focus on emotion.

*“Emotion is usually not something to be avoided, but rather it is encouraged in most new apostolic churches.”* (C. Peter Wagner, Churchquake)

### **4) True worship is orderly (1 Cor 14)**

Today the focus is changing to wilder worship and chaos.

*“I remember once when my wife, Doris, and I were having lunch with her pastor, Ted Haggard, and his wife, Gayle. Ted mentioned a woman's name whom Gail did not seem to recognize. By way of identification, he said, you know who she is - the cartwheel lady! Of course! She was one who occasionally did cartwheels across the front of the church when the worship became particularly intense I did see a man do a literal backflip during worship in a new apostolic church in Canada.”* (C. Peter Wagner, Churchquake)

## **The Changes in Music Worship**

According to C. Peter Wagner (Churchquake), the eight major changes in worship which are being brought in through the movement are:

1. **From Classical to Contextual.** Music in the church changes to conform to contemporary secular culture. The emphasis is on style rather than content. The argument is “...*the best music is the music that holds the attention of those who listen to it.*” (1). the focus is on the consumer market – attract people by choosing music which is the same as world.
2. **From Performance to Participation.** Move from a choir or performer to audience participation.
3. **From Hymns to Songs.** Similar to #1, this is a move away from older music to newer music. This is called the “re-birth” of Christian music based upon Vineyard and Marantha songs and music.
4. **From Pipe Organ to percussion.** This is again to transition from hymns to the music of the world or which sounds like it.
5. **From Cerebral to Celebration.** Focus is away from the intellectual assent to a focus on emotion. Dancing, cartwheels, lying, standing, sitting etc. are all okay. Music replaces a

“liturgy”. (See references above on “Focus of Worship). Liturgy is equated with form / thought as opposed to freedom and emotion.

6. **From Awe of God to Intimacy with God.** Emotion is the focus rather than a focus on the majesty of God. We need to “*feel the presence*” of God. This brings God down to our level and focuses on feelings rather than on what the word of God tells us about God and His majestic nature.
7. **From Liturgy to Liberty.** Again, this is a move from form and order to freedom based upon emotion.
8. **From Meditation to Mission.** Mission in this context refers to marketing the church (ref: Robert Schuller), make the church a “*shopping center for Jesus*”<sup>(1)</sup>

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*Footnotes:*

*1) Note: References are from “Churchquake” by C. Peter Wagner, unless stated otherwise.*