

Bowing Before God, Glorifying God with the Worship He Seeks

**O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.
For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.**

Psalm 95:6-7 (KJV)

**...ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before
him; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness. Tremble before him, all
the earth!**

1 Chronicles 16:29-30a (NIV)

**I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a
living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of
worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the
renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is
good and acceptable and perfect.**

Romans 12:1-2 (NASB)

**That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things
in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that
Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

Philippians 2:10-11 (KJV)

**...let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a
consuming fire.**

Hebrews 12:28b-29 (ESV)

**But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship
the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship
him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.**

John 4:23-24 (ESV)

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Introduction

This study of worship is a call to a deeper walk with God. It is a call to be in reverence and awe of our holy God. It is a call to be holy, to love and to obey Him.

A lasting revival of godly living will come in our own life and in the life of our churches when we choose to become faithful followers of our Lord Jesus Christ and to bring Him the kind of worship He seeks.

These study guides are not written for scholars; they are written for ordinary laymen. Their purpose is to help ordinary Christians to learn, to understand, and to live what God teaches us in His Word, the Bible.

This is not a book. It is simply a collection of fundamental Bible study guides relating to a key issue in knowing and walking with God.

I (Phil Benedict) have not attempted to make it all flow smoothly with a lot of introductions, transitions, conclusions, or lengthy explanations. It is my intent to let Scripture speak for itself. The Word of God speaks clearly on the key issues of life. It is my conviction that the Word of God is far more powerful and effective than my own advice or counsel. For this reason, I have kept my own “commentary” to a minimum and have quoted many Scriptures that pertain to the subject being covered.

As I have written these studies, I have been keenly aware of my own need to grow in my walk with the Lord and of my own failure to be all that God would have me to be. I have personally grown in my own walk as I have studied and sought the leading of the Spirit of God in writing this study guide. It is my hope and prayer that others will also grow as they read and study this material.

How to Get the Most from These Study Guides

While the subject matter in these studies deals with fundamental Biblical truths, it is not a light study. Take your time as you go through these studies. If you go over the material too quickly without much thought, it will have little or no lasting impact on your life.

It is important that one take time to read, to digest, and to absorb the Scriptures in these guides. Take time to carefully read and think about them. Meditate on them and on the truths they teach. Learn to love God and His Word. Regularly ask God for a right understanding of Scriptural truths and then make them part of you. Commit yourself to making Biblical truths the foundation of your life and to putting them into practice every day of your life.

About Phil Benedict

I (Phil Benedict) grew up in a godly Christian home and was saved as a young child. I was active in our church youth group in Boise, Idaho, where I met my wife, Linda. We married when we were young and God has blessed our marriage. We have now been married for over fifty-four years (as of January 2021). We have four children, all of whom are actively serving the Lord. We both graduated from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois, and from Boise State University in Boise, Idaho. I have also taken classes in secondary school administration at the College of Idaho in Caldwell, Idaho, as well as classes in Cherokee heritage from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and classes in drug and alcohol counseling at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. We have served as “full time” Christian workers for over thirty-five years. We have been members of UIM International (United Indian Missions) for over twenty-five years.

Thanks to My Wife

God has given me an exceptional wife. Linda has been a huge blessing in my life. She has been my co-worker and partner throughout life and in the writing of these study guides. She has spent many, many hours editing, checking for mistakes, making suggestions, printing, and binding these study guides. She has been a genuine ministry partner. Without her, these study guides would not exist.

My Prayer

It is my prayer and my desire that the Lord Jesus Christ will be honored and glorified through this study of Biblical worship. I pray that the Spirit of God will draw some to Himself as they go through this study guide or hear it taught. I pray that it will help some to grow in their walk with the Lord as it has helped me to grow in my own walk with Him. I pray that there will be some who, empowered by the Spirit of God, will be committed to living a transformed life of obedience and faithful service to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Bible Translations Used in These Studies

There are five different translations used in these studies. The translations used are the King James Version (KJV), the New King James Version (NKJV), the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the New International Version (NIV), and the English Standard Version (ESV).

The purpose of these studies is to help ordinary people understand fundamental Biblical truth. When quoting Scripture, I have tried to use the translation which most clearly states the Biblical truth being covered in that part of the study. After each verse that is quoted, the translation is identified by giving the initials of the translation.

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What Is Worship?

The most basic meaning of the Biblical word “worship” is to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to fall down, and to give reverence.

O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Psalm 95:6-7 (KJV)

Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. Job 1:20 (NASB)

Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Nehemiah 8:6b (NIV)

On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. Matthew 2:11 (NIV)

...the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. Revelation 4:10a (NIV)

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:10-11 (KJV)

When the Lord Jesus Christ was present on earth, many times an individual would bow or kneel before Him. In the book of Revelation, we are given a glimpse of eternity in heaven. In heaven they also physically bow before our Lord in worship, praise, and adoration.

It would be a high privilege to bow down before the physical presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in reverence, awe, and submission, and to give Him our love and devotion. However, today Jesus is not physically present with us. Can we still worship Him?

The following verses are key verses relating to our worship today. In these verses we learn that in this age we worship God in our spirit.

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:23-24 (ESV)

We do not have to be in the physical presence of Jesus to worship. We worship in spirit and in truth.

The Word of God has much to teach us about genuine worship. As we begin our study, I pray that the Lord will increase our understanding and that we will have a sincere desire to give Him the worship He desires.

One very good example of pure worship is given in Luke 7:37-38. Here a “sinful” woman bows in

reverence and repentance at Jesus' feet and demonstrates a deep appreciation, love, and devotion for our Lord Jesus Christ.

When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. Luke 7:37-38 (NIV)

What an example of pure worship! This "sinful" woman left forgiven. However, there is no indication that the proud Pharisee ever humbled himself to worship Jesus. God grant us the desire to love and worship Him with the same spirit as this "sinful" woman.

Each of the following phrases is used in various Biblical word studies or expository dictionaries to define or to describe worship.

1. to bow down
2. to kneel down
3. to prostrate oneself
4. to revere
5. to praise
6. to serve
7. to glorify
8. to honor
9. to have awe
10. to adore
11. to respect
12. to love
13. to give devotion

Putting all this together, we can, in simple terms, define worship as *"bowing down before God in our spirit with an attitude of reverence and awe, with love, devotion, and submission"*.

In the Bible, worship is seen in two distinct applications.

First, worship is a way of life. It is a lifestyle. We worship God by being a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ and by being committed to Him in every part of our life. We worship God by living a holy life.

...I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, ... Acts 24:14a (NIV)

Paul states that he worshiped as a follower of the "Way". The "Way" is a reference to belief or faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and all that goes with having that faith. All that goes with being a committed disciple or follower of Jesus is described as worship. *Our worship -- bowing before Him in our spirit-- is not an occasional experience but an on-going, continuous, non-stop way of life.* This attitude of worship and submission controls every part of our life -- not just the "religious" parts. If we hold back in any area, our worship is hindered and it may, in fact, be empty or vain worship.

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship*. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2 (NASB)

The Greek word that is translated worship in these verses (Romans 12:1-2) is, at times, translated “service”—thus the phrase in the NASB, “*spiritual service of worship*”. Our worship and our service are closely tied together. We serve and worship God by sincerely yielding to Him in every part of our life. Thus our “*spiritual service of worship*” is a lifestyle of commitment to letting Him control every part of our life. This is the heart and soul of genuine worship.

These verses in Romans 12 are clearly talking about an on-going attitude and way of life. This on-going transformed way of life is our spiritual worship. Here we are told to offer our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice. Being a living and holy sacrifice is death to self and total submission to our Lord Jesus Christ. When we offer our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, we offer every part of our body and our mind, including our hands, our feet, our mouth, our eyes, our ears, our personal parts--our whole body--in service and worship of Him. Being a holy sacrifice means being separated from evil as God is holy. According to these verses, our way of thinking about life is totally transformed. Offering our bodies as a living sacrifice is complete and total surrender of ourselves to God.

We have seen that offering our bodies to God as a living sacrifice is a description of our worship and service to Him. There is more in the Word of God describing acceptable sacrifices to God.

The following verse is loaded with meaning. We are being built up as a spiritual house (church) and we are priests who offer God spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God.

...you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ 1 Peter 2:5 (ESV)

In the Old Testament the priests were the heart of Israel’s worship. They were called and set apart for their primary job which was to offer sacrifices to God. They continually offered God the sacrifices that were prescribed in the Old Testament law. Again, this was the heart of their worship.

Today, every person who knows the Lord is part of a new order, the church, and each one of us is a priest called to offer God spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to Him?

Carefully read the following verses:

Therefore, by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Hebrews 13:15-16 (NKJV)

In the Word of God one important part of worship is to praise Him. We are to continually praise Him and, as we do, we are giving our Lord on-going worship. Notice again the last sentence in this verse. *To do good and to share are the kinds of sacrifices that please God.* Our on-going worship is to be a righteous person. This is what pleases God.

In the following verses financial giving is identified as a “fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God”.

I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:18-19 (NIV)

According to the last sentence, God promises to supply all our needs. Within its context, this promise is given to those who financially support missions.

Notice what the following verse says. I will extol the Lord at “*all*” times. His praise will “*always*” be on my lips.

I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. Psalm 34:1 (NIV)

Our church’s worship service is a very important part of our lifestyle of worship. However, our overall lifestyle of worship is much broader than just our church’s song and worship time. *Genuine Biblical worship extends to every part of our lives and it is continuous.*

She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day. Luke 2:36b-37 (ESV)

This widow, Anna, spent most of her life, night and day, worshipping. Wow, what an example of a lifestyle of worship!

Worship and our way of living cannot be separated. None of us are faultless or perfect, and our worship is not perfect; however, we do need to be growing in our walk with the Lord. As we grow and draw nearer to Him, our worship becomes more glorifying to Him.

A second expression of Biblical worship is that when we live a lifestyle of worship, there will be more specific individual times in which we experience genuine heart-felt worship.

By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff. Hebrews 11:21 (KJV)

There are times such as when we read and meditate on the Word of God that the Spirit of God opens up our understanding, and we respond in our hearts with thanksgiving and worship.

There are times when we sing a good gospel song that our spirits are lifted in praise and worship. When we see our children serving the Lord, we joyfully worship and thank Him. When He provides for us and when He comforts us, we thank Him and worship Him. When we fellowship with our brothers and sisters in the Lord, we can thank and worship Him. Other times we look at the stars, the trees, the mountains, or at a beautiful flower, or we see the squirrels in the trees, or the deer in the woods, or stand beside the ocean, and in our hearts, we give Him praise and worship because of who He is and what He has created.

There are times when I have taught a class and could sense the Spirit of God at work, and, in my heart, even though I was tired, I have thanked and praised God who gave me the privilege of teaching His Word.

There are endless reasons for us to lift our hearts in worship to our God, who is our Creator, our loving Father, and our Savior. These times of heart-felt praise and worship enrich our lives and they strengthen and sustain us, and they please our Lord.

And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Nehemiah 8:6 (KJV)

The man bowed his head and worshiped the Lord and said, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master. Genesis 24:26-27a (ESV)

Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. 2 Chronicles 20:18 (NASB)

In our society, it seems as if everybody is busy. This is just as true of Christians as it is of everyone else. In addition to our jobs, we have many responsibilities including those at home, to our families, and to our church. Often, we feel just plain tired and worn out. Even when we are committed to living a lifestyle of worship, most of us do not continually feel a spiritual high.

In spite of all this, when we are genuinely committed to serving the Lord, there will be times when we will experience and feel genuine deep-down heart-felt worship and appreciation of who God is and what He has done for us.

One thing that becomes immediately apparent as one begins a study of worship is that worship must come from a heart that is sincere and devoted to our Lord. If a person's heart is not right with God, then his worship may be empty or vain and not pleasing to our Lord.

These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; ... Matthew 15:8-9a (NIV)

In this verse there is a serious warning. Not all that is identified as worship is acceptable to God. Here some worship is identified as “vain”. The Greek word translated “vain” is defined in Biblical Greek word studies as meaning “at fault”, “a folly”, “having no purpose”, “groundless”, “invalid”, “useless”, “futile” or “empty”. (See Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, page 949, and W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, page 181.)

...let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire. Hebrews 12:28b-29 (ESV)

Again, for our worship to be genuine and accepted by God, it must be given by a heart that is sincere and right with Him. Worship that is given for any reason other than to bring glory and reverence to God is not genuine worship. It appears that today, as was also true in Biblical times, that much of what is identified as “worship” falls woefully short of this standard.

Worship is often associated with the music program of a church. Many Christians associate worship with a meaningful time of singing and music. Music is a very important part of our worship, but it is not synonymous with worship. Worship is much broader than our music programs. Worship can certainly be expressed through music; however, worship involves all of our life, not just our music.

In this study of worship, we will cover things that go beyond our ability to fully grasp and put into practice. Yet we cannot use our humanness as an excuse for shallowness or lack of effort or a lack of sincerity. While we will never achieve perfection, we can grow in our walk with Him and in our worship.

This study is not a condemnation of our lack of perfection; rather, it is a call for us to faithfully commit ourselves to growing in our understanding of His Word, to growing in our walk with Him, and to giving Him the worship He seeks.

Biblical Teaching Relating to Worship

1. John 4:23-24

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:23-24 (ESV)

As we have already seen, this is an important key Scripture relating to worship. There are at least three key Biblical truths that are given by Jesus in these two verses.

A. God seeks worshipers.

Notice the phrase, “*for the Father is seeking such people to worship him*”. God wants us to worship Him. However, there are limits to the kinds of worship He accepts. We must worship Him in “spirit” and in “truth”. If we want to give acceptable worship, we must do it with a right spirit, and our worship must be grounded in genuine Biblical truth.

B. We worship God in our spirit.

In these two verses we are given instructions for worshiping God in this age when Jesus is not physically present. We are told that we are to worship God “in spirit” and “in truth”. Since God is a spirit, and since in this age Jesus is no longer physically present with us, we bow before Him in our spirit rather than bowing before the physical presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today we worship God by bowing before Him in our spirit. We bow before Him in our spirits with the same attitudes of devotion, reverence, awe, and submission that we would be demonstrating if we were physically bowing before His physical presence.

C. We worship God in truth.

Our worship of God must be based in truth. Wrong or false understandings of God and His Word do not lead to genuine worship. It is certainly true that one does not have to be a Biblical scholar or theologian to bring God acceptable worship. Even baby Christians can worship and please God and bring joy to His heart. However, when we base our worship on a shallow or incorrect understanding of God and His Word, our worship will be shallow or not genuine. This is true whether we have been saved for a very short time or for a long period of time. Music that is not based on genuine Biblical

truth may make us temporarily feel good, but it is not genuine Biblical worship.

2. Worship and the Holiness of God

When we think of God, we often think of His great love for us. It is right for us to think of Him in this way. Many Scriptures teach us that He deeply loves us. His love is a big motivation for us to worship and to praise Him. However, in Scripture, an even more fundamental characteristic of God is His holiness.

Over and over throughout Scripture, God is defined as holy. When God describes Himself in Scripture, He uses the word “holy” more than any other characteristic. To have even a basic understanding of God and genuinely worship God, we must understand and be in awe of His holiness. *The basic meaning of “holy” in the Word of God is to be “separate” or “set apart”. When used in reference to God, it means that God is completely and totally separated from all that is sinful or evil. God is absolutely clean and pure, separated from even the slightest tint of evil.*

As people, it is hard for us to understand holiness since we are sinful. However, for us to understand God and give Him genuine sincere worship, we must have at least a basic understanding and awe of His holiness.

Carefully read and think about the following Scriptures. Let them sink deep into your mind and soul.

"Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you -- majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" Exodus 15:11 (NIV)

Exalt the LORD our God, And worship at His footstool-- He is holy. Psalm 99:5 (NKJV)

But the Lord of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. Isaiah 8:13 (ESV)

There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides You, nor is there any rock like our God. 1 Samuel 2:2 (NASB)

...holy and reverend is his name. Psalm 111:9b (KJV)

..."Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah 6:3 (NIV)

Let them praise Your great and awesome name; He is holy. Psalm 99:3 (NKJV)

Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name! Psalm 97:12 (ESV)

And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

Revelation 15:3-4 (ESV)

In heaven there is ongoing continual praise and worship because of His holiness.

And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” Revelation 4:8 (ESV)

Understanding the holiness of God has a huge impact on our worship. Many times, in the Word of God, He is worshiped because of His holiness. We are given instructions to worship Him in the “*splendor of His holiness*”.

..ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness. Tremble before him, all the earth!

1 Chronicles 16:29-30a (NIV)

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.

Psalms 29:2 (NIV)

Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth.

Psalms 96:9 (NKJV)

Again, genuine worship recognizes the holiness of God. We bow in reverence and awe because of his holiness.

The more we understand the holiness of God, the more we will strive to live a holy life. The greater our personal holiness, the deeper and more acceptable is our worship of God.

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." 1 Peter 1:14-16 (NIV)

I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, ... 1 Timothy 2:8a (NIV)

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ... Titus 2:11-12 (NIV)

In 2 Corinthians 7:1 we are told to get rid of all that contaminates our body and spirit. In so doing we develop holiness in our life.

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NIV)

The Bible clearly teaches that we are to live holy lives. Obviously, here on earth we will never be as holy as God. However, we are expected to grow in living a holy life. Notice that in the following verse, we “are being made holy”.

...because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Hebrews 10:14 (NIV)

As His followers *we worship God because of His holiness and we worship God by living a holy life.*

In the following verse there is an important pattern for us to follow. Notice again that they read the Word; then they confessed their sin and worshiped God.

While they stood in their place, they read from the book of the law of the LORD their God for a fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the LORD their God.
Nehemiah 9:3 (NASB)

3. We worship in our spirit with the right attitudes of worship.

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:24 (NASB)

As we have already seen, we worship God with a right spirit. In the following verse we find out what kind of attitude or spirit we should have.

...let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12:28b-29 (NIV)

In this last verse we are given two attitudes that are the heart of acceptable worship. Those two attitudes are “reverence” and “awe”. The Greek word that is translated “reverence” in this verse is used only two times in the Bible. The same is true of the Greek word that is translated “awe”. These two Greek words are not commonly used in the Bible and in order to understand this verse, we need to have a basic understanding of the meaning of these two words.

The Greek word for “reverence” that is used in this verse speaks of a love for what is honorable, just and right and a repugnance of what is dishonorable or evil. Worship or service to God holds on to what is genuinely good and is repulsed by what is not. This parallels the teaching that we worship God because He is holy. God is Holy and He abhors evil. *Genuine worship of God will also reflect holiness and a repugnance or hatred of evil.*

Many Christians do not seem to hate evil. Separation from evil is not an emphasis in many Christian homes or churches today. Yet, if we are not in sync with God’s hatred of sin and evil, we can hardly bring Him anything more than shallow or superficial worship.

The second word used in Hebrews 12:28-29 to describe acceptable worship is “awe”. The root meaning of the word translated “awe” that is used in this verse speaks of an attitude of “reverent submission” to God or a godly “fear” of God. It is to literally be in awe of God. In this usage, to “fear” God is to have a deep respect or reverence for God and to be devoted to Him.

Fearing God is a major theme throughout the Bible. It is not an easy concept to define. It does involve a healthy literal “fear” of God but it does not mean we are to be terrified of Him. To fear God is to revere Him and be in awe of who He is. To fear God is to be obedient to Him. To fear God is to hate evil (Proverbs 8:13). To fear God is to serve and worship Him. To fear God is to commit oneself to being all that God wants us to be.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. Ecclesiastes 12:13 (KJV)

The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Proverbs 8:13a (NASB)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. Proverbs 1:7 (NASB)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. Proverbs 9:10 (NASB)

In the following Old Testament passages the word that is translated “reverence” has basically the same meaning as in Hebrews 12:28. It speaks of a reverence and a “godly fear” of our Lord.

But I, by your great mercy, will come into your house; in reverence will I bow down toward your holy temple. Psalm 5:7 (NIV)

Worship the LORD with reverence and rejoice with trembling. Psalm 2:11 (NASB)

In the next verses there are warnings about not having a fear or reverent submission to our Lord:

Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would have none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. Proverbs 1:28-31 (KJV)

...let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12:28b-29 (NIV)

The last phrase of these verses (Hebrews 12:28b-29) is “...*for our God is a consuming fire*”. Within the context, this is referring back to the time when God spoke to the people of Israel from Mt. Sinai. God showed Himself in thunder, lightning, dark clouds, fire, and an earthquake. (Exodus 19) The sight was so terrifying that even Moses trembled with fear. (Hebrews 12:21)

It would be well for each of us to go back and read and digest Exodus 19 to seek a deeper sense of reverence and awe of God.

In the Word of God there are examples of insincere worship.

But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men. Matthew 9:8 (NASB)

There were large crowds who followed Jesus simply because they were fascinated by the miracles He performed. They did not believe what He taught. They followed Him just to see the miracles. The awestruck crowd “glorified God”. To glorify God is to worship God. However, we know this was not genuine worship because when the crowd did not like what Jesus taught, they left Him. In fact, they eventually wound up calling for His crucifixion. They did not worship Him with a right spirit and their worship was certainly not based on truth. Their worship was shallow and insincere.

From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. John 6:66 (NKJV)

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 (NIV)

4. Worshiping God in Truth

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:23-24 (ESV)

Genuine worship can only be given by one who is committed to correctly understanding and putting into practice the truths taught in God's Word, the Bible.

Genuine worship can only be given by someone who is worshiping in a manner that is in accord with God's truth as revealed in His Word, the Bible. The Bible is God's revelation of truth. Worship that is rooted in distorted Biblical truth is not true worship. Someone building his life on a wrong understanding of God's revealed Word cannot bring God genuine worship.

Today there is a tremendous amount of false or diluted teaching in our churches and on television and on radio. We must be alert and on guard. False teaching or mixing truth and error do not lead to knowing and walking with God and they do not lead to genuine worship.

This is true even when an individual may seem sincere. Sincerity does not override Biblical truth. If our worship is not based on Biblical truth, it is not genuine worship.

They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men. Matthew 15:9 (NIV)

In this verse we learn that discarding God's truth and worshiping by our own rules is vain or empty worship.

Jesus is identified as the truth. Worshiping in truth is to be in tune with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6 (NIV)

The Holy Spirit is identified as the "Spirit of Truth". Worshiping in truth is to be in tune with the Spirit of God.

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me." John 15:26 (ESV)

The Word of God is identified as truth. Worshiping in truth is to be in tune with God and His Word.

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. John 17:17 (NKJV)

From these verses we can accurately conclude that if something is not true, it is not from God.

The church, including its worship, is to be the pillar and foundation of truth.

...if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

1 Timothy 3:15 (NIV)

Satan is just the opposite. There is no truth in Him.

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

John 8:44 (NIV)

This has very important implications for pastors, teachers and other leaders. If we do not accurately teach the Word, we lead people down a path of insincere worship as well as spiritual frustration and fruitlessness.

Many Christians, probably most of us, associate worship with having good feelings about God. However, the foundation of worship is not our feelings. *Genuine worship is not based on feelings; it is based on Biblical truth.* We can thank God that He does give us emotions and feelings and that we are not unfeeling robots; however, truth, not feelings, is the heart of genuine worship. Feeling all warm and fuzzy inside, getting spiritual goose bumps, or having a good time may all be good things, but they are not indicators of genuine worship.

Again, notice the order in the following verse. They spent several hours reading the Word of God and then they spent several hours confessing their sin and worshipping. Again, genuine worship comes from a heart that is right with God. Here we see that the Word of God brought conviction of sin; then the people confessed their sin and worshiped.

While they stood in their place, they read from the book of the law of the LORD their God for a fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the LORD their God.

Nehemiah 9:3 (NASB)

Worshiping in Spirit and Truth -- Is Right Doctrine (teaching) really all that important???

Very carefully and thoughtfully read the following Scriptures. As you go through these verses pick out and think about some of the key phrases in these verses like the following.

“so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work”

“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead,”

“which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.”

“for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene”

“encourage others by sound doctrine”

“ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”

2 Timothy 3:16-4:3

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching (doctrine) for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB)

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 2 Timothy 4:1-2 (NASB)

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 2 Timothy 4:3 (NASB)

2 Timothy 2:14-17

Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. 2 Timothy 2:14 (NASB)

***Be diligent* to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)**

***Do your best* to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 (NIV)**

But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene 2 Timothy 2:16-17 (NASB)

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. Titus 1:9 (NIV)

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. 1 Timothy 4:16 (NASB)

Lack of sound doctrine has led to the church accepting and promoting many things such as abortion, homosexuality, politics, theistic evolution, divorce, women preachers, an unbiblical pattern of the family, and many other kinds of non-biblical teachings.

It needs to be emphasized again that one does not need to be a Bible scholar to worship God. However, it is also true that as we grow in our understanding of the Word, and faithfully walk in the light of that understanding, the more glorifying to God our worship becomes.

5. *Genuine worship exalts and brings glory to God and only to God.*

Sincere genuine worship never draws attention to a person. It always focuses on God.

I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another,... Isaiah 42:8a (NASB)

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (KJV)

Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

Exodus 34:14 (NIV)

There have been many “worship” leaders who profess a desire to glorify God but, in reality, they seek to draw attention to themselves and to their own talents and abilities. There have been many singers and music groups who seek to draw attention to themselves. In reality, they seek to glorify themselves rather than glorify God. This is serious. No person should ever lead in any worship activity unless he first empties himself of all pride and desire to glorify self and seeks only to uplift and glorify God. It is a serious matter to lead God’s people down a deceptive path of “vain” worship.

When we seek to draw attention to ourselves, we are attempting to steal the glory that belongs to God and God alone.

Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Daniel 3:28 (NIV)

In Daniel 3:28, the unbelieving king Nebuchadnezzar took notice when three men demonstrated that they would choose death rather than to worship anyone or anything else other than God.

Carefully read the following unusual passage relating to Old Testament worship:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take fragrant spices -- gum resin, onycha and galbanum -- and pure frankincense, all in equal amounts, and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer. It is to be salted and pure and sacred. Grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the LORD. Whoever makes any like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from his people."

Exodus 30:34-38 (NIV)

In this Scripture, God gives a formula for a perfume that was to be set apart for use only in the temple worship of Himself. No one could make it for his own use or pleasure. If he did, he was to be put to death. The point is that God took it very seriously when men used what was to be God’s alone for their own benefit.

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Colossians 3:23-24 (ESV)

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:11 (NIV)

Again, genuine worship never draws attention to ourselves or to another person. It always focuses on God and on God alone.

6. Unacceptable Worship

These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men. Matthew 15:8-9 (NIV)

The third commandment is “do not take the Lord’s name in vain”. The primary meaning of the Old Testament word “vain” is “empty”. To take the Lord’s name in vain is to use it in an empty, or shallow, or frivolous, or unthinking, or false, or deceptive manner. (See the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, page 908, and *The Complete Word Study of the Old Testament*, page 1107.)

When we think of “taking the Lord’s name in vain”, we normally think of using one of God’s names as a curse word. Using God’s name in cursing is certainly taking his name in vain; however, taking God’s name in vain goes much further than that. Any use of God’s name in a shallow, light, frivolous, or incorrect manner is taking God’s name in vain and that is a violation of the third commandment. This is serious. Shallow or frivolous worship is a violation of this commandment.

These verses (Matthew 15:8-9) clearly teach that worship from a heart that is not right with God is vain or shallow insincere empty worship.

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator who is forever praised. Romans 1:25 (NIV)

Here it speaks of those who worship what has been created rather than worshiping the creator. The result of this kind of worship is condemnation by God. Most of us fail to realize just how detestable empty or vain worship is to God.

Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations – I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Isaiah 1:13-15 (NIV)

Notice how strong God’s language is here---“my soul hates”. The heart of God is repulsed by our insincere worship and He will not hear the prayers of those who worship in such a manner.

I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies.... Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! Amos 5:21, 23-24 (NIV)

Notice the phrase “*Away with the noise of your songs!*”. God wants us to be just and live right (righteous). Then He will accept our worship.

I will turn your religious feasts into mourning and all your singing into weeping.

Amos 8:10a (NIV)

I will put an end to your noisy songs, and the music of your harps will be heard no more.

Ezekiel 26:13 (NIV)

"I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies.... "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. "But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Amos 5:21, 22-24 (NASB)

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. Exodus 20:7 (NASB)

Worship and Praise

Praising God is a major theme throughout the Word of God. Every follower of the Lord Jesus Christ should regularly praise God. In this part of our study, first we will look at what praise is and then look at some of what the Bible teaches about praise. We will also look at the importance of praise in the life of a believer and also the relationship between praise and worship.

This study of praise is a call to deepen our understanding and commitment to giving our Lord genuine praise. We all know it is important, but many of us do not realize that giving Him praise is one of the fundamental reasons we exist. Our walk with Him will be shallow if we do not learn to consistently praise Him.

As we have already seen, living a lifestyle of worship involves every part of our life. Thanking and praising Him is an important part of that lifestyle of worship.

Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Psalm 103:1 (NIV)

Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting. Psalm 147:1 (ESV)

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 1 Peter 2:9 (NKJV)

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. Psalm 100 (NIV)

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he

should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:11 (NIV)

Sing to him; sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! 1 Chronicles 16:9 (ESV)

In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" Revelation 5:12 (NIV)

Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. Psalm 47:6 (NIV)

What is praise?

The following phrases are all used in various Biblical word studies or Biblical dictionaries to describe praise of God.

...exalting the wonderful characteristics and the acts of God
...to speak well of
...to give thanks
...expressing genuine appreciation
...to approve of, to honor, to glorify
...expressing joy and adoration to God
...to shout for joy, to be jubilant, and to sing

Biblical praise has at least three fundamental elements:

- 1. Exalting God because of His attributes (characteristics)*
- 2. Exalting God because of what He does or has done*
- 3. Giving thanks for who He is and what He has done*

Putting this all together, we can define Biblical praise as: *To thank God and to speak, or to sing, or to think thoughts that exalt the characteristics and/or the acts of God.*

Some fundamental Biblical teachings about praise are as follows:

- 1. A primary reason that God calls us to Himself is so that we will praise and glorify Him.*

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 Peter 2:9 (NIV)

It is hard to adequately comment on the exceptional truths stated in this verse. As His followers, we have been chosen and equipped by Him to declare His praises. What a high honor and privilege to be called and equipped by God to praise our God!!!

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. Psalm 100 (NIV)

Our testimony of praise is to be given worldwide.

Sing to the LORD, all the earth; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples. For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; He also is to be feared above all gods.

1 Chronicles 16:23-25 (NASB)

2. God instructs His followers to praise Him.

There are many, many Scriptures that instruct us to give Him praise. Here are just a few of them.

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise -- the fruit of lips that confess his name. Hebrews 13:15 (NIV)

Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!"

Revelation 19:5 (NIV)

Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; Speak of all His wonders. 1 Chronicles 16:9 (NASB)

Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Psalm 103:1 (NIV)

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. Psalm 100:4 (NIV)

3. Genuine praise must come from one whose heart is right with God and who is committed to obedience and faithful service to Him.

It is an obvious truth that one who is not growing in his walk with God or one who is a “carnal” believer is not going to offer God very sincere praise. It is those who are committed to growing and maturing in their walk with the Lord that give the Lord sincere and acceptable praise.

I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. Psalm 119:7 (NIV)

Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones; Praise is becoming to the upright.

Psalm 33:1 (NASB)

An evil man is ensnared in his transgression, but a righteous man sings and rejoices.

Proverbs 29:6 (ESV)

Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Psalm 103:1 (NIV)

My heart is steadfast, O God; I will sing, I will sing praises, even with my soul. Psalm 108:1 (NASB)

And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!" Revelation 19:5 (ESV)

In each of these verses, praise comes from a heart that is right with God. Insincere praise is not really praise at all.

4. Genuine praise exalts God and only God.

Genuine praise exalts God and only God. Genuine Biblical praise cannot exalt any human being or anything else but God.

"I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. Isaiah 42:8 (NIV)

The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God my Savior! Psalm 18:46 (NIV)

Sing to the LORD, all the earth; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples. For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; He also is to be feared above all gods.

1 Chronicles 16:23-25 (NASB)

The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God, the Rock, my Savior! 2 Samuel 22:47 (NIV)

Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. Psalm 145:3 (NIV)

Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name, I will lift up my hands. Psalm 63:3-4 (NIV)

Sing the glory of His name; Make His praise glorious. Psalm 66:2 (NASB)

Today many churches design their “praise and worship” services to please people or to draw a crowd. In the Word of God, we are never instructed to use praise, worship or music as a means to entertain, to please people or to draw individuals into the church. Praise and worship that is designed to do anything but exalt God may not be genuine praise or worship at all.

5. Praise and thanksgiving go hand-in-hand.

Praise and thanksgiving very often go together. One can hardly give God praise without being thankful.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. Psalm 100:4 (NIV)

Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. 1 Chronicles 29:13 (KJV)

I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

Psalm 69:30 (KJV)

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him... Luke 17:15-16a (NIV)

...give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NIV)

6. Our attitude of praise should be continuous.

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise -- the fruit of lips that confess his name. Hebrews 13:15 (NIV)

I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. Psalm 34:1 (NIV)

And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long.

Psalm 35:28 (KJV)

I will praise you forever for what you have done; in your name I will hope, for your name is good... Psalm 52:9a (NIV)

So I will sing praise to Your name forever, That I may pay my vows day by day.

Psalm 61:8 (NASB)

I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

Psalm 146:2 (NIV)

Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. Psalm 63:3-4 (NIV)

Giving God praise should not be an occasional thing. We need to develop an ongoing attitude of praise and thankfulness. Obviously, in life we have many things to think about -- our work, our families, and many other important things. However, thanksgiving and praise should never be far from our thoughts, and we need to regularly look for ways in which we can thank and praise our Lord in relation to our activities throughout the day.

7. Jesus sings and He speaks the praises of God.

We don't normally think of Jesus as singing. However, the following verses (Hebrews 2:11-12) clearly identify Jesus as one who sings in the "midst of the church". It appears that when a body of believers has a genuine song and praise service, apparently Jesus is there singing with us.

**For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 saying:
"I (Jesus) will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly, I will sing praise to You." Hebrews 2:11-12 (NKJV)**

Jesus not only sings; He gives spoken praise to the Father.

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. Luke 10:21 (NKJV)

8. There is wide variety in Biblical examples of praise.

Praise can be given in many different ways. Praise can be spoken, shouted, sung, or an unspoken attitude of our hearts. Praise can be given individually or it can be given as a group.

My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to You; Psalm 71:23a (NASB)

And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice. 2 Chronicles 20:19 (ESV)

David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O LORD, ... 1 Chronicles 29:10a (NIV)

Then the man bowed down and worshiped the LORD, saying, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. Genesis 24:26-27a (NIV)

Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; Speak of all His wonders. 1 Chronicles 16:9 (NASB)

However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. 1 Peter 4:16 (NIV)

And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. Acts 3:8 (KJV)

Praise can be given individually or it can be given as a group.

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him... Luke 17:15-16a (NIV)

When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David, king of Israel. With praise and thanksgiving, they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love to Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. Ezra 3:10-11 (NIV)

Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people, And praise Him in the company of the elders. Psalm 107:32 (NKJV)

Praise is often accompanied by musical instruments. Those of us without a lot of musical talent can still sing jubilantly, and give a real loud blast on a ram's horn (if we can find one).

Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy. Psalm 33:2-3 (NIV)

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn -- shout for joy before the LORD, the King. Psalm 98:4-6 (NIV)

The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." 2 Chronicles 5:13a (NIV)

The priests took their positions, as did the Levites with the LORD's musical instruments, which King David had made for praising the LORD and which were used when he gave thanks,... 2 Chronicles 7:6a (NIV)

Four thousand are to be gatekeepers and four thousand are to praise the LORD with the musical instruments I have provided for that purpose." 1 Chronicles 23:5 (NIV)

Praise can be given to the Lord for a specific act that God has done, or for a specific characteristic of God, or it can be a more general praise for who He is and all He does.

I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! Deuteronomy 32:3 (NIV)

For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. 1 Chronicles 16:25 (NIV)

**The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God my Savior! Psalm 18:46 (NIV)
I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works,
And my soul knows it very well.** Psalm 139:14 (NASB)

Praise be to the LORD, for he has heard my cry for mercy. Psalm 28:6 (NIV)

The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman redeemer. Ruth 4:14a (NIV)

**And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "This time I will praise the LORD."
Therefore, she named him Judah.** Genesis 29:35a (NASB)

**Oh give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples.
Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; Speak of all His wonders. Glory in His holy name;
Let the heart of those who seek the LORD be glad.** 1 Chronicles 16:8-10 (NASB)

They sang, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, saying, "For He is good, for His lovingkindness is upon Israel forever." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. Ezra 3:11 (NASB)

He said, "Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, Exodus 18:10a (NIV)

When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. Deuteronomy 8:10 (NIV)

...And the king bowed in worship on his bed and said, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has allowed my eyes to see a successor on my throne today." 1 Kings 1:47b-48 (NIV)

Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness ... 2 Chronicles 20:21 (NIV)

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 1 Peter 1:3 (NIV)

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 2 Corinthians 1:3 (NIV)

Perhaps the most unusual example of praise is when Jehoshaphat sent the choir out in front of the army when they were getting ready to fight a major battle.

When he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who sang to the LORD and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, "Give thanks to the LORD, for His lovingkindness is everlasting." When they began singing and praising, the LORD set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; so they were routed 2 Chronicles 20:21-22 (NASB)

9. In heaven there is on-going praise and worship.

And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME." And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created." Revelation 4:8-11 (NASB)

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and

wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!" The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.
Revelation 5:11-14 (NIV)

Worship, Praise, and Music

God loves music. There are about five hundred references to some kind of music in the Bible.

Before creation, there was music in heaven. Beginning early in the Old Testament, there was music. Godly kings and leaders promoted music, praise, and worship. Jesus and His disciples sang. In the early church, there was music. And we find in the book of Revelation that there will be music in eternity to come.

Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. Psalm 47:6 (KJV)

O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. Psalm 95:1-3 (KJV)

Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting. Psalm 147:1 (ESV)

Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious! Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!" Psalm 66:1-3a (NIV)

Sing to him; sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! 1 Chronicles 16:9 (ESV)

Praise and music go together throughout Scripture. A primary means of expressing praise is through our music.

Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. Psalm 95:1-2 (NIV)

He stationed the Levites in the temple of the LORD with cymbals, harps and lyres in the way prescribed by David ... Hezekiah gave the order to sacrifice the burnt offering on the altar. As the offering began, singing to the LORD began also, accompanied by trumpets and the instruments of David, king of Israel. The whole assembly bowed in worship, while the singers sang and the trumpeters played. All this continued until the sacrifice of the burnt offering was completed. When the offerings were finished, the king and everyone present with him knelt down and worshiped. King Hezekiah and his officials ordered the Levites to praise the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness and bowed their heads and worshiped. 2 Chronicles 29:25-30 (NIV)

He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Psalm 40:3a (ESV)

In the Bible there is variety in music. There are solos, duets, women's choirs, men's choirs, small

choirs, and choirs numbering in the thousands. In heaven, over one hundred million angels sing together. There are many musical instruments mentioned. There are harps, flutes, lyres, stringed instruments, trumpets, ram's horns, tambourines, cymbals, lutes, pipes, and zithers.

This study of music is a call for us to deepen our understanding of God's purpose for music and to bring joy to the heart of God as we sing the praises of our God and of our Lord Jesus Christ.

While worship is much broader than music, music can and should be an important part of our worship.

Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Psalm 100:2 (NIV)

Following are some important Biblical teachings related to music:

1. Music is a primary way of praising God.

There are many Scriptures linking music and praise.

Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. Psalm 47:6 (KJV)

Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting. Psalm 147:1 (ESV)

Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Psalm 100:2 (NIV)

I will be glad and exult in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. Psalm 9:2 (NASB)

O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. Psalm 95:1-3 (KJV)

Even in hard circumstances, we can sing praise to God.

And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, Acts 16:23-25 (ESV)

As Christians, we can sing anywhere or any time. We can sing when we're alone or we can sing when we are with others. Those with musical ability can sing and play skillfully while the rest of us can just sing. And God is pleased with us both.

2. The song of a Christian is a new song.

In the Word of God there are many references to the "new song" of the believer. As Christians, we sing and play a new song. In the book of Psalms in the Old Testament and the book of Revelation in

the New Testament, we sing a “new song”. A “new song” does not mean a newly written song or the latest “hit”, but rather it is a new kind of a song. *It is new in character and quality.* In other words, our song is not the same as the world’s song, but is a totally different kind of a song.

He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Psalm 40:3a (NASB)

Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly!
Psalm 149:1 (ESV)

And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. Psalm 40:3 (KJV)

And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." Revelation 5:9-10 (NIV)

The new song of the believer is radically different than the music of the world. Our music is joyful praise to God while the world’s music is designed to entertain or to stimulate feelings or passion. As with every part of our life, we are to glorify God with our music.

3. One result of being filled with the Spirit of God is that we sing.

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ... Ephesians 5:18-19 (ESV)

Music is an expression of what is in our heart and souls. Real genuine music that is praise or worship comes from a heart that is filled with the Spirit of God. It comes from a heart that is controlled and led by the Spirit.

Throughout the Old Testament, there were times of revival among God’s people. After turning away from the Lord, a godly leader would lead them back to the worship of God. Often one of the first things to be restored was the music and praise of God. When we walk with God, we worship Him and we sing His praise.

The world also loves music. The world’s music does not come from a heart that is controlled by the Spirit, but from a heart that is controlled by the sinful nature. Much of its music is an expression of sin, rebellion, and sensuality. Unfortunately, this music is loved not only by the world but by many Christians. If the music we sing or listen to is pleasing to our old sinful nature, it is not exalting God. The old nature cannot please God. (Romans 8:5-8)

4. When the Word of God dwells in us richly, we sing.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another

in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
Colossians 3:16 (NKJV)

Your decrees are the theme of my song... Psalm 119:54 (NIV)

May my tongue sing of your word, ... Psalm 119:172 (NIV)

When we love and regularly read and absorb the Word of God, we enjoy singing praise to God. Christians who do not let the Word of God dwell in them richly will not feel much like continually singing praise to God. When we walk with God and are filled with His Spirit and His Word, we will want to sing. If we do not often feel like singing, perhaps we need to recommit ourselves to absorbing the teachings of the Word of God.

5. Music is not only a means to praise the Lord; our music teaches Biblical truth and admonishes us to follow and to walk with Him.

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Colossians 3:16 (NASB)

God calls and gifts some of His followers to be teachers of the Word of God. Teachers are important; however, we can also learn Biblical truth through good Christian music. I suspect that often a lot more of our understanding and concepts come from our music than we realize.

The right kind of music also admonishes or motivates us to serve the Lord.

This makes it important that we choose our music carefully. If music teaches and admonishes us, then it is important that we choose the music that correctly teaches and encourages God's people. There have been many wrong concepts or teachings that came through music.

6. The song of the Christian is a song of joy.

We who have been saved have a lot to be happy about. Even in hard times we can have an underlying satisfaction and joy because of all His blessings. (Ephesians 1) This underlying joy is reflected in the music that is so important in our life.

But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, Psalm 5:11 (ESV)

Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright. Psalm 33:1 (ESV)

I will be glad and exult in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. Psalm 9:2 (NASB)

...Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. James 5:13b (NIV)

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the

ram's horn-- shout for joy before the LORD, the King. Psalm 98:4-6 (NIV)

Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him. Psalm 126:5-6 (NIV)
An evil man is ensnared in his transgression, but a righteous man sings and rejoices.
 Proverbs 29:6 (ESV)

7. There is variety in the music of Christians.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
 Colossians 3:16 (NKJV)

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, Ephesians 5:18-19 (ESV)

There is variety in our music. Notice that in both of these key passages it mentions “psalms”, “hymns”, and “spiritual songs”. The distinction between these three categories does not seem to be clear cut but we can get at least a basic understanding of what they are.

a. Psalms: “Psalms” primarily refers to the Old Testament psalms. These were psalms or songs sung by God’s people in that time. Many of the psalms praised the nature and the work of God. It is still good to sing psalms as part of our music program.

b. Hymns: Many Bible scholars believe that Philippians 2:6-11 and Colossians 1:15-18 were hymns sung by the early church. These passages focus on the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Again, the definition of “hymn” may not be clear cut but these two passages give us an idea of what a hymn is. In a general sense, a hymn or “song of praise” is a song that focuses on truths about God and gives Him praise and glory.

c. Spiritual songs: Spiritual songs is a broader category that seems to be songs that express our personal joy and testimony of what God has done for us.

All of these songs, whether they are a psalm from Scripture, a hymn of praise to our God, or a testimony of what God has done, come from a heart that is filled with the Spirit of God and with the Word of God.

8. God does not accept all music offered in His name.

We find that God does not accept all music that is offered to Him in praise or worship. God has some very strong words for music that comes from an insincere heart. God does not accept music and praise from a heart that is not living righteously and justly.

I will put an end to your noisy songs, and the music of your harps will be heard no more.
 Ezekiel 26:13 (NIV)

"I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies.... "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. "But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Amos 5:21, 22-24 (NASB)
I will turn your religious feasts into mourning and all your singing into weeping.
 Amos 8:10a (NIV)

Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations -- I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Isaiah 1:13-15 (NIV)

These are shocking verses. *"Take away from Me the noise of your songs;"* There are times when our music is noise that repulses God. Within the context of each of these passages, the people were not honoring God in the way they lived. They identified themselves as worshipers of God and they went through the motions of worship, but their hearts were not right with God. God was sick of their so-called worship and music. God yearns for genuine praise and music, but hypocritical praise and music is an abomination to Him.

The following verse does not mention music, but it does give us a Biblical guide to use in determining if a song is acceptable to God.

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. Philippians 4:8 (NASB)

As an application of this verse, we can legitimately substitute "sing" in the place of "dwell". We sing about things that are true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, excellent, and praiseworthy.

It is not just the worship leaders who must correctly understand worship, praise and music and be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit. Those who come to the service must also be sincere in their desire to serve and to worship the Lord.

My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice. Ezekiel 33:31-32 (NIV)

9. Glorifying God With Our Music

It is unfortunate but the role of music in the church and in the lives of individual Christians has often been a divisive contentious issue. Churches have split over these issues.

The Word of God clearly instructs us many times to use music as an avenue of praise of Him. There are no Biblical instructions given for using music for such things as entertainment or to draw a crowd. Does that mean that it is wrong to use music for these purposes? Can we use music as entertainment? Can a church use music as a means to appeal to people and draw them into church? Is it okay to bring

secular music styles (genre) into the church to make it more appealing to people? Can I listen to classical music? Is country and western, okay? Is rock, or ??? okay? These and other questions are not always easy questions to answer.

As His followers we must remember that being a follower or a worshiper of the Lord Jesus Christ is a lifestyle that includes every part of our life, including our music. In the Word of God there are numerous instructions given that have to do with our way of life. There is no part of our life that is outside of these instructions.

The following verses all teach some very high standards. We all recognize that none of us are perfect or faultless, but if we have a desire to grow in our walk with the Lord, we will actively seek to put these high standards and teachings into practice. These standards apply to our life as individuals and they apply to all the activities and programs of a church, including its music.

In the following verses we are instructed that, as His followers, we are to have a transformed mind or way of thinking. We cannot serve the Lord and please Him and still think like the world.

Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:1-2 (NASB)

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. Philippians 4:8 (NASB)

In this verse (Philippians 4:8) we are given instructions as to what kinds of things we are to put into our minds. As His followers we are to have renewed minds. We cannot entertain ourselves with music, TV, or reading material that does not meet these standards and then simply brush it off by saying, "I enjoy listening but I don't think about it". If it goes into our minds, it will influence us.

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV)

Everything we do is to be done for the glory of God. This is an acid test. Do our choices, our actions, and our attitudes genuinely bring God glory?

The following group of verses all clearly instruct us to live holy lives. Remember, to be holy is to be set apart from evil unto God. Again, this is a high standard. In every part of our life we are to be separated unto God. We are to seek to be holy like God is holy. We are to be set apart unto God in "*all that we do*".

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." 1 Peter 1:14-16 (NIV)

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that

contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NIV)

But the Lord of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. Isaiah 8:13 (ESV)

The following verse does not mention holiness, but holiness is certainly at the heart of this verse.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ... Titus 2:11-12 (NIV)

We have looked at the following verse a number of times, but it is very applicable here. In all phases of our life, we are to have a reverence and awe of God. In every activity, both individuals and churches are to revere God. Again, there is no part of our life that is outside of these instructions.

...let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12:28b-29 (NIV)

In the Word of God there are two kinds of wisdom—wisdom from above and earthly wisdom. We must use the “wisdom from above” if we are to make decisions that honor Him. We need to determine which kind of wisdom we are using as we make decisions in life.

Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. James 3:15, 17 (NIV)

Again, churches and individuals have strongly disagreed over questions relating to music. I am not going to try to answer all the questions posed in the second paragraph of this section. I have my convictions, but I will not try to use this study as an avenue to defend all of these convictions.

What I will do is to strongly encourage individuals and churches to carefully and sincerely evaluate their practices, their programs, and their motives, using Scriptures like the ones given in this section. If we use music in a way not specifically covered in the Word, we need to be sure that it is in sync with Biblical instructions relating to all areas of the Christians life. No part of our life is outside of God's instructions for godly living. We would need to ask ourselves questions such as the following: Are we being genuinely led by the Spirit or are we relying on our own human wisdom? Is the music glorifying God? Is it in tune with a Biblical standard of holiness? Is the music in sync with verses such as Philippians 4:8?

Another debate among Christians concerns bringing secular styles (genre) of music into the church in order to relate to people better. Again, I would urge caution. Much of the world's music is designed to appeal to one's sinful nature. This is a natural thing for unsaved people to do. If a musical style is designed to appeal to the sin nature, it has no place in a church's worship program.

Genuine praise and worship may appeal to people, especially Christians, and they may be drawn to church by our music. From time to time even an unsaved person may be attracted to a genuine music and worship program of the church. There is nothing wrong with that. However, we must not forget that the fundamental purpose of our church's music is to praise and worship God, not to draw a crowd.

If the primary purpose of our music is to appeal to people, it is probably not very sincere or genuine worship.

Again, God loves music. He has called us to praise Him and, for most of us, music is a primary way that we express our praise to God. Praising and worshiping God is a high calling. It glorifies and pleases our God. What a privilege and what a joy we have. Let us do everything we can to fulfill our calling and glorify our Lord Jesus Christ through our worship, our praise, and our music.

Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Psalm 150 (NIV)

Conclusion

Many years ago, an individual named Stephen Charnock wrote, *“Without a sincere heart there is no worship: it is only a stage play, an acting of a part ... a hypocrite. We may be truly said to worship God if we lack perfection, but we cannot worship God if we lack sincerity.”*

I believe this statement is true. Our worship may not be perfect, but it is still worship if given from a heart that is sincere in its commitment to serving the Lord.

It would be well for us to stop and remember and to carefully think about some of the characteristics of genuine worship that we have covered in this study – *to bow down, to revere, to fear God, to serve God, to glorify Him, to honor Him, to have awe, to adore, to respect, to love, to have devotion*. In our spirit we bow before Him with an attitude of reverence and awe, with love, devotion, and submission. We worship in the “splendor of His holiness” and we offer Him our bodies as a “living sacrifice”.

As I personally look at these characteristics of worship, I have to wonder if my own worship is pleasing to the Lord. I’m afraid I fall far short of many of these standards. However, I believe that I am growing in my walk with the Lord and He deeply loves each of us – including me. Because of who He is and what He has done for us, it is my desire to give Him the worship He seeks, even though my worship lacks perfection.

Carefully read the following verses. While the word “worship” is not used in any of these verses, worship is certainly at the heart of these verses. God created men and women in his own image so that they would be capable of bringing Him the kind of worship He desires. To worship God and glorify Him is the very heart and soul of why we exist. To fail to properly worship is to miss the very reason and purpose for which we are created.

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:27 (NASB)

Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.” Isaiah 43:7 (NASB)

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son,
Romans 8:29a (ESV)

It can legitimately be said that ultimately our goal is to be conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are to be like the one we worship in every part of our life.

Evaluating a Church's Worship Service

Following is a list of questions that may be used to evaluate a church's worship, praise and music programs. We must recognize that no church or individual is faultless; however, we still need to reflect the leading of the Spirit of God in our services.

1. Are those who lead or have a part in leading the public worship service sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in their life? Does their lifestyle reflect a commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ?
2. Does the music reflect the new song of the believer?
3. Are the words of the songs Biblically accurate and true? Do they rightly reflect God's thoughts and attitudes?
4. Does the music and worship service promote an awe and reverence of our holy God? Does it promote submission, love, and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ?
5. Do those who are leading worship focus the attention of those participating on the Lord Jesus Christ, or is the service drawing attention to people?
6. Does the style of music or the manner in which the music is performed appeal to the listener's spiritual nature or does it appeal to the listener's sinful human nature?
7. Can the words of the songs be understood by those listening? If the words cannot be understood, then the effectiveness of the song is diminished.
8. Is the accompaniment so loud that the song itself can hardly be heard or understood?

Preparing Ourselves for Worship

When we attend a church service, many of us come with the idea of, "What can I get out of it?". We often hear something like, "I don't get anything out of church". We need to change our attitude and come with the idea that we are coming together to give God corporate worship and praise. Even if the service is less than perfect, we can still come with the understanding that I am here to give God worship and praise. We also come so that we can encourage and build up our fellow believers.

Hebrews 10:12 is a tremendous verse that we can use to prepare ourselves for public worship. While the words "worship" or "praise" are not in this verse, it is certainly the heart and soul of preparing

ourselves to give genuine worship and praise to God.

...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.
Hebrews 10:22 (NIV)

Now let's look at the individual phrases in this passage.

“...let us draw near to God...”

This is a call to worship. We must have a sincere desire to draw near to God.

“...with a sincere heart...”

Again, we may not be perfect, but we can be sincere.

“...in full assurance of faith...”

In coming before God, we are confident that He exists and that He can be trusted to keep His word. We actively seek to strengthen our faith by absorbing the Word of God and seeking to know Him better and drawing ever closer to Him.

“...having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience...”

In Scripture, “heart” is a broad word which refers to our inner being, -- our mind, our attitudes, our emotions, our feelings, and our desires. It is who we are, and what makes me to be me and you to be you. A clean heart or a pure heart is one that has been made clean by the blood of Jesus and seeks to live a transformed life. That person has learned, with the strength of the Spirit of God, to control his mind, passions, and desires. Now instead of desiring evil, he desires to worship and to praise our God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He comes to God with a clean conscience.

“...having our bodies washed with pure water.”

When we bring our thoughts and our feelings under control, we will also bring our physical bodies under control. Many sins are committed through our bodies. When we seek to control our heart and our body and to bring them under the control of the Spirit of God, we then bring God sincere praise and worship.

A verse similar to Hebrews 10:22 is James 4:8. This verse contains the promise that when we draw near to God, then He will draw near to us. Wow!!! What a blessing and a privilege. We can be near to the God of the universe and He is seeking our praise and our worship and He will draw near to us.

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded.

James 4:8 (NIV)

God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing He can give us. In return, He seeks our worship. Let's respond by learning to worship Him in spirit and in truth, in reverence and in awe. It glorifies

the Lord Jesus Christ and we fulfill the very reason for which we were created by God. Life cannot get any better than that!

As was stated at the beginning of this study, this is a call to a deeper walk with God. It is a call to be in reverence and awe of God. Let us seek to know Him better and deepen our walk with Him. This is a call for revival, done God's way. Lasting revival in our own hearts and in our churches will come as we learn to bring Him the acceptable worship and service that He desires.