

Worship: a Way of Life

True worship is about more than just singing; it requires  sacrifice and service, words and deeds

Which would you prefer: someone who tells you how special you are or someone who shows you?

If you're like me, the answer is *both*! I want the words *and* the actions, and I'm guessing the same can be said about you.

Well, God is no different from you and me. The worship God is after is a *both* kind of worship. He wants our words *and* our actions.

We see this in the two primary words that are used for worship in the New Testament. Jesus used one of them in His conversation with the Samaritan woman beside the well. This word we translate *worship* is all about an attitude of honor and reverence. It means literally "to bow before" or "to kiss the hand of the king."

The other worship word has a much less glamorous meaning; it means "to serve." It's the word Paul uses in Romans 12:1-2, a central New Testament passage on worship. He begins by begging us "in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God." This, Paul declares, is our "spiritual worship." Or literally, our spiritual act of "service."

Paul was saying, if you've seen mercy, if you've seen the cross, then offer all of who you are to God in response to all that He has done. Let's face it, that kind of full-blown serving is not usually the first thing we think of when we

think of worship. But in God's economy, worship = serving. Worship = life.

CHEW ON THIS:

Read Romans 12:1-2 again. Think about the word service. What kind of thoughts or impressions—negative or positive—does it bring to mind? What motivates you to want to offer yourself fully to God?

What We Can Do

What God has revealed to us about Himself is beyond our words of gratitude. What He has done on our behalf makes it impossible for us to ever repay Him. But what we *can* do in return—and must do—is give Him everything we have through a life of service to Him and to those around us.

That's what we mean when we say worship is a way of life.

For too long, people have been cheating God, somehow thinking that if they just keep telling Him He's great, He'll be content. Whether their words are genuine doesn't seem to matter. Whether their lives back up their words is no big deal.

After all, words come so easy. And saying (and singing) them makes us feel a little better about ourselves, even when our hearts don't back up the words coming from our lips.

But God isn't honored by words alone. Like any of us, He's moved by words that are authenticated by actions. When it comes to worship, it's the total package that matters—what you say, how you say it and whether you mean it. And our words mean most when they're amplified by the way we choose to live our lives when we are faced with various opportunities and

temptations.

Worship is our response, both personal and corporate, to God—for who He is and what He has done, expressed in and by the things we say and the way we live.

On Sunday morning you may be singing with all you've got, maybe evening falling on your knees to tell God He's your "all in all." But the whole time God may be thinking, *There seem to be a lot of other things in your life lately that you desire a whole lot more than Me.*

In that moment, we are no different from those of ages past about whom God said, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (Matt. 15:8, NIV)

God is no dummy. He knows what's going on in our hearts. And God knows how easy it is for us to say one thing and do another. That's why the true test of worship isn't so much what we say, but how we live.

Your Turn

Read Amos 5:21-24. How does God describe our singing when we don't follow it up with action? List some practical ways you can live out worship.

How Can We Offer Less?

God has given us "life and breath and all things," as Paul says in Acts 17:25 (NASB). The only fitting response to all He has done is to give back to Him all that we are. Anything less is not true worship. Anything less only proves that we haven't really seen Him at all.

Take, for instance, His mercy and grace. We deserved death but received life. God's grace and mercy are really just that

simple.

So how do we respond to the cross of Christ? With a Sunday visit to church? By dropping two bucks in the offering plate? Singing a few verses of a chorus we love? By lifting our hands? Wearing a cross? Owning a Bible? Showing up for small group?

No way! The only right response to such mercy and grace is our *everything*. All our time, all our decisions and everything we say and are.

I'm the Offering

Somewhere in the modern culture we've become confused thinking that *worship* and *songs* are one and the same. In other words we think singing songs = worship and worship = singing songs.

The church scene is flooded with new worship songs. That's not a bad thing in and of itself, but it's deadly when we make a subtle mental shift and start believing that by singing songs, we're worshipping in truth.

Don't get me wrong. I'm all for worship songs—both old and new. But a song alone is not enough. The cross demands more.

Grace requires that we bring ourselves, laying our lives before this merciful God. This wholehearted, full-on, life-encompassing response to God's amazing grace is the "reasonable" thing to do. Giving God everything is our only reasonable response.

Soul-Searching:

Have you equated worship with singing songs? What other beliefs do you have about worship? Write these down and

prayerfully ask God to reveal any that aren't truthful.

Now, check out Paul's challenging words: "So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him" (Rom. 12:1, *The Message*).

That's it! Worshipping God is what we do as we respond to His mercy in our "walking-around life."

*It's not the words I sing, but me I bring I'm the offering
laid at Your feet, My steps the melody, oh so sweet, all of me
in praise of Thee.*

Worship is life!

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