

BIBLICAL WORSHIP: TEN VALUES

and Their Application to the Local Church

Bob Kauflin

INTRODUCTION

- A. Confusion exists about worship today.
 - 1. The “worship phenomenon”
 - 2. What the Bible says about worship isn’t as clear as we think.
 - 3. The world, the devil, and our flesh oppose the knowledge of God.
- B. What kind of worship pleases God?

I. Biblical worship is grounded in God’s supreme love for His glory.

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven. Ps. 148:13

I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols. Is. 42:8

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Jn. 17:24

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. Rev. 21:23

- A. The heart and focus of biblical worship is about exalting God, not us.
- B. Biblical worship involves encountering God as He really is.
- C. Biblical worship entails enjoying God more than anything.

II. Biblical worship encompasses all of life.

“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good? (Deut. 10:12-13)

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1Cor. 10:31

Rom. 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Heb. 13:15 Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. 16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

III. Biblical Worship is centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Cor. 4:6

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

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. 1Pet. 2:5

Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" Rev. 5:11-12

- A. Jesus is at one and the same time the mediator, pattern, and object of our worship.
- B. The cross is essential to our worship for at least three reasons.
 - 1. Without the cross we have **no access** to God. (Eph. 2:18)
 - 2. Without the cross, there is **no acceptable worship**. (1 Pet. 2:4)
 - 3. Without the cross, there is **no worship in heaven**. (Rev. 5:12)

IV. **Biblical worship is enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit.**

Eph. 2:18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

2 Cor. 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

1 Cor. 12:3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

1Cor. 14:24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

- A. We must **acknowledge** the role God's Spirit plays in our worship, both in revealing God's presence and making our worship possible.
- B. We should eagerly **expect** the activity of God's Spirit in and among us.
 - 1. In spectacular and unspectacular ways
 - 2. During and outside meetings.
- C. We must **respond** to the working of God's Spirit in our midst and in our hearts.

V. **Biblical Worship is saturated with and governed by God's word.**

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. 2 Tim. 3:16-17

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Ps. 19:7-11

I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word. Ps. 138:2

- A. Throughout Scripture, the Word of God plays a central role in the worship of God. (Gen. 3; Ex. 20; 1 Kings 8:9; Ex. 34:6; 2 Chron. 30:16, 17:9, 31:2-4; Ezra 7:10; Jn. 1:1, Col. 3:16)
- B. The Old Testament makes it clear that not all worship we offer, however sincerely, is acceptable to God. C (Gen. 4:3-8; Lev. 10; 1 Sam. 15; Ex. 32)
- C. We must Scriptures in light of biblical theology, which takes into account where specific commands fit into the flow of the Bible's redemptive story.
- D. The New Testament contains no specific pattern for corporate worship.
- E. Some guidelines to follow in applying Scripture to our corporate worship are these:
 - 1. Don't neglect what God's word clearly commands (sing, pray, preach the Word).
 - 2. Don't do what God's Word forbids (self-mutilation, worshipping images).
 - 3. In everything else use biblically informed wisdom.
- F. We should especially note the proportional weight Scripture gives to specific practices.

VI. Biblical worship is ultimately expressed in and through the church.

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 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 Pet. 2:4-5

In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Eph. 2:22

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. Acts 20:28

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 1 Pet. 2:9

- A. Biblical worship was never meant to have a primarily individual, isolated focus.
- B. The Bible reveals that God's purpose has always been to redeem a people who would declare the greatness of His name through the words and witness of their life together.

- C. Metaphors for the church in the New Testament are corporate. (1 Cor. 3:9b; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 12:27; 1 Pet. 4:17, 2:5, 9-10)
- D. Worshipping God in the context of the gathered church has unique benefits.
 - 1. A greater awareness of God's presence.
 - 2. A more accurate picture of God.
 - 3. Greater glory to God.
 - 4. More opportunity for building others up and being encouraged ourselves.
 - 5. Involvement of God's appointed shepherds, who have been given the responsibility to lead, guide, guard, and feed God's people. (1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17).
- E. The church gathered and the church scattered. (1 Pet. 2:9-12)

VII. Biblical worship shows itself in expressiveness and forms accompanied by inward faith.

'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' Matt. 15:8-9

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. Heb. 11:6

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

- A. Bodily expressions are associated with worship throughout Scripture. (Ex. 15:20; Ex. 12:27; (2 Chron. 20:19; Job 1:20; Acts 3:8; Rev. 1:17)
- B. God commands certain expressions. (Ps. 41:1, 95:6, 149:3, 22:23; 1 Tim. 2:8)
- C. Physical responses in themselves are no sign one way or the other that God is pleased with our worship.
- D. Our expressions of devotion on the outside must line up with attitudes of faith-filled devotion on the inside.
- E. Many factors influence expressiveness: cultural acceptability, habit, fear of man, lack of true delight in God. We must seek to serve one another.

- F. The music, forms, and liturgies we use in corporate worship are not irrelevant and should be wisely chosen, but are no substitute for a heart of worship and faith in the finished work of Christ. Forms without faith are futile.

VIII. Biblical worship is mutually edifying and personally transforming.

What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. 1Cor. 14:26

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 1 Cor. 12:4-7

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Heb. 10:24-25

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 2 Cor. 3:18

- A. God intends there to be a horizontal dimension to our meetings as well as a vertical one. (Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 14:12; Heb. 10:24-25; Rom. 15:7)
- B. What we say and do must be understandable and relevant to those around us.
- C. One of our goals in coming together is to worship God by meeting the needs of those who gather with us. (James 2:2-4)
- D. While biblical worship is mutually edifying, it is also personally transforming. God redeems His people to change them.

IX. Biblical worship is unifying in the midst of diversity.

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. Rom. 15:5-7

But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 1 Cor. 12: 18-20

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. Eph. 2:14-16

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." Rev. 5:9-10

- A. What keeps us from experiencing the unity of the Spirit that Jesus achieved for us through His atoning death and victorious resurrection?
 - 1. Ignorance.
 - 2. A fear that church growth will be hindered unless people's preferences are catered to.

- B. Diversity in musical preferences, culture, or background should be no celebrated! There are a number of benefits to using different musical styles in congregational worship.
 - 1. Helps open our eyes to the creativity and glory of God.
 - 2. Enables a broader range of responses to God.
 - 3. Enables us to hear the same words with different emotion and effect.
 - 4. Expresses God's heart for people of all cultures and nations.

- C. Not every musical style is appropriate for congregational worship.

X. Biblical worship participates in and anticipates the worship of heaven.

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Heb. 12: 22-24

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Phil. 3:20-21

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Rev. 7:9-10

- A. Our lives together on earth, especially when we meet together to give praise to God, can be regarded in some way as an expression of the heavenly reality.
- B. Our worship should reflect what is taking place around the throne.
- C. This earthly connection with heavenly realities means that the praise of our lips and lives joins with the worship of the church past, present, and future.
- D. Our lives of worship here are similar to heaven, but in many ways they remain distinct from it.
- E. Our worship in heaven will be more glorious than we can possibly imagine.
- F. As the day of seeing our Redeemer's face draws closer, we have an increasing desire to "lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and...run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith." (Heb. 12:1-2)

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Eph. 3:20-21