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1. What is worship
2. Why should we worship
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## WHAT IS WORSHIP?

*It is the act of ascribing ultimate value to something in a way that energises and engages every aspect of your being – (Tim Keller)*

Worship is basically getting excited and it energizes you. True worship engages every aspect of your personality, whether it is your brain, your mind, your psychology and your emotion. That's true worship. False worship is coming to church on Sunday and wake up in the morning and feel agitated on going to the church. That is not worship. Here Keller's description of worship is very interesting. It ascribes ultimate value to God. That means you look at God like somebody of greatest value, so much so that you are enjoying yourself, energizing every aspect of your being.

Worship is a call to our emotions.

**Psalms 95:1-5 (ESV) Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! 2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!**

Here they are very joyful. It is a call to our emotions. There is music, emotion and then basically there is interpretation of spiritual realities. Nothing wrong with emotion but the problem is, the first thing we run in the problem is the issue of interpretation. We have heard a lot of people saying, "*come and enjoy the evening...the Group will lead us right into the throne room of God...*"

This is not actually correct because you actually have your emotion then you interpret in spiritual reality because the music and emotions equals, I am in the presence of God. That means being in the presence of God is determined by the music and the emotions. So, you go to Anglican church and they all play pipe organ, you wear your suit and tie and you feel very hot, and you feel that God is not here. You go to a church where everybody is jumping up and down and some people

rolling on the floor, some laughing, some crying and you say God is here. This is also wrong.

The presence of God is faith plus the blood of Christ.

Hebrews 10:19-22 (ESV) Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, **20** by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, **21** and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **22** let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water

What Hebrew's writer is saying that entering the presence of God is by faith. It is not by music. So, when we have a worship session in the morning here, the music doesn't make you closer to God. The music doesn't invite God to come in, as if God is attracted to music. That's not what it is about. The presence of God is basically an issue by faith. This is written by a worship leader.

*Our responsibility as worship leaders is to facilitate a **corporate worship experience** Our congregations look to us to show them how to connect with God during our times of singing together. They are literally following our lead. I've learned that the majority of people in the congregation will express about half the energy that those on the platform are showing. So how do you help your team lead them better? **Create authentic passion and engagement in worship on stage.** (Brian Taylor)*

He is trying to basically perform. If you perform the music well with that kind of passion, then the people will experience God and that's very-very dangerous. You don't experience God by your music. So, the problem is, music, your passion and you interpret the spiritual realities I am excited about God basically because of the music. If that's the case, then the problem is when you go home after having a fantastic worship in church then you go home and you are alone in your hotel room. Is God there? Yes, but you don't feel Him at all because you are so used to the fact that music transmits the presence of God. The issue is that worship is by faith and your emotions are expression of that faith, not the product of that music.

True worship is not how excited your music is or how emotional your people are.

### Worship is a Call to our Mind:

Psalms 95:1-5 (ESV) Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! 2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! 3 For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

There is a reason. So, when you actually worship God, it is not just emotion, it is a call to your mind. There must be a reason of getting excited.

### Worship is a Call to Thinking:

Psalms 95:7-11 (ESV) **Today, if you hear his voice,** 8 do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, 9 when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. 10 For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways." 11 Therefore I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest."

Basically, he is calling you to think, to listen, to understand. Worship is not just emotion, it involves your mind, thinking, listening and understanding. So therefore, you have got the most wanting that undergirds worship is the truth about God. Once you have got the truth about God you interpret the reality that I am in awe of God and then only you feel excited, there is emotion and then you have music. So, the passion of God is determined by the truth about God. The truth about God generates passion about God. It is not the other way around.

So, when we are singing a psalm or song, we are very-very particular that you sing a song that expresses truth about God. So, the most important aspect of worship is the truth.

### Worship is a Call to our Will:

Psalms 95:6-7 (ESV) **Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel** before the Lord, our Maker! 7 For he is **our God**, and we are the **people of his pasture**, and the **sheep of his hand**.

There are reasons and here we are talking about, let us worship, let us bow down and let us kneel. Kneeling in this psalm is about obedience, it is not some sort of a ritual. When you bow down to His authority in your life, it is so easy to say I kneel, but it is so hard to live that out in your life. So, when you say, I kneel to you, I worship you, I bow down, I kneel before you, it is because we belong to you. We have to reflect God. So, we worship God with emotion, our minds, the truth and we worship God with our will.

True worship has all the three elements; emotion, thinking and will. John Piper writes,

*"Truth without emotion produces dead orthodoxy and a church full of artificial admirers... On the other hand, emotion without truth produces empty frenzy and cultivates shallow people who refuse the discipline of rigorous thought. But true worship comes from people who are deeply emotional and who love deep and*

*sound doctrine. Strong affections for God rooted in truth are the bone and marrow of Biblical worship."*

So therefore, all of us if you look at our worship, fall short and you really admit it. We need to refocus on our lives so that when we are actually worshipping, we are focusing on the truth with the psalms will express to be proper worshippers of God. So, if you love the facts in an orthodox church, you can fight over the doctrine or in a more charismatic church you love the emotion and music and you cannot worship in orthodox music. So, in orthodox church you worship the fact that I am right and in charismatic church you worship the fact that I feel right. Either side is wrong. You must have both. If you are only excited about the music then there is something wrong with you, because you have been wrongly taught. It is the truth that should excite you.

## WHY DO WE WORSHIP?

**3 For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. 4 In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. 5 The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.**

It is the God of the entire universe. So, there is a reason behind worshipping God, it is because of who he is. How do we know? It is either revelation or intuition. It is very important how we worship. We worship because of revelation. We worship because of the Word of God. We live under the authority of the Word of God or under intuition. So therefore, if you actually worship with revelation, it is a God that often disagrees with you, a God that challenges you, a God that awes you, a God that forces you to sacrifice. If your version of a God is a God that you can handle, you can bargain with, you can bribe, who needs your worship it is all about you then I think you are worshipping an idol. You are worshipping an image of yourself. True worship is very uncomfortable, because God is going to invade your space and he is going to say things to you which you might not necessarily agree and all too often in our world today we are moving towards a worship of a kind of God that we like. So therefore, we go shopping from church to church. The church that has the God that I like I stay there. If that church doesn't demand much of you, doesn't ask you to sacrifice, doesn't push you beyond the envelope which you can go. A true God is uncomfortable, He will cut your heart. So therefore, that's the God of revelation. True worship transforms you.

A remember a patient of mine who had multiple stones in his kidneys and ureter. The expense on them was quite high and he was very upset about that. One day he found in his drawer his insurance policy. He was very excited about that. This is worship. He got so excited about it. That's the will.

*Worship is the act of ascribing ultimate value to something in a way that energises and engages every aspect of your being* (Tim Keller)

## Why do you worship?

Because it is something which ultimately value, perfection, glory, beauty. Why do people worship the Sun in those days? Because it is the most beautiful, most perfect thing which they see in the sky. Then later on there was the moon as well, they use to worship the moon, but with the advent of technology people went on the moon and they found out that there is no one there. So, there is hardly anyone who worship the moon nowadays, because it is not that valuable as it were.

We worship other human beings. When Mariah Carey came to Malaysia, there was a big storm, everybody come and listen to her. Two sisters from Perth spent RM 10,000 to attend the concert. They did it because they see great value in it.

There was a Mirror of Erised in Harry Potter movies. It was a magical mirror. Whenever you look into the mirror, you will see something that is your heart's greatest desire. So when Harry Potter look inside this mirror, he saw his parents, because his greatest desire was to see his parents as his parents were murdered by Voldemort. Then Harry Potter took the mirror and he gave it to his friend Ron and Ron saw a picture of himself riding the broomstick and they play a game called Quidditch and his heart's desire was to be the captain of the Quidditch team. So, when you look into the mirror, the mirror reflects his greatest desire. So this is a special mirror, when you look inside it reflects your greatest desire. In a sense worship is a true reflection of your greatest desire. In fact, the word 'Erised' is desire spelt backwards.

If you look at the psychology of human beings, we look at Alfred Adler's work.

- If you desire approval then you need to be validated, adored or praised.
- If you are a kind of person who desires control then you need to be always in control, you fear loss of control.
- If you need power, you need status and influence in order to get your way.
- If you need comfort you run away from difficulties or challenges and strives to build a fortress of safety and pleasure protecting yourself at all cost.

So we are all driven by these desires. There is nothing wrong with these desires, it only become a problem in how we go about satisfying these desires. David Foster Wallace was basically one of the foremost authors in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He is a non-Christian. He tried everything else drugs, women and everything. He died at a very young age. He ultimately killed himself. He writes,

*There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship—be it JC or Allah, be it YHWH or the Wiccan Mother Goddess, or the Four Noble Truths, or some inviolable set of ethical principles— ..is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you*

*worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough. It's the truth.*

Jim Hayes won 19 million dollars in 1997. In 2007 he became bankrupt and recently robbed a bank. In fact, he robbed 11 banks. He got caught and then basically put to jail. Somehow whenever you want more, the more you get you want more, it doesn't actually satisfy. It is the problem with our desires.

*Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you.*

So, all of us are creatures, we are born with desires. C.S. Lewis says, ducklings are born with a desire to swim so there is such a thing as water. Baby is born with a desire for food, so there is such a thing as food. Man are born with a desire for sex, so there is such a thing as marriage and sex. There is a desire that God creates. However, if I find myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy completely, the most probable explanation C.S. Lewis says, I was made for another world.

*If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. CS LEWIS*

We are created for something that you actually cannot satisfy, and Paul says this

**Acts 17:26-27 (ESV) And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him.**

We are made for God, so whatever desires that we actually have cannot be satisfied until they are satisfied by God. So therefore, if you look at all our desires for comfort, for approval, for control, for glory, they are actually signpost to God.

*Earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing*

We all want glory and beauty, it is hardwired in our DNA. We all know that it is a diminishing quality and the more you work out in the gym, the more painful it gets, it is like stopping ice-cream from melting. You can never stop it, but if you reinterpret this desire for glory, it is because God wants to make us beautiful. There is a desire that can be fulfilled one day, and we are going to be with him in glory. All these little things are not wrong, they point to a particular direction. If they point only to the world then we are going to die a death of 1000 cuts.

Worship is discovering that particular beauty. So, worship is actually a transfer. Instead of worshipping created things, you worship the creator. So therefore, when you look into your Mirror of Desire today, my challenge to you what do you see. You will see your heart's desire and until that mirror is filled with the picture of Jesus Christ then we are falling short. It is Jesus Christ who makes you excited about worship.

## HOW CAN WE WORSHIP?

We worship in community

**Psalms 95:1-5 (ESV)** Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! 2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

Everything is plural. The only way you can experience true worship as it were is in community, because the psalms always talk about us. C.S. Lewis also brings out this question about why we worship in community. Imagine three friends; Ron, Steven and David. Whenever Steven comes in contact with David then David becomes silly. He cracks jokes and has reckless behavior. Whenever Ron comes in contact with David, he becomes serious, he becomes thoughtful, he become sympathetic. **Which is the true David?**

Your wife will bring up certain things in you, other people will bring certain things in you but if you take away Steven then you take away that aspect in David's life, the sinner's, the spontaneity. So, when you actually come together as a Christian church, we are each impacted by each other and we show a facet of our lives. It is like God. God is so huge that all of God cannot be reflected in one person. It can only be reflected in many-many-many people.

**Ephesians 3:14** For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul is saying that the only way you could experience the whole of God, the fullness of God is to experience the whole length, height and breadth of God's love. How are you going to experience all that? With all the saints. You can't experience it through one person. It is like God is so great, He could take 5 billion people and all their collective experiences to see a little bit of the glory of God and here you are at home, you want to worship God alone. So therefore, you will miss out on experiencing the

entire dimension of the limitless glory of our powerful God. So, God cannot be contained. So therefore, when we worship as a church, we are then able to experience the fullness of God, the height, the length and the breadth in all the saints. That's why worship is very important in a community. We don't do it one by one as it were.

We worship through His Spirit

Psalms 95:1-2 (ESV) Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! 2 Let **us come into his presence** with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

His presence is associated with his Spirit

Isaiah 64:1 (ESV) Oh that you would rend the heavens **and come down**, that the mountains might quake at **your presence**—

Psalms 51:11 (ESV) Cast me not away from **your presence**, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

So therefore the Holy Spirit conveys the worship of God.

We worship with the gospel sabbath rest

Psalms 95:7-11 (ESV) Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, 9 when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. 10 For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways."

This refers to an episode in Exodus 17:7 onwards. It was the time when Israel left Egypt and they were going through to the Promised Land. They were in Sinai Desert, they were thirsty, they had nothing to eat or drink and they started to curse God. They said, God is useless, he brought us out of the desert to die here of thirst. They thought that it was better to be a slave in Egypt then to have a life like that, dying of thirst. By some miracle God brought water out, but God said this generation who saw my miracles they will not enter my rest.

11 Therefore I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest."

This rest is a metaphorical rest. One day they will actually go to the Promised Land. When they go to the Promised Land in Canaan they will then rest from the fighting from enemies. They will dwell in land of milk and honey, but that rest in the promised land is metaphorical. It is only a foretaste of the true rest that could



actually come to the people of God. Because in the end Joshua didn't achieve full rest.

Hebrews 4:4-8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. 9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, 10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

Tim Keller explains it like this

*If you don't understand gospel rest and then we will turn worship will be another work. If I worship well then, I will be accepted. If I pray or fast then I will be accepted and God will bless me. Instead of being transformed. Then it will be one more burden*

When God made the world, it was like a renovation project. When you renovate the house, life is terrible but the best time is when you are just finished and you invite your friends over and you explore the beauty of the wonderful place. You switch on the Air Con, you switch on the lights and the music and you love it. You are not working anymore, you are enjoying it. When God created the earth on the Seventh Day, He rested. It is not like as God was tired of working. It is as God took the time to enjoy what He had created and He enjoyed that with Adam and Eve.

Then sin came into the world and when sin came into the world, the people could not rest anymore. They are working and trying to create their own work's righteousness and then when God save the people from Egypt he gave them a promise of rest and it was a promise of rest in the Promised Land but that is only temporal and later on they were to realize that this temporal rest in the Canaan as the Promised Land is only the foretaste of the real rest which will be with God in the New Heavens and the New Earth. When Keller talks about this rest, he says this rest is a total rest because we can come into the presence of God and you don't have to work to worship God.

When Jesus Christ comes you have complete rest, because you don't have to try anymore. You don't have to bring your works up, God is totally pleased with you, you don't have to do another thing so that you will be accepted by God. That is what we call the gospel rest and when you actually worship God, all you are doing is just expressing the gratitude that comes from being totally accepted by God rather than waking up this morning and feeling tired to worship God. It is as if we have to do something in order to please Him. We all use to think that. That is called worship by works.

The trick is resting in all that God has given you. Resting in that truth and it is very tricky thing. It is very hard to rest. Then worshipping God out of pure joy, pure reciprocation of that love that he has given us. So that's worship with your mind, with your emotions and with gospel rest. So the next time you are worshipping, you need to remember, when you are worshipping you are there and you don't have to

come into the presence of God based on how clever you are, how Godly you are, whether you told a lie the other day, but you rest in the beauty and the love of Jesus Christ who died for you and when God looks at you he sees Jesus Christ and that my brothers and sisters should blow your mind and that will let the joy explode. Because no matter what you have done God accepts you and the joy is natural from that.