

Worship/Life

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Hi. I'm Phillip Hardy, the lead worshipper at Gladeville Baptist Church. I've been a member of this body of believers since 1995 and have been leading worship here since 1999.



I've been involved with "church music" since I was a teenager. Prior to coming to Gladeville, I spent about 20 years playing piano in church, providing musical accompaniment for hymns, choir specials, Easter cantatas, singing Christmas trees, the whole thing.

If you had asked me to define worship during those 20 years, I don't know what I would have said to you. But my operating definition of worship was: "The songs before the preaching, the music used to prepare for the message, the 'opening act' for the sermon." Practically speaking, maybe you are operating under a definition something like that.

When I first visited Gladeville in 1995, I encountered something different, something that I had been looking for but couldn't name; something that required a new definition of worship.

I could see that people were engaged with God. It was more than songs, more than emotion. It was a group of people encountering God, responding to God. The people weren't just looking into a hymn book, they were looking into God's face. They were seeking Him and finding Him. God was present.

I realized I had to re-define and re-discover for myself what worship really was.

Where do we go to do that - do discover what worship really is? I'd suggest starting with the Bible.

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

שָׁחָה	shachah	to bow down
עָבַד	abad	to work, serve
גָּדַף	segid	to do homage, to prostrate oneself

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

προσκυνέω	proskuneō...
	to kiss the hand, in token of reverence; to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence

λατρεία	latreia...
	divine service; the service and worship of God according to the requirements of the Levitical law.

All of these are very “active” words. They involve different body postures and various physical expressions - expressions that communicate, “You are very great and I am very small. I acknowledge this and I will express this towards you with my actions, with my body, with my emotions, with my life.”

As for our English word “worship,” the dictionary says its roots are in Old English, at least 900 years ago, in the word “worth-ship.” That makes sense - worship is about worth.

“Worthy” – now there’s another word that deserves some thought. Christians sing a lot about Jesus being “worthy,” but I find that it’s one of those words that can roll off my tongue with nearly no meaning at all.

Think of it as “worth-y;” you know, just like rock-y or fuzz-y...

If something’s rocky, it’s got rocks

If something’s fuzzy, it’s got fuzz

And if something’s worthy, then it has worth.

That’s important to understand, because the more value you place on Jesus, the more value you’ll place on worship. Worship is all about understanding the “worth” of the object you are worshipping. Jesus is ultimately worthy, He is the epitome of “worthiness.”

For a personal definition of worship (maybe it’s more of a description), I like saying that “worship is responding to God.”

On the one hand, that comes up a bit short. A response to God could be to stick my tongue out at Him, to intentionally disobey Him, or to slander Him.

On the other hand, “responding to God” is very inclusive. It includes singing to Him, yes, but also reading His word, obeying His commands, praying to Him, sharing His love & comfort, telling His story, enjoying His creation. My life is a response to God. That helps me to see all of life as worship.

1 Corinthians 10:31:

“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

Under this definition, then, worship is not an event to attend, but a perpetual attitude.

Romans 12:1:

“Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service of worship.”

Notice that the Bible calls us “living” sacrifices. Not a “dead and over with” sacrifice, not a one-time sacrifice, but a living, ongoing, day-by-day, moment-by-moment sacrifice; a life continually surrendered to God; ongoing submission to Him.

We are to surrender our lives to God in such a way that every moment of every day is an act of worship.

Jesus said it like this:

John 4:21, 23:

"A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. A time is coming and now is when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks."

Jesus is teaching a LOT about worship here.

One of the things Jesus is saying is that worship is not defined by time or place. Worship is not something that only happens in special places and at certain times.

Worship is not something you "attend," it's something you DO!

Is this biblical? Sure it is! Check out the Psalms – they are filled with verbs:

Shout to God. Sing a new song. Dance before Him. Clap your hands. Bow down. Lift up your heads. Tell of His might. Stand in awe. Leap for joy. Cast down your idols. Run to Him. Lift your hands. Clash the cymbals. Blast the trumpets. Tell the nations.

These are all actions. Verbs. Responses. Worship is responding to God.

Also, Jesus teaches that there is a "kind of worshipper" that the Father seeks. Singing Christian things in a Christian setting is not necessarily pleasing to God.

In Matthew chapter 15, Jesus says this:

"This people honors Me with their lips,
But their hearts are far away from Me.
In vain do they worship Me,
Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men."

So, what is the alternative to false worship, to giving "lip service" to God? It's worshipping God "in spirit and in truth" - with our hearts and our heads; with our emotions and our intellect.

It's strong affections for God rooted in a true knowledge of God.

It's loving the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

It's "whole-person" kind of worship.

It's responding to God with all of your life.

That's WORSHIP!