

Biblical Worship
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While *Worship* has always been a familiar term in Christian circles, it's fast becoming a household buzz-phrase in the secular arena. From what I've observed, the term worship is quickly carving its niche into our contemporary pop-culture. Not only has Time-Life aired infomercials advertising Worship CD's, but they've reportedly spent 30 to 40 million dollars doing so! Is worship becoming "hip?" Has worship in fact, "arrived?" I'm ambivalent on how to digest worship's surge to popularity. On the one hand, I can appreciate the public display and dissemination of the Gospel through music and songs that convey the truths of God. On the other hand, seeing late-night infomercials selling worship CD's in the time slot preceding the Thigh Master and Chuck Norris' Total Gym Fitness Equipment strikes me as somewhat odd.

But infomercials aren't really what I want to discuss in this article! Much of my personal reflections and concerns about worship go beyond its distribution and circulation in the secular arena. I'm far more interested in how worship is applied in the Body of Christ. In studying this topic with the Young Adults we discussed how biblical worship should be based on these three points:

1. **God Centered.** Revelation 22:8-9 says, *"John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"*

John was so overwhelmed by all of this that he fell down to worship the angel who was guiding him! Angel worship is wrong (Colossians 2:18). Although we must take into account the tremendous emotional state he was in—he was looking into Heaven itself! Yet John struggled with focusing his worship in the right direction, and was rebuked by the angel. Don't we struggle in the same manner? Isn't it easy to find ourselves worshipfully gazing upon things other than the Lord? A.W. Tozer says, *"Worship seeks union with its beloved, and an active effort to close the gap between the heart and the God it adores is worship at its best."* We all need to ask ourselves, "Is God my beloved? Or have I greater loves? Is it possible that I am worshipping Worship instead of worshipping God?"

2. **God's Word.** John 4:23 says, *"An hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

Our worship must be based on truths of God. And our source of truth is His Word (John 17:17). John Stott says it well: *"Word and worship belong to each other. They should not be divorced. All worship is an intelligent and loving response to the revelation of God."* John MacArthur says, *"Worship should engage the intellect as well as the emotions. By all means worship should be passionate, heartfelt, and moving. But the point is not to stir the emotions while turning off the mind. True worship merges heart and mind in a response of pure adoration, based on the truth revealed in the Word."* That's why it's so important for us to be in God's Word. It teaches us how to worship Him. It spells out what He wants and what He requires. Micah 6:8 says, *"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."* It's interesting to think of the Bible as the Believer's Worship Manual.

3. **Godly Living.** Romans 12:1 says, *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

There is a danger in thinking we can worship God with our lips without worshiping Him with our lives. I can verbally tell my wife Amy I love her, but if with my actions I do not lead her, support her, help her, enjoy her, or give my time to her, then alas, my verbal love is hollow. Another danger is the thought of compartmentalizing worship to certain times of the day or week. We cannot minimize worship to simply being a 15-minute time slot on Sunday morning. This could be likened to treating Amy special on her birthday and on our anniversary but without consideration or concern for her on other days of the year!

Lastly, it is this pastor’s perspective that there is a potential danger in thinking music is the all-encompassing definition of worship. If biblical worship is primarily a life of obedience and godliness then, music is only one form and a tool to express worship—not the definitive term. If music were the definitive association we made with worship then those who are monotone and those less musically inclined could not worship God like other Believers. Isaiah 29:13 says, *“The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.”*

In conclusion, the door to dialogue on worship needs to be opened further than it is in Christian circles. But in opening the door we must be careful not to let it swing off its biblical hinges. Pray for the Young Adult Ministry here at Riverpark. Pray that we would indeed be worshiping our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in a way that is pleasing to Him.