

Lesson Plan & Study Guide



Spiritual Disciplines: Worship

Walking with Jesus

iFOLLOW

The iFollow Discipleship Series

Version 1.0 - 11/17/10



About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

Credits

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www.ifollowdiscipleship.org

The Spiritual Discipline of Worship

This presentation is designed for people who have decided to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Learning Objectives

1. Define what worship is
2. Review the worship activities portrayed in the Bible
3. Understand the relationship between reverence and worship
4. See the differences and similarities between public and private worship
5. Learn the effects of true worship on the self, on others and on God

Content Outline

1. Differing perspectives and cultural assumptions about worship
2. How God defines worship.
3. Greek and Hebrew terms and what they mean
4. Various worship activities in the Bible
5. A study of praise in the Bible
6. The rules: Love and worship only God, worship in spirit and truth
7. A continuum of worship, from private and silent to large groups in joyful jubilee
8. Reasons to praise and worship
9. Some effects of worship and praise on ourselves, others, and God

Background Material for the Presenter

Shelly was a young mother new to Adventism but experienced in Christianity. She had made friends with Ann, a lifelong Adventist perhaps fifteen years older, so she was comfortable asking Ann some uncomfortable questions.

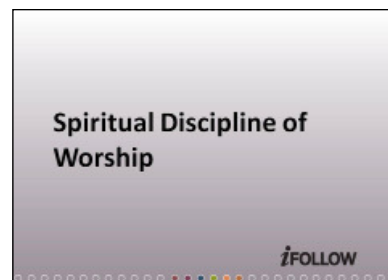
“I was so excited to find this church! Joe and I had studied, and knew the seventh day was God’s Sabbath, but we were just trying to keep it at home. When we went looking for a church that kept the seventh

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day, we didn't mind driving an hour to get to this one. We love the people, and the sermons are so deep! We're learning a lot. But there's one thing we just don't understand. Why don't they worship?"

Ann was startled. "Why don't we worship? We do worship! We worship God at home every day, and then we come to church for corporate worship, singing and praying together. . ."

Shelly waved her hands. "I know, I know, all of life is an act of worship to a real Christian, but I mean, why don't they **worship**?" It took some questioning and listening before Ann discovered that Shelly had heard the phrase "worship and praise songs" for so many years that she literally defined "worship" as singing a certain kind of song, standing, raising or waving hands, perhaps closing the eyes sometimes, or even crying. She accepted that there were many forms of worship, and God accepted them all, but this, and this only, was **real** worship. She was so excited about God and His truths herself that she simply couldn't grasp why anyone who felt as strongly as she did could sit or stand quietly, singing "old hymns."

"Don't get me wrong. I love some of those old hymns, too! But they're **about** God, not **to** Him. They're not really worship or praise." Ann did her best to broaden Shelly's horizons, to explain that the church members were singing to God, that many of the hymns are, in fact, addressed to Him and that to some people those hymns were just as deeply-felt an experience, but not all people liked to show their emotions so openly in public. That worship styles differ, but they're all worship. She wasn't sure Shelly really believed her.

Mary, an older woman in the church, came to Ann, too. "Why can't that young new family get a worshipful attitude? I try to be patient, telling myself that God is working with them, and when they are more experienced in their spiritual walk, they'll learn. But they're so emotional! We are told to stay away from emotional displays! Can't you talk to them?"

Ann talked and listened to all sides. She encouraged the pastor as best she could when he wanted to start a "praise team" and put Shelly in charge of it. Ann liked the singing, but wasn't particularly fond of standing so long. But she did it.

This story doesn't have a happy ending. After Ann moved away, she learned that the church drove out the new pastor who had doubled the attendance, got rid of the praise team, and went back to worshipping God in the only way they believed was reverent. The new people left. The members were saddened, but not surprised. They had suspected all along that the new conversions were only skin-deep. Every Sabbath they pray that God will fill the pews of their sanctuary.

Who decides what worship is? Is it right to make the older members of a congrega-

tion uncomfortable in an effort to encourage and keep the younger? Is it right to make the younger members uncomfortable in an effort to please the older? Do we need entire congregations with different styles of worship so that all may find a style they like and worship with others who feel the same? Some congregations are large enough to have two services with different styles, and that works well in some places.

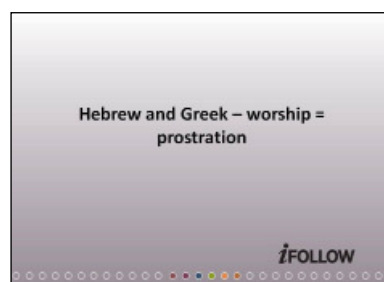
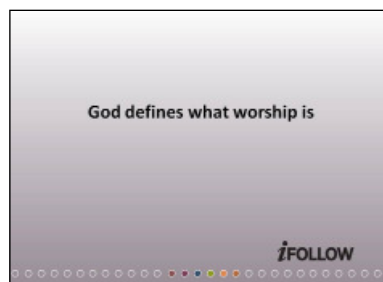
What is Worship?

If worship belongs to God, then it's up to God to define it. If we are really living our lives to please Him and not ourselves, we will not impose our own ideas on Him, but will prayerfully study what **He** has to say about every aspect of our lives, and learn to follow that. What does the Bible say about worship?

In Old Testament Hebrew, the word translated “worship” is **shachah**, which, according to *Strong's Concordance*, means to “bow (self) down, crouch, fall down (flat), humbly beseech, do (make) obeisance, do reverence, make to stoop, worship.” If we take this literally, the only two seen regularly in our churches are to humbly beseech and to bow. Crouching, falling flat, stooping, or making obeisance (an old-fashioned kind of low bow made to royalty) are not only rare, but if they did happen many would look upon it with dismay and embarrassment.

In New Testament Greek there are several words for worship. There is one used for ceremonial worship of an idol, and one used for general devotion (for instance, speaking of Lydia, in Acts 16:14, or Justus, in 18:7, as “worshippers” of God). But by far the most common word used is **proskuneo**, which comes from **pros**, a prefix denoting nearness to or motion towards, and “a probable derivative of [kuon, dog] (meaning to **kiss**, like a dog **licking** his master's hand); to **fawn** or **crouch** to, (lit. or fig.) **prostrate** oneself in homage (**do reverence** to, **adore**): worship.” We are given the option of taking it figuratively instead of literally. Very few of us today probably fawn, crouch, or prostrate ourselves, at least in public.

Maybe we will learn more useful things by looking at the activities of praise and worship described in Scripture. In the Old Testament, the term worship is often used simply to say someone went to the temple and participated in a feast day. Several places speak of worshipping “toward” Jerusalem or the temple. Perhaps this means



literally prostrating themselves toward Jerusalem, as Muslims now do toward Mecca. When a specific action is associated with worship, as in Joshua 5:14, Psalm 95:6, Isa. 46:6, and in a number of verses in Dan. 3, the action is “bowing down.” Nebuchadnezzar would never have known the three Hebrews weren’t worshipping his idol if everyone hadn’t bowed to the ground, leaving them standing, exposed. It is exactly the same in the New Testament. Worship is used as a general term, but the only time a specific activity is described, it is bowing or falling down. See Matthew 4:9 (where the devil trying to get Christ to “fall down and worship” him), 1 Cor. 14:25, and Rev. 22:8. Does all this mean that when we do not prostrate ourselves in our churches, we are not truly worshipping God?

What about praise? What does the Bible have to say about praise? It is beyond the scope of this lesson to get anywhere near the full answer to that question. Praise is mentioned in the Bible over 400 times, and nearly 200 of those are in the Psalms, the songbook of Judaism and early Christianity. The kind of praise the Bible describes is nearly foreign to the Western mind. It is all about symbolism and imagery. There is nothing formal that can be studied or broken down into the formulae so dear to our “enlightened,” scientific minds. Biblical praise is simple, vague, and often redundant. Some Psalms, such as 136 (the antiphonal “For His love is everlasting”) almost seem like repetitive babbling and could be seen as going against Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 6:7 not to use “vain repetition.”

We need to look at the sanctuary service instituted by God. This was an entirely “audio-visual” service. When David was setting up for the new temple his son would build, he made arrangements for only three jobs. There were priests, for the sacrifice, lighting lamps and candles, and taking care of the showbread; Levites for taking care of the physical plant, and singers and musicians. Dozens of them.

There was no preaching or talking in these worship services, though there were times when the people were gathered and the Torah was read to them. The daily services, weekly Sabbaths, and feast days consisted of sacrifice, mourning, fasting, feasting, singing, and dancing.

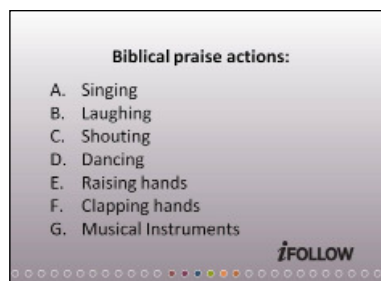
Dancing is mentioned twenty-seven times in the Bible, and there are only three stories about it that are negative. The first is the story of the idolatrous orgy the Israelites held at the base of the mountain while God gave the law to Moses. Note that this dance was still done in worship, but false worship. The second is in the prophecy



of Isa. 13:21, saying the land will be laid waste and “satyrs” (KJV) or “shaggy goats” (NASB) will dance there. The third is the dance of Salome for King Herod. In every other mention, dance is a positive thing, either of celebration, as when the prodigal son returned (Luke 15), or direct praise to God, as in Judges 21:21, or 2 Sam. 6:14, or Jer. 31:4. That last is an actual promise, in the words of God Himself.

Here are just a few of the actions given in the Bible as ways of praising God.

- Singing - Psalm 100:2
- Laughing - Psalm 126:2
- Shouting - Psalm 5:11, 35:27
- Dancing - Ps. 149:3
- Raising hands - 1 Tim. 2:8
- Clapping hands - Ps 47:1
- Playing musical instruments - all kinds of musical instruments! - Ps. 149 and 150



For a concise (and noisy) definition of praise in one Psalm, look at the last one; Psalm 150:1-6:

Praise the Lord!
Praise God in His sanctuary;
Praise Him in His mighty expanse.
Praise Him for His mighty deeds;
Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.
Praise Him with trumpet sound;
Praise Him with harp and lyre.
Praise Him with timbrel and dancing;
Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe.
Praise Him with loud cymbals;
Praise Him with resounding cymbals.
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord!

In fact, there is a song that sounds almost pagan (to modern ears) in Psalm 148 that calls on sun, moon, and stars, waters, fire and hail, clouds and wind, and more, to praise the Creator. This Psalm could perhaps help us build a bridge to our pagan friends. (**If** we are close enough to them to share this kind of thing, we could talk about how the earth praises the Lord and calls us to do the same, rather than calling us to praise and venerate nature or the earth itself.)

Worship and praise, in other words, were an art form. Or a collection of art forms. God clearly intended it to be a whole body experience. But are there any rules or cautions in the Bible? Yes. There’s one essential rule above all others. Love **God**, and Him

only shall you serve. In fact, it is probably possible to find an example in the Bible of nearly every one of the above actions used for a sinful purpose, for worshipping false gods or harming people. Just like meditation, which can be used to draw near to God (Joshua 1:8) or can be used by wizards to try to contact the dead (Isa. 8:19), our acts of worship, and for that matter nearly everything else we do, can be dedicated to God or not. And “whatever is not from faith is sin.” (Romans 14:23) This is a broad and alarming definition, when you think of it. It appears to mean that you can even do right things and if you are not doing them from an attitude of faith, they are wrong!

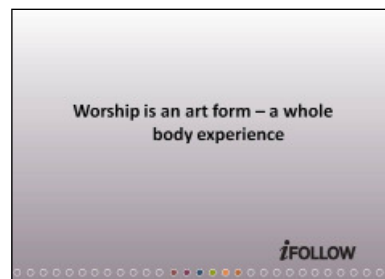
It is common for some people to tell stories in which someone says that the music young people are listening to is “just like devil music.” The intent of these stories is to prove that there are kinds of music which are intrinsically right or wrong. In clear contrast to this attitude, in fact the Bible nowhere condemns any of these methods of praise. Instead, it condemns false principles and theology. **Everything**, in fact, that is not “from faith.”

Praise and worship, the Bible teaches, are not an option. They are required from each serious servant of God. At the same time, the techniques are up to us. Why? Because the most basic fact of praise and worship is that they come from the heart. If they don't, they're no more true than a spouse or lover learning a speech or practicing an action he or she has been told is good and loving and romantic, but he or she really doesn't mean. It's a lie. There can't be anything worse than worship that is a lie. This is one thing about our Christian life that really is strongly attached to feeling and emotion. God created those, remember. They, like everything else, need to be dedicated to Him.

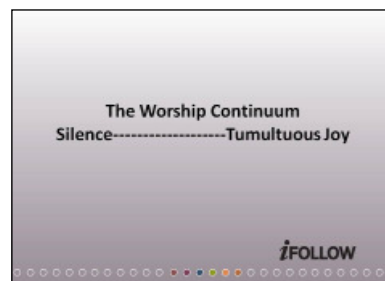
But what about reverence? Well, let's also check out the definition of reverence in the Bible. In Hebrew, believe it or not, it is the exact same term usually translated “worship.” Bow down, in other words. Then there is another word, and this one means to dread or fear. That is the one connected to the English word “awe.” It is a deep respect bordering on fear, a realization that this is the High King of the entire universe, who has enough power in His little finger to turn this world to ash. But doesn't. An important point to remember.

In Greek, the word translated “revere” or “reverence” means to respect or give regard to. This is closer to our usual definition of reverence in English. Yet somehow reverence has come to be connected in many minds with silence.

Doesn't the Bible say to be silent before God? Yes, in several places. Eccl. 3:7 says



there is a time to keep silence. But the only places that say people should keep silence before the Lord, such as Isa. 41:1 and Zech 2:13, are in the context of judgment and punishment. Personal prayer, meditation and pondering, etc., may all be silent, or at least quiet activities. Jesus says in Matt 6:6 to go to your own room and pray secretly to God.



A Continuum of Worship

There must, then, be a continuum of worship. There are many stories of individuals being silent with God. Elijah, on Mount Carmel, made a point of contrasting his quiet prayer with the frenzy of the priests of Baal. “Come near to me,” he said to the people (1 Kings 18:30). He calmly made his request of God, and it was granted. Later, after he had been fed and rested by the angel, he was treated to a display of thundering awe in the form of a mighty wind, an earthquake, and a fire, “but the Lord was not in” any of them. When he heard the “still, small voice,” or the “sound of gentle blowing,” he “wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave” 19:12. And God spoke to him. David speaks often of meditating alone on his bed at night. Jesus took great pains to find or make time to be alone with God, even foregoing sleep for the privilege.

Most of the time in the Bible, silence seems to refer to individuals alone with God, but in Acts 15:12 the “multitude” (KJV) of elders and apostles at the Jerusalem council were silent, listening to Paul and Barnabas relating the wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. It seems silence is a natural human reaction when new things are being learned, convictions are stirring, and the mind is processing. Silence is the respectful way of listening in many of our societies, although there are also many with a custom of nodding, murmuring, or exclaiming assent, and people from those societies feel anxious and worry that they are not being heard if others listen silently to them.

A little further up the continuum is the quiet conversation between friends: a staple of evangelism. Jesus sat on the rooftop with Nicodemus in the dark and talked to him of heavenly things. (John 3) Paul and Silas sang all night in the stocks, and then told the jailer the story of salvation. (Acts 16:22-34) God was in the earthquake that time, by the way.

Further still up the continuum, we have corporate worship which, in the Bible at least, is nearly always noisy. The Israelites, in particular, tended to make what would seem to our ears to be a cacophony of jubilee at worship. When the ark was brought back home after it had been in Philistia, In 2 Sam. 6:14, 15, there was shouting, trumpet-

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playing, and dancing. David got excited enough to disgust his wife, who was rebuked by God for her attitude. In 2 Chronicles 5:11-14, when Solomon dedicated the new temple, there were a crowd of singers, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, plus 120 priests blowing trumpets, as well as “other instruments of music,” over which the singers “were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the Lord.” In 2 Chronicles 20, the people are instructed to go out to battle in a whole new (and very strange) formation. No cavalry followed by infantry followed by archers here. No, the temple singers and musicians went ahead, and “sang their enemies to death.” Could we do that with some of our demonic enemies?

In Ezra 3:10-13, the people are so excited that the new temple foundation is laid that they praise God with shouting and trumpets. But some of the old ones who remembered Solomon’s temple were overcome by grief, as well. Here’s how Ezra describes the scene: “Yet many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers’ households, the old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, while many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the shout of joy from the sound of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard far away.”

Do we ever have church services, dedications, or ceremonies where people can hear us from “far away” and don’t know if we’re happy or unhappy? Would we consider that a good thing if it did happen? Even in heaven, we are treated to a description in Rev. 4 of trumpet sounds, thunder and lightning, and the unending calling of “Holy, holy, holy” around the throne of God. The early church in Acts sang and praised God in the temple together. But there were also times in the synagogues and the early churches which were for Bible reading and discussion, or later, reading and discussing the letters sent by Peter, Paul, or other apostles.

All of these things are acts of worship. And all are essential to the Christian walk. Shelly, in our opening anecdote, knew that all of life ought to be an act of worship for a Christian. But she also felt a deep need for a corporate experience of worship that included her overwhelming emotions of joy, gratitude, and love for her Savior. Yet the older members of her congregation felt a need, just as deep, for the quiet, reverent services of their childhood. How can we reconcile these conflicting needs? We could begin by reminding ourselves that none of these worship methods is wrong, according to the Word of God. That worship and praise are to be given from each individual heart in ways as individual as the fingerprint of the worshipper. Ellen White writes:

“We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that is divine. Every individual has a life distinct from all others, and an experience differing essentially from theirs. God desires that our praise shall ascend to Him, marked by

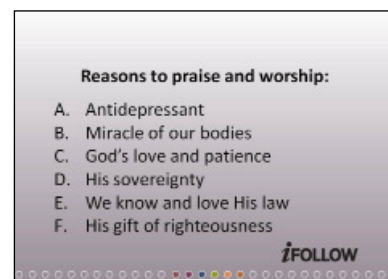
our own individuality. These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christ-like life, have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls.” (White, p 347)

Our personal testimony, our personal form of praise, can be an outreach tool no one else possesses. We can worship privately or in small groups or in any way that our hearts want to show their true, deep feelings for the God of our salvation. When it comes to corporate worship, things get more complex. Some churches have two or more worship services. Others mix and match, which only works if the advocates of each different form of worship respect the forms of the others. There will be no one up front, for instance, insisting (smilingly or not) that if you **really** love God, you’ll be “on your feet!” Or implying that you are stodgy and unworshipful if you don’t clap. There will be no one frowning or rolling their eyes over the drums or electric guitars. If a congregation is spiritually mature enough to be truly respectful from the heart in regards to each one’s wishes, or even if most of the congregation is that mature and can help the others to grow, this will work, and all sides will learn from each other and find new and wonderful ways to praise God.

And if the congregation is not that mature, if they are still attached to and invested in certain forms of worship as “the only right way,” the problem is far deeper than which songs to sing or how many times to repeat the chorus. This congregation can be helped in only one way; there must be serious and long-term prayer for unity of the Spirit.

Reasons for Praise and Worship

The reasons for praise and worship are almost endless. First, it’s the greatest antidepressant known to humanity. The passage Jesus read when it was His turn to read in the synagogue of Nazareth, Isaiah 61, says, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted.” (Verse 1) The passage continues, “to comfort all who mourn ... giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.” (Verses 2-3) The mantle of praise can keep us warm on the very darkest of nights. Praise can be sung with a voice breaking with tears. If the praise doesn’t actually rescue us, as it often does, it will at least remind us Who is at our side working for good, and that things could be much worse, and would be, if we didn’t know God.



Worship, by the way, also includes lament. Just read the Psalms. If God wants us to praise using our true, own, deepest emotion, then He wants to hear the truth about the not-so-thankful parts of us, too. Only when these dark shadows are brought out honestly into His light can He take away their sting, do any spiritual surgery we might need, and give us real joy.

Another reason for praise is the wonder of our bodies. We may praise Him for health, or we may praise Him for the miracle of healing that takes place, from a paper cut to major surgery. It is really unimaginable, the things our bodies are silently, secretly doing all day, all night, keeping us going. We are “fearfully and wonderfully made,” indeed! (Psalm 139:14)

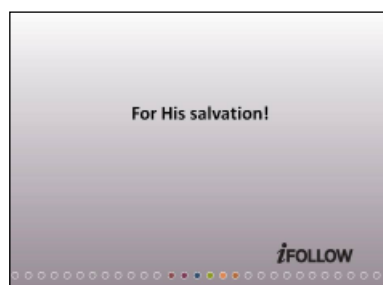
We can praise God for His patience and love, as passage after passage of the Bible do. One can almost open the Bible at random and be fairly sure of finding a praise passage. One example is found in Psalm 135:3, “Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praises to His name, for it is lovely.” And if times are evil, then look at the example set by Habakkuk in Chapter 3 of his book: Even if the Deuteronomy covenant promises themselves look like they are failing (Verse 17), “Yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation,” (Verse 18)

We can worship God for His sovereignty. After all, that’s why He is worthy of our worship to begin with. Ultimately, His will **shall** be done. “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.’” (Rev. 21:3)

We can praise God that we know and love His law. Of course, we know we don’t understand it all yet, or love it as much as we will, but what if we didn’t know Him at all! What an awful alternative! “I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches.” (Psalm 119:14)

We must certainly praise God for the incredible gift of His righteousness. “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! ... Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 7:25, 8:1) This is something we will never tire of praising and thanking God for, throughout our undeserved stay in eternity.

We can praise Him for our leaders, for the prophecies He’s given, for our homes and jobs and children. But there is one overwhelming thing we can never praise Him for enough, and that is the salvation that comes to us through Jesus Christ. “This is eter-



nal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” (John 17:3) “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” (Romans 5:1-5)

If we can read and contemplate such words as these and not feel our hearts overflow with praise, something’s wrong! But does that mean we will always praise the same way someone else does, or that if we see others not praising the way we do, they must not be really saved, or really love God? God forbid! He is the only one who can read hearts. We need to stop trying to usurp His privileges, stop trying to make everyone else worship the way we like to do, and keep our eyes on God.

Jesus only gave two requirements for true worship. They are found in His discussion with the woman at the well, in John 4. God Himself had set up Mount Zion in Jerusalem as the place where His name would be known and His people would come to worship. Yet now He said that the time would soon come when people would no longer worship there, but would worship wherever they were, “in spirit and in truth.” He then repeated it, as if to impress it on her mind (and ours). “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24)

These are words which deserve close scrutiny. In spirit must mean from the heart, from the truth at the depths of our beings, where we know God is the Maker and we are only the children, holding hands and singing around Him. In truth means all the truth we can spend our lives learning, from His Word, from each other, from songs and paintings and sculpture, from birds and flowers, from communion bread and wine, from dreams and visions, and from the person in our church who is the most different from us. But can we claim to know fully what it means to worship in spirit and in truth? Not yet. Maybe not even a million years from now.

Effects of True Worship

If we are truly, from our hearts, worshipping God, there will be clear effects on ourselves, others, and even on God.

Effects on Ourselves: We have already seen how we can divert sadness and discouragement. Probably the



main effect we can expect on ourselves from worship is a new perspective. Worship reminds us who and where and what we are, and Who and what and where God is. Worship reminds us that God is in His heaven and all is right with the world, as the old poem has it, but also that He is not just on His throne, high and lifted up, but right here with us and in us. God, says David, “inhabits” or is “enthroned upon” the praises of His people. That’s from Psalm 22, the despairing but praising Psalm from which Jesus quoted on the cross. It begins with a wail of horror—the horror only Jesus has truly experienced, of being torn from God—goes directly to praise, then to telling God all the heart’s troubles—which, again, only Jesus experienced to such depths—and it ends in utter peace: “Posterity will serve Him; It will be told of the Lord to the coming generation. They will come and will declare His righteousness. To a people who will be born, that He has performed it.” And they do declare it, to this day. When we praise and worship God, everything else falls into a place lower than it might have seemed a few minutes before.



Effects on Others: Our heartfelt worship opens a window to heaven for others to peek through. Whether they are ready or not to look through it will vary. Some people are angered or frightened by worship. We have to keep our eyes on the Spirit’s guiding and back away quietly when doors are shut against us, continuing to pray. But for those who are seeking, who want to know what God is really like, our worship can be a magnet. They may not know how to praise for themselves, and the window we can open will be limited, but they can get a glimpse. If God inhabits our praises, then our praises bring Him near to those around us. The true, heart-deep praise of a happy Christian can be irresistible to one who is feeling the ache of the “God-shaped void,” and doesn’t know what to do about it.



Effects on God: Finally, do our praises affect God? It seems impossible, doesn’t it? He is so great, so unsearchable, and so unimaginable that all we ever had for Him were pictures, like oil, or light, or a father or a mother, or a maker, until Jesus came. Now we see God with a human face, and that’s still only a tiny bit of the real picture. How can our feeble praises affect such a Being? It is impossible that an all-powerful God would need anything, but He made us “for My glory.” (Isa. 43:7) He wanted us! He needs us? As a Man, in Gethsemane, He would have died for lack of His friends, if an angel hadn’t come and revived Him.

It’s impossible that an all-powerful God could fail, but even Lucifer turned from Him,

and as for us, He once “repented” that He had made us. (Genesis 6:6) It’s impossible that an all-powerful God could cry over a loss, but He will. He’ll wipe away our tears, but He will never forget those beloved children He made, who refused Him. So, impossible as it seems, it must be true. Our praises can lighten the heart of God. Impossible, but fact.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem for His last week of life, the religious leaders were very disapproving of the shouting and praises of the people, young and old. They complained to Jesus and asked Him to make them be quiet. Jesus said, memorably, that if they were quiet, the very earth would cry out. God **will** be praised. We get to decide if we want to have a part in the song, or not.

Family Worship

An important part of this spiritual discipline is to establish a regular, daily routine of worship in the home. Couples without children need to set aside daily quiet time to pray and share their spiritual needs. One way to focus this is to establish a reading schedule together so they can discuss what each is reading. Other couples may find that they enjoy sharing different devotional reading that they select for themselves, while others like to read out loud to each other or listen together to recorded materials. All of these are ways to accomplish the goal of daily couple sharing in spiritual time together.

The Adventist Church publishes a number of daily devotional books each year. Originally, these were called “The Morning Watch books” because they were designed to read at breakfast time, out loud to the entire family or individually. Over the years they have adopted the more generic title of daily devotionals because people use them at various times during the day to meet the variety of schedules that families and couples face today. Each of the readings is one page or less in length and can be read in about three minutes. Currently there are several books provided each year designed for children, teens, young adults, women and other interest groups. Ask your pastor about how to obtain these books to meet your needs. It is not a requirement for Adventists to read these books; they are simply a resource for family and individual worship.

Research has shown that if you have children in the home, family worship requires some creativity and planning. It must be designed to involve the interests of your children and provide activity and interaction. Included in the list below are some tools that should be introduced to families with children in order to help them do a better job with family worship.



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Handouts in this Package

1. Worship in the Bible
2. Effects of True Worship

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Additional Resources

- Augsburger, David (2006). *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God and Love of Neighbor*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.
- Burrill, Russell (2004). *Waking the Dead: Returning Plateaued and Declining Churches to Vibrancy*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association.
- Chittister, Joan O.S.B. (1990). *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Foster, Richard J. (1978). *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Galli, Mark (2008). *Beyond Smells and Bells: The Wonder and Power of Christian Liturgy*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press.
- Johnson, Jan, Keith Matthews and Dallas Willard (2001). *Dallas Willard's Study Guide to The Divine Conspiracy*. New York, NY: HarperOne.
- Jones, Tony (2005). *The Sacred Way*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Labberton, Mark (2007). *The Dangerous Act of Worship: Living God's Call to Justice*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- McLafferty, Don (n.d.). *Kids in Discipleship Leader's Handbook*. Lincoln, NE: Advent-Source.
- McLaren, Brian D. (2008). *Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Ortberg, John (1997). *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Roy, Ruthven (2003). *A Challenge to the Remnant: Designing Our Mission Strategy to Impact the Real World*. Self-published by the author.
- Smith, James Bryan (1993). *A Spiritual Formation Workbook: Small Group Resources for Nurturing Christian Growth*. New York, NY: HarperOne.
- Stassen, Glen H., and David P. Gushee (2003). *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Wadell, Paul J. (2002). *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice and the Practice of Christian Friendship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.
- Webber, Robert E. (2008). *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

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Webber, Robert E. (2001). *Journey To Jesus: The Worship, Evangelism, and Nurture Mission of the Church*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

Whitney, Donald S. (1991). *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group.

White, Ellen G. (1898). *The Desire of Ages*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

Willard, Dallas (1990). *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. New York, NY: HarperOne.

Willard, Dallas (1998). *The Divine Conspiracy: Discovering Our Hidden Life in God*. New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco.

Willard, Dallas (2002). *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

Wright, N.T. (1994). *Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Articles

Staub, Dick (2003). "Interview: Michael Card Discovers St. Peter," *Christianity Today*, December 1. Available at www.christianitytoday.com on line. (In this interview Michael Card, the well-known Christian musician speaks about "lament." Here is a sample quote: "Twenty-five years of composing music, writing books, creating Bible study material and garnering awards haven't given Michael Card immunity from sorrow. After he watched his 18-year-old nephew and two infant nieces die, Card embarked on a journey to learn how grief brings us closer to God. His new album, *The Hidden Face of God*, follows his book, *A Sacred Sorrow*. Card shared with us about why both projects are devoted to the topic of grief, about the church in America and about true worship.")

Video and DVD Resources

Duerksen, Richard (1996). *Permission to Worship, Permission to Change*. Lincoln, NE: AdventSource. (Five sessions in a videos seminar for elders, church boards and worship planning committees.)

Youngberg, John and Millie (1997). *Families at Worship*. Lincoln, NE: AdventSource. (Complete materials for eight sessions of a class on how to plan and conduct family worship.)

Pastor's DVD 14, Advent Praise. Silver Spring, MD: NAD Church Resource Center.
(Contains 41 original Adventist Praise and Worship Songs with audio, video, lyrics, designed to be used in a personal, small group, or corporate worship setting)

Websites

A large database of worship resources, especially for younger generations, can be found on this site: www.worshiptogether.com

The Center for Creative ministry website is an Adventist resource center that provides materials and help for creative worship experiences: www.creativeministry.org

The worship planning and scheduling tools used by some of the best-known Protestant mega churches can be found at this website: www.planningcenteronline.com

Renovare includes a wide range of information about spiritual disciplines and spiritual growth on its website: www.renovare.org/

Other Resources

Little Folk Visuals (n.d.). *Family Worship Set*. Felt board materials for 25 Bible stories, including 114 figures, manual, storage box, file sheets and mounted blue background. Available from: www.adventsource.org

North American Division Children's Ministries Department (n.d.). *10 Ways for All Ages to Worship*. Lincoln, NE: AdventSource.

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**Spiritual
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Worship

Discussion Questions

1. What does worship mean to you personally?
2. How did you learn about worship?
3. What are some ways your church tries to fulfill the needs of people who like different worship styles? Do you attempt to use all the senses and all three common ways of learning; hearing, feeling, and doing? (visual, auditory, kinesthetic)
4. Do you believe there are ways of worship that are actively wrong?
5. Does your church have two services? If so, what are the advantages and disadvantages you see?
6. If you cannot have two services, how can you meet the differing needs of your congregation?
7. Do you feel there are negative emotions over this subject in your church?
8. What can you do to help?

Story sharing:

Tell about a time when praise or worship affected you.

Tell about a time when your praise or worship affected someone else.
Imagine that you were God. What affect do you think the worship services you have seen most recently in your congregation would have on you if you were God?

Group Activity

Purpose: To stretch our minds concerning forms of worship.

Preparation: This activity can be done with just the normal things found in a study room, classroom, or fellowship room, but it would be even better to bring lots of unusual objects like kitchen utensils, sticks, boxes, jugs, or anything you can think of that would make a noise that could be seen as musical or rhythmic. Real instruments would be good, too.

Assignment: Have each person find something in the room to use as a musical instrument, such as hands, feet, a book, tissue paper over a comb to make a kazoo. Be creative! If there are real instruments, use those, as well. Put Psalm 150 to music, or choose a simple praise song, and make a joyful noise to God.

Debrief: What are the reactions? What do people's faces look like? Discuss the feelings that are raised by this exercise. Did they feel it pleased God? Why or why not? If the group were children, would there be a different reaction? Why or why not?

Time: Allow five minutes for finding some kind of "instrument." If you want to set a psalm to music or write one, that might take 15 to 30 minutes. If you just sing a song you already know, it will only take a few minutes. Use your best judgment, based on the comfort or discomfort level of the participants.

Homework: Try writing a psalm or a letter to God that expresses your praises and thanks to Him. Or make a drawing, painting, song, act of service, or dance to Him that expresses the same things. Share with someone if you wish to.

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Group
Activities

Spiritual
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Worship

Handout 1

Worship in the Bible

Hebrew: **shachah**, “bow (self) down, crouch, fall down (flat), humbly beseech, do (make) obeisance, do reverence, make to stoop, worship.” *Strong’s Concordance*
Greek: most common, **proskuneo**, which comes from **pros**, a prefix denoting nearness to or motion towards, and “a probable derivative of [**kuon**, dog] (meaning to **kiss**, like a dog **licking** his master’s hand); to **fawn** or **crouch** to (lit. or fig.) **prostrate** oneself in homage (*do* reverence to, adore): worship.”

Praise and Worship Activities Described in Scripture

Bowing down – Joshua 5:14, Psalm 95:6, Isaiah 46:6, Daniel. 3, Matthew 4:9, 1 Corinthians 14:25, Revelation 22:8

Singing - Psalm 100:2

Laughing - Psalm 126:2

Shouting - Psalm 5:11, 35:27

Dancing - Psalm 149:3

Raising hands - 1 Timothy 2:8

Clapping hands - Psalm 47:1

Playing musical instruments of all kinds – Psalm 149 and 150

Praise is mentioned in the Bible over 400 times, and nearly 200 of those are in the Psalms. For a concise definition of praise in worship read Psalm 150.

The sanctuary service, sacrifices, candles, showbread, singers and musicians are described in Deuteronomy, Leviticus, Numbers.

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HANDOUT

Spiritual
Disciplines:
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Handout 2

Effects of True Worship

1. Effects on Ourselves
2. Effects on Others
3. Effects on God

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