

Worship Foundations, Part 1, GOD's WORTH

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As Craig mentioned last Sunday, today our pastor is going to begin a new series of messages called "Fresh Start." And in conjunction with that, I want our corporate worship to experience a "fresh start" – a "new beginning," almost a "reboot" if you will.

I've been leading worship here for over 10 years now, and I have this tendency to assume that everybody has heard and remembered every worship truth we've talked about in those 10 years.

But, obviously, that's not remotely true.

We've got a ton of folks who've become a part of this church in the last few years, even in the last few months!

Plus, even if you were here every Sunday for the past 10 years, you don't remember everything we've talked about! Neither do I!

(Sometimes I look back over notes from talks I gave several years ago, and I don't ever remember saying those things!)

And honestly, we *need* to loop back and remind ourselves of some foundational truths from time to time. Because these are truths that never change.

We'll keep coming back to them again & again - throughout this life, and forever in Heaven.

So, this morning, I want us to start a worship series that we'll call: "**Worship Foundations.**"

This may last a just few weeks, it may last longer – I honestly don't know yet.

We'll see where God leads us.

But what I want us to do is to search the scriptures for the *core* of Biblical worship – to strip away our traditions and opinions and pre-conceptions and find an eternal, unshakable, Biblical foundation upon which to build our worship.

It's easy for us to get caught up in the *externals* of worship, and lose sight of what's at the *heart* of worship.

So... "Worship Foundations."

Let's begin at the beginning – what is "worship?"

To answer that question, we don't go first to the dictionary, or to the internet.

No, we go first to the Word of God.

It's the only source that we can be certain is absolutely true and trustworthy.

To start with, let's look at the Biblical words for worship in the original languages:

In the Old Testament, there are three primary Hebrew words for worship:

שָׁחַח *shachah* to bow down sha· khah (by far the most common, over 200 times)

עָבַד *abad* to work, serve : / ah· bad (common word, only translated as "worship" a dozen times or so, depending upon your Bible translation)

סָגַד *segid* to do homage, to fall prostrate, face on the ground seg· eed (13 times)

Those are the main *Hebrew* words that get translated in English as "worship."

In the New Testament, there are two primary *Greek* words for worship:

προσκυνέω proskuneō formed from 2 words: “to kiss” and “towards”

It can mean to kiss the hand, in token of reverence. Or, to fall upon the knees and touch the forehead to the ground as an expression of profound reverence.

It’s the most common NT word for worship – it occurs over 70 times.

λατρεία latreia divine service lat·ri·ah (22 times)

this word refers to service in the temple, the worship of GOD according to the requirements of the Levitical law.

Now, something to notice... *every one* of these words are very “active” words.

Bowing, working, kneeling, kissing, serving. None of these are passive at all.

They describe physical responses to GOD, actions that communicate,

“You are very great, and I am very small and humble before You,
and I want to *honor* Your greatness and *express* that honor towards You.”

All of these are *responses* to GOD.

So “worship” – whatever else it may be – involves our *response* to GOD.

Worship is our responding to GOD.

(that’s a pretty good, broad, Biblical description of worship)

OK – one more quick word study.

Our English word “Worship.” The roots of this word are in Old English, hundreds of years ago, in the word “worth-ship.”

If you remember reading Beowulf in school, you’ll remember coming across some weird “Old English” words that you had to kinda figure out what they meant.

Worth-ship. Possessing the condition or quality of “worth.”

“Worth-ship.” You can easily see how that would morph into the word “worship.”

And that makes sense. Worship is about “worth.”

(Worship and worth are closely related; worship and worth go hand in hand.)

So Christian worship – *our* worship – is responding to God’s worth.

(particularly as He has revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ)

Worship is a declaration of worth.

Worship is our response to what we find to be ultimately “worthy.”

“WORTHY.” “Worthy” is one of those words we can sing in a song (over & over), but not really ever think about what it means. Worthy just means having worth.

If something’s rocky, it has rocks.

And if it’s worth-y, then it has worth.

And we *respond* to worth.

In fact, you can generally tell what something is “worth” to somebody by how they respond to it, can’t you?

If you loan your pencil to me, & I break it or lose it, you probably won’t really care or respond at all.

But if you loan your car to me, and I lose it or break it, will you respond? *Absolutely!*

Because your car is “worth” much more to you than your pencil.

You can tell what something is worth to someone by how they respond to it.

So let me ask you an important question... What is GOD worth? <pause>
What is GOD worth... *to you*?

These are two *different* questions.
One is about God's *intrinsic* worth, His *true* worth.
The other is about *your assessment* of His worth.

Let's start with the first question – “What is GOD worth?” The Bible says:

Psalm 145:3

Great is the LORD! He is most **worthy** of praise!
So, He is “worth” being praised! In fact:
His greatness is unsearchable!

And, if His greatness is unsearchable, then His worth is unsearchable!
It's immeasurable! Unlimited!

Revelation 4:11

Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, *because* You have created all things, and because of Your will they exist.

Not only does God own everything that exists in the universe, He created it all Himself! From nothing!
It's impossible to *imagine* any greater worth than the worth of GOD!
He *alone* is worthy to be worshipped, worthy to be praised, worthy to receive glory and honor and power.

Now ask yourself:

Does my worship seem like an appropriate response to such great worth?

Which takes us back to that 2nd question – “What is GOD worth *to you*?”

Different people assign differing values or “worth” to things.
Say you're driving home from work, and you need milk. Gas station, or Kroger?
\$2 more at the gas station, but saves time. Is the convenience “worth” it?
You're going to buy a car. New car or used car. Is the new car “worth” it?
I might pay \$200 for front row ticket to see James Taylor in concert.
You might not pay 2 cents.

Those are simply differences of *opinion*. No right or wrong; true or false.
But, sometimes the unequal (disparate, differing) values we place on things are based on differences, not of *opinion*, but of *knowledge*. Sometimes we lack information.
Sometimes our assessments of “worth” are simply wrong.

Here are 3 items of varying “worth.”

There's a stack of 100 hundred dollar bills – worth \$10,000. Very straightforward.
There's a plaster cast of Abraham Lincoln's face, it literally was applied to his face back in the 1800's and used to create a bronze bust. (it's the real deal)
And, there's a letter handwritten by Abraham Lincoln in 1841. (it's genuine)

If you could have just one of those items given to you, which would you choose?
How many would choose the plaster mask? The letter? The cash?

I'd tend towards the cash. Because I'm sure of that worth, unsure of the others.
You really just don't know the worth of those other two items, do you?
If you took the cash, you'd be wrong.
The mask is worth about \$2000, much less than the cash.
But the letter is worth \$75,000!

At least, that's what they say. And I *guess* I believe it, but you know, even *with* that information, I think I'd *still* be tempted to take the cash.
I'm certain of it's worth. I have doubts about that letter.
It just doesn't "feel" as valuable as that stack of \$100 bills.

Worth – there's what we *know* about an item's worth, there's what we're *told* about it's worth, and there's how we *feel* about it's worth, it's value to *us*.

So... what is *JESUS* worth to you?

I ask it that way because Jesus is the exact expression of the nature of GOD Himself, but He's so *personal*, so *immediate*.

What is JESUS "worth" to you?
And can anyone *tell* that, by how you *respond* to Him?

Remember, you can tell what something's worth to someone by how they respond to it.
If somebody had "unlimited access" to watch you respond – in this room, outside of this room, in all of life – what would they conclude that JESUS is "worth" to you?

"Well, Phillip, I'm not really a 'worshipper' type person."

YES YOU ARE! EVERYONE is a worshipper!
Because *everyone* has *something* that their life declares to be of greatest worth.
(your job, your house, your child, your appearance, your reputation... something)

If you think about it like that, you'll realize that we lavish our worship on so many things that are *not* "worthy," and yet often withhold it from CHRIST,
Who alone *IS* worthy!

As worshippers, could we learn from the Psalmist to say:

Psalm 101:3

I will set no **worthless** thing before my eyes;
...It will not fasten its grip on me.

Could we learn to pray, "Lord JESUS..."

Psalm 119:37

Turn my eyes away from **worthless** things; give me life in Your ways.

CHRIST *alone* - unlike anything or anyone else - is "worthy" to be worshipped.

The Bible says:

Revelation 5:12

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive **power** and **wealth** and **wisdom** and **strength** and **honor** and **glory** and **blessing**!

Notice that there are SEVEN words for what Jesus is worthy to receive.

Seven is the Biblical number for completeness and perfection.

These 7 words combine to form one complete aggregate, one perfect *expression* of the incredible, infinite, complete “worthiness” that belongs to the Lamb.

We sing a song called “the Heart of Worship” that says:

*King of **endless worth**, no one could express how much You deserve...*

And my response to this? I’m not much, I’m weak & poor & humble, but...

Though I’m weak and poor, all I have is Yours, every single breath.

I’m coming back to the heart of worship,

*and **it’s all about You, Jesus.***

When we truly begin to see and recognize and delight in the infinite, endless worth of GOD, and our worship becomes our response to His great worth,

it solves *so* many problems, removes so many obstacles to genuine worship.

Because worship is NOT about what kind of day I’m having, or if I like that song, or what somebody else did or said... it’s not about my circumstances...

None of that has *anything* to do with the **worth** of Jesus Christ, does it?

It has *no impact* on His endless worth!

And, if my worship is simply my response to His infinite greatness, all that other stuff is just *stuff*...

everything else is secondary!... to the *endless worth* of our GOD.

PRAYER:

Father, Your greatness is unsearchable.

Jesus, You are WORTHY of all praise, deserving of *endless* praise!

Captivate our hearts with a vision of Your greatness.

And teach us to respond to Your great worth with worship.

Genuine worship.

The worship that You deserve.

We ask you to put a solid, Biblical foundation for worship under our feet.

And shape us into courageous, surrendered worshippers of You.