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*The*  
**Ingredients**  
*of*  
**Worship**

Making Worship a Way of Life

The Ingredients of Worship

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## **DEDICATION**

First and foremost I want to dedicate this book to my wife Renae. Her encouragement through the years has kept me going when I wanted to quit. She has loved me when I know I wasn't very lovable. How blessed I am to have such a wonderful companion and friend. I will love and cherish her till death do we part.

I further wish dedicate this book to my children Matthew, Amber, Anna, Ashley and Angie. The joy you have brought to my life has given me a taste of heaven. To have our family standing before the throne of God in worship will be one of the crowning moments of my journey. I love you more than words can say.

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## **PREFACE**

I have been leading worship in small groups and corporate settings for many years. While leading worship in small groups, I have seen the floors of dens and living rooms covered with people on their faces in the presence of God. On many occasions I believe we could have sung *Mary Had a Little Lamb* and God would have shown up. In corporate settings I have seen people dance, shout and clap their hands while at the same time others knelt, bowed and wept. On some occasions people were physically healed and some came to salvation during these anointed times of worship.

Because we enjoy seeing people being touched by God, we can find ourselves worshiping the experiences that often accompany God's manifest presence. The primary purpose of our worship, however, is not to experience the hand of God but to see the face of God. It can also become very tempting to worship our praise and praise our worship. Because music is a universal language, we can even find ourselves worshiping our music instead of God.

As wonderful as these experiences are, I have come to understand that the experiences themselves are not the origin of worship; they are the overflow of worship. Worship is for God alone. He is the giver and the receiver of worship. All true worship has God at its center. It's all about him.

One Saturday morning I enjoyed breakfast with a pastor who is a long time friend of mine. He asked if I would do some teaching on worship for the praise band at his church. He felt there were some hurdles keeping the praise team from reaching their full potential. We didn't get far into the conversation when I realized the real reason he wanted me to come. "When the worship is good it opens people up to hear the word. I preach better when the worship is good," he said. When I suggested that worship was not to help him preach better he was visibly offended.

Often, we as Christians are so wrapped up in our own agendas that we miss the real reason for worship. First of all, we are born with a nature that has self in the center. We grow up in a society that tells us to better ourselves. Hollywood and the media are constantly at work to persuade us to pamper ourselves. We even choose the church we attend based on what it has to offer us rather than how we can serve God's people.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.* We have been bought with the blood of Jesus and we are not our own. Though we benefit greatly from worship and should get pleasure from it, the ultimate purpose of worship is not to make us feel better. It is to glorify God. Worship's primary agenda is God.

Worship is more than a time slot to be filled on Sunday morning. Worship begins before the music starts, when no one is looking. Worship is a way of life; daily giving oneself to God. True outward expressions of worship flow from a heart that is intimately involved with the Father. Without obedience and daily communion with the Father, outward expressions of worship can become mere emotional experiences. Worship may be emotional, but emotions are not the fuel of true worship. Worship cannot be "worked up." No amount of hype can produce true worship.

In this book I share ideas that I believe are necessary for worship to become a way of life, and not just an emotional experience when gathered with other believers. I pray that these ideas will be a blessing and a stepping-stone that will help you raise your life to a higher level of worship.

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*I can safely say, on the authority of all that is revealed in the Word of God, that any man or woman on this earth who is bored and turned off by worship is not ready for heaven.*

A.W. Tozer

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### TRUE WORSHIPERS

In England during the 1500s, and especially during the reign of Queen Mary, the Christian Church came under terrible persecution. Many Christians including clergy were excommunicated or executed for refusing to denounce their beliefs and adhere to the teachings of the Catholic Church. One of those who suffered for his faith was Thomas Hawkes.

Thomas Hawkes was born in Essex, England and later entered into the service of the Lord of Oxford. Upon the death of Edward VI, rather than change his religious beliefs to that of Queen Mary's, Hawkes left his service and returned home. After returning home Hawkes' wife gave birth to a son. Hawkes refused to have the boy baptized according to Catholic tradition and was reported to the Earl of Oxford. The earl sent Hawkes to Bishop Bonner of London where he answered to the charge of contempt of the sacraments.

Hawkes and Bonner argued over several practices of the Catholic Church. Other Catholic Church officials were summoned to help persuade Hawkes to change his beliefs, but Hawkes stood firm and would not recant. On February 9, 1555 he was condemned as a heretic and stayed in prison until June 10.

Days before Hawkes was to be burned at the stake he agreed with his friends that he would lift his hands over his head if the pain was tolerable and his mind was at peace. When he was engulfed in flames and most people thought him to be dead, Hawkes suddenly raised his burning hands above his head and clapped three times. Those who understood this gesture broke into shouts of praise and applause as Thomas Hawkes sank into the fire and died.

In chapter four of John's gospel, John tells a story of Jesus asking a Samaritan woman for a drink of water from a well near the Samaritan city of Sychar. Jesus broke two Jewish traditions by engaging in this conversation; one by speaking to a woman. It was unusual for a Jewish teacher to speak with a woman in a public place. Also, Jews hated Samaritans, so Jews rarely spoke to them.

Seeing that Jesus was Jewish and perceiving him to be a prophet the woman said, "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." My guess is that Jesus' response was not what the woman expected.

*Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 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 4:21-24

The woman was concerned about the house of worship, but Jesus was concerned about the heart of the worshiper. The woman was concerned with the mountain of worship; Jesus was concerned with the motive of the worshiper.

## True Worshipers Practice Sacrificial Praise

What does it mean to be a true worshiper? How do I truly worship God? Let's explore two characteristics of a true worshiper. 1. True worshipers practice sacrificial praise. 2. True worshipers practice sacrificial living.

The writer of Hebrews offers us a definition of sacrificial praise. *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.* (Hebrews 13:15 NKJV) According to this definition a sacrifice of praise consists of two things; the fruit of our lips and giving thanks to his name.

While driving home from work one evening I found myself following a quarter ton truck loaded with rotten fruits and vegetables. The farmer must have gathered them to feed to his animals. They were certainly not fit for human consumption. According to the original Greek manuscripts, the fruit spoken of in Hebrews 13:15 refers to plucked fruit, ripe, ready to eat, good fruit, fresh from the tree. This would lead us to believe that our sacrifice of praise is the best fruit of our lips, the first fruit of the picking, not something that is left over, blemished, or rotten.

Many people over the years have taught that a sacrifice of praise is praise that is given when the worshiper doesn't feel like praising. This definition totally misses the meaning of the scripture and places the focus of worship on the worshiper instead of the one receiving the worship.

As you read in the Old Testament book of Leviticus you learn that the sacrifices required in the Tabernacle of Moses were only acceptable if they were without blemish. The worshiper didn't offer something he didn't want or could not use; he brought the best of his flock, and brought it willingly (Leviticus 1:1-3). The requirement of a true worshiper is the same today. He must bring the best he has not his leftovers, and he must bring it willingly.

Worship doesn't depend on how the worshiper feels but on how great a God he is worshipping. Worship depends neither on the appearance of the worshiper nor his circumstances but on the greatness of the one who controls the circumstances, and the work he has done on the inside of the worshiper. Hebrews 13:15 (NJKV) says, *Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise.* The "him" he is referring to is Jesus. In Hebrews 13:12 the writer says, *So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.* It is by and through the sanctifying work of the blood of Jesus that we offer our worship.

It was in October of 1975 when I was 16 years old that I first remember kneeling at the altar to ask Jesus Christ to be my Lord and Savior. I didn't feel particularly convicted or remorseful of my sin. Our family had attended church all my life so up until this point I was a pretty good kid morally. It could be that at some point earlier in my life I had asked Jesus to save me, but I remember at 16 thinking I should really make sure that this is a done deal. Besides, there were some other kids in our youth group who were making that decision and if they were going to heaven I wanted to go with them.

As the day drew near for me to be baptized and officially join the church, one afternoon my dad stopped me in our dining room and asked me if I understood what I was doing. I assured him that I did. At this he responded, "There are a lot of people who have their names on the church role who will die and go to hell." To my recollection this was one of the few spiritual things my dad ever said to me. Though we regularly attended church we rarely if ever discussed spiritual matters. I don't remember ever hearing him pray. The only time I remember our family reading the bible together was around the Christmas tree on Christmas Eve.

Though it didn't mean that much to me when he said it, I am fully aware now of what my dad was trying to get me to understand. He wanted me to make sure that what I was doing was heart felt and that a change had taken place inside of me. He didn't want me to do something just because others were doing it. And he wanted me to know that just because I was being baptized and joining the church didn't mean I was getting a free pass to heaven; I must live a life of righteousness. As Jesus stated, *Not everyone who says to Me Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.* (Matthew 7:21)

In Psalm 118:19-20 the psalmist wrote, *Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.* The New Living Translation reads like this, *Open to me the gates where the righteous enter and I will go in and thank the Lord. These gates lead to the presence of the Lord and the godly enter there.*

According to the Psalmist the only way to get into the presence of the Lord is by going through the gates of righteousness and only the righteous are allowed entrance through those gates. That leaves us with a grave dilemma. Why? The Prophet Isaiah wrote, *But we are all like an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.* (Isaiah 64:6 NKJV) In Romans 3:10-12 the Apostle Paul quotes King David when he says, *as it is written: None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.*

Have you ever pictured in your mind what the filthy rags looked like as alluded to by Isaiah? When I thought about it I first pictured an auto mechanic's shop towels; stained with grease and oil from days or months of use. I even pictured the towels of a hospital laundry room. I have often wondered if Isaiah was alluding to the rags of a leper; cankered with puss, blood and rotten flesh. However, the literal meaning of "filthy rags" in this verse is menstrual garments. If that is what our righteousnesses look like what hope have we of ever being able to walk through the gates of righteousness to worship and fellowship with a righteous God? The only righteousness that can stand before God is God's righteousness. Therefore, we must become God's righteousness if we want to come into his presence.

The Apostle Paul wrote, *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* (2 Corinthians 5:21) Isaiah prophesied this, *But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* (Isaiah 53:5-6)

The effects of Christ's unselfish sacrifice are aptly captured by these timeless lyrics. *There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins; and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.* (William Cowper) *O precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. No other fount I know; nothing but the blood of Jesus.* (Robert Lowry) *Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain; he washed it white as snow.* (Elvina M. Hall)

Now we can enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19). The only way to get to God is through his Son. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through the blood of his precious sacrifice (John 14:6).

I firmly believe that God is in the business of physical healing today. However, the greatest miracles occur each time God takes a filthy, rotten heart and makes it clean; all because of the blood of Jesus. And if what Jesus did on the cross doesn't cause us to worship him with abandonment then we are at least one step removed from the center of worship.

A few years ago I listened to a series of tapes by James Ryle titled *The Mercy of God*. During the series he shared an incredible story that I want to share with you.

After the conclusion of World War II an International Military Tribunal held a set of trials for German officials involved in the war and the Holocaust during the Nazi regime. The trials were known as the Nuremberg Trials and were held from 1945-1949 in Nuremberg, Germany. Though 24 Nazi leaders stood accused, only 21 of them actually attended the trials. These men were accused of the murder of approximately 30 million people including 6 million Jews.

Before the trials began the defendants were offered attorneys and chaplains by the courts. Of the 21 offered, 6 asked for a Catholic priest and 15 asked for a Lutheran minister. When searching for a Lutheran minister the courts found a U.S. Army Chaplain who was Lutheran. This chaplain had lost two sons during the war and though he first refused to counsel these men, he later agreed.

Among the 15 men who asked for the Lutheran Chaplain were Göring, Sauckel, von Ribbentrop, Keitel and Rudolph Hess. The chaplain later told that as he stood before these men all he could say to them was, "Jesus Christ died for your sins and offers you forgiveness if you will accept it."

During their very first meeting Sauckel fell to his knees and said, "Oh God, have mercy on me a sinner." After a period of time reading the scriptures von Ribbentrop also sought forgiveness and was born again. Keitel was another of the 13 men who sought God and received his mercy. Two of the men, Göring and Hess, refused God's mercy and both later committed suicide.

As you read this story you might think that God's mercy is not fair. How could God forgive these men of such hideous crimes? Well, you're right. God's mercy isn't fair. Why? Because mercy is something that none of us deserve. All of us deserve eternal punishment, but God, through his Son has chosen to extend mercy to all who will accept it. Mercy is not just something God gives it is who God is; it's his character, part of his glory and name. Look at what God told Moses after Moses requested to see God's glory.

*The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.*

Exodus 34:6-7 (NKJV)

James Ryle said, "Those who have been saved from the lowest hell enter into the highest praise." Though each of us have come from different backgrounds and have experienced different "degrees" of sin, we were all headed in



the same direction; hell. Our only hope was that God would show us mercy through the blood of his Son; Jesus. In the following verses King David captures the mercy of God of which we all are in desperate need.

*The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.*

Psalm 103:8-14

If God never answers another prayer, if he chooses not to bless us or use us above where we are right now, David's revelation alone is enough reason for God to deserve our highest praise. David also wrote, *I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify your name forevermore. For great is your mercy toward me, and you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.* (Psalm 86:12-13 NKJV)

Psalm 117 (NKJV) says, *Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud him, all you peoples! For his merciful kindness is great toward us and the truth of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!* The Hebrew word used for praise in this passage is *halal*. According to Strong's Concordance, *halal* means to be clear (orig. of sound, but usually of color); to shine; hence, to make a show, to boast; and thus to be (clamorously) foolish; to rave; causatively, to celebrate; also to stultify. The Hebrew word *shabach* is translated *laud*. It means to address in a loud tone. These words describe how we should respond to the Lord because of his merciful kindness toward us and the fact that his truth (Heb: stability, certainty, trustworthiness) last forever.

There is nothing in the word *halal* that indicates a passive acknowledgement of God's merciful kindness. In fact, quite the opposite is clear when you look at the definitions to the words that define *halal*.

What does it mean to be clamorously foolish or to rave? The word clamorously is an adjective form of the word *clamor*. *Clamor* means a loud outcry or shouting; *hubbub*. A *hubbub* is a confused babble of loud sounds and voices; an uproar. The word *foolish* means lacking good sense or judgment or silly. The word *rave* means to speak wildly, irrationally, or incoherently, to roar or rage, speak with wild enthusiasm.

Doesn't this sound like a Saturday afternoon collegiate football game or maybe a Sunday afternoon professional game? Fans do foolish things like not wearing shirts in freezing weather and painting their faces and bodies with the team colors. In Green Bay the fans wear blocks of cheese on their heads; the fans in Cleveland wear dog masks while the fans in Minnesota wear Viking helmets. These fans leave no doubt who they are rooting for or where their affections lie. Let's face it; they put the church to shame when it comes to praise. What's even more, they pay good money to praise their team.

I'm not suggesting that we (the church) should run around the sanctuary or our neighborhoods with our shirts off, paint our bodies or wear silly outfits. I'm not saying that we should jump the pews, swing from the chandeliers or do something that would cause harm to us or someone else. But, if these football fans can be that radical in praise of their favorite team, why can't the church be just as radical in their praise of God? Would we be willing to pay \$50, \$75 or \$100 for a stadium seat to radically praise God? Are we willing to look foolish to make it clear to the world that we are praising the God of our affections? Have we really understood God's merciful kindness toward us?

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, wrote, *But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* (Lamentations 3:21-23) If you think about it, God owes us nothing; yet he freely gives. That is mercy. A fresh batch of mercy awaits us each morning. That deserves a fresh batch of our loudest sacrificial praise.

In the fifth chapter of The Revelation of Jesus Christ the Apostle John tells of seeing a Lamb standing in the midst of the throne of God. With the Lamb is the One who sits on the throne as well as four living creatures and twenty-four elders. In John's words the Lamb looked as though it had been slain. When the slain Lamb took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne all of creation broke out in abandoned worship. The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb and sang a new song and were then accompanied in their worship by thousands of angels.

*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. 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! And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever! And the four living creatures said, Amen! and the elders fell down and worshipped.*

Revelation 5:9-14

This bloody Lamb we know affectionately as Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God, Emanuel, the Word of God come in the flesh (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23, John 1:14). Just as he stood bloody in the middle of the throne, he hung bloody on the middle cross and his bloody sacrifice has made him the center of creation's worship. He has become the gates of righteousness by which we enter into the presence of the Father.

The Psalmist continues; *The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.* (Psalm 118:22-24) In what day are we to rejoice? (The Hebrew word used for rejoice is *guwl*. It means to spin around under the influence of any violent emotion.) It is the day the Father made his Son the chief cornerstone, the center of worship. It is the day Jesus became for us salvation (Hebrews 5:9), wisdom from God, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30). God gave us these gifts in his son. We should rejoice and be glad in them. Is that day marvelous in our eyes? Is the Son marvelous in our eyes? If he isn't then we are at least one step removed from the center of worship.

In Luke 17 is recorded the story of Jesus healing ten lepers. Jesus instructed the lepers to go show themselves to the priest. As they went they were cleansed from their leprosy. One of them, upon realizing he was healed, came back and fell at Jesus' feet and with a loud voice praised God and thanked Jesus for what he had done. In my opinion nine of the lepers rejoiced in their gift while one returned to rejoice in the Giver. If God never grants us another request, if he never meets another need, he has done enough in offering his Son to deserve our worship forever. Jesus, in offering his life, has already done enough to be the center of our worship.

We cannot offer to God the best we have apart from the blood that Jesus shed on the cross. His sacrifice makes our sacrifice of praise acceptable. We must come to the Father by him. Though we have a responsibility to worship the Father, we cannot come to him on the basis of our own merit. We only have access to his presence by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19). Not only that, but Jesus' sacrifice should fuel our worship. We should offer to him the best that we have because he offered for us the best that he had.

The writer of Hebrews wrote that a sacrifice of praise is the fruit of our lips. Isaiah 57:19 quotes God as saying, *I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near, says the Lord, and I will heal him.* (NKJV) It seems that God gives us the very thing we need to offer him worship.

In Genesis 22 we read the story of Abraham's obedience to offer his son Isaac to God as a sacrifice of worship. Isaac was God's promised heir to Abraham, and Abraham had waited for many years to see the promise fulfilled. As Abraham and those with him neared the place where the sacrifice was to be made, Abraham took the things necessary for the sacrifice, and he and Isaac went off together. On the way Isaac asked his father where the lamb was for the burnt offering. Abraham replied that God would provide the sacrifice.

When they came to the place God had spoken of to Abraham, Abraham built an altar, put the wood on it, bound Isaac and laid him on the altar. When Abraham stretched out his hand to slay his son, the Angel of the Lord stopped him. The Angel said, *Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.* (Genesis 22:12)

Then Abraham looked behind him and saw a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. He took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. Abraham named the place Jehovah-jireh, which means, *The Lord Will Provide* (Genesis 22:14).

Abraham's sacrifice was acceptable because he offered the best that he had in obedience to God. He could have offered Ishmael, the son born to him by Hagar the Egyptian maidservant of Sarah, Abraham's wife. However, that sacrifice would not have been acceptable because God did not even recognize Ishmael as Abraham's son (Genesis 22:2). When Abraham offered his best, God provided the sacrifice for worship. The Father's requirement is that we offer the best we have. What God demands he supplies. Just as he supplied the Old Testament sacrifices, he creates the fruit of our lips so that we can offer an acceptable sacrifice of praise.

The second aspect of a sacrifice of praise is giving thanks to his name. Many verses in the bible encourage us to give thanks to God. Psalm 92:1 says, *It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High. . .* In Psalm 107:1 we read, *Oh give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.*

For many years now, like most Christian families, in our home we have made it a tradition to give thanks before meals. When our children were younger and all still lived at home, I would choose one of them to say the

blessing. Usually it was a short prayer, very short, and most of the time the blessing was the same prayer each time. I also noticed that the younger children would often pray the same prayer as the older children. The substance and the length of the prayer was never really an issue with me, but I did want my children to understand that God provided for our meals and to learn to have a grateful heart for his provision. My hope was that the gratefulness for food would also spill over to every part of their lives.

The act of thanksgiving in worship has been around for many years. In fact, God made provision for it in the Levitical law.

*And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings that one may offer to the LORD. If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the thanksgiving sacrifice unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of fine flour well mixed with oil. With the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving he shall bring his offering with loaves of leavened bread. And from it he shall offer one loaf from each offering, as a gift to the LORD. It shall belong to the priest who throws the blood of the peace offerings. And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering. He shall not leave any of it until the morning.*

Leviticus 7:11-15

According to James M. Freeman in his book *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, there were three types of peace offerings; thank-offerings, offerings for vows, and free will or voluntary offerings (Leviticus 7:12, 16). Freeman writes, "The offerings were accompanied by the imposition of hands and by the sprinkling of blood around the great altar, on which the fat and the parts accompanying were burned."

Another aspect of the peace offering was that parts of the offering were waved and others were heaved (Leviticus 7:34). According to Jewish tradition the parts of the offering were laid on the hands of the offerer. The priest would put his hands under that of the offerer and move them horizontally for the wave offering and vertically for the heave offering. This action was intended to be a presentation of the offering to God as the supreme ruler of heaven and earth. The use of the Hebrew word for thanksgiving also bears out this Jewish tradition.

In Leviticus 7:12, 13 and 15 the Hebrew word used for thanksgiving is towdah. Towdah means an extension of the hand, avowal or adoration. This word comes from another Hebrew word yadah. Yadah means to use or to hold out the hand, to physically throw at or away, especially to revere in worship with extended hands. Towdah and yadah are used throughout the Psalms.

**Towdah:**

*I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving.*

Psalms 69:30

*Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; Let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise.*

Psalms 95:2

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him, bless His name!*

Psalms 100:4

**Yadah:**

*. . . that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.*

Psalms 30:12

*I will thank you in the great congregation; in the mighty throng I will praise you.*

Psalms 35:18

The tradition of offering the sacrifice of thanksgiving continued with King David. 1 Chronicles 16 records that once David had successfully placed the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle he built, he offered the burnt offerings and the peace offerings. He then appointed some of the Levites to commemorate or record, to thank (yadah), and praise the Lord (1 Chronicles 16:2-4). David even wrote a psalm of thanks that he gave to Asaph for the Levites to minister to the Lord (1 Chronicles 16:7-36). David also appointed singers and musicians to minister and give thanks at the tabernacle of Moses that was in Gibeon where the priests offered the morning and evening sacrifices.

Giving thanks was an integral part of David's worship. He wrote, *I will give thanks (yadah) to the LORD with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.* (Psalm 9:1) The Hebrew word used for whole in Psalm 9:1 means all or every. The Hebrew word used for heart means the feelings, will and intellect.

In essence King David was saying; "With all of my mind, will and emotions I lift my hands in reverence and make my confession of thanksgiving; I will recount with celebration all the things that distinguishes you and sets you apart." Or, "All the marvelous works that you (God) have done, no one else could have done. So with everything that is in me, holding nothing back, I will celebrate you with thanksgiving." David was determined not to be half-hearted in his worship; but rather to offer his thanks with everything that made him who he was.

King Solomon continued the tradition of giving thanks when the Ark of the Covenant was moved into the temple (2 Chronicles 5:13). After years of idolatry in Judah, King Hezekiah restored temple worship and thanksgiving (2 Chronicles 31:2). And after years of exile, Ezra and Nehemiah both record the restoration of Davidic thanksgiving during the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Ezra 3:11; Nehemiah 12:31).

The importance of giving thanks has always been a part of the church age. Jesus gave thanks (Matthew 15:36; 26:27). In his epistles the Apostle Paul exhorted the churches to give thanks. Here are a few of his revelations.

*. . . do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

Philippians 4:6

*And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Colossians 3:17

*. . . give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

1 Thessalonians 5:18

The Greek words used in these passages by Paul for thanks and thanksgiving (eucharisteo and eucharistia) mean; to be grateful or to actively express gratitude towards, to say grace at meals, grateful language to God as an act of worship. In the Revelation of Jesus Christ, John uses those same words as he witnesses the host of heaven giving thanks to God.

*And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever. . . .*

Revelation 4:9

*. . . saying, Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*

Revelation 7:12

*. . . saying, We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.*

Revelation 11:17

The writer of Hebrews wrote that giving thanks to God's name is a part of a sacrifice of praise. In Psalm 97:12 the Psalmist wrote, *Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!* What does it mean to give thanks to God's name?

When my wife and I were deciding on what names to give our children, we determined that at least one of each of their names would be the name of one of their relatives. We thought it would be good for each of those names to be carried on to the next generation. Little did we know that each of their names would correspond with either a physical or character trait that each of them would possess. We named our first-born daughter Amber. We used the name Amber because of the description Ezekiel gives of the brightness in which God appeared to him (Ezekiel 1:4, 27; 8:2). Imagine the surprise when she was born with amber colored hair. No one in either of our families has that color of hair.

What's in a name? In Old Testament times a person's name revealed their character or physical characteristics. For example, Isaac had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. The bible says that when Esau was born he was hairy all over; Esau means hairy. Jacob was born second and his hand took hold of Esau's heel. His name means supplanter. We

know from scripture, that when the brothers were older, Jacob stole Esau's birthright and blessing (Genesis 27:36). A few years later Jacob manipulated his uncle Laban's flock of sheep and gained for himself a stronger flock (Genesis 25-31).

The word most used for name in the Hebrew is *shem*. According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, *shem* has the idea of definite and conspicuous position. In other words it is easy to notice or attracts attention by being unusual or remarkable. *Shem* also means an appellation, as a mark or memorial of individuality. An appellation is a name or title. Thus, *shem* gives us the idea of a name or title that is set apart from everything else. *Shem* also implies honor, authority and character.

Throughout the scriptures God revealed himself to those whom he chose. The following is a sample of God's names revealed in his word.

**Adonai** – Master, Lord – Genesis 15:2

**El-Elyon** -- The Lord Most High – Genesis 14:18-20

**El-Olam** -- The Everlasting God – Isaiah 40:28-31

**El-Shaddai** -- The God Who is Sufficient for the Needs of His People – Genesis 17:1, Psalm 91:1

**Elohim** – Creator, Preserver, Mighty, Strong, Transcendent – Genesis 17:7

**Jehovah** – Self-Existent, Eternal – Exodus 3:2

**Jehovah-Jireh** -- The Lord our Provider – Genesis 22:14

**Jehovah-Nissi** -- The Lord our Banner – Exodus 17:15

**Jehovah-Rapha** -- The Lord our Healer – Exodus 15:26

**Jehovah-Shalom** -- The Lord our Peace – Judges 6:24

**Jehovah-Tsidkenu** -- The Lord our Righteousness – Jeremiah 23:6

**Jehovah-Mekaddishkem** -- The Lord our Sanctifier – Exodus 31:13

**Jehovah-Sabaoth** -- The Lord of Hosts – Isaiah 6:1-3

**Jehovah-Shammah** -- The Lord is Present – Ezekiel 48:35

**Jehovah-Rohi** -- The Lord our Shepherd – Psalm 23:1

In addition to these names other biblical writers have added adjectives such as excellent (Psalm 8:9), good (Psalm 52:9), glorious (Psalm 72:19), great (Jeremiah 44:26; Ezekiel 36:23), awesome (Psalm 99:3), and holy (Psalm 111:9) to describe the name of God.

When the psalmist declared God's name to be excellent he was saying that God's name is wide, large, powerful, famous, gallant and worthy. When David declared God's name to be good he was declaring God's name to be good in the widest sense; beautiful, best, bountiful and pleasant. By declaring that God's name is glorious the psalmist was saying that God's name carries weight, splendor and honor. In revealing his name to be great, God was saying his name is exceeding, high, mighty and noble. To say that God's name is awesome is to declare that it is to be dreadfully feared and revered. When the psalmist proclaimed God's name to be holy he was saying the God's name is sacred.

There is no other name that can compare to God's. His name embodies all that he is and defines his character and authority. And all that he is was poured out into flesh. John declared in his gospel that the Word was God (John 1:1) and the Word became flesh and dwelled on earth in the form of the Son of God; Jesus Christ (John 1:14). God's name, his character and authority, became flesh which is why Paul could write, *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* (Philippians 2:9-11)

Because God's name carries weight or clout, because his name is exceedingly high and mighty and noble, because his name is powerful, famous and worthy, sacred and to be dreadfully feared and revered, we should handle it honorably and respectfully, esteeming it precious; not only in what we say but also in how we live. As the Apostle Paul wrote, *But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: The Lord knows those who are his, and, Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.* (2 Timothy 2:19)

God is jealous for his name and he disciplines those who are called by his name yet do not live a life that is worthy of his name. This concept is clearly seen in his dealings with Israel. God spoke the following words to the prophet Ezekiel.

*Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. Their ways before me were like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity. So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it. I scattered them*

*among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries. In accordance with their ways and their deeds I judged them. But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that people said of them, These are the people of the LORD, and yet they had to go out of his land. But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came. Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.*

Ezekiel 36:17-23

Paul had a similar message for the teachers of law who believed that justification came by keeping the law yet they broke the very law that they preached others should live by. He quotes a passage from Ezekiel when he writes; *For, as it is written, The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.* (Romans 2:24)

In Psalm 29:2 we are exhorted by King David to *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name.* The Hebrew word for glory in this passage means weight. How do we give the Lord the weight that is due his name? David completes this verse with another exhortation; *worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.* Though the second part of this verse may be a totally separate exhortation, my perception is that it completes the first part of the verse. We might say that one way to give the Lord the weight or glory due his name is to worship him in the beauty of holiness.

The Amplified Bible renders this portion of Psalm 29:2 this way; . . . *worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness or in holy array.* The Hebrew word for beauty in this passage means decoration. So it could be read, worship the Lord decorated in holy array. For the believer today this is not speaking of outer ceremonial garments but a holy life before God. Jesus rebuked the Laodicean church for being lukewarm and counseled them to clothe themselves in white garments (Revelation 3:18) that represent purity and holiness.

Most likely you have heard someone say, "He's the splittin' image of his father." When we worship our heavenly father decorated in holy array, living holy lives before others, they get an image of what our father looks like. This is one way our father receives the glory due his name. The objective of our life is to point to him, to magnify him, to make him known, to make much of him. This must have been the idea Jesus had in mind when he said, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.* (Matthew 5:16) The Greek word for glorify in Matthew 5:16 is doxazo. Doxazo means to render glorious, honor and magnify.

Our passion for God's name to be exalted will most likely result in some form of outward expression. We always seem to find a way of displaying to others the things in which we place the most value. Thus, our outward expression of God's worth is another avenue of giving him the glory due his name. This was the heart of King David when he wrote, *I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.* (Psalm 86:12) The Hebrew word glorify in this scripture means to be heavy or make weighty, honorable, glorious, to boast or promote. In this verse David might be saying that the way he will glorify God's name forever is by praising him with all of his heart.

The Hebrew word David used for thanks in Psalm 86:12 is yadah. As we mentioned earlier the word yadah means to use or hold out the hand; to revere or worship with extended hands; to make a confession or give thanks. David not only desired to declare or speak of the greatness of his God but accompany that declaration with outward expression. He most likely wrote Psalm 30:4; a song which was sung at the dedication of his house. *Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks (yadah) to His holy name.*

In Psalm 63:4 David says, *So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands.* In this passage he uses the Hebrew word barak for the word bless. Barak means to kneel or to bless God as an act of adoration. It was customary in David's day for common people to pay homage to royalty by kneeling before them. David displayed the worth of his king by kneeling and raising his hands in adoration.

We mentioned earlier that the Old Testament thank-offering was made with an animal sacrifice. The sacrifice was placed in the hands of the offerer and waved and heaved with the help of the priest. The offering was intended to be a presentation to God as supreme ruler of heaven and earth. Today we present our thank offering is much the same way. We still need the assistance of a high priest to offer our sacrifice.

As I stated earlier in this chapter, the writer of Hebrews said, . . . *by him (Jesus) let us continually offer. . . .* In other words, by his sacrifice we offer our sacrifice. He makes our sacrifice acceptable. However, we do not offer a dead animal sacrifice; we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice.

In Romans 12:1 Paul wrote, *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.* So, in addition to assenting to and acknowledging that God is supreme ruler of heaven and earth; our sacrifice of thanksgiving is the sacrifice of our bodies as a covenant offering to God.

In modern day worship services there is a popular trend of lifting and even waving hands. I dare say many people who express their worship in this manner do so without a clue as to what it represents. Many do it just because it's popular, but doing something because it's popular doesn't make it worship. You see, the offerer of the Old Testament sacrifice could have waved his hands, but without the blood sacrifice it would have meant nothing. It would have not been acceptable to God. Therefore, the waving or lifting of our hands to God in thanksgiving is not acceptable to God if, through Jesus, we do not offer our bodies as a living sacrifice.

Isn't it easy to recognize when someone is not interested in performing a certain task. We might look at such a person and say, "His heart is just not into it." We show our gratefulness to God and display his worth in our lives by being whole-heartedly obedient to his word and direction; giving our bodies as a living sacrifice. We put our gratefulness on display with outward expressions of thanksgiving during times of personal and corporate worship. One psalmist wrote, *Praise the LORD! I will give thanks (yadah) to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.* (Psalm 111:1)

In Hebrews 13:15 (above), the Greek word used in this verse for thanks (homologeō) means to assent, acknowledge, or covenant. So, in giving thanks to His name we are assenting to and acknowledging all that makes God, God; his character and his mighty acts. So, as we enter God's gates to come before his presence with our hands extended in thanksgiving, let us remember that we do so, not only in gratitude for his mighty acts, but as a presentation of our bodies as a living sacrifice in covenant with him, acknowledging that he is supreme ruler of heaven and earth.

Is it possible to measure the level of our gratefulness by the amount of effort we put into offering thanks to the Lord and rejoicing and being glad in what he has given us? Do our lives display our gratefulness and his worth by our whole-hearted obedience?

## True Worshipers Practice Sacrificial Living

To explore the thought of a living sacrifice, let's take a more in depth look at Romans 12:1. Paul wrote, *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.*

The Greek word used for worship in this passage compares to our English word liturgy. According to Webster's dictionary, liturgy is a system of public worship in the Christian church. The New Living Translation renders Romans 12:1 this way: *And so dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice; the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.*

The Roman Christians had certainly heard of sacrifices, but they were familiar with dead ones, not living ones. The Old Testament sacrifices were killed at the will of their masters. They had no will of their own. When it came time for the fire to consume them they didn't object. The same applies to a true worshiper; however, this sacrifice is alive. A true worshiper offers himself to the Master as a holy sacrifice. He is dead to his own will but alive and submitted to the will of his master. When it is time for the fire to consume him he doesn't object. Such was the character of Thomas Hawkes. He was more jealous for God than for his own life. He was so consumed with God that when it was time to face the fire he gladly gave his life.

The King James Version of Roman 12:1 uses the phrase "reasonable service." Indeed the Greek word for reasonable (logikos) does mean rational or logical. So, Paul seemed to say that to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice is our reasonable worship. It is as if it is taken for granted; it is rational and logical. In the preceding versus to chapter 12 of Romans, he explains that God has turned Israel over to disobedience so that he can have mercy on all. Paul continues, *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways. . .* (Romans 11:33) Who would not gladly give themselves to worship him? It only makes sense.

Maybe when Paul wrote the passage in Romans 11 he was pondering the words of the psalmist who wrote, *Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing.* (Psalm 100:2) This living sacrifice of service could be what the Psalmist had in mind when he penned the words to Psalm 100:2. The Hebrew word used for serve in Psalm 100:2 means to work, be enslaved or to be in bond-service.

In order to pay off a debt or to make restitution for a theft, the Hebrew people would often sell themselves into slavery to other Hebrews. In the law, God gave Moses specific instructions concerning Hebrew slaves serving Hebrew masters. In summary, a Hebrew slave was to serve his master for six years and the seventh year was to be set free. However, if the servant loved his master and wanted to continue with him, the master would take him to the judges, then take him to the door or doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. This opening in the ear would signify that the slave or servant chose for love's sake to stay with his master and serve him forever.

Because of the injustices of the past and even the present, this particular type of service seems morally and ethically unacceptable. However, the Psalmist qualifies how this service to the Lord is to be wrought; *with gladness*. The Hebrew word for gladness means blithesomeness or glee, exceedingly glad, joy, or pleasure or rejoicing. So in essence, our bond-service (the giving of our body as a living sacrifice) to God is wrought, not by coercion, but with exceeding gladness, joy and pleasure. This sacrifice (our reasonable worship) springs from our deep love for him and our desire to serve him forever.

Jesus tapped into this idea of a living sacrifice when he said, *Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.* (Luke 17:9-10)

The ultimate expression of love is the sacrificing of one's life for another. Jesus said, *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.* (John 15:13) Laying down of one's life for another is the relinquishing of the right to have one's needs met in order to meet the needs of another. Though this doesn't necessarily mean physical death, physical death is certainly included. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, *And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* (Ephesians 5:2)

A true worshiper has no life of his own. He has been bought with a price. He has died to the right to have his needs met in order to meet the needs of his Creator. In other words, to do the Creator's will. The true worshiper does not exist for himself. He exists for his Maker. A living sacrifice has at its core the greatest of commandments: To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30), all the time.

At the very center of sacrificial living is obedience to the Father's will. In 1 Samuel 15, God gave King Saul a command through the prophet Samuel to destroy all the people of Amalek. He was to destroy their sheep, camels and donkeys as well. However, when Samuel arrived after the battle, Saul had spared the best of the flock and Agag the King of the Amalekites. Saul's excuse for sparing the animals was so that he and the people could sacrifice. In verse 22 we read Samuel's response to Saul, *Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen as the fat of rams.*

God didn't receive Saul's sacrifice of worship because Saul disobeyed God's instructions and worshiped his own way. He satisfied his own ego. Saul wanted to look good in the eyes of the people, but apart from obedience his worship was meaningless.

Without Jesus' death on the cross all mankind would be lost forever. However, without Jesus' submission to the Father's will, there would not have been a sacrifice for sin. According to the book of Matthew, after Jesus and the disciples finished the Passover meal they retreated to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and asked them to pray with him. Going a little further he prayed three times, *My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.* (Matthew 26:39-44) Though Jesus knew the cup of which he would drink was suffering and death, he submitted to the will of the Father. His obedience to the Father and his love for what the Father loved were the factors that made his sacrifice acceptable.

It is obedience to the Father that makes our worship acceptable. Jesus said, *If you love me, you will keep my commandments.* (John 14:15) True love is the gas that fuels our worship. Obedience is the gauge of true love. Without obedience there is no true love. Without true love there is no worship.

There are two important ingredients that propel our obedience to its full potential: brokenness and repentance. Brokenness and repentance are essential when approaching God. It could even be that brokenness and repentance are two major foundation stones of worship. In speaking of brokenness I am not talking about self-pity. Self-pity prides itself in what it pities. Genuine brokenness realizes its dependency on Christ and humbles itself to repent and follow hard after God.

Most of us are familiar with the life of King David. God called him a man after his own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22), yet we know David made some big mistakes that cost him and others a great deal of pain. His adultery with Bathsheba and consequent murder of her husband were among David's lowest hours (2 Samuel 11). We don't know the exact amount of time that elapsed between David's sinful acts and his visit from the prophet Nathan. I read in one commentary that it could have been as much as one year. Can you imagine the guilt David must have endured during that year?

After Nathan rebuked David and brought his sin into the open (2 Samuel 12), David penned the words to Psalm 51. In this Psalm David acknowledges his sin and pleads for mercy. He asked God to create in him a clean heart



and to restore the joy of his salvation. He went on to write, *For you will not delight in sacrifice or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.* (Psalm 51:16-17) The Amplified Bible renders it this way, *My sacrifice [the sacrifice acceptable] to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart [broken down with sorrow for sin and humbly and thoroughly penitent] such, O God, you will not despise.*

In speaking of a broken spirit David uses the Hebrew word *shabar*. *Shabar* means to burst, to break to pieces or to reduce. It is easy to see the brokenness in David's heart as he approaches God about his sin. When speaking of a contrite heart he uses the Hebrew word *dakah*. This word means to crumble, to beat to pieces, to bruise, to crush or to humble.

According to Judson Cornwall in his book *Let Us Worship*, contrite is a word that is used to describe the process of making talcum powder. Cans of talcum powder used to be labeled: This is stone that has been contrited. Cornwall says, "It means that what was once a part of a mountain has been ground and pounded so fine that it will float on water. It takes on a new form."

There is a popular prayer in many circles today that says, "Lord, break our hearts with the things that break yours." It's easy to look around us and see the things that break the Father's heart. Those things include injustices of all forms; hunger, abortion, war and racism to name a few. However, we want to make sure we don't overlook the things inside of us that break his heart. The sin that breaks the Father's heart us should break our hearts as well.

Though we may approach God boldly (Hebrews 4:16), we should never go into his presence presumptuously as though we have earned the right to be there. We have nothing to offer God that he hasn't provided for us. We come to him with our will and self-sufficiency crushed, having taken on a new form. Our approach is dependent on Christ and the sacrifice he gave. He earned the right for us to come into the Father's presence by shedding his blood (Hebrews 10:19).

In 1 Chronicles 21 we read where Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel. Though Joab pleaded with David not commit the evil, David's command stood firm and Israel was numbered. David's action displeased the Lord and he struck Israel. Upon realizing his sin, David cried out to God in repentance asking God take away his iniquity.

In response to David's cry of repentance, God sent Gad the seer to lay before David his options for judgment. God gave David three options of which David chose to fall into the hands of the Lord. The Lord then sent a pestilence on Israel and 70,000 men died. The Lord also sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy the city but later relented. David saw the angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth by the floor of Ornan the Jebusite. David and the elders fell on their faces and David again cried out in repentance asking for mercy.

At the Lord's bidding, Gad the seer instructed David to build an altar at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. David approached Ornan and requested to pay full price for the threshing floor. Ornan offered to give the threshing floor and its contents to David without pay to which David replied, *No, but I will buy them for the full price. I will not take for the Lord what his yours, nor offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing.* (v24)

So, David bought the threshing floor, offered his sacrifices and the Lord answered him from heaven with fire on the altar. Then the Lord commanded the angel to put his sword in its sheath. David then declared that the house of the Lord would be built on the location of Ornan's threshing floor and began making preparation for Solomon to erect the temple there. Solomon completed building the temple after David's death, placed the Ark of the Covenant there and made numerous sacrifices in dedication (2 Chronicles 7). He also appointed the Levites to the ministry of praise before the priests (2 Chronicles 8:14).

The temple in Jerusalem, built on Mount Moriah at the place of Ornan's threshing floor, became the central focus of worship in Israel. We might say that the central focus of worship in Israel was built upon the foundation of shed blood, brokenness (humility) and repentance. I believe Christian worship today should be built on no less; the shed blood of sacrifice on the part of Jesus Christ the Savior of the world and the sacrifices of brokenness and repentance over sin on the part of those who would call themselves worshipers.

As worshipers we cannot offer to God that which costs us nothing. A sacrificial life requires brokenness and repentance. Isaiah wrote, *For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.* (Isaiah 57:15) Brokenness is where God dwells. Only where God dwells is worship possible.

I have thought for some time that no one but me can cook a steak exactly the way I like them. I know how long I want to tenderize the meat and what ingredients I want to put on the steak while it cooks. I know just how long to leave them on the grill to achieve my desired taste; medium rare. There is also the pleasure of getting to smell the aroma of that steak while it cooks. The anticipation of eating that steak heightens as the aroma of the smoke causes

my stomach to rumble. Finally, it's ready! The hunger pains begin to subside as I enjoy a meal prepared just the way I like it.

Do you think God ever has hunger pains? At first glance this question has an obvious answer; no. God is not confined to a human body, he is spirit. He has no need for food. God is self-existent and does not need any outside source to assist him in sustaining life. However, though he is not physically dependent on food, there is a burning hunger in God that he actively seeks to satisfy.

As the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness God gave Moses specific instructions as to the sacrifices they were to offer. In Numbers, Moses recorded the instructions given for the daily offerings. The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, *Command the people of Israel and say to them, My offering, my food for my food offerings, my pleasing aroma, you shall be careful to offer to me at its appointed time.* (Numbers 28:1-2)

God is hungry for our special gifts. He feeds from our daily offerings or sacrifices. The meal that satisfies the Father's hunger consists of sacrificial praise and sacrificial living. His hunger is not fully satisfied until he has smelled the aroma and tasted the delicacy of these special treats. True worshipers practice both sacrificial praise and sacrificial living. One is incomplete without the other.

God told Moses to make sure the offerings were brought at the appointed times. The appointed time to offer our sacrifices is "continually." The writer of Hebrews agreed with David who wrote, *I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.* (Psalm 34:1) Another psalmist wrote, *Upon you I have leaned from before birth; you are he who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you.* (Psalm 71:6) Psalm 119:44 and Psalm 119:117 read respectively, *I will keep your law continually, forever and ever. Hold me up, that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually.*

God has a perpetual hunger for relationship with his children. God's food is our continual living sacrifices of a broken spirit, a contrite heart and a praise of thanksgiving offered in spirit and truth.

During a recent worship service a friend of mine experienced a picture in her mind. In the picture she saw the Lord sitting across a table from her; they were having a candlelight dinner. The Lord leaned forward and blew out the candle! She knew he was being amorous. He said, "I want to have more candlelight dinners with you."

What kind of meals do you serve the Father? Would your offerings leave him starving? Set fire to your passion and burn. Be a sweet smelling aroma to the Father. He will not be able to resist coming to the table you prepare for him. You will even have him coming back for more.

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*We belittle God when we go through the outward motions of worship  
and take no pleasure in His person.*

John Piper

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## **CHAPTER 2**

### WORSHIPING THE FATHER

When I was a child I worshiped the ground my father walked on. I just knew for sure there was nothing he couldn't do and had no doubt he did nothing wrong. He was my hero, and I felt safe when he was around.

I had a reverential fear of my dad. He didn't mind warming my backside when my actions warranted it, yet I knew he always welcomed me in his arms for a hug or to sit in his lap. As far as my memory goes back I can recall every spanking my dad gave me. On one particular occasion he had given me instructions not to cross the street in front of our house. We lived on the corner of two high traffic streets and he wanted to prevent me from being struck by a car.

I was in the yard playing one day when a next-door neighbor threw my baseball bat across the street into a drainage ditch. Upon looking carefully in both directions I crossed the busy street to retrieve my bat. To my chagrin my dad was watching. He quickly called me in the house and administered discipline. After pulling myself together, I crawled into my dad's lap and told him that I was sorry. My mom later told me that after dad had spanked me he went off to himself and cried. "He wasn't mad at you," she said, "He just didn't want to see you get hurt."

When I was in elementary school I began playing football. Though my dad never made me play I knew it was his desire. Many times before I graduated from high school I wanted to quit, but the drive to please my dad kept me going. Somehow, though, I knew he was proud of me just because I was his son.

My deep love for my dad continued into my pre-teen and teenage years. I spent many summers with him in the fields planting crops and working with him on the tractors. I enjoyed hanging out with him. We were always interested in what was happening with each other. We laughed together and cried together. I was never ashamed to call him my dad or show him my affection. Even when I was nineteen years old, just days before his death, I met him at the door with a hug when he came home from work. I wanted all my friends to know him and was always quick to introduce him to them.

Oh, I know he wasn't perfect, and we had some disagreements along the way, but he was more than a dad to me, he was my best friend. I will always be grateful that in many ways my relationship with my dad gave me a beautiful picture of what it means to have a relationship God the Father.

#### The Father Must Have Our Affection

John writes in his gospel, *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father. . . .* (John 4:23a) What does it mean to worship the Father? How do we make the Father the object of our worship?

In his gospel, Luke records a story of a woman who was not ashamed to display her affection toward Jesus.

*One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began*

*to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said to him, Simon, I have something to say to you. And he answered, Say it, Teacher. A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more? Simon answered, The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt. And he said to him, You have judged rightly. Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.*

Luke 7:36-47

Jesus rebukes Simon for his omission of three things; for not washing his feet, for not kissing him and for not anointing his head.

The Jews in those days did not wear shoes like we wear today. Their shoes consisted of a soul that was strapped on with thongs around the foot and ankle. When a guest entered a home it was customary for them to remove the shoe and the host to have a servant to wash the guest's feet since they would have been exposed to outside elements. This would have been especially necessary before they ate a meal as we will see later. Secondly, Simon did not greet Jesus with a kiss. A kiss was an emblem of love and a common salutation used among Jewish men. And thirdly, Simon did not anoint Jesus' head with oil which was also a courtesy shown by a host to their guests. Simon, therefore, neglected all the courtesies he should have shown to Jesus.

As Jesus and those with him were reclined at the table to eat, a woman entered the house and stood behind Jesus at the table wetting his feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair. This was possible because Jews reclined on couches lying on their sides when they ate. Their knees would have been bent to make more room and their feet would have been behind them making them easy to approach. That too was a one of the reasons it was necessary to wash the feet before dinning.

The woman's name is not mentioned in Luke's account, however we do know that Simon considered her a sinner and felt that her touching Jesus was improper. Perhaps Simon knew her by reputation or by the fact that she had let her hair down to wash Jesus' feet. It was custom in those days for women to wear their hair up with their head covered. The only time a woman would let her hair down was in the privacy of her bedroom with her husband or in the case of a prostitute when she was conducting business. In either case we know that Jesus' assessment of the woman and Simon's assessment were completely different.

As the woman wept on Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair she also repeatedly kissed Jesus' feet. In Jesus' words, "she has not ceased to kiss my feet." In humility she lowered herself to show the love and affection toward Jesus that Simon had failed to show. She also anointed the feet of Jesus with fragrant ointment. The ointment she used was most likely an expensive ointment unlike the oil used for anointing the head of guests. The oil used for guests was made from a sweet oil or olive oil that emitted a fragrant smell and made the hair elegant. The ointment used by the woman most likely consisted of various oils making it a more valuable. Jesus made the distinction by saying to Simon, in essence, "You did not even anoint me with the common oil, but this woman has anointed my feet with an ointment which is far more valuable." Perhaps the woman had obtained this valuable ointment in the process of earning her livelihood. That being the case, she poured on Jesus' feet all that she had; all that was valuable to her.

Why such a lavish expression of affection? Jesus explained it to Simon by using a parable. It was because she loved much. And the reason she loved much was because she had been forgiven of much. Simon didn't even recognized that he was in need of forgiveness, however, this woman lavished her love upon Jesus, not in response to a command, but from a heart that was overflowing with gratitude for the forgiveness she had received. And she wasn't concerned what those sitting at the table thought of her.

This woman's selfless act of love was evidence that she had been forgiven of her sins. Should not we as Christians lavish Jesus with the same expressions of affection? Have we not been forgiven of much? Like the debtors in Jesus' parable who were unable to love the moneylender until he had forgiven their debt, we too were unable to love God until we had been forgiven. Now having been forgiven it seems the natural response would be an outpouring of affection upon the one who has forgiven us of much.

God is to be loved and adored for who he is, not merely for what he has done for us. However, it is proper to display our affections toward him for the goodness he has shown to us. No expression of our affection toward him

goes beyond what is worthy of him, even to the laying down of our very lives. And we should never be concerned what those watching may think of us.

King David is another example of a worshiper who wasn't concerned with what others thought about his lavish love for the Father. In 2 Samuel 6 we read the story of Israel returning the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. The Philistines who had captured the ark when Eli was the priest later returned it to Israel. Because he did not transport the ark in the proper way, David's first attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem resulted in the death of Uzzah, one of David's friends.

David spent some time seeking God, and God revealed to him the proper way to transport the ark. With everything in place the procession began.

*And when those who bore the ark of the LORD had gone six steps, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal. And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the horn. As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, and she despised him in her heart.*

2 Samuel 6:13-16

When David came home Michal said to him, *How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of his servants' female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!* David replied, *It was before the Lord, who chose me above your father and all his house to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the Lord—and I will make merry before the Lord. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this. . . .* (2 Samuel 6:20-22)

True worshipers are not ashamed to show their affection to the Father regardless of who is watching. They are so overwhelmed with God's love for them that they have no fear of displaying their affection for him.

Christians can easily fall into the trap of worshiping traditions, rituals or institutions. When they see worship that doesn't fit into their tradition or ritual they often become critical like the Pharisees at Simon's house and Michal. For her criticism of David, Michal was physically barren the rest of her life. The Pharisees had the kingdom of God stripped from them and given to a nation that would honor the Son of God. Their affection was misplaced and the preservation of their tradition became their passion.

When the preservation of religious traditions causes a church congregation to become inflexible to the word and leading of God, traditions take the place of God. The result is idolatry and spiritual barrenness. Idolatry is the result of misplaced affections. God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah. *Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.* (Jeremiah 2:12-13)

During the dry summer months in Palestine the people were forced to build cisterns to collect the rain water or water from small streams. This was particularly necessary in places where there were no large streams or springs. Most of the cisterns were dug in the earth or cut out of soft limestone. They varied in size and shape. With proper care the water could be kept in good condition for a while, but often it became dirty. Sometimes the cisterns would break and the water would leak out.

In Jeremiah 2:12-13 God is describing the spiritual condition of a people who have turned away from him. In the process he has given us a definition of evil. He states that evil is forsaking the fountain of living waters and getting water from another source. How did this people get in this condition? How did they forsake the fountain of living waters?

Earlier in Jeremiah 2 God says that Israel worshiped foolish idols and did not seek after him. In fact they exchanged him for the idols of other countries that he called "broken cisterns that hold no water." Israel sought to be satisfied by something other than God. They exchanged eternal satisfaction found only in relationship with God for a temporary satisfaction, which in reality, did not satisfy them at all. God spoke this message through other prophets as well.

*You played the whore also with the Assyrians, because you were not satisfied; yes, you played the whore with them, and still you were not satisfied. You multiplied your whoring also with the trading land of Chaldea, and even with this you were not satisfied.*

Ezekiel 16:28-29

. . . so two or three cities would wander to another city to drink water, and would not be satisfied; yet you did not returned to me, declares the Lord.

Amos 4:8

It's easy to look and see that as a nation we have sought to satisfy ourselves with things other than God. We have indulged in all types of debauchery and whet our appetites with fleshly desires; none of which have filled us up. Super stars and super models sit on the thrones of our adulation. This is to be expected from a world that doesn't know God, but the sad reality is that so many in the church have played the harlot with the world.

Many in the church have worshiped the idols of self-gratification such as prosperity, power, popularity and prestige. Others have worshiped the institutional church loving the traditions, doctrines and programs of man more than a fresh anointing of God's presence. In many churches ritual has taken the place of repentance and righteousness; works have taken the place of true worship. Man pleasing has replaced God-pleasing.

Though we shrink back at the thought of this being evil, that is exactly God's definition. He compares our worldly indulgence and religious toys (misplaced affections) to broken cisterns that hold no water. We can pamper our flesh thinking that will meet the needs of our heart. However, once we have indulged we find it is not enough. Even the water held by the cisterns became dirty in time. The only pure water came from fountains of flowing, living water. To be truly satisfied our affections must be consumed with God alone. We must be obsessed with his person and addicted to his presence.

Upon Jesus' entry into Jerusalem before his crucifixion, the Pharisees asked Jesus to rebuke his disciples for worshiping him (Luke 19:39). The Pharisees spent many hours in the temple studying God's word to know when the Messiah would come. They spent time in fasting and prayer for God to send the Messiah. Yet, when the Messiah came they missed the very thing they searched for because they loved their tradition and their position more than they loved God.

There are many things in the world that war for our affection. Being the father of five children it is my desire to constantly show my family how much I love them and give them the affection they need. Christians must, however, be careful not to let even family members become their first love. Jesus said, *Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* (Matthew 10:37) Jesus is to be our first love. All other loves should pale in comparison to our love for him.

In The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Jesus rebukes the church in Ephesus for leaving her first love. He exhorts her, *Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. . . .* (Revelation 2:5) Our first work is to make the Father our first love. Mark 12:30 reads, *And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. . . .*

The Father has loved us with an everlasting love. Nothing can quench the love he has for us. The prophet Zephaniah wrote, *The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.* (Zephaniah 3:17) The Hebrew word for exult used in the phrase, *he will exult over you with loud singing* is the word *guwl*. *Guwl* means to spin around under the influence of any violent emotion. The Hebrew word for singing is *rinnah* that means to shout. Can you picture God the Father dancing and shouting over us? He is not ashamed to call us his own. He rejoices over us as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride (Isaiah 62:5). Should our response toward him not be the same?

As the Beloved and the Shulamite in the Song of Solomon, God desires to have a love affair with his bride. He is continually pursuing, desiring to be intimate with his church. The Shulamite says, *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine.* (Song of Solomon 1:2) The Beloved declares later by saying, *How beautiful and pleasant you are, O loved one, with all your delights.* (Song of Solomon 7:6)

A couple usually gets married because they want to be together. They are so in love their every thought is consumed with one another. Before the marriage ceremony the bride to be doesn't think, "I'll have a man to fix my car, my washing machine and mow the lawn." The groom doesn't look forward to the possibility of having someone to cook his meals or wash his clothes. The extras come as a result of an intimate relationship. Our relationship with our bridegroom should be no different. We are married to him just so we can be together. We will be satisfied with nothing less.

King David had everything a person could possibly desire, but he knew that the person and presence of God alone could satisfy him. He wrote, *How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.* (Psalm 36:7-9) And in Psalm 65:4 David wrote, *Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!* David longed for the presence of God. He

wrote, *O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.* (Psalm 63:1)

Our thirst is only quenched in Jesus. He said, . . . *If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.* (John 7:37-38) In the conversation with the woman at the well in Sychar, after asking her for a drink of water, Jesus said, *Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.* (John 4:13-14)

The Father is looking for men and women who are not afraid to break their alabaster boxes and anoint him with fragrant worship regardless of what those around them may think. He is looking for people who are not ashamed to let their hair down and show publicly how much they love and adore him. He is searching for those who continually make him their first love.

Where do you turn for satisfaction? What are you looking toward to quench your thirst? Have you forsaken the fountain of living waters and dug out cisterns that hold no water? Are you thirsty for God alone? Is your life filled with misplaced affections or can you cry with the psalmist, *As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?* (Psalm 42:1-2)

When I played football in high school my dad and I would frequently talk about my games. To my knowledge he never missed a game and usually had an observation or two to share with me. Occasionally he would share with me some of the highlights of his football playing days in high school. My dad played tackle on his high school football team. Though he was strong, he wasn't a large man like the tackles you see playing high school football today. They didn't grow'em as big in the 1950s.

He told me that one Friday night they were playing an in-county rival that had an exceptionally fast tail back. On one particular play the tail back broke into the open field and was quickly making his way toward the end zone. My dad gave pursuit and oddly enough was able to gain some ground on him. Dad caught up to him, but the tail back was able to stay just out of the reach of my dad's outstretched arm. When they got into the end zone both players were so tired that they sat down and leaned against one another.

Pursuit; you hear that word used a lot in football. Defensive coaches use the word pursuit as they train their players to find the football and get to it as soon as possible, any way possible. They must move whatever obstacles are in the way in an effort stop the other team from gaining ground.

King David of Israel knew something about pursuit. Many times during his crusades for King Saul and later as king himself, he was the pursuer. He not only pursued but subdued his enemies. Maybe he had some of those instances in mind when he wrote, *My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.* (Psalm 63:8) The King James Version reads like this; *My soul **followeth hard** after thee; Thy right hand upholdeth me* (emphasis mine). There were instances in David's life when he was the one being pursued by his enemies. In fact, when he wrote the words to Psalm 63 he was being pursued in the wilderness of Judah.

Pursuit is the act of chasing in an effort to overtake or capture. The Hebrew word David used in Psalm 63:8 for "followeth hard" means to impinge (collide, strike, dash, encroach, trespass), cling, adhere, and to catch by pursuit. The same word is used in the Old Testament when speaking of armies pursuing their enemies. For example:

*Likewise all the men of Israel who had hidden in the mountains of Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, they also **followed hard** after them in the battle.*

1 Samuel 14:22 (NKJV)

*Then the Philistines **followed hard** after Saul and his sons. And the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons.*

1 Samuel 31:2 (NKJV)

*Then the young man who told him said, As I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa, there was Saul, leaning on his spear; and indeed the chariots and horsemen **followed hard** after him.*

2 Samuel 1:6 (NKJV)

David was just as determined to pursue God as he was to pursue his enemies. In essence he was saying in Psalm 63:8, "God, I am going to pursue you until I catch you." The determination and the desperation of catching God can be heard in David's words in the previous verses of Psalm 63.

*O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.*

Psalm 63:1-7

King David's prime motivation for pursuing God was thirst; his soul was thirsty. He had a longing to see the power and glory of God. He realized that the loving kindness and favor of God was more precious than life itself. And that if he could catch God in the midst of his praise that his soul would be sustained and satisfied; for God was his only source of satisfaction. David also realized that if he could catch God that God would be his help and protection.

An important part of David's pursuit was the manner in which he expressed his feelings toward God. David's pursuit of God in his worship is evidenced in such phrases as, *My lips shall praise you, I will bless you, I will lift up my hands, My mouth shall praise with joyful lips, and I will rejoice.*

David used the Hebrew word shabach for praise in his phrase "My lips shall praise you." Shabach means to address in a loud tone, a loud adoration, a shout, proclaiming with a loud voice unashamed. For bless he used the word barak which means to kneel or bow, to give reverence to God as an act of adoration. In the phrase "lift up my hands," David used a word meaning to exalt, extol or to hold up. In essence David was saying, "I am going to proclaim unashamedly with a loud voice that your mercy and favor is better than life. As long as I am alive I will bow and give reverence to you because I adore you. I will exalt your name with uplifted hands."

He continues to express his worship by saying, "My mouth shall praise with joyful lips." The Hebrew word praise in this phrase is hallal. Hallal means to make a show or rave about, to glory in or boast upon, and to be clamorously foolish about your adoration of God. If you combine the meanings of the words rave, clamorously and foolish you might come up with something like this; to continuously speak wildly or incoherently (lacking logic) with extravagant enthusiasm, showing a lack of good sense.

The next Hebrew word used is found in the phrase "with joyful lips." The word joyful comes from the Hebrew word alats that means to jump for joy. Finally, David says, "In the shadow of your wings I will rejoice." The word rejoice is the Hebrew word ranan. Ranan means to creak or emit a stridulous sound, to shout usually for joy.

For us to catch God we must have the same heart as David and the sons of Korah. The sons of Korah wrote, *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?* (Psalm 42:2) In other words, "I am suffering of thirst for the God who gives me life. When are you going to let me catch you?" We must pursue God with the intent purpose of catching him. We must be thirsty for God alone and realize that his right hand (power) is the only thing that sustains and satisfies our soul. And we must be willing to express or display our passion for his person and presence.

Unlike the tail back which my dad pursued, God desires to be caught. In fact he has already given us more than one invitation. Jesus said, . . . *If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.* (John 7:37) The one whom John saw sitting on the throne said, *It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.* (Revelation 21:6) *The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let the one who hears say, Come. And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.* (Revelation 22:17)

Not only has God invited us to pursue him, he made our pursuit possible by first pursuing us. John 3:17 says that God sent his son into the world. He came looking for us. John 15:16 tells us that we did not choose God he chose us. John 4:23 says that God is seeking those who would worship him in spirit and truth. The only way we can pursue God is because he pursued and is pursuing us. Paul wrote, *Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.* (Philippians 3:12) So, God is pursuing us and waiting to be caught by us. And if we pursue him with all our heart to make him our most treasured affection, he will let us catch him.

A few years ago I was a General Manager at a local Chick-fil-A restaurant. While I was there a directive came down from the home office for our employees to respond with "my pleasure" anytime our customers thanked us for our service. As Chick-fil-A employees it was our mission to ensure that each customer had a pleasurable experience when they came into our restaurant to eat. The "my pleasure" response was one way to let them know that we labored for that purpose.



How much more should it be our pleasure to give God pleasure? Isn't that the very reason for our existence? Worship occurs when God receives pleasure from our existence. God's pleasure is complete when it is our pleasure to exist for him. You might conclude that our act of worship is "giving him pleasure."

No one exemplified a lifestyle of worship more than Jesus Christ. The fact that the Father took pleasure in him and received pleasure from him was evident from the very outset of his ministry. As he came up from the water after being baptized by John the Baptist the Father said, *This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* (Matthew 3:17) Matthew quotes God through the prophet Isaiah saying, *Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.* (Matthew 12:18; Isaiah 42:1)

The Greek word for pleased in these passages is eudokeo. Eudokeo means to think well of, i.e. approve (an act); especially, to approbate, (a person or thing). The word approbate means to sanction or authorize. So, God the Father thought well of his son. He not only approved of his actions he authorized them as well. The prophet Isaiah wrote speaking of Jesus, *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When you make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.* (Isaiah 53:10 NKJV)

The pleasure of the Lord prospered in the hands of Jesus. Everything Jesus did was pleasing to the Father because Jesus did everything according to the Father's will. Paul wrote in Roman 15:3 that Jesus did not please himself. In other words he did nothing for the pleasure of his own flesh. He even took our sins upon himself on the cross to please the Father. Hebrews 12:2 states that Jesus endured the cross for the joy that was set before him. It was the pleasure of the Son to give pleasure to the Father. With Jesus as our model, we must conclude that a lifestyle of worship is one that takes pleasure in giving the Father pleasure.

What can mere man do to give the Father pleasure? The scriptures give us an idea.

*...but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.*

Psalm 147:11

*For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.*

Psalm 149:4

*I know, my God, that you test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you.*

1 Chronicles 29:17

As we just read, the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him and who hope in his mercy. To fear the Lord is to reverence him. Proverbs 16:6 says that by the fear of the Lord one departs from evil. Proverbs 8:13 says that the fear of the Lord is to hate evil. We give the Father pleasure when we hate and depart from evil. The Father also takes pleasure when we patiently wait for his mercy and practice humility. These are acts of worship that portray our affection toward him.

God also takes pleasure in uprightness. The Hebrew word for pleasure used in Psalm 147:11, Psalm 149:4 and 1 Chronicles 29:17 is ratsah. This word means to be pleased with; specifically, to satisfy a debt. We can never satisfy our debt to God by working our own uprightness. Our debt is only satisfied because God made him who knew no sin to become sin for us that we might become the righteousness (uprightness) of God in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21). It is not by works of righteousness that we have done but according to his mercy he saved us (Titus 3:5). Proverbs 14:2 says that he who fears the Lord will walk in uprightness. Therefore, as we walk in uprightness and humility, in patient hope of his mercy he takes pleasure in us. This way of life is our sacrifice of worship to our Father.

Enoch is a great example of a man who pleased God. In Hebrews 11:5 the writer records, *By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God.*

The Greek word for pleased in Hebrews 11:5 (as well as Hebrews 13:16) means to gratify entirely. God was so gratified with Enoch that he couldn't wait for him to die to be with him. What a testimony! What a life of worship! Enoch surely learned what King David would learn years later.

*You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

Psalm 16:11 (NKJV)

*They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.*

Psalm 36:8 (NKJV)

It is God's desire that we experience the pleasure of his presence. He finds pleasure in filling us and visiting us with his presence. So, who gets pleasure from our worship? The Father and us.

Yes, it is okay for us to get pleasure as we worship the Father. He gets pleasure from our pleasure. For example: I receive pleasure from spending time with and doing things for my wife. If those things didn't give me pleasure would that be edifying or insulting to her? I couldn't imagine saying to Renae (much less God), "I receive no pleasure from spending time with you or doing stuff for you. The only reason I spend time with you or do anything for you is because that is what a husband does; it is my duty." If I give Renae flowers because it is my duty she will loathe the gift. However, she will get mounds of pleasure from the gift knowing that I received pleasure from showing her my affection.

Don't we want God to get pleasure from our acts of affection toward him; our worship? That's sort of the point. Well, God gets pleasure from our acts of affection when it is our pleasure to give them.

### The Father Must Have Our Attention

One cool fall day I had no more gotten in the door from work when my son Matthew asked if I would throw the football with him. Even though I was tired I agreed, and we headed for the back yard. The house where we were living at the time had several trees in the back yard. Most of the trees had lost their leaves, and we had raked them into large piles. When I would kick the ball to Matthew he would run toward me, and I would tackle him in a large pile of leaves. We would roll around in the leaves for a while then get up and do it again.

The next morning I got out of bed early and went downstairs to the den to read my bible. As I sat on the couch God softly spoke to my spirit and said, "Could we just roll around in the leaves this morning?" I understood that he wanted my undivided attention. He didn't want me to read, sing, or play my guitar; he just wanted us to be together.

A few years prior this, I was tired one evening and went to bed early. I hadn't been in bed long when I felt someone crawl in the bed with me. I turned over to see Matthew grinning at me from under the covers. I said, "I love you, son." He replied, "I love you, daddy." "I am very proud of you." I said to him. "I am very proud of you." he replied. We exchanged a few more endearments; then with my heart full of pride and my eyes filled with tears, I turned over to go to sleep.

As I turned over, in my spirit I heard God say, "I love you, son." I told him that I loved him. "I am very proud of you." he continued. It became obvious that God wanted to share the same endearments with me I had just shared with my son. He wanted me to give him the same attention and affection my son had just given me. I will always cherish the intimacy of that moment.

In pondering the intimate moments I have had with my children I can only imagine the depth of intimacy God has with his son. The relationship between God the Father and God the Son is a unique relationship, yet it gives us a plumb line by which we gauge our relationship with the Father.

We know that this Godhead relationship began before the world was made. John 17:21 tells us that the Father loved the son before the foundation of the world. As Jesus walked the earth his love for the Father was evident not only by what he said but also how he lived. Jesus said that the world would know he loved the Father because he kept his commandments (John 14:31). The Father always had the attention of the Son.

Jesus made the focus of his life known at an early age. When he was twelve years old Mary and Joseph took the family to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover. When the feast had ended they traveled a day's journey supposing that Jesus was among their relatives or acquaintances. Having not found him they returned to Jerusalem where they searched for three days. They eventually found Jesus in the temple sitting among the teachers listening and asking questions. Mary began to scold Jesus and he replied, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business? (Luke 2:41-52 NKJV)

The Gospel of John gives us testimony of Jesus' own words that further signify the focus of his life.

*So Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.*

John 5:19

*I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.*

John 5:30

*But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.*

John 5:36

*So Jesus said to them, When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.*

John 8:28

*For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.*

John 12:49-50

The focus of Jesus' entire life was the Father. He said what the Father wanted said and did what the Father wanted done; the Father had his undivided attention. Jesus glorified the Father by showing that the Father was worthy of such unflinching obedience (John 17:4). He proved his jealousy for the Father's house by entering the temple and casting out those who bought and sold. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and those who sold doves (Matthew 21:12). When questioned about the greatest commandment his focus was still turned toward the Father (Matthew 22:37-38). There was no place in the life of Jesus for another god. The heavenly Father wasn't someone Jesus added to his life, he was his life.

Let me take you back a few years to the time when Moses and the children of Israel were building the tabernacle. God gave Moses specific instructions on the construction of the tabernacle, and God's spirit empowered the people to build it.

The most important piece of furniture in the tabernacle was the Ark of the Covenant. The ark was placed inside the Holy of Holies where only the priests could enter one time a year to make atonement for the people's sins. On top of the ark were two angel-like beings called cherubim; one on each end, and their wings covered the top of the ark. Between the wings of the cherubim was the mercy seat. It was above the mercy seat that the visible presence of God appeared (Leviticus 16:2).

To the Israelites the Ark of the Covenant represented God's presence among them. They carried the ark before them into battle, and it preceded the tribes into the Jordan River as they entered Canaan. In 1 Samuel 4 we read of an instance when the children of Israel brought the ark into battle. They felt sure that with the ark present victory was imminent. Yet, because of the wickedness of the high priest's two sons Israel was defeated. The Philistines captured the ark and placed it in their temple beside their god Dagan.

When the Philistines came to the temple early the next morning they found Dagan lying on its face before the Ark of God. So they erected it to its original position. Early the next morning they arrived at the temple only to find Dagan lying on its face again before the Ark of God. This time, however, the head of Dagan and both palms of its hands were broken off at the threshold; only the torso was left intact.

The Philistines had taken the God of the universe and attempted to add him to the worship of their other idol, but God was not mocked. The children of Israel made a similar mistake. They had not repented of their wickedness but thought God would rescue them from the Philistines just because the ark was present. Their worship was directed toward the Ark of God instead of toward the God of the ark. The ark had become an idol to Israel.

So many Christians today have turned their attention toward careers, sports, television and hobbies. Worship, prayer, bible study and Christian service have fallen to the bottom of the priority list. Like Dagan, whose head and hands were broken before God, their minds are filled with earthly things and their hands are busy doing for self. Some Christians have even allowed their traditional worship, prayer and bible study to take the place of an intimate relationship with the Father.

Judson Cornwall wrote, "Whenever the method of worship becomes more important than the Person of worship, we have already prostituted our worship." God commanded Israel, *You shall have no other gods before*

me. (Deuteronomy 5:7) He also said in Exodus 34:14, (*for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God*). The same command applies today for those who are called by his name. God is not something we add to our life, he is our life. All other objects of worship must bow to him. He will have all of our worship or none of our worship.

When the Father is the center of our attention in worship the more like him we become. The more like him we become the more we display his beauty and worth. The more we display his beauty and worth the more attention is drawn to him.

I can remember when my wife and I were dating. Many times when we would go out to eat we would hardly talk. We spent much of our time just looking at each other. The unspoken words said a lot about our feelings for each other. Of course the words came in time, but it was during those times of gazing that our hearts and souls began to knit together. Those times of gazing have grown into a wonderful intimate relationship.

It has been said that when a man and woman live together for a few years they begin to look like each other. Well, my wife and I don't look like each other physically, but we do share many things in common. Our theologies are the same, and we think alike on a number of issues. We have learned how the other would respond to certain questions and circumstances that come on a daily basis.

During a family gathering one year at Thanksgiving my Aunt Becky organized a game for the married couples to play. The rules of the game were set up much like the old "Newlywed Game" that aired on television several years ago. Each spouse was required to answer a number of questions the way they believed their partner would answer. Most of the questions were simple like favorite color, favorite sport. Some were a little harder. When the scores were tallied Renae and I had answered every question right. Even the couples who had been married longer than us didn't do as well. In fact no one did. At this one of my cousins remarked, "You guys spend too much time together."

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, *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 Corinthians 3:18)

Man was created to worship God. The question is; "Will God be the object of man's worship?" History has proven that man becomes like the object he worships. The Scythians who overthrew Rome are a good example. Their chief gods were bloodthirsty and cruel hero-gods. They believed that one of their hero-gods killed himself after he had massacred much of the human race. Therefore, those who were not killed in battle frequently committed suicide fearing that to die a natural death would exclude them from the favor of their god.

Another example can be found in Paul's day in the city of Corinth. The Corinthians worshiped the goddess Venus, called Aphrodite by the Greeks. She was known as the goddess of love, but the goddess of lust would best describe how she was worshiped. The most sacred people in the temple of Venus were the prostitutes who were consecrated for her worship.

The psalmist understood the concept of becoming like the object being worshiped.

*Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.*

Psalm 115:4-8

We begin to look like the Father as we spend time in his presence listening, heeding his words and worshiping his person. As we spend time gazing into his image our character becomes conformed to his character. The more time spent in his presence the more we are transformed into his image. God predestined us to look like him. Though worship is for God and an end to itself, becoming like him is a vital benefit of worship. It would be nice if others, by noticing our character, said of God, and us "You guys spend too much time together."

Though it gives me much joy to see what my children have become now that they are grown, I must admit that there are times when I miss certain experiences of their childhood. Some of those "magical" moments would have to include birthdays and Christmas.

I will never forget watching the expressions on their faces when they blew out the candles on their birthday cake and afterwards as they ripped the wrapping paper from around their presents. Many times at Christmas my wife and I would put their big presents under the tree unwrapped. The looks on their faces when they saw their present for the first time would light up a room. The excitement continued as they tore into the presents that were wrapped. Sometimes squealing and grinning from ear to ear, they would sling wrapping paper all over the living

room floor. When the present was finally out of the box they would cling to it and jump up and down with excitement.

When I consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:3, *Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven*, I often wonder if I share the same excitement over the presents God has given me as my children did with the presents I gave to them. I must ask myself as the psalmist did, *What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me?* (Psalms 116:12) What are God's benefits; his presents so to speak? King David un-wrapped a few for us.

*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

Psalm 103:2-5

The Amplified Bible reads Psalm 103:2-5 this way; *Bless—affectionately, gratefully praise—the Lord, O my soul, and forget not [one of] all His benefits, Who forgives [every one of] all your iniquities, Who heals [each of] all your diseases; Who redeems your life from the pit and corruption; Who beautifies, dignifies, and crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies; Who satisfies your mouth [your necessity and desire at your personal age] with good; so that your youth, renewed, is like the eagle's [strong, overcoming, soaring]!*

To give the Father pleasure is the goal of our worship. If we as earthly parents receive an abundance of pleasure watching our children rejoice over the presents we give them, how much more pleasure does the heavenly Father receive when we rejoice in him over the presents he gives us? Maybe David had a glimpse when he wrote, *May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you! May those who love your salvation say evermore, God is great!* (Psalm 70:4)

It is not only “okay” for us to be glad in the Lord for the presents he gives us, we are commanded to be glad and rejoice. Luke 12:32 tells us that it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. For us to fail to be glad and rejoice in God for the things he gives us would be an insult to him and would be the epitome of ingratitude. When the scriptures speak of the Father giving us the kingdom, we understand the kingdom of God to be the rule and reign of God. Paul said the kingdom of God consists of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

The Greek word for joy in Romans 14:17 means cheerfulness, calm delight, gladness, exceeding joy. This word is similar to the Hebrew words used in Psalm 70:4. The word rejoice means to be bright, cheerful, glad, make mirth. The word glad means to brighten up, be gleesome, cheer up, or make merry. So, when David exhorts those who seek the Lord to rejoice and be glad in the Lord, he is saying to brighten up, be cheerful, make mirth (rejoicing or enjoyment, especially when expressed in merrymaking). Joy and gladness are presents that God takes pleasure in giving us.

Many authors, including myself, have written in the past few years that we are to seek the face of God and not his hands. We have written that Christians should seek the presence of God and not his presents. Even David said that we should rejoice and be glad “in God.” I concur with these thoughts, however, I also believe that it is imperative that we rejoice and are glad in God for the presents he gives us.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote, *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.* (Isaiah 61:10) Why did Isaiah rejoice? He rejoiced in God for the presents of salvation and righteousness. Salvation and righteousness came to us by Jesus Christ. He bought for us salvation (Hebrews 5:9), righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30), peace (Romans 5:1) and joy (John 15:11). God gave us these presents in his son. We should rejoice and be glad in it! The Father also gave us presents (gifts) through the Holy Spirit (Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12). We should rejoice and be glad in him for them as well!

Again, David said for those who seek the Lord to rejoice and be glad in the Lord. To seek the Lord means to search out by any method, specifically in worship and prayer; to strive after, to beg, desire, inquire, procure, request (Jeremiah 29:13). Psalm 105:3 says, *Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice!* Only those who seek the Lord are capable of rejoicing and being glad in him for what he gives. And only those who love his salvation can continually say, “Let God be magnified.”

To magnify God is to make him larger. How can we make God larger? One way we make God larger is to rejoice and be glad over the presents he gives us. This works much like a telescope. A telescope takes a large object that is far away and brings it up close so that the viewer can see it more clearly. When we rejoice and are glad over the presents God gives us (especially salvation; Psalm 35:9), we bring him closer so that those who are far from

him can see him better. So, the consequence of rejoicing and being glad in the Lord and loving his salvation is that God is magnified. Therefore, not only with our mouths do we profess “Let God be magnified” but our lifestyle of rejoicing and gladness magnifies God.

It’s difficult to express the joy it gave my wife and I as we watched our children pull their presents from the box. To know that we had given them something that brought them so much joy and gladness brought us an abundance of pleasure. However, maybe the best part was when they realized from where the presents had come and they laid them down long enough to jump in my lap, put their arms around my neck and say, “Thank you so much; I love my presents. I love you, daddy” Isn’t our heavenly Father worth as much?

The Father desires unbroken fellowship and an intimate relationship with his children. To be a true worshiper you must have an undivided heart, giving your undivided attention to the Father. Whatever has your affection will also get your attention. Matthew 6:21 says, *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* Where is your treasure? What has your heart? Are you so distracted by the things of this world that you don’t have time to give God your full attention? Are you actively pursuing God with all your heart?

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*The very last thing God desires is to have shallow-minded and worldly Christians bragging on him.*  
A.W. Tozer

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## CHAPTER 3

### WORSHIPING IN SPIRIT

In 1986 the church in which I was the youth pastor merged with another church and formed a Vineyard Christian Fellowship. One month into the merger I was asked to be the worship leader. I accepted and began a journey for which I will be forever grateful.

The church that we merged with had purchased a former Boys Club facility and renovated one end of the gymnasium into an auditorium. A stage was built on one end of the gym and later two floors of class rooms were added to each side of the stage. The ceiling of the classrooms was some two to three feet below the ceiling of the gym.

One Sunday, having arrived several minutes earlier than anyone else, I was connecting my guitar to the sound system when I noticed a bird perched on the ceiling of one of the classrooms. I didn't pay a lot of attention to the bird; in fact I figured it would be somewhat of a distraction when the worship began. I had every intention not to draw attention to the bird, but as we began the worship service I noticed several people staring in its direction. The first song of the service was dull at best so after we finished I paused the service and directed every one's attention toward our visitor, the bird.

As I did, for the first time I realized the bird was a dove (The dove is the biblical symbol of the Holy Spirit). "Is that a dove?" I asked the congregation. Spontaneously the people began to laugh, shout and applaud. What followed was one of the most memorable worship services in which I have ever been involved. Every song fit into place. The congregation worshiped spontaneously at a higher level than ever before. The Holy Spirit breathed new songs straight from the throne of God. It was as if the Holy Spirit had visited our worship service and led us into the worship that was most pleasing to the Father.

#### The Holy Spirit Produces Worship Through Us

John wrote, *But the hour is coming, and now is here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit.* . . (John 4:23) What does it mean to worship in spirit?

The word spirit which Jesus used in John 4:23 is the Greek word pneuma. Pneuma is defined as a current of air, breath or a breeze. It is used to describe man's spirit, God's spirit and even demon spirits. The fact that it is not capitalized in John 4:23 most likely indicates that the translators felt Jesus was referring to the human spirit. In most cases the translators used a capital "S" when speaking of the Holy Spirit. We know that Jesus was not referring to demon spirits. The idea that Jesus was speaking of the human spirit might also be validated when you take into consideration the context in which he spoke. He was speaking with a Samaritan.

During the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians, the city and the temple were destroyed. Most of the Israelites were carried into captivity, but a few were left behind to tend the land. King Shalmaneser of Assyria ordered that people be brought from surrounding areas to replace the Israelites that were taken captive (2 Kings 17). The Israelites who were left behind intermarried with these people thus defiling their Jewish bloodline. This was the group of people known as the Samaritans. Jews with a pure bloodline considered the Samaritans as half-breeds and would have no dealings with them.

When Ezra and Nehemiah return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the temple, the Samaritans asked permission to assist in the project but were denied. In consequence of this refusal, the Samaritans tried to discourage the workers from performing their duties (Ezra 4; Nehemiah 4). In protest the Samaritans erected a temple on mount Gerizim and instituted the Mosaic sacrifices.

When the Samaritan woman asked Jesus about the proper place of worship he responded, *Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 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 4:21-24) The implication of the answer Jesus gave is that the place of worship is now delocalized. The essence of worship does not take place in a certain physical location, but within the spirit of man.

So, the place of worship is the spirit of man, but the means of worship is the Holy Spirit. As Paul wrote, *For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.* (Ephesians 2:18) The Amplified version of Philippians 3:3 reads, *For we Christians are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit and by the Spirit of God, and exult and glory and pride ourselves in Jesus Christ, and put no confidence or dependence on what we are in the flesh and on outward privileges and physical advantages and external appearances.*

True worshipers worship the Father in spirit and by the Spirit. Physical locations are of no concern. Our status in the church or the community doesn't determine the sincerity of our worship. It doesn't matter how talented we are or our physical appearance for worship comes from the spirit of the worshiper. True worshipers don't take notice of themselves for their eyes are on the Father and their ears attentive to his Spirit.

Jesus told his disciples that the Holy Spirit doesn't speak of his own accord but speaks what he hears from the Father (John 16:13). He has come to guide us into all truth (John 16:13). Paul wrote to the Corinthians that it is the Spirit that searches out all things, yes the deep things of God and that no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. He goes on to say that we have received the Spirit of God so that we can know the things freely given to us by God (1 Corinthians 2:10-12).

The Holy Spirit is the worship leader and knows the heart of the Father. The worshiper must listen to the voice of the Spirit so that he can know what acts of worship are freely given and most pleasing to the Father.

A good example of allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us in worship is found in the Old Testament book of Esther. Esther was a young Hebrew girl who was chosen by King Ahasuerus to be the Queen of Persia. Before it was Esther's turn to see the king she was required to complete one year of preparation. This requirement had to be met by all the virgins chosen to go before the king. When the virgins were prepared they were given whatever they desired to take with them from the women's quarters to the king's palace.

*When the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his own daughter, to go in to the king, she asked for nothing except what Hegai the king's eunuch, who had charge of the women, advised. Now Esther was winning favor in the eyes of all who saw her.*

Esther 2:15

What would a eunuch know about women's clothes? This particular eunuch, Hegai, was custodian or chamberlain over the virgins of the king's harem. Chamberlains were often employed in various offices of the king's court and at times were advisors to the king. It is very possible since Hegai was chamberlain of the women that he had access to the king's bedchambers. He was privy to the likes and dislikes of the king. Esther could have had anything she wanted, but she asked the opinion of the king's chamberlain. She was not concerned about what she liked or wanted but was more concerned with pleasing the king.

We should enter worship in the same way. The goal of worship is to please the King of Kings. There are many acceptable forms of worship, but when we come before the King we want to do what pleases him. The Holy Spirit knows what the King likes, and we should allow him to advise us on how to best please the King.

I will never forget that first Sunday morning Renae and I led worship in front of a congregation. I had played backup guitar in the worship band but didn't feel confident enough to lead worship and play at the same time. I opted instead to let the piano player serve as the lead instrument. Renae and I stood up front on the stage with the backup singers to the side of us. At this point in our worship experience we only knew to do what we had seen modeled by the worship leader at this church. This was the way he did it so we followed suit. With the help of the supporting cast we proceeded.

In attendance that Sunday was a lady who came to our church maybe three or four times a year. She came across as one of those people who make their rounds to various churches. I noticed each time she came to our



church that she brought ballet shoes and a tambourine. When the music began she had on her dancing shoes and played the tambourine with all her might.

We were into our second or third song that Sunday and just as I was gaining some confidence, this lady comes running down the center isle right up to the stage demanding my attention. "Let's do a *Jericho March!*" she exclaimed. For those who are unfamiliar with the term *Jericho March*, it is simply a dance where most of the church members get in a line and march around the sanctuary. It acquired the name from the story of Israel marching around the ancient city of Jericho (Joshua 6).

Needless to say I was horrified. I had not planned for this nor had I been briefed for such a situation. With the service continuing and not knowing how to respond I asked, "What?" Now, I had heard her question, but I was hoping she wouldn't repeat it. If she did maybe my "What?" would buy me some time to figure out how to respond. "Let's do a *Jericho March!*" she yelled. I feel sure God saw the predicament I was in and dropped my response to her right in my mouth. I leaned over the altar and said, "We will if that is what God leads us to do." I am not sure if my answer satisfied her or offended her. All I know is that she turned around and danced to the back of the sanctuary. Well, we didn't do a *Jericho March*, and the rest of the service went without a hitch.

Although at the time I was clueless how to respond to this lady, looking back now I see the wisdom in the answer God gave me. The Holy Spirit is the one who directs us in worship. He knows the mind and the heart of the Father. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit only speaks what he hears from the Father (John 16:13). That should be the mind set of every worshiper. The more time the worshiper spends in the Father's presence the more instinctive worship becomes.

The Apostle Paul gave some other examples of worshiping in the Spirit. *He wrote to the churches, 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) Colossians 3:16 says, *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.*

In each of these verses three mediums of acceptable expressions of worship are listed; psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. To properly define psalms, hymns and spiritual songs we should take a look at their meanings from the original language in which they were written.

The Greek word used in the Pauline Epistles for psalms is psalmos. Psalmos is defined as a set piece of music, a sacred ode accompanied with the voice, harp or other instruments. There are religious denominations that believe music should not accompany songs in the church. However, the very definition of a psalm refutes that idea. I am not suggesting that the way these denominations express their worship is unacceptable just that their theology of worship is incomplete.

Hymns are another acceptable medium for expressing our worship. The Greek word used here is humnos. Humnos is defined to celebrate, or one of the psalms, a hymn. When we generally think of hymns great songs like *Amazing Grace*, *How Great Thou Art*, and many others come to mind. *O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing* is one of my favorites. However, these songs we refer to as hymns are actually psalms. We said a psalm is a set piece of music accompanied by an instrument and voice; so once these songs were recorded they became psalms. In fact all the worship songs we sing in church are in reality psalms. Since hymns and psalms are different we must conclude that a hymn is a song that has not been recorded. Thus it is a new, spontaneous song.

The third medium of song Paul speaks about is the spiritual song. The phrase spiritual songs in the Greek is 'ode pneumatikos; meaning songs of the breath of God. Spiritual songs are songs sung in or by the Holy Spirit. These songs are inspired by the Holy Spirit and are spontaneous and prophetic in nature. At times spiritual songs are sung by the worshiper to God, At other times the singer sings to the congregation and prophetically reveals God's heart to the people. This is done to bring edification, exhortation and comfort to the church. This type of spiritual song is sung in a language understood by the congregation.

Therefore, Paul is exhorting the church to sing psalms (songs that have been recorded), hymns (new, spontaneous songs), and spiritual (prophetic) songs.

Singing in tongues is another way a believer can worship in the spirit. In teaching the Corinthian church on spiritual gifts, Paul wrote, *For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.* (1 Corinthians 14:14-15) In this passage Paul has equated singing in the spirit with singing in tongues.

Jesus promised to give the Holy Spirit to all those who believed in him. In John 7:38 he said, *Whoever believes in Me, as the scripture has said, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.* John follows that by saying, *Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for as yet the Holy Spirit had not*

*been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* (John 7:39) So out of the heart of a believer will flow rivers of the Spirit. The Spirit desires to lead us to the Father through rivers of worship.

A true worshiper will have an ongoing relationship with the Holy Spirit. This relationship will produce new worship responses because the Spirit continually gives fresh revelations of the Father. These revelations will come because the true worshiper will not allow sin, nor lack of fellowship with God, to dam up the rivers of living water produced by the Spirit's presence.

I believe another vital key to worshiping in and by the Spirit, especially in corporate settings, is discerning the seasons of the Spirit. I was leading worship in a local church a few years ago when we went through a season of incredible visitation from the Lord. Each Sunday morning during our worship service God poured out his Spirit in visible ways. The congregation was so enraptured with his presence that they didn't want the worship to end. Father was there and desired our undivided attention.

After a month or so of such visitation the pastors decided to change the way we structured the Sunday morning service. In a staff meeting they shared with me that the congregation was so mesmerized by the presence of God that they didn't hear a word of the sermon. They shared they were finding it difficult to preach. They had studied and prepared for a message they knew God wanted the people to hear, but the people were not hearing it.

The pastors decided to begin the service with one song to bring the people together, then have a few announcements before the sermon. When the sermon was finished and the invitation given we were to end the service with worship. Guess what happened to our divine visitation? After the sermon the people were ready to go home. Our visitation could have led to a habitation of God's presence had we properly discerned the season of the Spirit instead of allowing man's agenda to take preeminence.

To worship in spirit and by the Spirit we must realize that it is God who decides when he wants our offering; he appoints divine visitation. A great biblical example of this is found in the fifth chapter of the Song of Solomon. Beginning in verse two the Shulamite is in bed when she hears the voice of her Beloved calling to her to unlock the door and let him come inside. She makes excuses for why she cannot come to the door; *I had put off my garment; How could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; How could I soil them?* (v3) By the time the Shulamite decides to open the door for her Beloved, he is gone. *I opened to my beloved, But my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not, I called him, but he gave no answer.* (v6)

One Sunday morning our worship team arrived before Sunday school to take a view minutes to practice our set. We were not far into the set when a remarkable sense of God's presence came over us. As people began entering the building for Sunday school they too had a strong sense of God's presence. Many of them came into the sanctuary and found their way to the altar. Knowing it was time for Sunday school to begin, I ended the practice in deference to the teachers who had prepared their lessons.

When the worship service began we anticipated that the move of God's Spirit would pick up where we left it before Sunday school. We were badly mistaken. We sang the same songs as we did before Sunday school, but there just wasn't the same movement of the Spirit. In fact our song service seemed void of the anointing of God. We made excuses for not opening the door when our Beloved called and when we finally went to the door he was gone. We missed our time of visitation. We did not heed the voice of God when he spoke through Isaiah saying, *Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.* (Isaiah 55:6)

Who are we seeking to please? If we take an honest look at our Sunday morning meetings, we will find that most of them are geared more toward man rather than toward God. I believe many Sundays that we leave church full, but God is still hungry. Man's programs, more often than not, get in the way of God's presence. Discerning the seasons of the Spirit is vital if we are to worship in spirit and by the Spirit.

## The Holy Spirit Produces Worship in Us

Not only did the Holy Spirit come to lead us to Christ in salvation, he continues to lead us to Christ in worship. He not only desires to produce true worship through us, he also desires to produce true worship in us. For us to worship with a right or true spirit our lives must be under the control of the Holy Spirit.

As wonderful as the many expressions of worship are, they lose much of their meaning if the worshiper is not pursuing the character of Christ. Worship is raised to a higher dimension when the worshiper has a passion to become like Jesus. Where there is no passion for Jesus, worship is reduced to an emotional experience. God does not accept worship that comes from the lips of those who have no desire to be conformed into the image of his Son. A true worshiper will worship God with the character of the Holy Spirit.

There is a group of people mentioned in the Revelation of Jesus Christ who exemplify the characteristics one must possess to truly worship in spirit and by the Spirit. The Apostle John introduces them to us in chapter seven.

*After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.*

Revelation 7:1-8

Many bible teachers have taught through the years that the 144,000 spoken of here are virgin Jewish males who will be sealed and preach the gospel during a seven year tribulation period. Some believe the 144,000 represent the remnant of the church that will be alive at the second coming of Jesus. Though these beliefs could be right I believe a different interpretation applies here.

There are a couple of things that catch my eye in this passage. First, traditionally when Jewish genealogies were given the oldest son was mentioned first. In the tribal listing of Revelation 7 the tribe of Judah is listed first; he was actually the fourth born. The significance of this is that Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah; the tribe of praise. Secondly, this listing of the tribes is not the same as we see in the Old Testament. There was no tribe of Joseph, but Joseph is listed in Revelation 7:8. His tribe was split into two tribes; Ephraim and Manasseh (Joshua 14:4). Ephraim is not mentioned among the tribes in Revelation 7; neither is the tribe of Dan.

I believe numbers are important only as they represent concepts. If you take a careful look at the numbers used in the Revelation you will find many numbers that are either factors or products of twelve. For instance you have four living creature, twenty-four elders and 144,000 servants of God; 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Twelve or forms of twelve are used in numerous places throughout scripture and especially in the Revelation. Jesus had twelve disciples. David appointed twenty-four courses of twelve accomplished musicians, a total of 288, to worship twenty-four hours a day around the Ark of the Covenant that he placed in a tent on Mount Zion. Therefore it is my belief that the number twelve represents completion or totality. Hence the 144,000 represent the totality of the worshiping church; the true Israel of God.

We have learned from Paul's teaching that, through Christ, God makes no distinction between races of people. He wrote, *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.* (Romans 10:12) Peter made this same observation during his visit to the household of Cornelius a centurion of the Italian Cohort. *So Peter opened his mouth and said: Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.* (Acts 10:34-35) John concurs with this concept by writing that Jesus redeemed a people, not just from one nation, but from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Revelation 5:9).

Paul also wrote to the Roman Christians, *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.* (Romans 2:28-29) Paul also wrote to the Galatians and the Colossians that there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcised or uncircumcised, but that all are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11). Though I believe that God will fulfill every prophecy given concerning national Israel, I believe Paul clearly conveys that the true Israel of God consists of people who have believed on Jesus and have put away the works of the flesh, whether Jew or Gentile.

John's description of the 144,000 gives us insight into the characteristics of those who worship with the character of the Holy Spirit. He wrote, *These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.* (Revelation 14:4-5) In addition to this description John says they have the mark of Jesus' Father on their

foreheads and sing a new song before the throne, the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who were redeemed from the earth (Revelation 14:1-3).

All true worshipers have been sealed by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 4:11 that circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of the faith of Abraham which he had while still uncircumcised. Today believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit and circumcised in heart by the cutting away of the old man and sin nature (Roman 2:28-29). Paul wrote to Timothy, *Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: The Lord knows those who are His, and, Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.* (2 Timothy 2:19) True worshipers depart from iniquity. They are not slaves of sin, but slaves to God. Paul also wrote to the Ephesians and the Corinthians concerning the seal of God.

*In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise...*

Ephesians 1:13

*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

Ephesians 4:30

*...who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*

2 Corinthians 1:22

The 144,000 who received the seal of God trusted in him and believed the word of truth. Their belief in God was more than just a mental acknowledgement that he existed; they had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14).

Many people today have watered down what it means to believe in Christ. To believe in Christ means to come under the mastery of his lordship. This means being obedient to his word and participating in his works on earth. These servants of God had his mark on their foreheads. In other words they had a change of mind. They forsook the world and false religious systems to pursue the kingdom of God.

True worshipers today are given this same mandate. *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* (Romans 12:2) In his letter to the Colossians Paul wrote, *Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.* (Colossians 3:2) *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* (Romans 8:5)

Jesus said the greatest commandment of all is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind (Matthew 22:37). God made a covenant with his people by saying, *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them.* (Hebrews 10:16) In Revelation 22:3-4 John shares his vision of the final resting place for the servants of God. *And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.* God's laws have been written in their hearts and minds and those laws govern their behavior.

Another description of the 144,000 servants of God given to us by John is that they were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. Several times in scripture we read where God describes his people as virgins. The meaning of the word virgin in the Revelation and the Old Testament goes beyond one who has not participated in sexual activity. It refers to a person or in Israel's case a nation, who has served only one God; one who has forsaken the works of the flesh and kept himself unspotted from the world.

Listen to how God addresses his people.

*Therefore you shall say this word to them: Let My eyes flow with tears night and day, and let them not cease; For the virgin daughter of My people has been broken with a mighty stroke, with a very severe blow.*

Jeremiah 14:17

*Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel! You shall again be adorned with your tambourines, and shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice.*

Jeremiah 31:4

*Set up signposts, make landmarks; Set your heart toward the highway, the way in which you went. Turn back, O virgin of Israel, Turn back to these your cities.*

Jeremiah 31:21

*How shall I console you? To what shall I liken you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I compare with you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin is spread wide as the sea; Who can heal you?*

Lamentations 2:13

God declared that he was a husband to Israel. Israel was the virgin of his affection and he longed to be the affection of Israel's heart. He said, *For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. For the Lord has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused, says the Lord.* (Isaiah 54:5-6)

Throughout the Old Testament God commanded Israel to have no other gods before him (Exodus 20:3). During times of rebellion he accused them of committing adultery with other lovers. God's assessment of Israel's condition was, *...She decked herself with earrings and jewelry, and went after her lovers; but Me she forgot...* (Hosea 2:13) *You are an adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband.* (Ezekiel 16:32) *For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns -- broken cisterns that can hold no water.* (Jeremiah 2:13) Israel sought gratification in something other than God. They loved how the things of the world made them feel and defiled themselves with those things.

The word defile means to make filthy or dirty. When I think about being defiled I am reminded of my football playing days in high school. You may not have ever been in a high school locker room during football season, but let me inform you it stinks. Each Monday we began practice with clean uniforms that quickly became soiled during practice. We didn't take those uniforms home that night to be washed, we wore them all week. By the time Thursday's practice was over they were filthy. You could practically stand them up in a corner.

That is exactly what happens when we entertain the things of this world. At first it may seem not to affect us. We enjoy how it makes us feel so we continue to indulge ourselves. Soon that thing isn't enough, and we begin to turn to other sources of pleasure to fulfill our desires. Eventually we find ourselves cankered with worldliness and have forsaken what really satisfies us. We have hewn cisterns that hold no water.

The apostles exhorted the early church concerning a love for the things of the world. John wrote, *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* (1 John 2:15) James adds, *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.* (James 1:27) He goes on to say, *Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the scripture says in vain, The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?* (James 4:4-5)

Paul, being concerned that the Corinthian believers had been deceived into believing a different gospel than the one he had preached, wrote this, *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.* (2 Corinthians 11:2)

Many people in the church today have chased after the things of this world. They have honored God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. They have been lured away from the one who betrothed them by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. However, there is no room in those are led by the Spirit for a divided heart. Our husband is jealous for a virgin bride. True worshipers are virgins in the sense that they are married to God alone. They are not defiled with the things of this world nor have they given themselves to other gods. They have only one husband; Jesus.

John goes on to write of the 144,000;

*These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes...*

Revelation 14:4

It was established in the earlier chapters of John's revelation that Jesus is the Lamb standing in the midst of the throne of God. To find the 144,000 standing with Jesus in the place of worship (Mt. Zion) is fitting of their character. For all those who are led by the Spirit will always be in the place of worship, in the presence of the Lamb. However, there is a requirement for one to be in that place of worship. There is a requirement if one is to follow the Lamb wherever he goes.

Jesus made it plain what is required of those who desire to follow him. He said, *If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.* (Matthew 16:24) *And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.* (Matthew 10:38) The requirement of a follower is to take up his cross. What does it mean to take up your cross? The answer is most likely found as we explore what the cross meant in the life and death of Jesus.

I believe one meaning of the cross in the life of Jesus is total abandonment of self to the obedience of the Father's will. Jesus' life was centered in the Father's will. He always did what he saw the Father doing. He always said what he heard from the Father. His teaching focused on the heart of the Father. Jesus came to show the world what the Father is like, and he did it all the way to the cross where he was obedient to death (Philippians 2:8). His love for the Father compelled him to be obedient. That love became the perfect sacrifice for sin.

Jesus not only endured the cross out of love for the Father, he also took the sins of the world upon himself. The shedding of his blood was the sacrifice for sin. *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.* (Isaiah 53:5) The cross meant death for sin and death to sin.

Believers who walk by the Spirit have a deep desire to do the will of the Father and that desire is a motivating force in their lives. Their lives are centered in the Father's will. All of their hopes and dreams have been placed in the Father's hands and their lives given to his service. They go where he says to go and say what he commands them to say. They love what he loves and hate what he hates. They know the Father's will because they have his heart and have a willingness to abandon their lives in obedience to the Father which means death to self and sin.

The Lamb followers have this testimony, *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.* (Galatians 2:20) To follow the Lamb one must first go where to Lamb went. *He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.* (Isaiah 53:7) The Lamb went to the slaughter. Those people who stand with Jesus in the place of worship deny themselves and take up their cross daily. They have crucified the flesh and walk in obedience to the Spirit of God. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes.

We come to yet another portrayal of the 144,000 servants of God standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion, which gives two vivid descriptions of those who worship by the Spirit of God. *These were redeemed from among men being first fruits to God and to the Lamb.* (Revelation 14:4)

It is impossible for a person to worship by the Spirit of God unless that person has been redeemed. The Greek word for redeemed used in this scripture passage means "to go to market, purchase, or buy." No one is born into this world as a child of God. They are God's creation but not his child. Everyone is born with a sinful nature that is against the laws of God. All have sinned and fall short of his glory (Romans 3:23). The only way one can be redeemed is by the blood of the slain Lamb that is standing on Mount Zion with these 144,000. John begins the Revelation with this declaration.

*John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood...*

Revelation 1:4-6

Both Paul and Peter address this issue of redemption in their epistles.

*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree).*

Galatians 3:13

*...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

1 Peter 1:18-19

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth (the market place if you will), lived a sinless life, died a sinner's death, took our sins upon himself and with his blood purchased our souls for the Father. The first step to worshipping

in spirit and by the Spirit is to acknowledge his work on the cross for the forgiveness of sin and allow the Father to take possession of our life. Our lives are not our own, we have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23). We have been redeemed from among men and are first fruits to God.

In referring to the 144,000 as first fruits, John again taps into knowledge of his readers. John, himself being Jewish, was also aware of the concept of first fruits. In the Old Testament we read of several feasts that God commanded the nation of Israel to observe. One of those feasts was the Feast of Harvest. It was also known as the Feast of Weeks and Day of First Fruits. Later the early church referred to it as Pentecost because it occurred fifty days after Passover. During the feast Israel was to offer the first fruits of their wheat harvest as a free will offering to the Lord (Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10).

First fruits have always been important to God. Not only was Israel commanded to offer the first of the grain produce but also their flocks and vintage. They were also commanded to consecrate their first-born males to the Lord. Solomon reflected God's heart when he said, *Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first fruits of all your increase...* (Proverbs 3:9) God, through the prophet Jeremiah, referred to Israel as the first fruits of his increase (Jeremiah 2:3).

The Apostle Paul, in writing to the churches he helped to establish, refers to the early converts as first fruits of his labor (1 Corinthians 16:15; Romans 16:5). James portrayed all believers as first fruits when he wrote, *Of His own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.* (James 1:18) Once a person allows the redeeming work of the blood of Jesus to take effect in his life he becomes a first fruit of Christ's labor. Such were the 144,000 and such are those you worship in spirit.

The Greek word for first fruits used in the New Testament means "a beginning of sacrifice." Paul wrote, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.* (Romans 12:1) A sacrificial life is characteristic of those who have been redeemed and have become first fruits to God. Only those who practice sacrificial living can truly worship with a right spirit and by the Spirit.

In the description of the 144,000 standing with Jesus on Mount Zion we find two more characteristics of a those who are yielded to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. *For in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.* (Revelation 14:5)

The Greek word used for deceit in this passage means misrepresentation or deception. To misrepresent something is to give false information that makes it appear to be something it isn't; which is deception. For years used car salesmen have been given a bad reputation for hiding the facts about a particular vehicle in order to make a sell. Often defective vehicles are made to look good on the outside so as to deceive the potential buyer. One good biblical example of misrepresentation and deception happened early in the history of mankind in the Garden of Eden.

God commanded Adam saying, *Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.* (Genesis 2:16-17) Later Satan in the form of a serpent tempts Eve to eat of the fruit. Eve tells the serpent of God's command to which the serpent replies, *You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.* (Genesis 3:4-5) Satan misrepresented what God had said and deceived Eve. As a result the whole of mankind was plunged into sin. Maybe this is one reason God despises a deceitful tongue.

I believe King David speaks the heart of God in Psalm 101:7 when he says, *He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house; he who tells lies shall not continue in my presence.* In Psalm 24:1-4 David writes, *Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.* Again David gives us an idea of the character of a person who is allowed, not only to ascend into God's presence, but also to dwell in his presence.

*O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; who swears to his own hurt and does not change; who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.*

Psalm 15

A deceitful tongue can be traced to a deceitful heart. Jesus taught that out of the heart the mouth speaks (Luke 6:45). God will not allow deceitful hearts to come into his presence. They will not be allowed to worship before him. True worshipers keep themselves from a deceitful heart. They worship in spirit and truth.

The next characteristic given of the 144,000 is that they are without fault before the throne of God. The Greek word used in Revelation 14:5 for fault means unblemished, without blame, blemish, spot or fault; faultless. When the accuser of the brethren stands before the judge of all ages to bring accusation against a true worshiper there will not be enough evidence to find the worshiper guilty. By the drawing of the Holy Spirit the true worshiper comes to Christ and is cleansed from his fault by the blood of Christ. When a person comes to Christ he is made a new creation, old things are passed away (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians, *And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight...* (Colossians 1:21-22) Jesus not only died to make us blameless before God, but God himself is working in us by the Spirit so that we might be blameless. Paul wrote this to the early believers;

*...who [God] will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Corinthians 1:8

*And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

Those who walk by the Spirit live a life of holiness and keeps himself unblemished and unspotted from the world. Without holiness no one will see God or dwell in his presence (Hebrews 12:14). We look to Paul again who instructed the early church on how to be blameless.

*Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.*

Philippians 2:14-15

*...pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing.*

1 Timothy 6:11-14

The Apostle Peter encouraged his readers to *be diligent to be found by him (God) in peace, without spot and blameless.* (2 Peter 3:14) For someone to be diligent in something they must put forth an effort. The 144,000 had been washed in the blood of the Lamb and had been diligent in the things of God. They had given their bodies over to the work of the Holy Spirit and their reward was the opportunity to stand in the place of worship (Mount Zion) with the Lamb.

The Apostle Paul wrote, *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, or you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) God desires for us to glorify him with what we say and by how we live. Jesus said, *By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples* (John 15:8). How does bearing much fruit glorify the Father? What does it mean to glorify the Father? Let's begin answering that question at creation.

*Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.*

Genesis 1:26-28



Man was created for two reasons; to multiply and have dominion. God made Adam and Eve in his image and told them to be fruitful, multiply and have dominion. The Hebrew Bible translates Genesis 1:27 like this: *And the Great Powerful One filled the man with a representation of himself.* Man's task, therefore, was to fill the earth with a representation of God and the rule of God. They were to be image bearers. They were to fill the earth with the likeness of God.

Years ago I read a book by Kay Arthur in which she gave a wonderful definition of what it means to glorify God. I don't remember the name of the book, but she said to glorify God means to give the world the correct opinion of what God is like. In other words when others look at our values, character and behavior they will be able to say, "That is what God is like."

Because of sin Adam and Eve could not fully carry out the mandate God gave them. No longer could they give a proper representation of God, so God made another way; he sent his Son Jesus. Speaking of Jesus to the Colossians, Paul wrote, *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (Colossians 1:15) For in him the whole fullness of deity bodily. . . . (Colossians 2:9)* Jesus said, . . . *for the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10)* What was lost? Man's ability to be an image bearer. Jesus, the second Adam, came to earth to show the world what God is like and to restore man's ability to bear God's likeness. He accomplished this by sharing the words of God and doing the works of God.

Before Jesus was crucified he said to the Father, *I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. (John 17:4-5)* He gave the world the correct opinion of what God is like. Our purpose for existence is no less the same. The Westminster Catechism lends credence to this by declaring, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and fully to enjoy him forever."

Before his ascension, Jesus promised his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit as a helper. He said, *He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:14)* The Holy Spirit came to produce fruit in us so we would look like Jesus. He brought gifts to us so that we might do the works of Jesus. The proper mixture of fruit and gifts give the correct opinion of what God is like.

Many times Christians grieve the Holy Spirit by allowing fleshly desires to choke out the work God desires to do in them and through them. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. (Ephesians 4:30-31)* Behavior such as this limits the genuine flow of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

Galatians 5:22-24

Paul preceded this passage by describing the opposite of walking in the Spirit. *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21)* Not only will those who practice these things not inherit the kingdom of God, they will not be allowed to enter into God's presence in worship.

God brought Israel out of the bondage of Egypt, delivered them from the armies of Egypt at the Red Sea and later took his people into the Promised Land. However, before he brought them to the borders of Canaan he led them to Sinai.

*...while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.*

Exodus 19:3-6

The Lord went on to instruct Moses to have Israel wash their clothes because on the third day he would descend on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. Moses obeyed all the words of the Lord and on the third day led Israel out of the camp to meet with God.

Many of us remember the movie *The Ten Commandments* starring Charlton Heston. In the movie when God gave Moses the commandments a huge fireball burned the words on a large stone while this booming voice sited the commandment that was being written. However, in reality, the first time the commandments were recited was in the hearing of all the children of Israel. All of Israel had the opportunity for God to speak to them personally and witness his glory. Moses recalls the scene forty years later.

*These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and he added no more. And he wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.*

Deuteronomy 5:22

As the children of Israel drew near the mountain and heard the voice and saw the glory of God they became afraid. The bible says, "They stood afar off." Moses encouraged them not to be afraid and said that God was testing them so that they would fear him and not sin. Israel's response to Moses was, *You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.* (Exodus 20:19) How that must have broken the heart of God. His greatest desire for Israel was not to take them into Canaan. It was to bring Israel to himself. His desire was for them to be a special treasure to him and a kingdom of priest, a holy nation. He no longer wanted a mediator to stand between him and his people. He wanted to speak with all of Israel face to face.

God was calling Israel to intimacy, but there was a condition to that intimacy. The condition was holiness. Israel didn't pass God's test because they were not willing to obey his voice and keep his commandments. The light of God's glory exposed the true condition of their hearts, and they shrank back instead of pursuing God. We know this because a short time later they disregarded God's commandment and made a golden calf to take his place. Has God not dealt with us in much the same manner as he did Israel? He has brought us out of spiritual bondage and delivered us from an enemy too strong for us. Now his deep desire is to bring us to himself. He wants us to be his special treasure, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The Apostle Peter said it this way, *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 Peter 2:9)

God's desire is for us to be intimate with him, but there is a condition to intimacy. That condition is holiness. The real praises of God come from a kingdom of people who are pursuing holiness. Psalm 96:9 instructs us to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. You see we come to God on his terms. King David wrote, *Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.* (Psalm 24:3-4) The writer of Hebrews concurs by writing, *Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.* (Hebrews 12:14)

The closer we get to God the more the light of his glory exposes our darkness. The question is, "Will we go to the mountain or will we stand afar off?" Do we want to pursue holiness and be intimate with God or do we love our sin more? Do we really want to see his glory or do we want to wander in the wilderness?

The wilderness is a good place to be, at least initially. In the wilderness God calls us to himself. It is our response to God's call that determines how long we stay in the wilderness. The group of people who shrank back at Sinai was not the same group that inherited Canaan. The group that shrank back refused to go into Canaan because of the bad report of ten spies. However, the reason they spent the next forty years in the wilderness was not merely because they refused to enter Canaan. It was their refusal to draw near to God at Sinai and pursue intimacy with him. Instead of pursuing God they all died in the wilderness except for Joshua and Caleb.

The bible says that God had Moses set a boundary so the people couldn't touch or come up the mountain. God knew their hearts. I am convinced that if the children of Israel had possessed a heart that wanted to pursue God, all of them could have gone up the mountain.

To be a true worshiper one must worship in and by the Spirit. To worship in spirit we must allow the Holy Spirit to produce worship through us by being sensitive to his direction. We must be willing to put man's agendas aside and seek God's agenda. To worship in spirit also means to allow the Spirit to conform us into the image of Jesus; producing spiritual fruit and perfecting a life of holiness. Doing these two things will cause worship to become a way of life and not just a ceremony or ritualistic experience.

Over the years I have received e-mails from pastors who are struggling with the idea of introducing contemporary worship music into their congregations. It seems their biggest fear is that their congregations might become divided by, as one pastor put it, the “ubiquitous worship wars.” Many churches have successfully dealt with this issue by scheduling an additional worship service for those who prefer a more contemporary approach to worship. But, that is not always possible nor necessarily the solution.

One pastor posed these questions to me, “Do you think that it is possible to be in a worshiping congregation that uses only the traditional hymns? Do you think that by God’s grace we might still be capable of worship in spirit and truth?” My personal perception is that you can worship in spirit regardless of what you sing as long as it speaks the heart of the worshiper to the heart of God. The style of music doesn’t determine the worship, but rather the heart or the lifestyle of the worshiper. Though I prefer modern worship music to the exclusive use of traditional hymns, I cannot find in scripture where worshiping in spirit hinges on the style of music that is being used.

All music when first written is contemporary. When King David and others wrote the Psalms they were contemporary. The type of worship David established on Mount Zion had not been done before. Do you think there were some contemporaries of David who balked at what he did? There were some who probably said, “Wait a minute, you’re supposed to have a veil in front of that ark. And the priests are supposed to be the only ones who can see it. And only once a year! With blood! Besides we’ve never had that kind of music in the presence of the ark before. It looks like you guys are just carried away with emotionalism.” I don’t know about you, but I’m sure glad David and his buddies didn’t listen to them. We might not have the book of Psalms today if they had.

When Fanny Crosby wrote *Blessed Assurance* it was a modern song. When H.G. Spafford wrote *It is Well with My Soul* and Martin Luther penned *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* they were contemporary songs. John Newton (*Amazing Grace*) and William Cowper (*There is a Fountain*) published a hymnal of 268 songs to be sung by Newton’s church. That was their contemporary worship music.

I have read that some of the tunes of the old hymns were tunes taken from bar room songs. Do you think some of the traditionalists had a problem with that? Do you think some of Newton’s parishioners complained about the “new” music? Do you think some could have even left the church because of the “new” music? Surely today’s generation of pastors is not the first to be faced with the dilemma of which music to use in their church. Yet, these founding fathers and gifted writers pressed on even in the face of criticism. In doing so, they have left us a legacy of anointed worship music which should not be ignored by this generation.

So, you might ask, why do you prefer modern worship music to the exclusive use of traditional hymns? I suppose the reason is that the modern songs help me to express my heart to the heart of the Father. I worship to express my gratitude and love for God to God. I want to sing to him and for me the modern worship songs best facilitate that activity. For the most part the modern songs speak the way I speak as opposed to backward sentences and the use of King James English. I much prefer to say, “I love you, Father” as opposed to “I lovest thou thee, O Father.” Now, I don’t have an issue with anyone who wants to sing traditional hymns exclusively if that expresses their heart to God.

Also, I believe revelation is progressive. God is still revealing things about himself to us through the Holy Spirit. In other words, we don’t know everything there is to know about God and how we should respond to him. There are still mysteries in scripture. I certainly don’t understand all of it. Some of the modern worship songs capture some of the “new” things that God reveals about himself. It’s fresh for me. I am not suggesting that God has changed or that scripture or the gospel has changed. But, the way we understand him and how we respond to him is changing all the time. I believe by his Spirit God is still creating. At the least he has gifted people with creativity. The gifts they offer to the church are just as important as the gifts offered by the saints of old and should not be ignored by the older generations.

Often times in the quest for what is best, the church has allowed the world to determine what mediums are used in worship. We should always be careful not to mistake the unholy for what is holy. We must also be careful not to call unholy what is holy. It is equally important that our definition of worship not be relegated to what occurs on Sunday mornings.

Expressing our worship includes activities such as feeding the poor, visiting the sick, taking care of widows and orphans, loving our neighbor as ourselves and being conformed into the image of Christ. My perception is that all of these are acts of worship and coupled with our emotional responses to the Father comprise the sum of our worship. Our worship is not determined by the style of music we use but by the style of life we live.

I recently read a book by John Piper titled *The Hidden Smile of God*. The book is a reflection on the lives of John Bunyan, William Cowper and David Brainerd. In his conclusion Piper writes, “If the Christian life has become the path of ease in the modern west, then corporate worship is the place of increasing entertainment. The problem is not a battle between contemporary worship music and hymns; the problem is that there aren’t enough

martyrs during the week. If no soldiers are perishing, what you want on Sunday is Bob Hope and some pretty girls, not the army chaplain and a surgeon.”

Piper goes to say, “...faith-filled suffering is essential in this world for the most intense, authentic worship. When we are most satisfied with God in suffering, he will be most glorified in us in worship. Our problem is not styles of music. Our problem is styles of life. When we embrace more afflictions for the worth of Christ, there will be more fruit in the worship of Christ.”

Piper’s assessments might be best illustrated by in the lives of Paul and Silas. Their abandonment for the cause of Christ landed them in a Philippian jail. Broken and bleeding, when most of us would be licking our wounds, the two preachers began praying and singing hymns in the middle of the night. In response, God caused a massive earthquake so violent it shook the foundation of the prison. The prison doors were opened and all the prisoners were loosed from their chains. As a consequence the jailer and his entire family were saved.

The worship offered by Paul and Silas was authenticated by the affliction they suffered for the worth of Christ. The fruit of that worship was the salvation of souls; the loosing of prisoners.

If we want God to shake our worship services with his manifest presence, if we want to see prisoners loosed from their chains, then we must be willing to lay down our lives for the sake of God’s kingdom. The style of worship music we use is not the stimulus that moves the heart of God. It is our willingness to suffer for the cause of Christ and be obedient to his call on our lives. The question of authentic worship is not, “Do we use contemporary or traditional music?” but rather, “Are we willing to die?” That is the kind of worship the Holy Spirit seeks to produce in us.

You may need a fresh touch from the Holy Spirit. Your life may be parched and dry from a lack of fellowship with God. The Holy Spirit may have been quenched in your life so there have been no rivers of living water flowing into your spirit. Maybe there is a need for repentance and asking the Father’s forgiveness. Remember he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1: 9).

The Father desires for us to come to him. Release the Holy Spirit to work in you right now to restore sweet fellowship with the Father and determine, by his grace, to live a life of holiness. I don’t know about you, but I don’t want to spend year after year going around the same mountain; I want to go up.

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*To worship God in truth is to recognize Him for being who He is,  
and to recognize ourselves for what we are.*

Brother Lawrence

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## **CHAPTER 4**

### WORSHIPING IN TRUTH

For several years we had a ritual in our house, especially when our children were younger, that on Monday (sometimes Tuesday) evenings, as a family, we listened to twenty to thirty minutes of the bible on cassette tape. We gathered in the living room making sure everyone had something to keep them quiet and turned on our dramatized version of the Old or New Testament. Over the years, as our five children have grown, we have spent quality time sharing with them the plan of salvation. We have stressed the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus and have given them a biblical foundation for living a godly life.

At some point in time, especially when they were small, questions would arise like “Where did God come from?” and “What does God look like?” These were honest and innocent questions because they had listened to us describe to them where they had come from and what side of the family they most favored.

We quickly learned that answering these questions was difficult if not impossible. A child (and most adults if they are honest) has a difficult time understanding that God has no origin. We can only draw our information from the standpoint of the created, but God cannot be described in those terms. What hope do we have then of ever knowing what God is like?

#### Worship in the Truth of Who God Is

Jesus said true worshipers will worship the Father in truth (John 4:23). What does it mean to worship in truth? One way to worship in truth is to worship God according to the descriptions laid out in scripture; his person and attributes.

Our human minds cannot grasp the magnitude of an incomprehensible God. We cannot and never will be fully able to understand God. David wrote in Psalm 145:3, *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.* Again David writes, *You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.* (Psalms 139:5-6) In Psalm 147:5 the psalmist writes, *Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.* God spoke through the Prophet Isaiah, *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.* (Isaiah 55:9)

This theme is carried over in the New Testament scriptures. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.* (1 Corinthians 2:11) To the Romans Paul wrote, *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!* (Romans 11:33) Paul also prayed for the Colossians to “increase in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:10). Thus acknowledging that there is always more they can learn about God.

The psalmist gives us a way of how we can learn more about God and worship him in the truth of who he is. He writes, *I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules.* (Psalm 119:7) The only way we can worship God in truth is to worship him with an upright heart. In Psalm 119:7 the psalmist is sending two

distinct messages. The first is that to have an upright heart he must learn God's righteous rules. The second is that he can only offer praise with an upright heart when he has learned God's righteous rules. Knowing God's will and ways (rules) gives us a platform to worship him in truth.

When I speak of knowing God's will or ways, I have in mind God's perspective on life's issues or circumstances. The King James Version of Psalm 119:7 uses the word judgments instead of rules. The Hebrew word used for judgments means verdict (favorable or unfavorable). It also means something that is pronounced judicially, especially a sentence or formal decree (human or particularly) divine law. The best way to learn God's will and ways is to learn and memorize the Holy Scriptures. The word of God, the bible, is our source for knowing and learning about God.

The Hebrew word used for learn in Psalm 119:7 means to goad. It also means to teach (as the rod being an Oriental incentive). The word goad means to provoke, drive, prod or push. The psalmist seems to be suggesting that he must make a concerted effort to learn God's righteous rules. This doesn't seem to imply having a devotional on occasion, but rather a somewhat more intense study of the word of God. One doesn't need to be a theologian or seminary graduate to worship God in truth, but one does need proper knowledge of God. That knowledge can be obtained by spending time studying God's word.

In our study of the scriptures we also learn about the character and attributes of God. God has chosen to reveal himself to us throughout the bible. For instance: God is a just judge (Psalm 7:11), God is creator (Psalm 148:5), God is King (Psalm 10:16), God is good (Psalm 100:5), God is merciful and gracious (Psalm 103:8), God is compassionate (Psalm 111:4), God is great (Psalm 135:5), and God is righteous (Psalm 145:17). We also have many descriptions of God in the New Testament such as; God is spirit (John 4:24), God is wise (Jude 25), God is holy (Revelation 4:8), God is light (1 John 1:5), God is love (1 John 4:8), God is faithful (2 Thessalonians 3:3), God is the beginning, the end and the Almighty (Revelations 1:8).

No doubt someone will protest by saying that you can know all about God, but neither know God nor have a relationship with him. That ascertain may be correct based on a conversation Jesus had with the Jews. However, Jesus told the Jews that even though they had searched the scriptures to find eternal life they did not have the word abiding in them (John 5:38-39). The goal of studying the scriptures is for the scriptures to abide in us. It is the scriptures that testify of Jesus; the Word of God (John 5:39; John 1:1, 14). It is through Jesus that we know the true God and true things about God. Jesus said, *All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.* (Matthew 11:27)

God chose to reveal himself through the life of his son, Jesus. The writer of Hebrews tapped into this truth when he said, *God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.* (Hebrews 1:1-3 NKJV)

Jesus is the express image of the Father. The Apostle Paul gave us the follow description of Jesus. *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.* (Colossians 1:15-20)

Jesus gave us a perfect picture of what the Father is like. He never acted outside the Father's directions and did only what he saw the Father doing. All the words Jesus spoke were in perfect harmony with God the Father. He told his disciples that he and the Father are one, and that whoever had seen him had seen the Father (John 10:30; 14:9). Jesus never avoided making himself equal with God. In Philippians 2:6 Speaking of Jesus, Paul wrote, . . . *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.* . . . In 1 Timothy 3:16 Paul speaks again of Jesus' equality with God; *Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.*

John 1:1 and 14 reads, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* Every attribute Jesus possessed is true of God the Father for he was God in the flesh.

Jesus spoke often of his divinity, but many of the religious leaders did not accept it as truth. Jesus told the Jews, *You search the Scriptures, for you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.* (John 5:39) They called him a prophet and teacher, however many never worshiped him as God the Messiah, the Savior of the world. So it is today. Many people say Jesus was a good man who did and said good things, but they deny his equality with God. To worship in truth is to worship God according to the truth he has revealed about himself, and he has perfectly revealed himself in and through his Son.

Maybe one of the most moving revelations of Jesus is found in the fifth chapter of The Revelation of Jesus Christ. Many biblical scholars view The Revelation of Jesus Christ as a revelation of the end times. There is a certain amount of end time revelation in the book, but my perception is that the main purpose of the book is to reveal Jesus. Those who view the book as mainly that of the end times seem to be more enamored with the revealing of the anti-christ than the person of the Conquering Christ. John begins the fifth chapter with a stunning revelation.

*Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals. And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.*

Revelation 5:1-7

Understanding the meaning of the scroll is paramount to understanding the meaning of this passage. This revelation not only reveals the person of Christ it is a springboard to the interpretation of the rest of the John's vision.

Once Israel had conquered the enemies of the Promised Land each tribe was given a portion of the land as an inheritance. This land was their most prized possession. It was passed down from generation to generation and was the object of many wars. Wars continue to be fought over the land today.

Occasionally a family would fall on hard times and would be forced to sell their land and serve the new owners as slaves. When the property was sold two documents were used as proof of the transaction; a sealed scroll and an open scroll. The open or unsealed scroll stated the purchaser as the new owner of the land. It was the public transaction of the purchase. The sealed scroll contained the details of the sell and the terms of redemption. This scroll had the signatures of witnesses on the back.

In the book of Jeremiah we find evidence of the sealed and open scrolls. God commanded Jeremiah to purchase the field of his uncle's son Hanameel. When Jeremiah bought Hanameel's field in Anathoth, he had witnesses to sign the scroll and then he sealed it. God instructed Jeremiah, *Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for a long time.* (Jeremiah 32:14)

There were two ways a Jewish family could obtain their land back once it was sold. The first was known as the Year of Jubilee. Every fifty years all the titles of purchased land were automatically returned to the original owners. The second way the land could be returned was the law of the kinsman-redeemer. If they were willing and had the means a person who was the nearest of kin to the original land owner or another person could redeem the land and return it to the original owner (Leviticus 25).

The law of the kinsman-redeemer is portrayed in the Book of Ruth. Boaz redeemed the land that Elimelech had sold during a time of famine. In doing so he returned it to Naomi, Elimelech's wife, and then married Ruth the widowed daughter-in-law of Naomi. This allowed the family name to be passed down to future generations. Jesus was born of this lineage.

It was not by coincidence that the slain Lamb opened the scroll that had been sealed. In doing so he established himself as the kinsman-redeemer. Not only was he willing to purchase the lost inheritance he was also able to pay the necessary price for redemption. These two facts led all of creation into a new song.

*And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 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.*

Revelation 5:8-10

Jesus, the slain Lamb, had become the object of heaven's worship because he had become the kinsman-redeemer. The price he paid for redemption was his blood. Mankind had lost his inheritance in the Garden of Eden, had become a slave to sin and alienated from the presence of God. But, now a kinsman-redeemer was found who was worthy to pay the price for God and man to be re-united. Heaven's only response was to worship the Lamb. That kind of revelation compels all of God's creation to worship the Lamb.

In offering his son as a slain lamb, the kinsman-redeemer for the sin of mankind, we recognize the sovereignty of God in the salvation of his people. It is imperative to worshiping God in truth that we acknowledge his sovereignty in all things. To say that God is sovereign is to say that he is self-governing; not ruled by anyone or anything. He has supreme authority and power. The Psalms give voice to the self-governing aspect of God. In Psalm 115:8 we read, *Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.* Psalms 135:6 says, *Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.* God speaks about himself through Isaiah saying, *...remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose...* (Isaiah 46:9-10)

God is sovereign over the minds and hearts of man. The psalmist wrote, *The Lord looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man; from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds.* The Proverbs concur; *Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.* (Proverbs 19:21) *The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he wills.* (Proverbs 21:1) God's sovereignty over the minds and hearts of men demands the highest exaltation and praise of his name; even the evil that men perpetrate. Asaph wrote, *Surely the wrath of man shall praise you; the remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt.* (Psalm 76:10)

We find in the scriptures examples of how man's wrath leads to God's praise. In the book of 2 Kings, chapters 18 and 19, we read of an event that took place in Judah during the reign of King Hezekiah. Sennacherib king of Assyria fought against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. When he set his sights on destroying Jerusalem, Hezekiah tried to appease Sennacherib by giving him silver and gold that he took from the house of the Lord. Sennacherib was not deterred by the gift and sent an envoy with a message for Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem.

The envoy touted the people of Jerusalem in an effort to get them to surrender and make peace with the king of Assyria. They even said that the Lord had sent them to come to Jerusalem to destroy the city; which may have had validity as we will see later. They also sought to undermine Hezekiah's integrity by saying that he was misleading the people by telling them that God would deliver them.

Using their many accomplishments as a tool to discourage the people, the envoy mocked God by saying, *Has any of the gods of the nations ever delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?* (2 Kings 18:33-35)

When Hezekiah heard the words sent by Sennacherib he sent his own envoy to Isaiah the prophet who responded; *Say to your master, Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land, and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.* (2 Kings 19:6-7)

Again Sennacherib sends messengers to Hezekiah saying, *'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.* (2 Kings 19:10) Now, not only has Sennacherib called Hezekiah's integrity into question he has also accused God of deceiving Hezekiah with false promises. Hezekiah goes to prayer and God responds through the prophet Isaiah.

In God's response through Isaiah he brings to mind that Sennacherib has bragged of his victories over other nations. However, God assures Hezekiah that it was he that determined long ago that Sennacherib would have such military success (2 Kings 19:25-26). And because Sennacherib had raged against him, he would send him back to Assyria. That night an angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrians. Sennacherib returned home and was later killed by two of his sons as he worshiped in the house of Nisroch his god.



God planned Sennacherib's military success (2 Kings 19:25). Even Sennacherib said through his envoy that it was not without the Lord that he came against Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:25). God gave Sennacherib the power to subdue all the nations with which he fought. The gods of the nations were not able to deliver their worshipers from the hand of Sennacherib. Only the God of Israel was able to defeat Sennacherib. It was none other than God who put a spirit in Sennacherib that caused him to leave Jerusalem and return home. Why did God plan Sennacherib's success and demise? The answer may be found in the words of Hezekiah's prayer; . . . *that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O Lord, are God alone* (2 Kings 19:19).

The wrath of Sennacherib and his evil intentions toward Jerusalem were thwarted by God to prove that God is more powerful than any other so-called gods (Psalm 86:8), that it is God's plans and counsel that stand (Psalm 33:10-11), that God sovereignly rules over the nations (Psalm 103:19), and that God alone is to be worshiped and feared among the peoples (Psalm 76:7). I believe Asaph had this in mind when he wrote; *The wrath of man shall praise you...*

God's dealings with Pharaoh, King of Egypt, are another example of how the wrath of man leads to the praise of God. After God had performed the sixth plague upon Egypt he told Moses to tell Pharaoh, *For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. You are still exalting yourself against my people and will not let them go.* (Exodus 9:14-17)

One way that the wrath of Pharaoh led to the praise of God is that God triumphed over the plans of Pharaoh. Albert Barnes wrote, "It is not that there was anything in the wrath itself, or in their plans or intentions, that was in itself "adapted" to honor God; but that it was overruled by him, so that he took "occasion" from it to display his own character." God raised Pharaoh to power for three specific purposes; so that Pharaoh would know that there was none like God in all the earth, to show Pharaoh his power, and so that God's name would be proclaimed in all the earth. God told Pharaoh that he could have already cut him off from the earth. However, God created Pharaoh and used Pharaoh's wrath and evil deeds for the purpose of displaying his own character and attributes; his glory.

The prophet Isaiah wrote, *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.* (Isaiah 45:7 KJV) The Hebrew word for create used in this passage is the same word used in Genesis 1:1; *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* In fact, the word is used throughout the creation narrative. The Hebrew word for evil used in this passage is also the word used for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9), and of the wicked (evil) men of Sodom (Genesis 13:13). It is also used in Psalm 34:14 which says, *Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.* (Psalm 34:14)

We gasp at the thought that God creates or ordains evil. However, scripture tells us that God created all things (John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 2:10). The Apostle Paul wrote, *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him.* (Colossians 1:16) Proverbs 16:4 says, *The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.* (KJV) God has created all things, even the wicked, for his purposes and for his praise.

The Hebrew word for evil used in Isaiah 45:7 and Proverbs 16:4 is ra'a' which means *bad* or (as noun) *evil* (natural or moral) : adversity, affliction, calamity, distress, exceedingly great grief, harm, heavy, misery, sorrow, trouble, vex, wicked, wretchedness, and wrong. To choose to believe that God does not create evil leaves us without the hope of Romans 8:28; *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* If God does not have sovereign control over the circumstances (evil) in our lives what hope do we have that he can turn them or use them for our good?

Though God creates or ordains evil the scriptures never say that God does evil. God is neither to be blamed for evil nor his holiness brought into question. Evil is perpetrated by the willing choices of evil men who are held accountable for their evil deeds. Barnes also wrote, "It is certain, also, that the fact that God overrules the wrath of people does not justify that wrath. The purposes of people are, like the pestilence and the storm, what they are in themselves; and the nature of their conduct is not affected by any use that God may make of it. People must be judged according to their own deeds, not for what God does through their wickedness."

Jesus' own words attest to the fact that God ordains evil yet holds man accountable for his willing choices. We read in Luke 22:22, *For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!* Concerning evil Jesus said, *Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!* (Matthew 18:7)

In speaking about God's dealing with Pharaoh, Paul anticipated the question; "How can God find fault with man if it was indeed himself that created the evil?" His answer is: *You will say to me then, Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will? But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, Why have you made me like this? Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory...* (Romans 9:19-23)

Does a potter place a lump of clay on the wheel and let it decide what it wants to be? Absolutely not! The potter forms the clay according to his will and purpose. So, God created (like a potter does with clay) vessels of wrath to make known the riches of his glory; using the evil of men to display his mercy.

To say that God does not use evil to display his glory leaves us with a dilemma. Wayne Grudem writes in his *Systematic Theology*; "...if we maintain that God does not use evil to fulfill his purposes, then we would have to admit that there is evil in the universe that God did not intend, is not under his control, and might not fulfill his purposes. If evil came into the world in spite of the fact that God did not intend it and did not want it to be there, then what guarantee do we have that there will not be more and more evil that he does not intend and that he does not want? And what guarantee do we have that he will be able to use it for his purposes, or even that he can triumph over it?"

In the second Psalm the psalmist wrote that God has set his King (his Son) in power and it is he who rules over the rage of the nations (Psalm 2:6-9). God's rule and reign over the rage of the nations is a source of thanksgiving for the twenty-four elders when they heard the words, *The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever* (Revelation 11:15-18). Such a proclamation gives us great comfort in knowing that regardless of how wicked man becomes, God has sovereign control. And should we suffer at the hands of wicked man, we know that God will triumph unto his glory; that our suffering will lead to his praise.

Psalm 2 begins, *Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.* (Psalm 2:1, 4 ESV) Again in the Psalms we read, *The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.* (Psalms 33:10-11 ESV) Our world is full of the wrath of man. Nation wars against nation and civil wars abound. Rulers make great boasts about their military might and ally themselves with like-minded rulers. God is not moved, his plans do not change. All of the rage of the nations and the plotting of the rulers exist for this purpose; to fulfill the plan of the Almighty God to exalt his name above every name and to be made much of among the nations.

God is the supreme value of the universe and should be worshiped as such. Isaiah wrote, *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust. Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering. All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness. To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?* (Isaiah 40:12-18) Though it is true that God is a father and desires to have intimate relationships with his children, it is just as true that God is the Almighty, comparable to no one, and worthy of reverence and honor.

Several years ago I attended a worship conference with some friends. As we entered for the initial service I noticed above the sanctuary entrance a sign that read "Enter to Worship." That simple sign spoke volumes to me about the attitude and seriousness in which the church approached worship. First, it said that beyond those doors worship would be taking place. Secondly, it projected the idea that you were expected to worship should you come inside. Thirdly, and maybe the most important, it conveyed to me that what was happening in that place of worship was holy and should be approached with reverence.

I have been leading worship for more than thirty years, and I must admit that it still grieves me to watch people casually and somewhat irreverently approach worship. Many times I have witnessed people mill around during worship, talk to a neighbor or otherwise act disinterested. The seriousness of the moment eludes them and the fact that we are approaching the King of Kings, the Holy and One True God, is not enough incentive to warrant their attention. There appears to be a lack of respect for the presence and person of God and they fail to show honor and render him the glory due his name.

Many churches today value a visitor friendly atmosphere above a Spirit friendly atmosphere. Coffee bars with snacks and drinks are set up in sanctuaries that foster a party type atmosphere. The time that is set aside to express worship through song and other means is interrupted with a time of shaking hands, hugging necks and announcements. And, what I will admit as being a pet peeve, a holy time with God is tainted with entertainment via videos and other media sources. These types of things have a tendency to keep people “happy” and distract them from the weightiness God’s presence. I am not suggesting that we create a morose type atmosphere, but a joyful reverent atmosphere in which God is the primary focus and not man.

Have you ever watched a broadcast of the President of the United States giving a State of the Union Address? Usually when the cameras first come on there is a lot of milling around and talking going on between members of congress and other dignitaries who are present. However, when the president enters the room and the band begins to play “Hail to the Chief” immediate attention is given to the president. Those in attendance stand to their feet and applaud as the president approaches the podium and their undivided attention is given as he addresses the assembly. Why is such respect given to this man? Because he holds a place of honor and such respect is due a person of his stature. Of how much more honor and respect should the God of the universe receive when we gather to worship him?

King David wrote, *But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.* (Psalm 5:7) The Hebrew word used here for fear means reverence. David knew the God he worshiped and understood that he should be approached with reverence and honor.

Have you ever wondered why God seems to hide his presence sometimes during our worship services? It could be that at times we fail to give him honor by neglecting to hold him in high esteem and render him our undivided attention. We disrespect him by not considering his presence as precious and failing to worship him in the manner he has commanded; his divine order.

Aaron’s two sons, Nadab and Abihu suffered grave consequences because they dishonored God. We pick the story up in Leviticus 10 after God manifests his glory above the tabernacle.

*Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. And Moses said to Aaron, This is what the Lord spoke, saying: By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.*

Leviticus 10:1-3 (NKJV)

We read that Nadab and Abihu offered profane fire before the Lord. Webster’s dictionary defines profane as showing disrespect or contempt toward sacred things; irreverence. These two priests attempted to enter God’s presence with an offering made with their own hands; one that was not commanded by God. Their sin was approaching a holy God as though he were something common. Their offering was disrespectful and irreverent and did not honor God.

A young man named Uzzah met a similar fate to that of Nadab and Abihu. Uzzah was the son of Abinadab a man from Kirhath Jearim. When the Ark of the Covenant was sent back to Israel after being in Philistine possession, it was placed in the house of Abinadab where it stayed for twenty years (1 Samuel 7:2). When King David desired to bring the ark to Jerusalem it was placed on a new cart with Uzzah and his brother Ahio in charge of driving the cart. As they arrived at the threshing floor of Nachon the oxen stumbled and Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark. Immediately God struck him dead (2 Samuel 6:1-7).

The ark was a familiar piece of furniture in Uzzah’s home for 20 years. Uzzah as well as King David failed to transport the ark as God had prescribed thus treating his glory as something common.

Jesus did not do many miracles (manifest all his glory) in his own country because the people neither believed nor honored him. As He taught in their synagogues the people were astonished and said, *Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? Are not his brothers James and Joses and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?* (Matthew 13:55-56) The very people who were watching and waiting for the Messiah missed his glory because they were too familiar with him. Again, God refused to manifest his presence among people who considered him as common. Jesus’ reply to the people’s blatant disrespect and unbelief was, *A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.* (Matthew 13:57)

We cannot expect God to permit us to come into his presence with an attitude of disrespect. I am not making a case here for a “solemn” assembly each time we meet. The psalmist wrote, *Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.* (Psalm 2:11) As we have seen before the Hebrew word used for rejoice is *gwl* that means to spin

around under the influence of any violent emotion. When we come to God in worship, whether dancing or bowing, we should come in reverence; honoring his majesty and kingship. We should always approach God with seriousness and respect. I understand that he is our Father, and we are invited to crawl up in his lap for hugs and kisses. But, we must also understand that he is Almighty God and honor and glory are due his name.

Are you too familiar with God? Do you haphazardly approach him as if he were something common? Should you expect God to manifest his glory if you do not give him the honor and reverence due his name?

Judson Cornwall in his book *Worship as Jesus Taught It*, shares that after years of preaching and demonstrating praise and worship in his church the congregation had reached a peak in their worship experience. For one year he stopped preaching on praise and worship and began preaching on God. He writes, "As we saw God high and lifted up, our response also lifted up higher and higher, because worship is always a response to revelation. Fresh revelations produce fresh worship responses and higher revelations bring higher responses."

Worship becomes our obvious response when we get a true revelation of the creator. Without a revelation of God it is impossible to worship him. Yet, once a person has a true revelation of the nature of God it is impossible not to worship. There is so much more of God that he is ready to reveal, and with each new revelation comes a new worship response. We get fresh revelations of God as we spend time with him and in his word.

Times of prayer and worship are a necessity in our quest to know more of God. As we spend time in his presence our knowledge of him increases as should our level of intimacy. This works much like a marriage as husband and wife learn more about each other by being together over the years.

Until the truth God has revealed about himself through his word and his Son becomes truth that is written in our hearts, our worship will be stale and lifeless. This truth must be more than a head knowledge based on facts. It must also be truth written in our hearts, based on revelation and a personal relationship experience.

## Worship in the Truth of Who We Are

I had my first experience in leading small group worship in 1983 when Renae and I took a full time youth pastor's position in an inter-denominational church. It was our first full time ministry position so we had a lot of learning ahead of us. About a year prior to this a good friend of mine stirred my interest in learning to play the guitar. He gave me a chord chart, showed me how to read it and told me to teach myself. By the time I became a youth pastor I knew a few chords and could keep a decent rhythm.

Week after week our small youth group would gather, and I would give them my best shot at leading them into the presence of the Lord. I know I wasn't very adept at worship leading, but honestly, at times I didn't have the grandest of audiences either.

Though there were some in the group who could and would sing it was obvious that they were not worshipping. It was very puzzling to me because most of those kid's parents were the more radical worshipers in our corporate gatherings. I pulled out all stops in an effort to coerce those teens to worship. I would coach and encourage them one week then shame them the next. Looking back I see how questionable my methods were though the intent was good. Regardless of the intent, my efforts proved futile for the most part.

After spending some time with many of them and becoming more familiar with their lifestyles, I realized that the behavior some of them displayed on Sunday mornings was not consistent with their behavior during the week. Though they honored God with what they said, their actions suggested otherwise. It seemed I was trying to pull worship from spiritually parched lives. Any work of the Spirit that had taken place in their lives had been quenched by worldliness and sin. Though they could sing the right words, their approach to God was not based on the truth of their relationship with him.

There is a story recorded in Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30 about a Greek woman, Syro-Phoenician by birth, who approached Jesus after he had entered the region of Tyre and Sidon. The woman followed Jesus and his disciples begging him to heal her daughter who had an unclean spirit. "O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed, she cried." Jesus did not answer the woman immediately and was urged by his disciples to send her away. Jesus replied, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The woman then came and fell at Jesus feet, worshiped him and said, "Lord, help me!" Jesus answered her, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." To which the woman replied, "True Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Jesus healed the woman's daughter that very hour.

I have read this story many times and felt that Jesus treated this woman harshly. Knowing the compassionate nature of Jesus I have been puzzled with his approach to this woman. However, there is an explanation.

This woman must have heard the stories about people who had received healing by referring to Jesus as the Son of David; blind Bartemeus for one example. She knew that being a Gentile she had no claims on Jesus as the Son of David. She pretended to have a relationship with Jesus that did not exist so as to get his attention and favor. After the woman fell at Jesus' feet to worship him he exposed her hypocrisy by calling her a dog. It is interesting to note that the Greek word for worship (proskuneo) used in this passage means to kiss the hand or lick like a dog. This woman had now approached Jesus from the true position of her status and presented her plea. That was the approach that got Jesus' attention and favor.

Hebrews 10:22 says, . . . *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.* True worship flows from a true relationship with God. One can use the expressions of worship used by others, but if their relationship with God is not based on truth it will not be true worship. Psalm 51:6 reads, *Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.* God said of Israel, . . . *these people draw near to Me with their mouths and honor Me with their lips but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men. . . .* (Isaiah 29:13 NKJV)

To worship in truth means that our actions match our words. In Isaiah we see that Israel talked the talk but did not walk the walk. Their experience with God was based on what was told them about God. They acknowledged that there was a God and that everything said about him was true, but they had not given him their hearts. They came to God based on other's experiences that made their worship futile.

In the book of Amos we read where God tells Israel that he hates and despises their feast days and sacred assemblies. He said that he did not accept their offerings and told them to remove the noise of their music and songs because he wasn't listening. God's requirement was for Israel to show justice and work righteousness (Amos 5:21-24). God is not impressed with our methods of worship if those methods express someone other than who we really are. God desires truth in the inward parts. When with a right relationship with God we come to him in worship, he hears. When he hears, he responds.

Ask God to expose the true condition of your heart. Ask him, "Do I approach you on the basis of others' actions or experiences, or am I approaching you on the basis of a true relationship?" Once that issue is settled be assured that the Father desires fellowship with you. He longs for his children to climb in his lap and lavish their love on him.

There is another aspect of approaching God on the basis of relationship that is very important to understand. We can worship him in truth by approaching him with the understanding of who he says we are. If we have been born again we are children of God. John wrote, *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* (John 1:12-13)

In love God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. The Apostle Paul wrote, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.* (Ephesians 1:3-6) In these verses Paul described two acts that God performed which resulted in the praise of his glorious grace. The acts to which Paul refers is that God, in his love, "chose us in him...that we should be holy and blameless before him" and "predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ." In other words, God's choosing of us to be holy and blameless before him and the predestination of our adoption as sons commends or praises his grace. Again, God praised his own grace by choosing us to be holy and blameless before him and by the predestination of our adoption as sons. He chose and predestined us to show the glories of his grace and love.

These acts of praise were initiated by God before the foundation of the world and had no dependence upon our future choice to receive his adoption. God did not choose and predestine us based on our merits or because he looked into the future and saw that one-day we would receive his choosing. In fact, had God not chosen and predestined us we neither would not nor could not have chosen him. God did not look into the future and say, "Because they will one day love me I am going to love them." It was God first loving us that gave us any hope of ever loving him (1 John 4:10). There was nothing in us that was lovable. That is what makes his love for us so incredible and his grace so glorious.

The glory of God's grace is manifested in his predestination of us as sons because we were not capable of saving ourselves. In fact, we were not even capable of making a righteous decision to choose to believe in Christ. Later in his epistle, Paul tells the Ephesians that they were by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). As we noted in chapter one, Paul, quoting King David, told the Romans, . . . *as it is written: None is righteous, no, not*

*one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.* (Romans 3:10-12, Psalm 14:1-3) King David also wrote, *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.* (Psalm 51:5)

In another psalm David wrote, *I say to the Lord, You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you* (Psalm 16:2). Isaiah, in the midst of his prophetic word concerning the Messiah, said, *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way. . .* (Isaiah 53: 6) Isaiah also lamented, *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.* (Isaiah 64:6) God himself said that the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth (Genesis 8:21).

God's election, choosing and predestining of us is totally based on his love for us. There is nothing we can do to be worthy of his love. If God's choosing of us was based on our eventual choice to choose him we would have reason to boast. However, Paul wrote to the Ephesians, *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

*God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.*

1Corinthians 1:28-31

Paul wrote to Titus, *...he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* (Titus 3:5-7) Peter wrote, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...* (1 Peter 1:3) We will not be able to stand before God one day and say, "God, had I not chosen you I would not be in heaven." To which God might reply as Jesus did to his disciples, "You did not choose me, I chose you."

*For he [God] says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.*

Romans 9:15-16

Paul went on to tell the Ephesians, *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.* (Ephesians 1:11-12) The Greek word Paul used for predestined is *proorizo* that means to limit in advance, predetermine, determine before, ordain or predestinate. Paul also used the same Greek word in Romans 8:29 where he wrote, *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

Many people have interpreted Romans 8:29 as saying that God, in his omniscience, looked down through time and saw the people who would one day accept his call on their lives then chose and predestined those people to salvation based on the choice he knew they would one day make. However, this interpretation is lacking in at least two ways. First, certainly God is all knowing, but the verse says that God foreknew people not certain facts about people. Secondly, the scripture does not say God foreknew or foresaw that a certain group of people would believe and then predestined them according to that knowledge. God foreknew a group of people in which he would have a relationship. God wanted more sons, so he predestined to conform all that he called into the image of Christ.

Furthermore, Paul continues in Romans 8:30, *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.* Paul did not say that those whom God called he gave the option of self-determination. Rather, those whom God called he also justified. God justifies all whom he calls; there are no exceptions. This truth is supported in Acts 13:48 which reads, *And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.* Luke did not write that those who believed were then appointed to eternal life, their believing was preceded by their appointment to eternal life. Had they not been appointed to eternal life they would not have believed. Though it is true that not everyone who hears the call of man to believe in Christ unto salvation will indeed believe, all those who hear the call of God will believe and be justified.

When being questioned by the Jews on whether or not he was the Christ, Jesus replied, *I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock.* (John 10:25-26) Notice that Jesus did not say, "but you do not believe 'therefore' you are not part of my flock." He made it plain that being a part of the flock was a prerequisite to believing. In other words, if those Jews had been a part of Jesus' flock they would have believed.

In 1 Peter 1:20-21 Peter writes concerning Christ; *He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.* Peter used the same Greek word (*proginosko*) for foreknown as Paul used for foreknew in Romans 8:29. Was Christ's coming and subsequent death on the cross for our sins based on a decision that God knew Christ would one day make? Was Jesus given an option as to whether or not he would be the lamb without blemish (1 Peter 1:19) or was there a predetermined plan?

In Acts Peter declared, *Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.* (Acts 2:22-23) The Greek word Peter used for definite is *horizo* that means to mark out or bound, to appoint, decree, specify, declare, determine, limit or ordain. The Greek word Peter used for foreknowledge is *prognosis* which means forethought. (Peter also used the word *prognosis* in 1 Peter 1:1-2 in writing to the exiles who were elect "according to the foreknowledge of God.")

In Acts 4:26-27 the disciples prayed, *...for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.* The Greek word used for predestined in this verse (*proorizo*) is the same as is used in Ephesians 1:5 and 11 as well as in Romans 8:29. Again, this fact begs the question, "Did God plan the salvation of mankind based on the choices that he knew Jesus and man would make or did he predetermine the plan of salvation and in his sovereignty influence the voluntary choices of man to guarantee the outcome he had predetermined?" Scripture confirms the later.

Acts 4:27 plainly states that it was God's hand and God's plan to crucify his son. Isaiah 53:10 says, *Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief...* The King James version says that it pleased the Lord to bruise him. Though lawless men willingly chose (not forced by God) to carry out the crucifixion of God's son, it was God who planned it and brought it to pass; holding them totally responsible.

John Piper writes in his book *Spectacular Sins and Their Global Purpose in the Glory of Christ*: "Why should this matter to you? It should matter because if God were not the main Actor in the death of Christ, then the death of Christ could not save us from our sins, and we would perish in hell forever. The reason the death of Christ is the heart of the gospel—the heart of the good news—is that God was doing it. Romans 5:8: "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." If you separate God's activity from the death of Jesus, you lose the gospel. This was God's doing. It is the highest and deepest point of his love for sinners."

Just as it was God's great love for us that caused him to predestine (plan and execute) the crucifixion of his son for our sins, it was also God's great love and mercy toward us that caused him to predestine (plan and execute) our salvation. **God chose to display his love in this way for the praise of the glory of his grace.** So, as Christians we are living representations of the praise of God's glorious grace.

*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 Peter 2:9

The Greek word Paul used for grace in Ephesians 1:6 is *charis*. *Charis* means graciousness of manner or act; especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life. How do we represent the praise of his glorious grace? We give praise to his grace simply by being chosen by him. However, the praise of his grace is reflected in our lives as we give verbal testament of his saving grace and as our conduct and character reflect his divine influence; the conformity of our lives into his image. Therefore, let us walk in a manner worthy of the calling by which we were called (Ephesians 4:1) and so live a life of worship. And remember who and whose we are.

Years ago God reminded me who I am when I first began leading worship. I vividly remember the first worship band practice I led as a full time worship leader. Murphy's Law was in full swing. If it could have gone wrong it did. To start things off the lady who was supposed to have played the piano didn't show up and didn't give a notice. This really left me holding the bag. I was still unsure of my guitar playing ability and counted on her to be the lead

instrument. Some of the songs I had chosen to use I couldn't play on the guitar. I found myself changing the song list while all the other worship team members watched intently.

Secondly, I had asked another young lady in the church to do a special song during the offering. She didn't show up either. Once I had gathered my wits and plotted a new course of action, I began to share the order of worship with the team. Imagine my despair when some of the members began to complain about certain aspects of the service. I wanted to cry. I wanted to gather my belongings, walk out of the building and never go back. Upon arriving home I shared with my wife my intentions of meeting with the pastors the next day to resign. I was emotionally spent. I felt used and unappreciated and really thought no one cared how I felt. This does sound like somewhat of a pity party, but I was really hurting.

What I want to share next is in no way meant to be offensive, but I want to share it to show how the mercy of God touched me at a very low time in my life. As my wife and I lay down to sleep that night I said to her, "I am nothing but an ass." She assured me that was not the case, but I insisted and gave several examples to back my claim.

The next morning I rose early to attend a five o'clock men's prayer meeting at a local YMCA. We met in an upstairs room with several chairs and tumbling mats available for us sit or kneel. While some of the men prayed aloud, I slipped out of the chair I was sitting in and knelt on one of the mats. Even with my eyes closed I noticed the room getting strangely dark. I opened my eyes to investigate and found that several of the men had gathered around to pray for me. One or two of them knelt beside me putting their arms around my shoulders. Others laid hands on my head.

As this was taking place one of the elders leaned over and whispered in my ear, "The Lord wants you to know that you are the head and not the tail." Imagine the shock! You have to understand that none of these men had attended band practice the night before, and certainly this elder had not heard the conversation I had with my wife while we were in bed. The word he shared with me could have only come from God.

You see, the fact is, in Christ, we are the head and not the tail (Deuteronomy 28:13). Paul wrote to the Ephesians that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world and predestined us to adoption as sons according to his good pleasure (Ephesians 1:4-5). He also has raised us up and seated us in heavenly places together with Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6). Though all of our righteousness is like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), we have been given permission through the blood of Jesus to come boldly before the throne of God (Hebrews 4:16). Maybe this point is best articulated in Psalm 95:6-7 which says, *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.*

Often in our quest to define certain types of worship we will use terms such as Mosaic Worship, Davidic Worship, Lifestyle Worship, Evangelistic Worship, Messianic Worship and others. We often associate worship with music, singing, dancing, shouting, banners and preaching. Certainly these terms and expressions of worship are valid as we attempt to put into words how we should respond to the God we love. I have attempted to share in this book that worship is also a lifestyle and that expression without character can be nothing more than noise without substance.

Since the title of this section is *Worship in the Truth of Who We Are*, I thought it necessary to add here an aspect of worship that is easily overlooked. Worshiping in truth is not only a vertical proposition but has a horizontal aspect as well. Scripture teaches that as Christians we are the body of Christ. That being true, we cannot shirk our responsibility to the body of Christ and continue to worship in truth.

The writer of Hebrews wrote, *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) The word share in verse 16 (communicate in the KJ) is the Greek word *koinonia* that means partnership or fellowship. God is well pleased with our kind deeds to others and our fellowship with the saints.

In June of 2008 I underwent open-heart surgery to replace my aortic valve that had a congenital defect. During my subsequent stay in the hospital, the number of people who showed acts of kindness to me and my family overwhelmed us. Beginning with the hospital staff as well as other family members and friends, we were made to feel loved and genuinely cared for. Many people called to let us know they were praying. Others made visits to the hospital. Some sat with my family during the six-hour operation. Still others brought food to my house to feed my wife and kids while others gave us money for various expenses. It was truly an example of the body of Christ in action.

I am convinced that these acts of kindness shown toward our family were indeed acts of worship toward Christ. Christ is the head of the church and, as I mentioned earlier, we as Christians are his body. So, any act, for good or ill, that we perform toward members of Christ's body is rendered unto Christ (1 Corinthians 8:12). Worship is



attesting to the “worth ship” of Christ. As we minister to members of Christ’s body we express the value we place on Christ himself. That is why the Apostle Paul was so stern in his rebuke of the Corinthians for the way they were conducting the Lord’s Supper.

*When you come together, it is not the Lord’s supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.*

1 Corinthians 11:20-22

The purpose of the Lord’s Supper was for the church to remember the body of Christ, which was broken for them, and the blood of the new covenant that was shed for them. In doing so they would proclaim the Lord’s death until he returns (1 Corinthians 11:24-26). However, the Corinthian church had made a mockery of the celebration in that, not only had they despised the Lord himself, they had also despised the less fortunate among them and in doing so had not properly discerned the Lord’s body. Paul goes on to say, *For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.* (1 Corinthians 11:29-30)

Jesus himself conveyed the message that men would be judged according to how they treated members of his body. In essence he said that those who treated his brethren well were indeed sheep and those who did not minister to his brethren were considered goats.

*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer him, saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will answer them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.*

Matthew 25:31-40

The Son of Man’s response to the goats will be, *Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.* (Matthew 25:45). He then pronounces judgment on the two groups; eternal punishment for the goats but eternal life for the righteous (sheep).

The Apostle James goes as far as to attach acts of kindness to the proof of our faith. He said, *If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, Go in peace, be warmed and filled, without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.* (James 2:15-17) The writer of Hebrews tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). We must conclude, therefore, that if we do not please God we cannot truly worship him. However, God is pleased, and may I add worshiped, when we confirm our faith through acts of kindness toward members of his body.

Finally, there is this whole love thing. The Apostle John conveys the message that eternal life is dependant on our loving the brethren (1 John 3:14-15). He goes on tell us what it means to love the brethren.

*By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?*

1 John 3:16-17

John says later in his epistle, *If anyone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.* (1 John 4:20) The answer is obvious; he who does not love his brother cannot love God. We prove that we love God and the brethren each time we lay down our lives, with a pure heart, so that we can meet the needs of the brethren. Acts of love toward the brethren equals

acts of love toward God. Acts of love toward God equals acts of worship. These are the acts of one who worships in truth.

So, as John says, *Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth* (1 John 3:18). I believe it would be safe to say; Let us not worship in word and tongue alone, but also in deed and truth.

## **EPILOGUE:**

### **A CALL TO ABANDONED WORSHIP**

I began playing football when I was in the third grade. Year after year I suited up for spring drills and again in July to prepare for the season. For ten years (that's a professional career for some folks) I banged heads with my fellow teammates vying for a starting position. The off-season was spent running and lifting weights to stay in shape in hopes of gaining an advantage when the season started. All the benefits of that hard work were realized on the opening kick off of the first game.

Athletes have a phrase they often use to describe their intensity of play. It is "Leave it all on the field." The idea is to give it all you've got. All the conditioning, weight lifting and studying the playbook have brought you to game time. Preparation is over; it's time to give 100% on every play the entire game. There is no holding back or saving it for later.

Most of us would not recognize the Apostle Paul as an athlete, but in the game of life he was one on those who left it all on the field. He chose to abandon popularity, position, power and prosperity to gain an eternal prize. He wrote,

*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ. . .*

Philippians 3:7-8

*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.*

1Corinthians 9:25-27

These next passages are proof that Paul abandoned all for the sake of Christ.

*. . .but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.*

2 Corinthians 6:4-10

*Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.*

2 Corinthians 11:23-28

According to The American Heritage Dictionary, the word abandon means: 1. To forsake; desert. 2. To surrender one's claim or right to; to give up. 3. To desist from. 4. To yield (oneself) completely, as to emotion.

What better word could describe the life the Paul? What better word could describe a person whose one desire is to live a life of worship? Paul went on to say in Philippians 3:8 that he counted all his gain as rubbish that he might know Christ. His one desire was to have intimate fellowship with Christ.

A life of worship has deserted all other ways of living to have an intimate relationship with Jesus. It has forsaken all that is familiar to walk by faith. It has surrendered all rights to have its own way and has yielded control to the one who formed it. The bible gives us many examples of believers who paid the ultimate price and left it all on the field. We are not given the names of some of them; they are simply known as Others.

*. . . Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— of whom the world was not worthy. . .*

Hebrews 11:35-38

Once we have abandoned (past tense verb) our old way of life we are called to abandoned (adjective) worship. What is abandoned worship? When abandoned is used as an adjective it means shameless; thus we have shameless worship. The life of two very familiar bible characters that we mentioned earlier; King David and the woman who let her hair down can best describe shameless worship.

*And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the horn. As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, and she despised him in her heart.*

2 Samuel 6:14-16

*And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.*

Luke 7:37-38

David and the woman referred to by Luke were not concerned with what those watching them thought of their worship. Their reputations were of no consequence. They were shameless in their worship. They worshiped with abandonment; a complete surrender of inhibitions.

I once heard a well-known speaker by the name of James Goll speak at a conference. I'll paraphrase his remarks. He shared that he had a vision of a target being painted with a bull's eye in the middle. As he was looking at it he saw a dart fly through the air and hit the bull's eye. He heard the Lord tell him, "My dart shall hit the bull's eye." He asked the Lord, "What is the dart?" The answer was "David's Abandoned Revolutionary Tribe" (DART). Goll went on to say that God is releasing, not just a few, but a whole company of abandoned Davidic worship and praise warriors.

God is calling us, his bride, to a life of abandonment; to set aside all inhibitions we have about the way we live and respond to his love. God is calling for abandonment when we get up every morning and go about our daily lives. He is calling for abandonment every time we gather with believers to worship him. No more "playing it safe." It's time to be reckless with our lives and with our worship. It's time for the bride of Christ to leave it all on the field.

Will you decide today to live a life of abandoned worship? Is it time for you forget about what others around you think and worship God with all your might? Will you be a part of David's Abandoned Revolutionary Tribe? God is calling.

# The Ingredients of Worship

## Study Guide

### Chapter 1

#### True Worshipers

1. What definition did Jesus give of true worship?
2. Name 2 characteristics of a true worshiper.
3. Name and write out the scripture that gives us a definition of a sacrifice of praise.
4. A sacrifice of praise consists of what two things?
5. Define “the fruit of our lips.”
6. What were two of the requirements Old Testament worshipers were to adhere to concerning sacrifices?
7. Who does “him” refer to in Hebrews 13:15?
8. According to Psalm 118:19-20 what is the only way we can enter the presence of God?
9. What must we become to enter God’s presence?
10. How do we enter the Holiest?
11. Who is the center of creation’s worship in Revelation 5?
12. According to Psalm 118:22-24 in what day are we to rejoice?
13. What should be the fuel of our worship?
14. Who creates the fruit of our lips?
15. Why was Abraham’s sacrifice acceptable to God?
16. What are two Hebrew words associated with thanksgiving? Give the definition for each.
17. Who appointed Levites to commemorate, to thank and to praise the Lord?
18. Who restored Davidic thanksgiving during the rebuilding of Jerusalem?
19. List and write out two New Testament scriptures concerning thanksgiving.
20. What two Greek words does Paul use for thanks and thanksgiving? Give the definition for each.
21. What Greek word is used for thanks in Hebrews 13:15? Give its definition.
22. In Old Testament times what did a person’s name reveal? Give an example.
23. In Romans 12:1 what does reasonable service also mean?
24. What do we offer as a covenant offering to God?

25. What should we remember as we enter God's presence with our hands extended in thanksgiving?
26. How does the Amplified Bible render the phrase "reasonable service?"
27. What is the ultimate expression of love?
28. What does it mean to lay one's life down for another?
29. For who does a true worshiper exist?
30. What commandment is at the core of a living sacrifice?
31. What makes our sacrifice of worship acceptable?
32. What is the gas that fuels our worship?
33. What is the gauge of true love?
34. What are two important ingredients that propel our obedience to its full potential?
35. What Hebrew word does David use when speaking of a broken spirit? Give the definition.
36. What Hebrew word does David use when speaking of a contrite heart? Give the definition.
37. What is essential when approaching God?
38. Doing what requires an attitude of brokenness?
39. What meal satisfies the Father's hunger?
40. When is the appointed time to offer our sacrifices?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Worshiping the Father**

1. What are true worshipers not ashamed to show?
2. Give two biblical examples of people who were not afraid to show their affections?
3. Name traps into which Christians can easily fall.
4. What happened to Michal because she despised David's worship?
5. What is the result when church congregations become inflexible to the word and leading of God?
6. What is the result of misplaced affections?
7. What is God's definition of evil in Jeremiah 2:12-13?
8. How did Israel forsake the fountain of living waters?
9. How has today's church played the harlot?

10. To what does God compare our misplaced affections?
11. Who truly satisfies our affections?
12. Who is to be our first love?
13. What is our first work?
14. What is the Hebrew word for rejoice in the phrase “he will rejoice over you with singing?” Give the definition.
15. How does the Father rejoice over us?
16. For what is the Father seeking?
17. What must we do to experience God’s river of delight?
18. When does worship occur?
19. What is the Greek word for pleased in Matthew 3:17 and 12:18? Give the definition.
20. How did Jesus please the Father?
21. According the Jesus’ model, what is a lifestyle of worship?
22. What does it mean to fear the Lord?
23. In what things does God take pleasure?
24. What is the Hebrew word for pleasure in Psalm 147:11? Give the definition.
25. How is our debt satisfied?
26. Why did God translate Enoch?
27. When does God get pleasure from our acts of affection?
28. What was the most important piece of furniture in Moses’ tabernacle?
29. In the tabernacle of Moses where did God’s visible presence dwell?
30. What did the Ark of the Covenant represent to Israel?
31. Why was man created?
32. Like what does man become?
33. How are we transformed into the Father’s image?
34. What is a vital benefit of worship?
35. What two things does the Father desire to have with his children?
36. According to Psalm 5:7 how did David worship God?
37. How did Aaron’s two sons dishonor God?

38. Why did God smite Uzzah?
39. What prevented Jesus from performing many miracles in his own country?
40. How should we approach God?

## **Chapter 3**

### **Worshiping in Spirit**

1. What Greek word does Jesus use in John 4:23 for spirit? Give the definition.
2. What is pneuma used to describe?
3. What response did Jesus give to the Samaritan woman's question about the proper place of worship?
4. What is the place of worship?
5. What is the means of worship?
6. How do true worshipers worship the Father?
7. Who is the worship leader?
8. Where in the Old Testament is a good example of allowing the Holy Spirit lead us in worship?
9. What is the goal of worship?
10. According to Paul what are three mediums of acceptable worship?
11. What is the Greek word of psalms? Give the definition.
12. What is the Greek word for hymns? Give the definition.
13. What are the Greek words for spiritual songs? Give the definition.
14. To what does Paul equate with singing in the spirit?
15. What did Jesus promise to give to all those who believe in him?
16. With whom will a true worshiper have an ongoing relationship?
17. What will an ongoing relationship with the Holy Spirit produce?
18. Name another vital key to worshiping in the Spirit.
19. What two things does the Holy Spirit desire to produce in us?
20. How is worship raised to a higher dimension?
21. How can worship be reduced to an emotional experience?
22. Whose character will a true worshiper exhibit?



23. How do we glorify God?
24. According to Genesis for what two reasons was man created?
25. What is man's task?
26. State Kay Author's definition of what it means to glorify God.
27. What did Jesus come to seek and save?
28. What does the Westminster Catechism state concerning the chief end of man?
29. Before his ascension, who did Jesus promise he would send?
30. What two things does the Holy Spirit give us to help us give the correct opinion of what God is like?
31. How do Christians grieve the Holy Spirit?
32. List the fruit of the spirit from Galatians 5:22-24.
33. List the works of the flesh from Galatians 5:19-21a.
34. What will those who practice the works of the flesh not be able to inherit?
35. What 12 characteristics from Psalm 15 does a person need to possess to enter into God's presence?
36. Who first heard the 10 commandments?
37. What did the children of Israel do when they heard God speak?
38. To what was God calling Israel?
39. What is God's condition for intimacy?
40. What does it mean to worship in spirit?

## **Chapter 4**

### **Worshiping in Truth**

1. Give two possible definitions of what it means to worship in truth.
2. How has God chosen to reveal himself?
3. What are the characteristics of God listed in Exodus 34:6-8?
4. How did God reveal himself in time past?
5. How has God revealed himself in these last days?
6. Who was the express image of the Father?
7. Who was Jesus according to John 1:1-14?

8. What is the purpose of The Revelation of Jesus Christ?
9. Who was the lamb standing in the midst of the throne?
10. Name the two types of scrolls.
11. What were the two ways a Jewish family could re-possess their land once it had been sold?
12. What happened when the lamb took the scroll from the one sitting on the throne?
13. Why did the slain lamb become the object of heaven's worship?
14. How did the slain lamb become the kinsman-redeemer?
15. According to Judson Cornwall what produces fresh worship responses?
16. How do we get fresh revelations of God?
17. What is the Greek word used for worship in the story of Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician woman? Give the definition.
18. How do we draw near to God according to Hebrews 10:22?
19. From what does true worship flow?
20. Where does God desire truth?
21. What must our actions match if we are to worship in truth?
22. What did God require of Israel according to Amos 5:21-24?
23. When is God not impressed with our methods of worship?
24. What right has God given to us as sons?
25. When were we chosen in Christ?
26. Where do we now sit together with Christ?
27. How are we permitted, through the blood of Jesus, to come before the throne of God?
28. Who are we according to Psalm 95:6-7?
29. What has the author attempted to convey in the book?
30. As Christians we are a part of whose body?
31. Acts of kindness toward Christian are also acts of kindness toward whom?
32. Who did Paul rebuke for the way they were conducting the Lord's Supper?
33. Why were many sick and weak among the Corinthians?
34. According to Jesus how will men be judged?

35. What judgment was rendered to the goats?
36. What judgment was rendered to the sheep?
37. How does James say that we prove our faith?
38. What do we need to please God?
39. According to John, how do we know that we have passed from death to life?
40. How do we prove that we love God?