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ABSTRACT

EDUCATION FOR WORSHIP IN THE EAST WENATCHEE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

S. Joseph Kidder

Adviser: C. Raymond Holmes

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Report

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

TITLE: EDUCATION FOR WORSHIP IN THE EAST WENATCHEE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Name of researcher: S. Joseph Kidder

Name and degree of faculty adviser: C. Raymond Holmes,
D.Min.

Date completed: April 1996

There is no greater challenge than to learn how to worship God, the Creator and Redeemer. God's people must make an effort to search for this truth as it is found in Christ (John 5:39). They must learn how to worship Him, who created and redeemed them through His only Son, for true worship experience will add power to their faith and vitality to Christian practice. One must not only endeavor to acquire more knowledge and to gain increased understanding about the truth of worship, but also to share in a greater worship experience.

This project report begins by discussing the theological principles of Christian worship that were the basis of a worship emphasis series consisting of six sermons

preached to the congregation of the East Wenatchee Seventh-day Adventist Church with the intention of educating the congregation regarding worship and six of its elements. A questionnaire designed to determine the congregation's attitude towards and understanding of worship and its elements was handed out to the congregation before the worship education series and again after its conclusion. The post-test data seem to suggest that the worship emphasis series has accomplished two things: (1) it has given the East Wenatchee congregation some theological information about Christian worship and its essential elements, and (2) presented the information in such a way that the attitude toward worship has changed and spiritual development has taken place. The worship education appears to have taken place during the implementation period. This observation appears to be substantiated by the results of the post-test questionnaires and the written testimonies submitted by the members. The responses seem to indicate that many of the members have made an intelligent reassessment of Christian worship, have gained a better understanding of it, and are experiencing worship more fully.

The worship emphasis series can be planned and implemented by the worship committee and the pastor in any local church. As a result, God's people may grow in grace so that their worship as a redeemed fellowship on the Sabbath may truly be "in spirit and truth." God's people will give Him an appropriate response as a worshipping

fellowship by dedicating themselves in service to Him,
entering into the world to honor and glorify Him.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

EDUCATION FOR WORSHIP IN THE EAST WENATCHEE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

A Project Report
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
S. Joseph Kidder

April 1996

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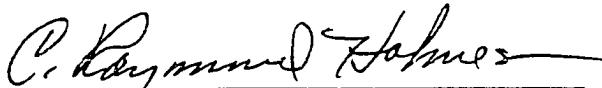
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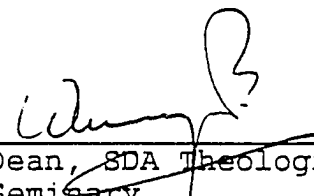
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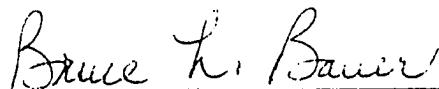
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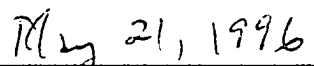
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Bruce Bauer



Date approved

To
the members and friends of the East Wenatchee
Seventh-day Adventist Church who made this
paper possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

Worship is the single most important event in the life of the Christian,¹ for everything in Christianity centers on worship. The health and vitality of the believer rise and fall on the vicar of his worship experience. Worship is the commemoration of creation and celebration of the Gospel. It is the believer's response to the mercy and goodness of God in the act of adoration, reverence, thanksgiving, obedience, and submission.

Christians have a theological and eschatological motive for worship. They worship because of what God has done and is doing and will do through His Son Jesus Christ and through His Spirit.²

The chief aim of Christian worship is to glorify God, to praise Him and to thank Him; to enter into a

¹John Power, Look Toward the East: Some Aspects of Old Testament Theology (Dublin: Gill-Macmillan, 1969), 108.

²Andre H. M. Stijnman, "Toward a Theology of Christian Worship and the Improvement of Worship Participation in Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Africa" (D.Min. Project Report, Berrien Springs, MI, Andrews University, 1981), 2.

definite experience with Him. Therefore worship is one of the most important activities of the church.¹ If the Church fails in its worship, it will also fail in its mission, and degenerate into nothing but a social club.

In order to improve the Church's activities and mission, it is necessary to reform its concept, understanding, and theology of worship. Without intelligent worship, church life would soon weaken and disintegrate. "There can be no possibility of the church being Christian without worship."²

The relationship between faith and worship, between theology and liturgy, has been well recognized. "The basis of Christian worship is not utilitarian but theological."³ "What is believed," asserts Merville Clark, "will and must govern what is done in worship."⁴ Christian worship must always be "under the judgement of theology," writes Robert Rayburn.⁵ Walter Harrelson stressing this point writes:

Few would argue with the view that vital religious communities need constantly to be alert to the question

¹Jean-Jacques von Allmen, Worship: Its Theology and Practice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 283.

²Franklin Segler, Christian Worship: Its Theology and Practice (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1967), 11.

³Raymond Abba, Principles of Christian Worship (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 5.

⁴Merville Clark, Call to Worship (London: SCM Press, 1960), 38.

⁵Robert G. Rayburn, O Come, Let Us Worship (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 21.

why they do what they do in their acts of worship, in their cultic practice. Periodic assessment can assist in the job of pruning the rich foliage that grows unnoticed in the worship of any religious community no matter how "non-liturgical" it may consider itself to be.¹

Since Christian worship involves a clear knowledge of God, it is all the more important that "we establish a theological norm for the guiding of Christian worship."² The revelation of God must govern the character and decide the content of Christian worship.

Understanding then that Christian worship is the essential issue in the life of the Christian believer and that worship education is long overdue, an attempt is made in the following chapters to come to grips with the concept of worship and the theology of Christian worship.

The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this study was to introduce and explain the scriptural principles of Christian worship to the men and women of the East Wenatchee congregation. The task was to educate the congregation regarding six essential elements of worship, which will in turn make worship more meaningful and encourage greater worship participation. This endeavor was to be accomplished by studying the subject

¹Walter Harrelson, From Fertility Cult to Worship (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1969), xi-xii.

²James F. White, "Characteristics of Effective Christian Worship," Studia Liturgica 8 (n.d.): 199.

of worship and presenting the findings in a six-sermon series.

The Justification of the Project

The Christian life centers on worship. However, lack of understanding of the proper meaning of worship (or misunderstanding of worship) leads to frustration, confusion, and decline in spirituality. There is widespread ignorance concerning the significance of true worship, its essential elements (i.e., Scripture, preaching, prayer, praise, offering, and fellowship), and the means of attaining the blessing of rich, rewarding, corporate worship.

It is therefore not surprising that multitudes of people, young and old, who in childhood regularly attended church, have turned away from the church, expressing their loss of interest or their failure to find meaning, relevancy, and significance in the worship service. The haphazard and superficial way in which many worship services proceed leaves many people with an impression of meaninglessness. Often because of lack of education the congregation is unaware of the meaning, significance, and connection of the essential parts of the service with one another. There is no obvious reason why there should be offering or prayer, nor why a particular hymn is sung. The components of the service seem to have been chosen at random and the order of the various parts is followed simply

because of tradition or convenience. Instead of the Sabbath worship service being anticipated as the spiritual high point of the week, it has come to be regarded as a time of boredom and irrelevancy.

From my own observation it seems that worshipers have very little understanding of the significance of the elements of worship. Many of the believers in my church have told me on numerous occasions to eliminate everything but the sermon. They say, "After all, that is why we are here anyway."

The emphasis of the worship services of most churches today is placed almost exclusively upon the sermon. People's comments following the services indicate that the whole period of worship is judged exclusively on the basis of the sermon. Worship often degenerates into a thirty-minute talk about God. When the believer leaves church, he generally does not ask "What does God want me to do?" He analyzes the sermon apart from life, rating it on the merit of its content, delivery, and effectiveness. Certainly there has never been a greater need for faithful and powerful preaching of the Word of God than there is today. But there is an even greater need for the experience of uplifting and fulfilling corporate worship of the living and awesome God.

I found this to be the case in East Wenatchee, as well. In a business meeting in November of 1988, as part of

the devotions I asked the question "What is worship?" To my dismay not one of the answers was what could be considered adequate. I took the issue to the board the following month, and we talked about the need for a comprehensive program of education to explain to the congregation the meaning of worship and its essential elements. The suggestion was unanimously endorsed. We all believed that proper education concerning worship, and the implementation of meaningful worship services would create excitement and enhance spirituality.

The board believed that education is essential for the following reasons: First, the individual believer must have specific instruction as to the importance and meaning of worship, especially corporate worship. Second, the worship leaders must recognize their own responsibility to prepare and conduct services in which every participant can clearly understand the meaning of what is transpiring and be aided in lifting praise and prayers to God in fellowship with other believers. Those who lead the services as well as the congregation must understand clearly the importance of corporate worship and the means by which believers can fulfill the demands of a holy God. Third, the believer must come to understand the significance of every element of worship and how to personally use them as a means of worship rather than preliminaries that have to be endured.

The Need for Education in Worship

Education is vital and necessary if we want to come to an intelligent understanding of Christian worship. Henry E. Horn, emphasizing the importance of worship education, says that "renewal in Christian worship is best accomplished by . . . an educational program. . . . Education in worship is essential and long overdue."¹

Ellen G. White underscored her burden for the improvement of worship by a strong emphasis on education.

Unless correct ideas of true worship and true reverence are impressed upon the people, there will be a growing tendency to place the sacred and eternal on a level with common things, and those professing the truth will be an offense to God and a disgrace to religion.²

Concepts like "educate," "correct ideas," and "meaning" involve the exercise of the mind. Worship may begin with an emotional response to God, but there comes a time when the emotional response has to be thought through and the concepts of Christian worship presented in a systematic way.³ When this procedure is followed, Christian worship is not just an emotional response but an intelligent

¹Henry E. Horn, Worship in Crisis (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1972), 144, 153.

²Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 5:500.

³William Barclay, The Revelation of John (Edinburgh: Saint Andrews Press, 1975), 1:153.

response of the believer to God. Hence, worship ought to be the approach to God of the whole person.¹

Through educational development in the worship of God, the Christian worshiper not only gains an increased theological understanding of what worship is, but is simultaneously given the opportunity to intensify his participation in Christian worship. Wilfred M. Baily says, "The stronger our grasp becomes on the deeper meanings of Christian worship, the more we . . . enter into a rehearsal of the drama of our salvation."² It is imperative that we seek an intelligent understanding of what Christian worship is.³ This understanding will lead to a more fulfilling Christian experience.

By means of educational programs the Christian may not only increase his theological understanding of Christian worship, but is also given the opportunity and the responsibility of becoming a more involved Christian in God's service in the world wherein he lives.⁴

¹Ibid.

²Wilfred M. Baily, Awakened Worship (New York: Abingdon Press, 1972), 21.

³R. A. Anderson, "Effective Worship," The Ministry 37 (September 1964): 48.

⁴See Bailey, 21.

The Limitations of the Project

The sources that were consulted deal primarily with congregational worship. Therefore, the project refers most frequently to sources that explain Christian worship in terms of congregational worship.

However, the principles of Christian worship are equally applicable to the personal worship of the individual Christian believer. If there were no individual believers, there would be no church and thus no corporate worship. A church presupposes that there are individual members, and from this follows that congregational worship presupposes individual worship.

While worship is a broad subject, the intent of this project is to cover primarily two aspects: the meaning of worship and the elements of worship. In terms of education, the sermons deal with the following six facets: the meaning of worship, the Word of God and worship, prayer and worship, offering and worship, praise and worship, and awe and wonder in worship. Issues such as worshiping in the spirit and the truth, the sacraments and worship, the uniqueness of Adventist worship, and the Sabbath and worship are beyond the scope of this project.

Another limitation imposed on this project is that since the elements of worship as we find them in the average church today are primarily New Testament developments, therefore the theological background of those elements is

drawn mostly from the writings of the New Testament (NT) and Ellen G. White. The Old Testament (OT) is dealt with by way of summary and only to discover the basis of worship in the New Testament.

The Organization of the Project

The fundamentals of Christian worship that are found in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the writings of Ellen G. White are elaborated on in this project report and are discussed in Part One, which covers the theological foundation for worship.

Part Two describes how the theological principles of Christian worship were presented to the members of the East Wenatchee Seventh-day Adventist Church.

After a brief description of the history and the makeup of the congregation, the paper moves into a description in chapter 6 of how the project was implemented in the East Wenatchee Seventh-day Adventist church.

An analysis is presented from which the conclusion is drawn that a worship emphasis series seems to have been a successful endeavor in helping the members to reassess and understand the principles of Christian worship and the elements involved.

Chapter 7 contains conclusions highlighting the concept that worship education is a vital tool in helping the congregation to understand worship and its essential elements and to experience them more fully.

PART ONE
THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR WORSHIP

CHAPTER 2

THE IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF WORSHIP

The Importance of Worship

The worship of God is the authentic believer's most important activity. Jean-Jacques von Allmen argues that "worship is one of the two essential elements in the life of the Church (the other being the evangelization of the world)."¹ Yet, at the same time it is one of the most tragically neglected activities in the average church today.²

There are numerous indications in the Scriptures of the importance of worship. God gave specific instruction as to the manner in which His children were to practice their worship. Considerable sections of the book of Exodus detail the construction of the place of worship, the Sanctuary. Almost the whole book of Leviticus is devoted to instruction concerning worship and the regulations that would make them acceptable to God and relevant to the lives of the people.³

¹von Allmen, 283.

²Rayburn, 11.

³Ibid., 18.

The book of Psalms, in its entirety, is a book of worship. It has been properly designated as the inspired book of prayer, worship, and praise of God's people. Ponder how the psalmist emphasizes the primary characteristic of worship. In Ps 29:2 he bids us to "give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."¹ In Ps 95:6 and 7 he shows the importance of corporate worship by inviting us to join him in worship: "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."²

Almost all of the prophets had much to say about the worship of the true God Jehovah. Many of them rebuked the people severely for the abuses that had crept into their worship.³ Jeremiah cried out: "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations?'" (Jer 7:9, 10).

Again and again the prophets reminded the people of the necessity of pure hearts in their worship of the Lord.

¹Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from the Authorized King James Version.

²Rayburn, 17.

³See also Isa 1:11-14 and Mic 5:13.

Without purity of heart their pretense of worship was indeed an abomination. Sacrifices and offering had become offensive to God because of the way they had been abused.¹

It was because the prophets recognized the supreme importance of the worship of the Lord that they cried out against those sins of the people that made their worship unacceptable.

Now we must turn to consider what Jesus teaches concerning the importance of corporate worship. The main discourse is recorded in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John. There we read the conversation that took place between Jesus and the Samaritan woman concerning true worship.

In His discourse the Savior pointed out that, contrary to Samaritan and Jewish ideas, the place of worship was without particular significance at that time. He said, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when we shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father" (John 4:21). It was important that she should understand that it is the Person who is the subject of worship that is important, not the place.

He continued,

"Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for *the father seeketh such to worship him*. God is a Spirit:

¹Rayburn, 18-19.

and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (vss. 22-24).

These words of Jesus clearly tell us that worship is the most important activity of the believer. Man was created for the purpose of worshiping the Creator and bringing glory and honor to His name. Every Christian must recognize that the most important means of realizing true purpose in life is responding in continual spiritual worship to the eternal and true God.¹

Worship, moreover, will continue in heaven and will occupy the redeemed host forever. Worship, in fact, will endure when all other earthly activity has come to an end (see Rev 4:10, 11; 5:11-14; 19:1-7, 10; 22:8, 9).

Based on the above evidence worship ought to be a main concern of the Seventh-day Adventist Christian. At the heart of the gospel message are found the inspired words, "Worship Him that made heaven and earth" (Rev 14:7). Seventh-day Adventists are an apocalyptic and a prophetic people, who have the roots of their Christian existence in the prophecies of Daniel and of Revelation. Both of these apocalyptic documents reveal that the essence of life is worship (see Dan 3:16-18; 9:3-19; Rev 4:10; 5:14). In fact, the conflict of the ages is essentially one regarding worship (see Rev 13 & 14).

¹John MacArthur, Jr., The Ultimate Priority (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 115-126.

Seventh-day Adventists have been called by God (Rev 14:6) to be worshipers par excellence, thus demonstrating in their words and in their way of life what true worship means and how such worship is practiced.

Adventists are to be primarily a worshipful people. . . . Adventism . . . is not just a creed, and not a set of doctrines. [It] . . . essentially is a way of life. And that way of life is a way of worship.¹

From what we have seen we should seek to learn all that we can about how to worship God in a manner that brings glory to Him. Seeing that God "made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is the Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temple made with hands; neither is worshiped with man's hands as though he needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, breath, and all things" (Acts 17:24, 25), we must carefully ascertain how to offer worship in a pleasing and acceptable manner.

The Definition of Worship

Worship has been defined in various ways. Webster's Ideal Dictionary defines worship as paying divine honor, reverence and homage to the Supreme Being through adoration, confession, prayer, thanksgiving and the like.² While this definition lists certain significant elements involved in worship, it is certainly inadequate. It says nothing about

¹A. J. Bietz, "Our Worship of God," The Ministry 31 (October 1958): 47.

²Webster's Ideal Dictionary (1961), s.v. "worship."

obedience and submission nor how to pay this divine honor, reverence, and homage.

James Gustafson states, "Worship is the common action of Christians as they turn to the source and object of their identity as a people."¹ This definition lacks clarity and concreteness. The individual may turn to God but may lack devotion, obedience, and submission. Worship in its essence is fidelity to God and loyalty to His will.

For Paul Tillich, worship is a turning "to the ultimate ground of being, the source of the Spiritual Presence and the Creator of the Spiritual Community, to God who is Spirit."² The question to pose at this time is "how?" This definition does not give specific details on how the worshiper does it.

John Huxtable defined worship as "a dialogue between God and his people."³ Certainly worship involves such a dialogue, but it includes much more than this.

Ralph P. Martin offers this definition of worship: "Worship is the dramatic celebration of God in His supreme worth in such a manner that His worthiness becomes the norm

¹James Gustafson, Treasure in Earthen Vessels (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), 93.

²Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, 3 vols. (Chicago: University Press, 1963), 3:190.

³John Huxtable, The Bible Says (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1962), 109.

and inspiration of human living."¹ Though this definition covers many facets of worship, it seems to leave many more unincorporated. It is vague. It does not say how.

The limitations of this project make it impossible to examine many more of the numerous definitions of worship that have been offered by many authorities on the subject. The definition Rayburn propose comes closest to an accurate definition.

Worship is the activity of the new life of a believer in which, recognizing the fullness of the Godhead as it is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and His mighty redemptive acts, he seeks by the power of the Holy Spirit to render to the living God the glory, honor, and submission which are His due.²

Worship is seen as essentially a response. It is mankind's response to the nature and action of God. It is a response of humility, reverence, honor, devotion, and adoration that properly marks the relationship of created beings to their Creator. This response is dependent upon the revelation that an omnipotent God in love offers man joy, fullness, meaning, and healing in every occasion.³ This response rises from the prompting of and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. "True worship can only spring

¹Ralph P. Martin, "The Purpose and Meaning of Worship," in Leadership Handbook of Practical Theology, ed., James D. Berkly (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 1:140.

²Rayburn, 109-110.

³Benjamin Franklin Reaves, "A Study of Black Seventh-day Adventist Worship" (D.Min. Project Paper, Chicago Theological Seminary, 1974), 1.

from the activity of the Holy Spirit. Worship, like saving faith, is man's response . . . but . . . like the response of faith it is itself the gift of God."¹

Actually worship is an attitude²--the attitude of "humility, reverence, honor, devotion, and adoration that properly marks the relationship of created beings to their Creator, especially in His presence."³

Worship is an attitude toward God, an attitude that says God is God. He is the Lord. He is the Creator. He is the Savior and King. He is worthy of our adoration, worthy of our submission, worthy of our obedience, worthy of our love, worthy of our enthusiasm. Worship is a personal response to a divine revelation. I have not worshiped until I have responded. I want to obey Him, submit to Him, and accept His will.⁴

God is worshiped by the Christian believer not only because He is the Creator but also for the fact that this God is his Redeemer. To rephrase this statement in terms of

¹Abba, 7.

²Fritz Guy, "What's Worship?" Insight, February 8, 1972, 9.

³Siegfried H. Horn, "Worship," Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (1960), 1184.

⁴Evelyn Underhill, Worship (Scranton, OH: Harper & Row, 1936), 3.

Christian worship: "True worship is God reseen and man remade."¹

It [worship] is an inward experience of those redeemed by Christ Jesus, indwelt by His Holy Spirit, who with Paul can say that they "worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13).²

Indeed, Christian worship by definition is the redeemed man's response to his Redeemer.³ Thus the redeemed person, in his response to God, worships Him because he does not belong to himself; he has become aware that, as a redeemed one, he is the blood-bought possession of Christ (1 Cor 3:32; Gal 3:29; 5:24; Phil 1:27).

Therefore, we can say:

Corporate Christian worship is the activity of a congregation of true believers in which they seek to render to God that adoration, praise, confession, intercession, thanksgiving, and obedience to which He is entitled by virtue of the ineffable glory of His person and the magnificent grace of His acts of redemption in Jesus Christ.⁴

The Vocabulary of Worship

To understand better what worship entails, let us examine the meaning of the words used in our language and the original languages of the Scripture--Hebrew and Greek--to describe this activity. The English word "worship" is

¹R. A. Anderson, "Our Worship of God," The Ministry, October 1958, 50.

²Roy G. Irving and Roy B. Zuck, eds., Youth and the Church (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), 192.

³Stijnman, 30.

⁴Rayburn, 110.

wonderfully expressive of the act that it describes. It is a contraction of the original Anglo-Saxon word *weorthscipe*, which then was modified to *worthship*, and finally to *worship*.¹ *Worship* means "to attribute worth" to something or someone. Thus, originally, to give *worship* to anyone simply meant to accord him/her the proper recognition of inherent dignity and value, or to put it another way, to accord him/her his worth or worthiness. When we say of someone that "he worships his money" we are using the word a bit loosely. If, however the supreme worth for him is in his money, then it is an accurate use of the term.

To worship someone or something is to attribute supreme worth or to declare supreme value to that one or that thing. Along this line, Ralph P. Martin writes, "If we may elevate this thought to the realm of divine-human relationships, we have a working definition of the term *worship*. To worship God is to ascribe to Him supreme worth, for He alone is worthy."²

Because of who God is and what He does, we attribute to Him the glory that is due His name. The psalmist exhorts us to "give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name" (Ps 96:7-8).

¹Ronald Allen and Gordon Borrer, Worship: Rediscovering the Missing Jewel (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1982), 16-17.

²Martin, 141.

This Old Testament text of Ps 96 is paralleled by a New Testament passage of great worship of the Living Christ, the Lamb Who is worthy: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing" (Rev 5:12).

The English word "worship" forces our attention upon the intrinsic majesty of God and the necessity of rendering to Him that recognition of the glory of His being and His wonderful redeeming work of which He is so worthy.

We must recognize, of course, that what is even more important than the English word is the biblical terminology used to define worship. There are several words in the original Greek and Hebrew that are translated "worship." The first of these is the word *proskyneo*.¹ When Jesus was tempted by Satan who promised Him the kingdoms of this world if He would fall down and worship the Devil, the Lord rebuked Satan with these words, "It is written, thou shalt worship (*proskyneo*) the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt 4:10). It is worth noting that in this declaration of Christ are found two Greek words, *proskyneo* (worship) and *latreuo* (serve), that are translated "worship" in the various English versions of the NT. *Proskyneo* originally had the meaning of bowing down or prostrating oneself. It referred to the physical act of obeisance

¹H. Schonweiss and C. Brown, "*Proskyneo*," The New International Dictionary of The New Testament Theology (1975), 2:875-879.

before an earthly ruler. It is the word used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word *shachah*,¹ which means the same thing. In all the usage of *shachah* (seventeen in the OT) the meaning is "to be brought low," "to humble oneself," "to have one's arrogance knocked out of him"² (see Isa 2:11, 17; Ps 107:39; Job 9:13).

The other Greek word that is translated "worship" is *latreuo*.³ It is used by Jesus in His rebuke of Satan: "him only shalt thou serve." The original meaning of this word was simply to serve as a slave serves his master or a hired servant his employer. However, it became a word used for worship and is so translated in such passages as Acts 7:42; 24:14; Phil 3:3; and Heb 10:2. This word corresponds to the Hebrew word *abadah*, which has been translated "servant," "slave," and "service."⁴ *Abad* often is used to describe service offered to God not in bondage but out of love and joyous experience (Exod 3:12; 4:23; 7:16; Ps 22:31; Job 21:15; Jer 2:20; Mal 3:14).⁵

¹Victor P. Hamilton, "*Shachah*," Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (1980), 2:915.

²Ibid.

³K. Hess, "*Latreuo*," The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (1971), 3:549-551.

⁴Walter C. Kaiser, "*Abad*," Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (1980), 2:639-640.

⁵Ibid.

In late Judaism, just as in the Old Testament and later the New Testament, the relationship of man to God is expressed in terms of service and obedience. Man is the servant or slave of God. So *abad* and *latreuo* and their derivatives convey the meaning of the true worship of God in terms of faithfulness as expressed in service and obedience. This applies to corporate worship as well as to personal and inner worship of the heart.

What is the significance of the biblical terminology?

First, it makes very clear the fact that in true Christian worship the sincere believer is prostrating himself before the living God [even though this may not involve a physical act] in recognition of His glorious majesty, so that he may offer the adoration, the praise, the thanksgiving, the exaltation to which God alone is entitled. Second, it makes plain the fact that the true worshiper essentially is offering himself to God in submission as an obedient servant even as his Savior did.¹

The Significance of Corporate Worship

We must turn now to consider the subject of corporate worship as differentiated from the worship of the individual in the privacy of his own personal devotions. Corporate worship has been defined as what we say and what we do when we stand together before God, realizing in high degree who He is and who we are and what He has done for us, for Christian worship can never be divorced from the life, work, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We can never

¹Rayburn, 24.

know the full richness of worship unless we unite in common worship with other believers.¹

The church is not a human organization, but a "divinely created fellowship of sinners who trust a common Savior, and are one with each other because they are all one with Him in a union realized by the Holy Spirit."² The Church is primarily a worshiping community because it is composed of those who trust in the Savior; its response to God's free gift is adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and dedication of life.

In worship the Church is built up into a vital body which in turn shares its salvation with the world outside. Until the Church has worshiped, it can do nothing else in Christ's name. The first business of the Church is worship.³

Observation and experience reveal that participation in congregational worship heightens the intensity of worship much more than is the individual passion of any one worshiper when he is by himself. Martin Luther, expressing his delight in the corporate worship experience said, "At home in my own house there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a

¹Ibid., 29.

²Carl F. H. Henry, Basic Christian Doctrine (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1962), 242.

³Franklin Segler, A Theology of Church and Ministry (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1960), 27.

fire is kindled in my heart, and it breaks its way through."¹

Every one of us needs the high experience of true corporate worship continually (see Heb 10:25). As we bless and encourage one another in personal fellowship, so we are uplifted, strengthened, and encouraged by being together in common worship. To unite one's heart and voice with other believers as songs of praise are sung, prayers are offered up, and the Scriptures are read is indeed an experience that carries the soul beyond the reaches of individual worship.

The early believers lived under difficult circumstances and extreme pressures. Their most pressing problems were, as Pease indicates, "survival and testimony."² Thus their coming together was for the very crucial matter of building up the community. This concern proved to be crucial for it helped to govern that which became a part of their worship experience.

All that serves to build up, belongs to the Christian service of worship. This aim purifies the service of elements which satisfy profane, egocentric human needs and excludes excessive enthusiasm which would empty the service in its attempt to purify.³

Christ, moreover, promised that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of

¹Rayburn, 30.

²Norval F. Pease, And Worship Him (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1967), 23.

³Oscar Cullman, Early Christian Worship (London: S.C.M. Press, 1953), 34.

them" (Matt 18:20). While God's presence is certainly not limited to times of corporate worship in the church, this promise means that He will be present in a very special way when His children assemble to praise, worship, and adore Him.

It is important also to mention that every believer is a child of God, and that makes him/her a member of the family of God and of the body of Christ. God desires that no person should live in isolation from other believers. When one becomes a born-again Christian, he/she becomes a member of the body of Christ, which has its manifestation in a local church (1 Cor 12:15-17).

It has already been established that the highest and holiest function of the believer is the worship of the living God. Since this is true, the highest and holiest function of the body of believers in any place is Christian corporate worship. Thus every believer must participate in the worship of the body and must perform his proper obligations in that worship.¹

It is worship that motivates and empowers the Church in its witness, service, and life. When worship is absent, all the other functions of the Church weaken and even die.²

¹Rayburn, 31.

²Ibid., 5.

CHAPTER 3

CORPORATE WORSHIP IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Introduction

To understand the attitudes and activities included in our corporate worship of God, it is important to learn all we can from the origins and development of worship as they are revealed in the Bible. The fact that Scripture abounds with teaching on worship shows its great import to the living God who gave us the Scriptures.

The present study can by no means be exhaustive. The intent of this chapter is discover the basis of Christian corporate worship in five selected Old Testament periods: Creation, Patriarchal, Mosaic, Monarchical, and Exilic.

Corporate Worship at Creation

The book of Genesis provides only momentary glimpses into the worship practices of the Lord's people and does not tell us how God gave them the directions for their worship. It was only after the Exodus that we find specific instructions concerning worship recorded in Scripture. There are, however, some significant opportunities to observe the worship of God's people as early as the Garden

of Eden. God created mankind in His own image; in doing so He gave mankind the capacity to communicate with and to worship the Creator. God made abundant provisions for mankind, including dominion over the earth and all its living creatures. Such plentiful privileges provided much cause for praise and thanksgiving. The greatest blessing, however, was the favor of man's continual fellowship with his divine Creator.¹

Although the Scriptures do not specifically say so, worship must have begun in the Garden of Eden before the fall of Adam and Eve, who enjoyed unbroken face-to-face communion with their Creator God. This is evident since after they had sinned they "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God" (Gen 3:8). God's very approach to them after the fall certainly indicates God's desire for the fellowship and worship of His children.

With the setting apart of the Sabbath day as blessed and sanctified, God established the first specific ordinance of worship. This event happened immediately following creation, while Adam and Eve were still in a state of innocence. However, after the fall and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden, the record suggests a continuing worship on the Sabbath.

The Sabbath later became the sign of Israel's special covenant relation to the Lord (Exod 31:13). Its

¹Ibid., 43-45.

observance marked Israel as God's peculiar people and served as a reminder of the rest into which God desired to bring them.

In Gen 4:3 we also see the beginning of sacrifice in worship. In the light of the full biblical revelation, we know that every sacrifice pointed forward to the one perfect and final sacrifice, which would be made by the Son of God Himself.

Corporate Worship in the Patriarchal Period

In the life of Abraham we are able to see the practice of worship of the Hebrews before the Exodus. Five characteristics can be ascribed to Abraham's relationship with God in terms of faith and worship.

1. Abraham demonstrated his worship to God by the act of building the tent and the altar.

Rayburn has identified Abraham as "the man of the tent and the altar."¹ By faith Abraham heeded the call of God to leave his home in Ur (Gen 12:1; Heb 11:8) and lived the life of a pilgrim who was seeking "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb 11:10). Moreover, everywhere Abraham pitched his tent he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord (Gen 12:9; 13:4). Abraham's faith and sacrificial worship of the One True God served as a powerful testimony of the

¹Ibid., 48.

sovereignty and redemptive love of the Creator God. For Abraham, faith and worship unite in proclaiming the gospel of grace and faith, and point to the New Testament worship.¹

2. Abraham demonstrated his worship in the tangible act of returning his tithe to God.

This simple yet significant act of worship was a public acknowledgment of God's sovereign claim and ownership, as well as his Lordship. Love and gratitude in worship are thus expressed in a tangible way to the God who blessed Abraham in the fullness of life, prosperity, strength, blessing, and hope.

3. Abraham demonstrated his worship to God by the act of circumcision.

According to Scripture, circumcision was first practiced by Abraham after his entry into Canaan. It was ordered by God as a sign of His covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:9-14, 23-27). By the circumcision as the seal of covenant, Abraham was to become "a father of many nations" (Gen 17:4), the inheritor of earthly Canaan (and ultimately the heavenly Canaan, Heb 11:10), and the forefather of the

¹John Watts, Basic Patterns in the Old Testament Religion (New York: Vantage Press, 1971), 42.

promised son who is to be a blessing of many nations (Gen 17:15-16).¹

Roland de Vaux points out that circumcision was an initiation rite to married life in the time of Abraham. Thus Abraham's circumcision fulfilled the term of the covenant that was intended to be a marriage relationship with Yahweh.² That this is so seems to be borne out by later prophets who condemn Israel's unfaithfulness as the breach of the covenantal marriage relationship with God (cf. Hos 2:2, 16-19, 23; Mal 2:11, 14).

4. Abraham demonstrated his worship to God in the act of communion with God.

In his experience, Abraham demonstrated that worship is not one-way communion. God and Abraham engaged in dialogue. Worship, in this sense, is authentic communion, a genuine fellowship with God. Close communion and intimate fellowship make possible active intercession and mediation for others as Abraham did in his intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:16-33).

The deep adoration and awe which led Abraham to fall on his face and worship God (Gen 17:3, 17) must repudiate

¹Oliver Kan-Song Koh, "A Proposed Order of Worship for the Seventh-day Adventist Church Informed by the Theological Presuppositions Implied in the Genesis Account of the Creation and Fall of Man, and the Covenant Promise of Genesis 3:15" (D.Min. Project Report, Andrews University, 1982), 22-23.

²Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel--Its Life and Institutions (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961), 47.

any suggestion of flippancy and carelessness. When one fails to sense the glory and majesty of the Creator God, faith can easily turn into presumption and worship into self-glorification.

5. Abraham demonstrated his worship to God by the act of offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice.

His communion with God prepared Abraham for the greatest test of faith--the offering of his son Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen 22:2). Rowley writes:

Abraham felt constrained to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, not because it was a common duty or because Isaac meant so little to him, but because Isaac meant so supremely much to him and because he wished to show the completeness of his own devotion to God.¹

To summarize, Abraham's worship was personal, intimate, and vibrant. It was demonstrated in his communion with God. Worship is relevant and personal, yet it never loses sight of the transcendence and the sovereignty of God.

Corporate Worship in the Mosaic Period

The Exodus marked the birth of Israel as a nation. In terms of the development of worship, it can conveniently be divided into two periods: the Sinai-Event and the Sanctuary.

¹A. H. Robert, Worship in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 25.

The Sinai Event

In the Exodus, God brought Israel out of Egypt, across the Red Sea, and to Mount Sinai, where He entered into a covenant with them at the public meeting that took place at the foot of Mount Sinai. This meeting between God and Israel is important because it demonstrates the characteristics of any meeting between God and His people (Exod 19-24).¹

First, the meeting was convoked by God. God, who called the people out of Egypt and brought them to Mount Sinai, now called His people to meet with Him at the foot of the mountain where they became the Q'hal Yahweh, the "assembly of God." In this call is seen a prerequisite of true worship--that God calls His people to meet with Him.

Second, the people were arranged in a structure of responsibility. Although the role of leadership was given to Moses, other parts of the drama were to be played by Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, the seventy elders of Israel, the young Israelite men, and the people. The picture is not that of leaders and an audience, but full participation of those congregated. Each had his or her own part to play. This organization points to participation as a fundamental characteristic of worship.

¹Robert Webber, Worship Old and New (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 23-25.

Third, God spoke to His people and made His will known to them in this meeting. This shows that worship is not complete without hearing from the Lord.

Fourth, the people publicly accepted the conditions of the covenant, signifying their commitment not only to hear but to obey it. An essential aspect of worship is the renewal of personal commitment. In worship, the community is engaged in the renewal of the covenant God made with His people.

Finally, the meeting was climaxed by a dramatic symbol of ratification, a sealing of the agreement. In the Old Testament, God always used a blood sacrifice to demonstrate the sealing of His relationship with man. These sacrifices pointed to the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The Tabernacle

The birth of Israel as a nation marked a great transition in its politics and religion. Israel was called to worship God (Exod 4:23), to hold a festival to Him (Exod 5:1), and to offer sacrifices to Him (Exod 5:3). Thus, Israel was brought into existence primarily to be a worshipping community, to be "a kingdom of priests" and a "holy nation" (Exod 19:6).

It is not the intent to describe in detail Israel's order of worship; in a short study as this, that would be impossible! Therefore, certain major aspects of Israelite

worship are concentrated on: (1) the Sanctuary system--its symbolism, furnishings, and ministration; (2) the holy Sabbath--its unique significance and weekly observance; and (3) the three major national feasts--Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles--their annual celebration, purpose, and implications.

The Sanctuary System

God instructed Israel to make Him a sanctuary, that He may dwell among them (Exod 25:8). God's desire to dwell with sinful people speaks of His great love to commune with His creatures (Exod 29:45, 46). The structure and furniture of the Sanctuary provides revelation of God's nature, character, and ministry. The holy and moral purity of God, in contrast to the sinfulness of mankind, is most emphatically expressed in: (1) the three successive veils of the Sanctuary to keep off an unqualified approach to God's presence (Exod 26:31-36); (2) the bronze laver for cleaning and preserving the moral fitness of the priest before God (Exod 38:8); (3) the mediation through a sanctified priesthood (Exod 28:3); and (4) the high priest's garment and his turban--inscribed with the inscription "Holiness to the Lord" (Exod 28:36).

The sharp contrast between God and depraved man is also revealed in the design of the Sanctuary furnishings. The ark in the Most Holy Place symbolizes the throne of God (1 Sam 4:4; Exod 20:8-11; cf. Ps 80:1) and His majestic

presence (Num 10:33-36). The Decalogue kept within the ark indicates that the standard of God is righteousness and justice (Pss 89:14; 97:1-2). The mercy seat which covers the ark and the law within is the place where God meets with His people (Exod 25:22).

The shewbread in the Holy Place symbolizes God's spiritual sustenance for His people (cf. Lev 24:6-7).¹ The offering of the shewbread is regarded as the Old Testament version of the New Testament petition "Give us this day our daily bread."²

The lampstand (also in the Holy Place), which burned continuously (Lev 24:1-4), symbolizes God's presence and His sustaining power of all life through the life-giving, omniscient, omnipresent Spirit of God (Zech 4:6; Ps 121:3-4; Rev 4:5).³

The Sanctuary is rich in the symbolism of God's presence, character, and ministry. But in none of this symbolism is there any representation of a cultic icon or idols. God strictly forbids using any man-made representation of Him in worship. The imageless worship of

¹Rayburn, 60.

²Arnold Wallenkampf, ed., "The Israelite Sanctuary," in Sanctuary and the Atonement, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 1:25.

³Ibid., 26-27.

Israel distinguishes it as a unique worshipping community among surrounding nations.¹

The sacrifices and offerings "are all parables of the holiness and justice of God."² The holiness of God is clearly disclosed in the character of the victim. The unblemished animal indicates that only a perfect sacrifice can meet the righteous claim of God and His law. The animal functions as a substitution on behalf of the sinner (Lev 1:4). The shedding of his blood is "to make atonement" for the people (Lev 1:4) to meet the justice of the Holy God and to reestablish union with Him.³

The relation between the altar of burnt offering outside the Sanctuary and the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place was expressed in the service of the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). In the liturgical act of the high priest sprinkling blood upon the ark and the alter (Lev 16:14; 18-19), he made atonement for himself, his household, and the whole nation (Lev 16:17). In the service of the Day of Atonement is portrayed the struggle of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, between the work of righteousness and the work of sin, and the divine solution

¹Gerhard Van Rad, Old Testament Theology, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 1:214.

²William Dyrness, Themes in the Old Testament Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 156.

³J. H. Kurtz, Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1863), 64.

to it all. God has offered His own substitutionary atoning sacrifice in order to meet the claim of a holy and righteous law to redeem and reconcile sinners unto Him. The ark and the altar thus proclaim God's covenantal redemptive grace in which "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps 85:10).

The Sabbath

Israel is commanded by God to observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy (Deut 5:12; Exod 20:8). This was founded upon the Sabbath being a memorial of His creation (Gen 2:1-3; Exod 20:11), and further upon the historical redemptions of the Exodus (Exod 20:2; Deut 5:6), and God's redemptive grace from the power of sin. By this observance, Israel is to remember that they were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord God brought them out of there with a mighty hand (Deut 5:15).

The same Sabbath command points to both the creation and redemption as the basis for faith and worship. J. C. Rylaarsdam writes, "The order of creation, and the order of redemption are held together: God is One."¹ Rylaarsdam regards this unity of God as Creator and Redeemer as expressed in the Shema (Deut 6:5) as "the matrix of worship

¹Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., ed., "The Matrix of Worship in the Old Testament," in Worship in Scripture and Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 62.

in the Old Testament."¹ The Sabbath day then constitutes a religious day of joy and worship,² to provide time in which God's people could grow spiritually.³

The Appointed Feasts

The concept of God as Creator and Redeemer is manifested in the observances of the three great annual feasts: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Characteristic of the feasts is the joyousness of the harvest, of forgiveness, of redemption.

The Passover feast coincided with the barley harvest. It began with the Exodus event and was transformed into a great feast celebrating God's redemption of Israel.⁴ The Exodus became a recurring theme in the worship of Israel, reminding them of His creatorship (Deut 32:6), and His redemption (Exod 15:2).⁵

The Feast of Pentecost coincides with the wheat harvest. It featured the offering of the first fruits (Deut 26:2). Accompanying the offering of the first fruits was a liturgy proclaiming the mighty saving acts of God in the

¹Ibid., 44.

²Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 3:47-72.

³Walter Harrelson, From Fertility Cult to Worship (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1969), 32.

⁴H. H. Rowley, Worship in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1967), 88.

⁵Koh, 33.

Exodus event (Deut 26:3-20). Pentecost, as De Vaux points out, was to commemorate the redemptive act of God¹ (Exod 15:17). Love and gratitude mark the occasion.

The Feast of Tabernacles coincided with the grape harvest. It was the climax of the year's celebration, and perhaps the most important of the three feasts. Lev 23:39 calls the Feast of the Tabernacles the "feast unto the Lord." Roland de Vaux cited Josephus describing the Feast of Tabernacles as "the holiest and the greatest of the Hebrew feasts."² The harvest feast was celebrated to commemorate the wilderness wandering and God's guidance, provision, and redemption of Israel (Deut 23:43).

The feasts of Israel were celebrated in remembrance of God's redemptive acts in the past. However, the celebrations were not merely services of intellectual remembrance. Through their recounting of God's mighty deeds in the past, the people confronted and realized anew the present work and guidance of God in their midst. To Israel, God was real and sovereign; He determined and shaped creation and redemption, nature and history, people and events.

The whole tabernacle service and furniture, the observance of the Sabbath, and the joyous celebration of the annual feasts are revelations of God's character and the

¹de Vaux, 494.

²Ibid., 495.

discloser of Himself as creator and Redeemer of the world and of Israel.¹

Worship in the Monarchical Period

With the rise of the monarchy a new form of worship developed, which in scale and splendor proved appropriate to Israel at its height of glory and might. Conceived by David, built by his son, Solomon, the Temple in Jerusalem became the center of Israel worship.

At the dedication of the Temple, King Solomon played the leading role in the procession of the ark to the temple (2 Chr 5:6; 7:5), the offering of the sacrifices (2 Chr 5:6; 7:5), the installation of the ark, the pronouncement of blessing upon the assembly (2 Chr 6:3), and the offering of the dedicatory prayer (2 Chr 6:14-42). Then "fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house" (2 Chr 7:1), and the Israelites knelt and worshipped the Lord (2 Chr 7:3).

Monarchical worship distinguishes itself by its splendid liturgy and the leading role played by the king in worship. There is no specific mention of a high priest in the early stage of the monarchy.² The king is "the priestly

¹A. H. Herbert, Worship in Ancient Israel (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1959), 7; also Rayburn, 51.

²Koh, 36-37.

person par excellence."¹ He is regarded as belonging to the order of Melchizedek, the priest-king of God Most High (Ps 110:4; cf. Gen 14:18), the Anointed of the Lord (cf. 1 Sam 24:10; Ps 2:2), the son of God (Ps 2:7). He thus rules the nation in God's name and leads out in worship as God's priest. The king of Israel as a son of God implies God is the true King. Hence the psalmist sings, "For God is the King of all the earth" (Ps 47:7 NIV). Thus to Israel under the monarchy, God is not only Creator and Redeemer, but also King and Lord over all.

Feasts, tithes, first fruits, offerings, and the Sabbath, which were familiar to the Israelites, were all observed. The sacrifices remained central to Israelite worship, particularly while the Jerusalem Temple was at its center (Pss 50:5; 132:13).²

Worship was accompanied by music and instruments, anthems and great choirs (2 Chr 5:12-13). Worship also was marked by silence as well (Pss 4:4; 46:10; 76:8; Hab 2:10).

The theology of monarchical worship can well be summed up in the cultic hymn in Ps 96 (NIV). The psalmist cries out, "O worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before Him, all the earth" (vs. 9). For God is the Redeemer (vss. 2-3), the Creator (vs. 5), the King (vs. 10), the Judge (vss. 10, 13). He is great and most worthy (vs.

¹Herbert, 23.

²Koh, 37.

9), glories (vs. 8), sovereign (vs. 10), just, true and righteous (vss. 10, 13). Man's response is to worship God in the splendor of His holiness (vs. 9), in praise of His salvation (vss. 1, 2), in awesome wonder of His great creation (vss. 4, 5), with an offering to His glory (vs. 8), with proclamation of His marvelous redemptive deeds (vs. 3), and with trembling and fear because the Lord is in the sanctuary (vs. 6). In this great cultic hymn are found all the basic ingredients of true worship.¹

From the time of monarchy we have the "locus classicus for the study of worship"² in the Bible, the worship experience of Isaiah (Isa 6:1-8). In the Temple of the Lord, Isaiah caught a vision of his sinfulness and of the holiness of God, and cried, "Woe is me!" (Isa 6:5). His confession was immediately followed by acceptance and cleansing from God and a commitment on the part of Isaiah to the Lord. Sacrifice and obedience, worship and responsible existence were one.

Worship in the Exilic Period

Warnings that Jerusalem's Temple would be destroyed became a tragic reality in 586 B.C. The finest of the Jewish population was deported to Babylon. All sacrificial

¹Ibid., 38-39.

²Warren W. Wiersbe, Real Worship: It Will Transform Your Life (Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1986), 77-80.

worship was suspended. The form of Temple worship as described in the Bible ceased.

Having accepted the theological interpretation of their calamity, the Israelites once again turned to worship God. But worship in that traumatic experience struggled to find its true meaning in the absence of the Temple, the sacrificial cult, and the hereditary priesthood. A unique phenomenon, the synagogue, arose, not to substitute for the Temple, says Herbert, but to coordinate the faith and worship of the exiles.¹ It probably began first in the homes. James F. White characterizes the synagogue worship as an Exilic survival agency, with its prime intention of preserving the Israelite's identity through a corporate memory of God's great deeds for them in the past. They met to keep their faith alive.²

Since the synagogue probably originated as a result of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the subsequent dispersion of the Israelite people during the Exile,³ it is an intertestamental phenomenon and not an institution of the Old Testament. The function of the

¹Herbert, 31.

²James F. White, Christian Worship in Transition (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 12. White further notes that "Judah could survive through worship, though countless other conquered kingdoms perished completely. Worship could overcome even fire and sword," 12.

³Horton Davies, Christian Worship, Its History and Meaning (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 11-14.

synagogue was the preservation and proclamation of the Scripture. Consequently, the synagogue became the religious, educational, and social center of the Hebrew village life. Through it the precepts of the ancient Hebrew religion were passed down from generation to generation.

Worship in the synagogue was strikingly different from that in the Temple. It had no sacred rituals, no sacrifices, and did not support a sacred ministry. Its focus was on reading and understanding the Word of God.¹

Synagogue worship consisted of an affirmation of faith, prayer, and the Scriptures and the benediction.² The affirmation of faith is expressed in the Shema, which is divided into three different sections. The first section (Deut 6:4-9) proclaims the unity of God as a central confession and sets forth the primary duty of Jewish people to "love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut 6:5). The second emphasizes the doctrine of rewards and punishment (Deut 11:13-21). The third stresses the duty of each person to strive for holiness because the essential nature of God is to be emulated (Deut 28:1-11).

¹Ibid., 12.

²Webber, 27-29.

Summary

We have looked briefly at five selected periods of Old Testament worship. The primary focus of each one of them is the exaltation of God and the celebration of His goodness.

Worship started with Adam and Eve communing with God on the Sabbath. When sin entered, the sacrificial system was introduced so the worshiper might see the evil nature of sin and look forward to the coming Savior. The sacrificial system became the focus of worship in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses. Monarchical worship refined the Mosaic worship. The centrality of the sacrificial worship remains, but it is further enhanced with the prominent role of Israel's king, as God's anointed and son, in leading the nation in a solidarity act of worship with splendid sacrifices and offerings. The manifestation of God's glory in His Temple brings worship to a height of divine exaltation and proclamation of faith never experienced before. God is glorified as Creator, Redeemer, and King.

After the fall of Israel, in the absence of a Temple and the sacrifices, Israel preserved the identity of its faith in the phenomenon of the synagogue. The simple recital of God's deeds in the reading of the Torah enhances afresh the objective reality of God and the subjective faith and gratitude of the people.

In summary, the ingredients of worship in the OT are all manifested toward exalting God as Creator and Redeemer, as shown in the Sanctuary service, and in the joyous celebration of the Sabbath and the great feasts. The response of the redeemed in worship expressed reverence, awe, gratitude, love, and joy.

Old Testament worship shows the centrality of the Word Of God, the importance of prayer, the richness of praise, and the prominence of offering. These elements become the bases of worship in the New Testament.

CHAPTER 4

WORSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Introduction

This chapter examines the practice of worship in the life of Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the early church. Then, it moves into an exposition of the essential elements of worship as they are found in the New Testament.

The Practice of Worship

In the Life of Jesus Christ

We could not begin even a brief study of worship in the New Testament without carefully contemplating the example of our Lord. It is clear from the New Testament that Jesus supported Old Testament worship. He regularly worshiped in the Temple; Luke tells us that He was brought there as an infant for presentation as a child of the covenant (Luke 2:21-24), and that as a youth of twelve years He was back in the Temple again (Luke 2:41ff.). During His public ministry He frequented the Temple. John tells us in his Gospel (7:2ff.) that Jesus was present for the Feast of Tabernacles, and again (10:22) for the Feast of Dedication. We must also take note of Jesus' respect for the Temple and its purity. At least twice during His public ministry He

cleansed the Temple of those who had defiled it for personal advantage (Luke 19:45-48).

While there is no evidence that Jesus offered sacrifices in the Temple, we do know He endorsed the principle of sacrifice.¹ It is also clear that when He offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sins, the function of the Temple ceased. His disciples needed to learn that the Temple was only a type foreshadowing our Lord's own ministry and sacrifice. When Jesus died, the veil of the Temple was torn in two (Matt 27:51), symbolizing the end of Temple worship with its sacrifice.² Forgiveness of sin and the perfect entrance into the holy presence of God had been granted for all true believers. By putting a stop to the sacrifices, He pointed to Himself as the fulfillment of all the Old Testament sacrifices.³ Jesus thus proclaimed Himself as the new focal point in Christian worship (John 2:19; 4:21-23). All that the Temple provided the devout believer of Old Testament times, the believer of the New Testament finds in Jesus Christ today.

Because Christian worship is also closely related to synagogue worship,⁴ we must also take note of our Lord's pattern in this matter. Luke stressed that Jesus regularly

¹Rayburn, 81-82.

²Webber, 34.

³Ibid., 34.

⁴Davies, 19-20.

attended the synagogue to worship on the Sabbath day, and often participated in the service Himself (Luke 4:16). Every Gospel tells us that He made it a practice to use the synagogues for His teaching ministry (Matt 4:23; Mark 1:21; Luke 6:6; John 6:59; 18:20).

Yet, Jesus did not fit fully into the framework of the synagogue worship, for His exegesis of the Scriptures was completely different from that of the scribes of His day. Jesus proclaimed the decisive intervention of God into the affairs of mankind to provide eternal salvation by the offering of Himself for the sins of men and women. Jesus wanted them to understand that they cannot expect to win forgiveness by the shedding of the blood of animals; instead it is granted by the grace of God. Those who truly believe in Him find in Him the object of worship and the source of true fulfillment and joy.¹

In the Life of the Early Church

Let us now consider the character of worship in the Apostolic Age. The New Testament throws considerable light on the practices of the apostolic church, which most believers accept as normative for the Christian church today. It is clear that the apostles and other Jewish Christians continued to worship in the Temple in Jerusalem. In fact, we read in Acts 2:46 that they went daily to the

¹Rayburn, 83.

Temple. Luke mentions that they "were continually in the Temple" (Luke 24:53). Even the apostle Paul went into the Temple to pray (Acts 22:17), and on his last visit to Jerusalem, he sponsored four Jewish men who had taken upon themselves a Jewish vow and went with them into the Temple.

Although the first Christians continued to worship for a time in the Temple, the basis of their worship was what God had accomplished in His Son Jesus Christ. Thus, while they found themselves using the Old Testament Scriptures in worship, they recognized that Christ was Himself the One to Whom the Old Testament pointed.¹ Early Christian worship was therefore continuous with Jewish worship except that Jesus was worshiped as God in the flesh, as the sin-bearer, and the author of life.

As worship in the Temple continued during the early Apostolic Age, so also did worship in the synagogue. Stephen disputed with certain leaders of the synagogue who opposed the gospel (Acts 6:9); and, wherever possible, Paul customarily began his missionary work in the Jewish synagogues (Acts 9:20; 13:5, 14: 17:1, 2, 10). Other New Testament preachers such as Apollos and Priscilla and Aquila also used the synagogues for their preaching ministry as well (Acts 18:26).

Of course, the Christians' expulsion from the synagogue was inevitable. Even during the time of Jesus'

¹Webber, 34.

own ministry, the rulers of the Jews had agreed that "if any man did confess that he [Jesus] was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue" (John 9:22). The apostle Paul was forced to separate himself from the synagogue in Corinth after the Jews there opposed him and blasphemed (Acts 18). He entered into the house of Justus, a believer, and there continued his preaching and teaching.

It is important to mention that the synagogue had significant impact on the form and elements of New Testament public worship. Synagogue worship involved no blood sacrifices, no oblations of the inanimate produce of the harvest, no offerings of first-fruits, and no incense.¹

Horton Davies states that there were four significant elements in synagogue worship. First, there was the reading of the Scriptures; second, there was the singing of Psalms. The third element was prayer, which may have occupied the most prominent place in the service. The fourth element was the homily, usually upon a subject suggested by the reading from the Scripture.²

It can be noted that most of the basic elements of what is called Christian worship was in fact present in the synagogue services.³ For example, the synagogue service began with an invitation to prayer. This was followed by

¹White, Christian Worship in Transition, 12.

²Davies, 11-14.

³Ibid.

the confession of faith known as the Shema (Deut 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num 15:37-41). These elements are indeed very similar to our call to worship. The synagogue service closed with a benediction, as do Christian services today. At the close of the prayers in the synagogue the congregation responded with "Amen." The Christians continued this practice by closing their service by saying "Amen."

This should in no way sum up Christian worship as the continuation of synagogue services. Indeed Christian worship contained a new ingredient--the centrality of Jesus Christ. It was this that put life into New Testament worship and distinguished it from other types.¹

The Elements of Worship

Now we must uncover what light the New Testament sheds upon the form and content of corporate worship. Let us begin with the first description of the assemblies of the believers following Pentecost and the establishment of the Christian church as a distinct organization.

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness

¹Illion T. Jones, A History of Evangelical Worship (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1954), 85.

and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

Here we see the earliest evidence of the essential elements of worship in the first Christian community. Note that they included (1) the apostles' teaching (the Scripture), (2) preaching, (3) prayer, (4) praise, (5) offering, (6) fellowship, and (7) the Lord's Supper (the Lord's Supper is beyond the scope of this paper). Of course, it would be impossible to determine from this brief account just where these elements appeared in the services. In fact, it is quite impossible to recognize from the New Testament sources any fixed forms or any particular order of primitive Christian worship. However, the order of service is not important. What is important are the elements.

Let us briefly examine the elements that we find in Acts 2.

Scripture¹

The first element of worship is the apostles' teaching. Christian worship from the earliest times has been characterized by the centrality of the Word of God.²

¹In this section, the words "Doctrine," "Scripture," and "Apostolic Teaching" are used to mean the same. It is beyond the scope of this paper to differentiate between them.

²John Stott, The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of Acts (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 82.

In worship God speaks and acts.¹ The record of His action and revelation is contained in the Word of God.

The passage in Acts 2 refers to the doctrine of the apostles, and certainly that expression by itself would mean New Testament truth as well as apostolic instruction from the Old Testament Scriptures. The apostles had learned from the Lord what the Old Testament meant and how it was to be interpreted (Luke 24:25, 42).

In light of the constant references that the letters of the apostles make to the Old Testament Scriptures, it would seem certain that readings and expositions from the Old Testament were common in early Christian services. In the New Testament epistles, the Gentile Christians as well as the Jewish Christians were assumed to have a familiarity with the Old Testament Scriptures. They could hardly have had this familiarity unless these Scriptures were read to them in their services. In the book of Romans, for example, Paul bases much of his argument about righteousness by faith on illustrations taken from the Old Testament. The Roman church was largely Gentile. Individuals did not have their own copies of the Scriptures. What they knew of the Old Testament would have come from hearing those Scriptures read. It is logical to assume that they heard them in the services of public worship.

¹Robert E. Webber, Worship Is a Verb (Waco, TX: Word Publishing, 1985), 68.

Perhaps the most conclusive indication that the Old Testament Scriptures were read to the people in their services, along with the already existing New Testament documents, is Paul's clear statement in Rom 15:4, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

That the apostles used the Old Testament generously suggests strongly that reading and exposition of the Old Testament formed a large segment of what is called "the apostle's doctrine." James F. White believes that in every worship service the believer read portions from the Old Testament and the already existing New Testament documents.¹

The reading of God's written word, first in the OT and then increasingly in the NT, was surely an important part of worship from the very first, as it patently was in both Temple and synagogue, and then again in the early Church.²

The first important element of worship is faithfulness to the Scriptures³ for they are the special revelation of God. Loyalty to God's Word demonstrates man's obedience to God's will and revelation. The theological

¹James F. White, Introduction to Christian Worship (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1982), 126.

²G. W. Bromiley, "Worship," The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible (1976), 5:988.

³von Allmen, 26.

norm, which has God as its center, is described in the following way: "It [worship] is more than a spontaneous gesture, done by man in his own way. It has to be in harmony with a body of revelation of God which God has given to man."¹

Preaching

Closely related to the reading of the Word of God is preaching. Preaching had a prominent part in the assemblies of the believers in apostolic times. Undoubtedly the Word of God was communicated by what we understand as preaching today. Paul's commandment to Timothy in 1 Tim 4:13 seems to urge upon him careful attention to the public reading and preaching (expounding) of the Scriptures. In his second epistle, he reminds Timothy (2 Tim 3:16) that the whole of Scripture is divinely inspired and therefore "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

A number of evangelistic sermons are recorded in the book of Acts, but it is apparent that there was also preaching for the Christians when they gathered together for worship and for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. (See Acts 20:6ff.) Paul preached at Troas. The prophesyings at Corinth also seem to be forms of Christian exhortation. The needs of evangelism and education as well as edification

¹Pease, 12.

made it essential that the ministry of the Word be included in the early services. The apostles were called to the ministry of the Word (Acts 6). At a later time, church leaders were to be apt to teach (2 Tim 3:2).

Preaching combined several aspects of worship: declaration of God's work, confession of faith, underlying prayer, and the climax of praise. Early preaching was particularly related to the OT on the one side and to the life and work of Christ on the other.

Among Gentile Christians, in particular, a good deal of information would have to be passed on in preaching, for the same level of biblical knowledge could not always be assumed as among Jewish Christians or the early "God-fearers." Apollos, a man mighty in the Scriptures, exercised an important ministry in this field (Acts 18:24ff.).¹

C. Raymond Holmes connects the importance of preaching and worship.

Worship and preaching are intended to bring persons to the place where they bow the knee to the God of heaven in dependent praise and adoration, where the idols of life are pushed aside in favor of Him who made and redeemed the world. That will not happen without a lofty concept of God, one that draws the believer to worship not for what he/she can get out of it, but to praise the Majesty in the heavens who is present by His Spirit and through His Word. What one gets out of such worship is an added blessing, but it is not the essential goal of worship. As Revelation 4-5 so graphically portrays, worship focuses on God and His Son

¹Bromiley, 5:988-989.

Jesus Christ, not on the worshiper. Such worship is Other-centered rather than self-centered.¹

Prayer

The third element in the worship of the early church was prayer. The early believers cherished the opportunity for direct communication with God and never failed to offer up petitions to Him when gathered together to worship Him. It seems from the written record that the very first duty of the Church between the ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit was to wait in prayerful expectancy. Persecution quickly forced the Jerusalem church to its knees in common prayer.

Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy, seems to place prayer as first in importance in the gathering together of the Church, and he includes in his exhortation several different kinds of prayer (1 Tim 2:1). Paul shows the importance he attached to prayer by constantly praying for his converts (see Rom 1:8-10; Eph 1:13-23; Phil 1:3-11; 1 Tim 2:1-4; Phlm 4-6) and for his own needs (cf. 2 Cor 12:8). The needs of the Christians, the needs of the apostles and teachers, the needs of the world--all provided constant material for intercession. Common concern produced common petition.

¹C. Raymond Holmes, Sing a New Song (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1984), 123.

But more than this, Paul acknowledges the value of corporate prayer. Christians may be described as those who "in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor 1:2). As to the content of the prayers of the early Christians, Paul's own prayer in Eph 1:3-14 may be cited as an example. In his adoration of God, he reminds us that Christian prayer is inseparable from Christian tenets of faith. The Colossians were exhorted to continue in prayer and to include special prayer for the apostle and his assistants (Col 4:2; cf. 1 Thess 5:25).

One feature in Paul's references to prayer is the importance he attaches to "thanksgiving" (see Col 4:2; Phil 4:6; cf. also 1 Cor 14:16). Prayer in both individual and corporate worship was intended to be a joyful occasion when the amazing goodness of God in Christ was recognized.

Blessings, whether from the OT or the NT (Cor 13:14 or Rev 22:21), probably became sets of cherished prayers. The epistles especially seem to testify to the emergence of distinctive vocabulary of Christian worship based on thanksgiving and blessing. Whatever the forms, however, the essential element of prayer itself belongs to worship from the very outset, and a genuine Christian service without it is almost unthinkable.¹

Another feature was the use of brief set forms like "Amen" and "maranatha"; both are significant because they

¹Bromiley, 5:987.

were used either by Jesus or by the early church. Both served as a congregational response, as in synagogue worship. The first affirms the reliability of God's promises (2 Cor 1:20) and the second affirms belief in the Lord's second coming (1 Cor 16:22; cf. Rev 22:20). Both therefore have theological overtones. Another Aramaic word that seems to have been preserved in its original form together with its Greek translation is *Abba* (Father), and this is a form used by Christians, prompted by the Spirit (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6).¹

One cannot say exactly how the Church prayed. Perhaps a leader prayed for the whole; perhaps individuals prayed in course; perhaps there was recitation of a form or forms of prayer.

Praise

The fourth element of worship mentioned in the passage in Acts 2 is praise. Praise is the confession of God's nature and works. It is something we direct toward God or something we express to others about God.²

Some of the definitions for "praise" in the dictionary highlight its simplicity: "to commend; to applaud; to express approval or admiration of; to extol in

¹Donald Guthrie, New Testament Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981), 754.

²Bob Sorge, Exploring Worship: A Practical Guide to Praise and Worship (Canadaigua, NY: By the author, 1987), 1.

words or in song; to magnify; to glorify."¹ There is a bi-directional focus of praise inherent in these definitions: we praise God directly by extolling Him or expressing admiration of Him; we praise God indirectly by commending Him or magnifying Him to others. Praise can be given directly to God, or it can be expressed to others in reference to God.

Praise is preoccupied with who God is and what He has done. It focuses on both His incomparable character and His wondrous acts on behalf of His children. When God does something glorious for us, we love to lift high His praises. And yet praise is not simply our thankful response to His provision; praise is also very fitting even when we have no specific gift of God in mind. He is worthy to be praised solely for who He is. Praise is based upon God's greatness, and that never changes! Notice how David spoke: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name" (Ps 103:1).²

Praise manifests itself in many ways but mainly in singing and prayer. Singing was indeed a major part of the worship services of the early Christian churches.³ Paul wrote to the Ephesians Christians that they were to speak to

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 2-5.

³Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Acts*, The Communicator's Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1983), 75.

one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. This would suggest an assembly of believers in corporate worship singing and making melody to the Lord (Eph 5:19); the burden of their songs was certainly praise. Paul wrote similarly to the Colossians (Col 3:16) that they were to teach and admonish one another with "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in [their] hearts to the Lord."¹ The Corinthian church was also a singing church, for the apostle spoke of the fact that, when they came together, it was customary for each one of them to be prepared to suggest a psalm for singing (1 Cor 14:26). Scholars have discerned possible fragments of early Christian hymns in such passages as Phil 2:6ff. and 1 Tim 3:16.

The hymns of Revelation show that songs were sung in heavenly as well as earthly worship. In the earliest period the psalter was probably the hymnbook of the Church, but it seems that quite early on new and more specifically Christian hymns found a place in the confession of praise.²

Prayer in the form of thanksgiving was itself praise. Almost all the prayers recorded in the NT contain

¹Jack Hayford believes that Psalms refer to the singing of the Old Testament Psalms, hymns refer to songs containing doctrine and theology written about the Lord, and spiritual songs are defined as informal choruses, choral anthems, simpler, more personal statements of faith or brief, uncomplex odes. See Jack W. Hayford, Worship His Majesty (Waco, TX: Word Books Publishing, 1987), 147-152.

²Bromiley, 5:988.

an element of doxology. They recall God's acts, and thus sound a note of assurance and triumph.

Praise started in the OT and even was a part of the life of Jesus Christ. The infancy stories show how His life began with angelic and human canticles, which ultimately served as new songs in the congregation. The cry of jubilation uttered by the Lord took the form of a hymn. Jesus and the disciples sang a hymn--probably the customary *Hallel*¹--at the Last Supper.

William Willimon says, "When we praise we join 'all the company of heaven' in their song of unending praise."² In praise "we experience our chief purpose in life--to enjoy God forever. As C. S. Lewis expresses, 'Joy is the serious business of heaven'."³ On Sabbath morning we are rehearsing the parts that we shall play in heaven--glorifying and enjoying God forever. Thus, praise is indeed the serious business of the church.

In fact, Karl Barth says in his Church Dogmatics that praise is the mark of the true church:

All ministries, whether of speech or action, are performed well to the extent that, they all participate in the praise of God. The praise of God which constitutes the community and its assembly, seeks to bind and commit and therefore to express, well up and

¹Ibid., 978.

²William H. Willimon, With Glad and Generous Hearts--A Personal Look at Sunday Worship (Nashville, TN: The Upper Room, 1986), 61.

³Ibid.

surge in concert. The Christian community sings from inner material necessity. What we can and must say quite confidently is that the community that does not sing is not the community.¹

Offering

The fifth element of worship included in the New Testament is the giving of offerings to the Lord.² From the very beginning, worshiping God meant bringing an offering to Him. Looking at worship in the Old Testament, we see that, in the first recorded act of worship by Cain and Abel, each of them brought an offering unto the Lord. It is significant that Abel's offering was a sacrifice offered by faith while Cain's was an offering of the fruit of the ground. It is, therefore, important to note that the worship of God began with offering.

Throughout the history of Israel, God's people erected altars and made offerings upon them to the true God. Whether it was during the lives of the great patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or in front of the tabernacle in the wilderness, or within the courts of the Temple of Jerusalem, to worship God was to bring an offering to Him. The psalmist gave the invitation clearly, "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name: bring an offering, and come into his courts" (Ps 96:8). This is perhaps the

¹Karl Barth, quoted in *ibid.*, 61.

²G. C. Richardson, "Christian Worship in NT Times," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (1981), 5:888.

simplest statement in the Scriptures as to what is involved in the worship of God.¹

Worship is not to be considered chiefly as getting from God; worship is giving. Worship is offering. If there is anything that we need to understand, it is this fact.²

The great majority of the offerings of the Old Testament were sacrifices. Since Jesus Christ offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sins, there is no longer any need for blood sacrifices. However, because the sacrifice of Christ is the basis of all Christian faith and hope, if we are to be faithful to Him, that sacrifice must always be prominent in our worship. Christ's sacrifice involves not only His death on Calvary, but also His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven itself with the blood of the eternal covenant, and His present intercession for the believer (see Heb 13:20, 21). All this is included in His offering of Himself for sinners. Nothing can ever be added to that sacrifice; it is sufficient for our salvation.³

It is clear, nevertheless, that Christians are to continue to sacrifice to the Lord as a part of their worship. One of the most precious doctrines of the NT is the priesthood of all believers. The apostle Peter said,

¹Rayburn, 132-133.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 133.

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, and holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:4, 5). Here it is evident that those who belong to the Christian priesthood are to be exercising that priesthood in the offering up of spiritual sacrifices.

These are in no sense to replace or to increase the efficacy of the one offering of Christ. Rather they are made possible by that one eternal sacrifice and are to be offered as a response to and in perfect union with that sacrifice.¹

That the offerings were made in public is indicated in Acts 5:1-11, where we read that Ananias "sold a possession (a piece of property), and kept back part of the price . . . and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet" (vss. 1, 2). This was a hypocritical pretense that the apostle Peter called lying to the Holy Spirit. Paul had much to say to the Corinthians about the matter of offerings. He encouraged them to lay aside at home their gifts to the poor in Jerusalem upon the first day of the week (1 Cor 16:1, 2). In his second epistle to them he spoke of their liberality (9:13) as a service that not only supplied the needs of other believers, but overflowed in praise to God. Giving was a form of Christian sacrifice well-pleasing to God. Paul himself received the offerings

¹Ibid., 132-134.

of the churches for the poor saints in Jerusalem as well as gifts that were gathered and sent to sustain him in his own gospel ministry.

One should consider that offerings have a long OT history, and that the importance of liberality as part of serving God is beyond dispute. Thus, it is necessary to stress that offering is an imperative part of the worship service.¹

Fellowship

The sixth element in the early worship was fellowship. One of the most striking elements in the life of the primitive churches was its sense of fellowship (*koinonia*). "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship" (Acts 2:42). The several statements stating that the early Christians were "together" (2:44, 47) designate the quality of their fellowship as much as their common assemblage. The early Christians were conscious of being bound together because they were together bound to Christ. It was inconceivable that a believer should be in isolation. To be a believer meant to share with other believers. This sense of fellowship expressed itself in the Jerusalem community in a distinctive way. The community was apparently characterized by many poor people, especially widows, who had no family and therefore no source

¹Bromiley, 5:989.

of support. The sense of sharing the blessings that God had bestowed upon them led to an actual sharing of possessions. No man considered his property to be his own, but to be used for the good of all. Therefore, many believers voluntarily sold their lands and properties and made the proceeds available for the support of the indigent (2:44-45). This Christian fellowship and giving was an expression of the deep bond of Christian fellowship. This same sense of fellowship ought to characterize every worshiping community.¹

The early church member's strong sense of fellowship manifested itself in a robust element of ministry to each other as Jesus had ministered to them. Indeed worship is associated with ministry. "Worship the Lord . . . and Him only shall thou serve" (Matt 4:10). These are not two unrelated commands. The way Jesus put them together may make them nearly synonymous.² Note then that service may mean sharing or helping others, and even giving of our time and talents for the good of others.³

Perhaps there are those who would insist that while

¹George Eldon Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 350-351.

²Dictionary of New Testament Theology (1971), s.v. "*Diakoneo*."

³Randy Petersen, Giving to the Giver: Worship That Pleases God (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990), 13-14.

fellowship is important in the life of the church, it has little to do with worship.¹ However, most scholars agree that fellowship is a particularly important element in corporate worship. There is no substitute to the Christian for the realization of the spiritual bond that unites him with other believers and with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a lack of a sense of true fellowship with other believers that mars the worship experiences of many today. The unattached Christian is an impossibility. The Lord's special presence in worship is promised for those occasions when at least two or three are gathered together. The warmth of fellowship is one important safeguard against spiritual coldness.

Liturgical Structure in the New Testament

Nothing in the NT suggests that the early church members had any liturgical form to which they made their practice conform. Form in essence was second to the overwhelming experience that transformed their lives, and because of this their criteria of worship rested not on aesthetic experience or on traditional logic but on the authenticity of service and devotion.²

¹For a detailed discussion on this subject, see Rayburn, 91.

²Reaves, 5-7.

In its variety and flexibility, New Testament worship was beyond any liturgical regulations.¹ This freedom from undue restraint did provide certain advantages for their worship.

1. It was kept flexible and capable of easy adaptation to the needs of widely differing localities and races; these in turn contributed to it some touches of their peculiar genius.

2. Within the individual worship-assemblies the creative impulses were stimulated in the highest degree. The conduct of the worship was not restricted to the few; it was open to the many.²

As far as the New Testament is concerned, freedom and tradition, spontaneity and order are all present, and they are accepted as complementary. Paul concludes his discussion of the worship of the Corinthian church by saying: "Do not forbid ecstatic utterance; but let all be done decently and in order."³

Summary

Although the elements of Christian worship are the same as those found already in the OT (Scripture, preaching, prayer, praise, offering, and fellowship), there is a new factor at the very heart of the NT that brings about a

¹James Hastings Nichols, Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 174.

²A. B. MacDonald, Christian Worship in the Primitive Church (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1935), 55.

³Reaves, 9.

decisive reorientation. Christian worship is at its very core and essence the worship of God the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ. The elements remain; the Christological orientation is new. The worshiper now stands in a personal relation of sonship to God on the basis of adoption in Christ. He prays in the name of the Son (John 16:23). The works of God in the Son are the theme of His praise (Eph 1:3ff.). His plea for forgiveness is that Christ gave Himself a perfect sacrifice for sin (1 John 1:7ff.). His confession is confession of Jesus as Lord (See 1 Cor 12:3; 1 John 5:39). Preaching is the setting forth of Christ in His revealing and reconciling work (2 Cor 5:18ff.). Christian offering acquires a new ground and basis in the light of God's gift in Christ (2 Cor 9:15). The suitability of worship at various points in life rests in the fact that all Christian life is life in the Lord (Rom 14:8). The decisive point, then, is not that new forms are provided or new levels of devotion ensured, but that God in Christ has come in person and fulfilled His work of grace. With this focus, worship is given a depth and content that it could hardly achieve in the time of OT Jewish expectation.¹

¹Bromiley, 5:989-990.

CHAPTER 5

WORSHIP IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

Introduction

The purpose of this investigation was to discover the principles and essential elements of worship as given in the writings of Ellen G. White.

Ellen White's concept of worship reflects the feelings of one who has beheld the awesome glory of God. Her concept is abundantly reflected in her many emphases on reverence and awe in the worship of God.¹ She stressed that in our worship of God, He is to be the subject of thought, the object of worship, and the purpose of our presence.²

Worship is to be made intelligent³ so as to impress the worshippers "with the elevated, ennobling character of

¹There are nearly two pages on reverence listed in the Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White. 3 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1962), 2272-2274. The strong emphasis that she placed on reverence must have stemmed from her profound experiences with the Holy God through visions and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

²Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1917), 48.

³Ellen G. White, Testimonies, 2:582.

the truth and its power to cleanse the heart."¹ She also calls for active participation "to make the Sabbath meeting interesting."² Such worship is truly a communion, a divine-human dialogue.

Ellen White conceives of worship as consisting of "much prayer and praise" and "also of preaching."³ Such a proper balance, together with congregational singing, fellowship, and offering⁴ allows for meaningful participation in worship.

The Object Of Worship

The Creator Who Is Worthy of Reverence and Worship

The worship of God is a duty and privilege entrusted to every man by God the creator of the heavens, the earth, and all that is therein. He extends an invitation to all to worship Him because He made the "heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Rev 14:7).

This call to worship God had its beginning in Genesis where God established a perpetual memorial of His creative power. This memorial, the Sabbath, has come to man

¹Ellen G. White, Evangelism (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1946), 207.

²Ellen G. White, "Love for the Erring," Review and Herald, November 30, 1886, 738.

³Ellen G. White, "Acceptable Worship," Signs of the Times, June 24, 1886, 369.

⁴Ellen G. White, Testimonies, 9:143-144.

weekly since the creation of the world. It was to be a special time when man could reflect upon the goodness and power of the Creator.¹ It was also to be a time when His subjects would meet together for mutual assurance, praise, and fellowship (Heb 10:22-25).

Every seven days man was to be reminded of his duty and privilege to worship the Creator. "The Sabbath was to be a sign between God and His people forever" identifying the true worshippers of the living God (Ezek 20:20). This symbol is a period of time that could not be changed by geography, culture, or the passing of the centuries. So today, after thousands of years, the Sabbath comes to man carrying the same blessings and design with which it was first presented in the garden of Eden. It is to keep man's thoughts and affection upon the Creator as the true object of worship.²

The Creator Who Is Personally Involved

The first Sabbath that God spent with Adam and Eve was a time of intimate association and relationship. With this relationship came a spontaneous response and an awareness of true worship--a fellowship with God the Father and with His Son, Jesus. Ellen G. White said:

¹Ellen G. White, Education (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), 250.

²Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 438.

God saw that a Sabbath was essential for man, even in Paradise. He needed to lay aside his own interests and pursuits for one day of the seven, that he might more fully contemplate the works of God and meditate upon His power and goodness. He needed a Sabbath to remind him more vividly of God and to awaken gratitude because all that he enjoyed and possessed came from the beneficent hand of the Creator.¹

Elements of Worship

This section is not intended to be a suggested order of the worship service, but rather to show the elements that shape it. Order may vary with individual churches, but the essential elements that are discussed in this section should be included in any worship service.

Scripture

The Scriptures are the foundation of worship. They are to be given a prominent place in the worship service.² Ellen G. White wrote that "attention is to be called, not to the assertions of men, but to the word of God."³

She counseled that the Scriptures are to be read in a clear, distinct voice and advises that the one reading should train the voice so he can read properly. The congregation should also have opportunity to participate in the reading of the Scriptures.⁴

¹Ibid., 48.

²Ellen G. White, Evangelism, 502.

³Ibid., 447.

⁴Ellen G. White, Testimonies, 6:380.

Preaching

Closely associated with the use of the Scriptures is the art of preaching. This is the primary means that the Lord has of giving the gospel to the world (1 Cor 1:21). As an aid in this work the following counsel is given.¹

The Center of Preaching

Undoubtedly, the center of each discourse is Jesus Christ.

The Sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. . . . The son of God uplifted on the cross . . . is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers.²

There is no natural power in preaching itself to renew the heart; "it is the presence of Jesus that is needed to make the preaching of the Word effectual to the salvation of souls. It is the divine influence accompanying the Word, that brings souls in penitence to the foot of the cross."³

The Content of Preaching

Diligent preparation is necessary to keep the minister continually before the Lord by studying His Word.

¹Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1948), 171.

²Ellen G. White, Evangelism, 190.

³Ellen G. White, "The Work of the Minister," Review and Herald, September 11, 1888, 577.

If he has studied God's Word, he will have a good idea of what topics will advance the cause of God. Never should a minister preach a sermon that does not help his hearers draw nearer to God. Christ as our Savior should be the subject and aim of every sermon.

Mrs. White gives far too much information on topic selection for the scope of this paper, but some of her principles are summed up here:¹

1. Preach both doctrine and practical godliness.
2. Keep the sermon simple and clear, yet informative enough to arouse the intellect.
3. Always relate the theme of every sermon to Jesus Christ and His salvation.
4. The message of the sermon should have done its work of reformation in the life of the minister before he attempts to give it to the congregation.
5. The minister is to avoid awkward gestures, mannerisms, and speech.
6. Opportunity should be given to those present for a confession of Christ.

¹Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1938), 232; see also idem, Gospel Workers, 91.

Reverence

Mrs. White cautions against talking of Christ's life in a light manner. This practice brings Him down on a level with ordinary men of the world. She says:

The preaching of the Word should appeal to the intellect and impart knowledge. . . . You have men of all classes of minds to meet, and as you deal with the Sacred Word, you should manifest earnestness, respect, reverence. Let not the impression be made upon any mind that you are a cheap, surface speaker. . . . Preach the Word.¹

Prayer

In order to render acceptable worship, the service must be characterized by earnest prayers. These prayers should come from one who has had private communion with God.² Public prayer from such a person will influence and strengthen the faith of all who are attentive. The mind will be prepared for the preaching of the word. Ellen G. White wrote:

With heartfelt simplicity we should state our needs to the Lord and claim His promises with such faith and confidence that the congregation will know that we have learned to prevail with God in prayer. . . . Their faith in your sincerity will be increased and they will be ready to listen with willing ears.³

Ellen G. White has other suggestions for public prayer:

¹Ellen G. White, Evangelism, 209-210.

²Ellen G. White, Testimonies, 5:174.

³Ellen G. White, Evangelism, 174.

1. The prayer should be offered in a kneeling position. "Both in public and private prayer, it is our privilege to bow down upon our knees before God when we offer our petition to Him. This act shows our dependence upon Him."¹

2. The prayer should be short. "A few minutes is long enough for any public petition."²

3. The prayer should represent the actual need of the congregation, "expressing their desire for temporal and spiritual blessings and their gratitude for the same."³

4. The prayer should be offered "slowly and distinctly, and in tones loud enough to be heard by all."⁴

5. The prayer should be offered in simple language "that others may understand what is said."⁵

Praise

Praise is as much an act of worship as is prayer.⁶
The clearest manifestation of praise is in the act of singing. This is one part of the service in which everyone

¹Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, 48.

²Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers, 175.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 89.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ellen G. White, Education, 168.

may participate. It is the part that may do as much as any other in setting the mood for the sermon.

There are two ways in which singing will contribute to the worship service. The first is that singing will set the thoughts upon noble themes that elevate and inspire the soul.¹ Singing will also awaken an expression of gratitude to God.²

Some helpful suggestions she makes concerning congregational singing are:

1. The singing should be accompanied by musical instruments skillfully handled.³
2. The hymns selected should be appropriate to the occasion.⁴
3. The songs selected should not be too long, nor should they be added too often during the service.⁵

Offering

Offering is an important act of worship as much as prayer or praise. It is designed for the good of man who,

¹Ibid., 167.

²Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1913), 594.

³Ibid., 144.

⁴Ellen G. White, "The Schools of the Prophets," Signs of the Times, June 22, 1882, 277.

⁵Ellen G. White, "Proper Balance in Time Given to Singing," Review and Herald, November 27, 1883, 737.

by nature, is inclined to be selfish.¹ God's design for man is to possess a spirit of liberality and to "consecrate to the Lord a portion of all their increase."²

White considered tithe and offering a privilege to the committed Christian to help him grow in love for the Lord and to advance the cause of God.³

White emphasizes three important symbols associated with tithe and offerings:

1. Tithe and offerings are symbols of a close relationship with God. "The tithing system reaches back beyond the days of Moses. . . . The Lord designed to bring man into close relationship."⁴

2. Tithing and offering are symbols of love for God and man "by placing upon him responsibilities in deeds that would counteract selfishness and strengthen his love for God and man."⁵

3. Tithe and offerings are symbols of loyalty to God:

The loyal hearts of His people, rejoicing in the saving truth for this time, will through love and gratitude to Him for this precious light, be earnest and

¹Ellen G. White, Testimonies, 3:413.

²Ibid., 1:170.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 3:393.

⁵Ibid.

anxious to aid with their means in sending the truth to others.¹

Fellowship

In public worship, the Christian congregation meets for the purpose of prayer and to give mutual encouragement to one another. This fellowship will bring members joy and gladness.

Christ will be the center of this fellowship because each person has made Him the center of his life (1 John 1:1-3). This truth will be expressed in the songs that are sung, in the prayers that are said, and in the sermon that is preached. In this sense the "church of God below is one with the church of God above."²

Principles of True Worship

Ellen G. White counsels that the worship services should be kept simple, reverent, and worshipful.

The Atmosphere of Worship

The Seventh-day Adventist church should hold a high place in the mind of the worshipper. Those who are responsible for the service should see to it that the house of worship is neat and attractive.³ The appeal is not for extravagance, but rather for neatness, order, taste, and

¹Ibid., 3:413.

²Ibid., 6:362.

³Ibid., 6:269.

plain beauty.¹ "To the humble believer the house of God on earth is the gate to heaven."² The worshipper should be able to feel that the church is a place of refuge from the pressures of the world--a place where one can go to have quiet communion with God. The problems and perplexities of the week may easily be forgotten as one enters into such a place to commune with God. In providing a place of this nature the church will have acted according to God's will. "Nothing that pertains to the worship of God should be treated with carelessness or indifference."³

Order and Edification of Worship

A worshipful atmosphere is to be retained in the sanctuary by cooperation between the leadership and the worshipper. Certain responsibilities are left to each party to carry out.⁴

The minister and the church board are in the position of leadership. Through this body the arrangements are to be made as to the time, the place, and the manner of worship.⁵

¹Ibid., 2:257.

²Ibid., 5:491.

³Ibid., 5:491.

⁴Ibid., 5:500.

⁵Ibid., 5:491.

It is the minister's duty, by precept and word, to keep the sanctuary free of all things that are of a worldly nature.¹ The deacons should be organized to extend a pleasant welcome to those entering the church. The same organization could be used at the close of the worship service to clear the sanctuary in an effort to maintain reverence.² It is also suggested that the minister arrange a training program in which the parents and children are taught how to be reverent in the house of God.³

It is the minister's duty to put skill, study, and planning into the matter of preparing for the worship services.⁴ The services held should be such that the occasional stranger would want to return because of the favorable impression that he or she received. The services should be made to appeal to all.

If the worship service is to be all that it could be, the individual believers will perform certain duties to make sure that the church is indeed a place of worship. They will pass quietly and directly to their seat upon entering the sanctuary.⁵ They will refrain from all impulse

¹Ibid., 5:496.

²Ibid., 5:494.

³Ibid.

⁴Ellen G. White, "The New Heart," Review and Herald, April 4, 1885, 225.

⁵Ellen G. White, Testimonies, 5:492.

to talk or whisper.¹ The children will be taught to enter the sanctuary with reverence² and will be in the care of the parents during the service.

Summary

Worship is a privilege that is granted to intelligent created beings. In granting this privilege, the Creator gave a perpetual reminder, the Sabbath--a time during which man worships God and reflects upon His goodness. As in Eden, God still invites intelligent beings to worship Him on the Sabbath day. God draws very near to His people and the relationship can be as close as that of a father and his children.

The principal elements of worship are Scripture reading, preaching of the Word, prayer, praise, offering, and fellowship. The worship atmosphere can make the church a refuge. This atmosphere is affected by the physical condition of the church. It becomes the duty of the pastor and members to keep the place of worship neat, attractive, and tasteful.

In sum, Ellen White's concept of worship is a lofty and authentic one. Well expressed in her concept are the sovereignty, transcendence, immanence, holiness, justice, and mercy of God, and the creatureliness of man and his

¹Ibid., 5:494.

²Ibid., 5:497.

utter dependance on God. Thus she calls for an exalted worship of the Creator God with reverential awe, humility, joy, obedience, and gratitude. She emphasizes order and rules, but also insists on spirituality, intelligence, beauty, and meaning in worship. She underscores the preaching of the Word and active participation in worship. She accentuates the need for a right spirit of worship along with a form and content that reflects the truth and character of God. The objective reality of God, His awesome greatness, as well as the subjective significance of congregational participation make worship truly a communion.¹

¹Koh, 110-111.

PART TWO
WORSHIP EDUCATION IN THE
EAST WENATCHEE SDA CHURCH

CHAPTER 6

THE PROJECT PROCESS: A PROGRAM OF EDUCATION IN WORSHIP PRINCIPLES FOR EAST WENATCHEE SDA CHURCH

Introduction

This chapter chronicles the history of the East Wenatchee SDA church as well as the steps taken to implement the worship educational program, the actual implementation of the project, and all the related materials.

History of the East Wenatchee Seventh-day Adventist Church

East Wenatchee (population: 13,000) is located in the heart of the state of Washington half way between Seattle and Spokane. It lies at the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. East Wenatchee is the sister city of Wenatchee, the larger of the two (population: 25,000). They are situated on opposite sides of the Columbia River. The area is famous for its apple orchards supplying 25 percent of the nation's apple production.

The Adventist work started in Wenatchee in the early 1900s. By the year 1905, there was a small but growing church south of Wenatchee in the small town of Malaga. By the year 1975, when the East Wenatchee church started, there

were 498 members in the Wenatchee SDA Church. Many of the members of Wenatchee felt the need to start a new congregation in East Wenatchee to alleviate the church's crowded situation, and to start the first SDA church in Douglas county where East Wenatchee is located.

East Wenatchee Valley View SDA Church (Valley View is the church's nickname since it overlooks the valley) began in 1975 as a branch Sabbath School in the homes of members from the Wenatchee SDA Church. On April 1, 1976, the official branch Sabbath School was held at the local Friend's church in East Wenatchee. Twenty-five persons were in attendance that day. By June 27, 1976, regular church services were also being held in addition to the Sabbath School. Organizational services were held July 17, 1976, establishing the first SDA church in Douglas County. There were sixty-three charter members.

On September 1, 1976, the name "Valley View Seventh-day Adventist Church" was adopted by vote in a business meeting. The members voted September 9, 1976, to purchase property at 10th and James in East Wenatchee, the future site of the church facility, and to move the services to Trinity United Methodist Church only two blocks away from that site.

Elder Ben Green and family held the first evangelistic series for Valley View September 22 through

October 20, 1979, which resulted in five baptisms. Membership totaled ninety-four at the end of 1979.

Ground-breaking on the new building site was held in the fall of 1980. The first services were held May 11, 1985, in the first phase of the building, the fellowship wing. In the fall of 1985, phase two was begun, which included framing the sanctuary section, framing and finishing the Sabbath School class wing, and carpeting both fellowship wing and classroom wing. Open house on phase two was held November 22, 1986, with a membership of 134.

The final phase of the building project, completion of the sanctuary, was accomplished by March 1988 when the first Sabbath service for 154 members was held in that section of the church.

With the church facility completed, the church members moved forward to fill the 500-seat capacity of their new sanctuary. In 1989 there were 163 members. Twenty-six baptisms, twenty-three transfers in, and fourteen transfers out brought the membership total to 198 in 1991. The year-end membership for 1992 was 236. More baptisms and transfers brought the 1993 total to 268.

The mortgage on the church facility was paid off in February of 1993 with dedication ceremonies being held April 22 and 23, 1994. Church membership at that time was 290.

Valley View Seventh-day Adventist Church now shows 351 members on the books. Members are planning an addition

to their church building to house new offices for the secretary and pastors and three new classrooms, to be started late in the summer of 1996.

Profile of the Congregation of
the East Wenatchee SDA Church

The membership of the church as of April 1995 stood at 351 with 245 active members (those who attend at least once a month), and an average attendance of 278 people. The full distribution of the membership is found in table 1.

The data in table 1 shows about 70 percent of the congregation are active members. The church has actually added 200 people to its membership as well as its attendance in the last five years.

Most of the members live in the sister cities of Wenatchee and East Wenatchee. There are about thirty members who live in the small town of Waterville approximately thirty miles north east of East Wenatchee, and ten live in Cashmere about fifteen miles northwest of East Wenatchee. Only about fifteen members are scattered in the countryside.

The congregation is a fairly young one; about 70 percent of the members are between the ages of one and fifty. The highest concentration is in the thirty-fifty years age bracket. There are a lot of children. In fact, about twenty to thirty children come up front each week for the children's story.

TABLE 1

THE DEMOGRAPHY OF THE EAST WENATCHEE SDA CHURCH

MEMBERSHIP STATUS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Active Members	230	66.0
Shut-In Members	6	2.0
Seasonal Members	9	2.6
Total Active Members	245	70.0
Missing Members	12	3.0
Out-Of-Town Members	20	5.7
Inactive Members	74	21.0

In terms of education, about half of the members have finished high school, and approximately 25 percent have a college education. Only about 10 percent have graduate degrees, which includes two medical doctor, one optometrist, and one dentist.

The Sermon as a Vehicle of Education

The ultimate goal of Christian worship is to glorify, honor, and exalt God, and to bring about the "edification" or "the building up" of the church (1 Cor 14:26; Eph 4:12, 16). However, the maturing of the church as God's people and as a redeeming fellowship requires that

their worship be done intelligently. God's people will not experience edification if they remain ignorant of the meaning of Christian worship.

Ellen G. White wrote:

Ignorance does not increase the humility or spirituality of any professed follower of Christ. The truths of the divine word can be best appreciated by the intellectual Christian. Christ can be glorified by those who serve Him intelligently.¹

In order to glorify God and to edify the church in the scriptural principles of Christian worship, education is indispensable. The urgency of such education is well expressed in the following words: "Educate, educate, educate."² Ellen G. White underscored her burden for the improvement of worship by strong emphases on education.

In this particular project, preaching was chosen as the means of education. The worship committee of the East Wenatchee Church and I believe that preaching is the most effective means of education since it reaches most of the congregation.

Preaching in the biblical sense is not the delivery of discourses, but rather a person-to-person encounter.

C. Raymond Holmes states it this way:

[Preaching is] . . . a shared experience in which the given Word of God moves from the mind of God through the preacher as he listens and hears that Word in the

¹Ellen G. White, Counsels to Parents and Teachers, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1943), 361.

²Ellen G. White, Testimonies, 5:590.

sermon text and contemporizes it in human speech, to the mind of the worshipper as he listens and hears that given Word contemporized in the sermon and which confronts him in terms of redemption and judgment.¹

God communicates His thoughts through the Scriptures, then through the preacher to the listening worshiper. The preacher listens to God's Word and shares it with those who listen to him so that the worshipful listener, hearing the Word of God, gives Him a reverent reply. Within the context of congregational worship it may be stated that worship is ineffective when there is no preaching of the Word. Only when the Word of God is heard and obeyed is the act of worship experienced.

The believer being aware of God's invitation to worship Him, and sensing His gracious revelation of His presence, gives God an appropriate response in his act of humble confession followed by adoration, praise, offering, and thanksgiving, which are all part of true worship. The redeemed worshiper rededicates himself to God and enters into the world as a redeemed person, serving God by serving men.

Thus, in Christian worship, to preach is to act and to act is to hear. Karl Barth writes:

In the Church to act means to hear, i.e., to hear the Word of God, and through the Word of God revelation of faith. . . . There exists no more intense, strenuous

¹C. Raymond Holmes, "A Dialogical Evaluation of a Series of Eight Sermons Preached in the Benton Harbor Church of the Seventh-day Adventists from April 6 to June 1, 1974" (D.Min. Project Report, Andrews University, 1974), 26.

or animated action than that which consists in hearing the Word of God.¹

On these bases, preaching was seen as a major instrument to communicate the scriptural principles of Christian worship to the congregation of East Wenatchee SDA Church.

Description of the Process

The story of the project began in a business meeting in November of 1988. I had just assumed the pastorate of East Wenatchee SDA Church and wanted to convey my views on the purpose and mission of the church. In that meeting I emphasized that the church exists to worship God and to serve Him and humanity. After a few minutes of devotion, I asked the question "What is worship? Precisely what is corporate worship?" To my dismay not one of the answers I received was what I call an adequate definition of corporate worship. The main concept of corporate worship was "to hear a good sermon." Many if not all who were present urged me to cut out all "preliminaries" such as offering (they suggested putting a basket in the foyer, and those who were interested could drop their offering in it), prayer, and special music. They urged me to emphasize the sermon and minimize everything else.

I took the issue to the board the following month, and we talked about the need for a comprehensive program of

¹Barth, 210.

education regarding worship to explain to the congregation the meaning of worship and its various elements. The suggestion was unanimously endorsed. We all felt that a proper education concerning worship and its elements, and the implementation of meaningful worship services should create excitement and enhance spirituality. The board suggested using the sermon as the vehicle of education on Sabbath morning since that is the time when most people are present. They urged me to preach a series of sermons on worship: the meaning of worship and the elements of worship.

In January 1989, the board at the request of the pastor voted to start a worship committee that would be responsible for every worship service and every special spiritual program.

Description and Role of the Worship Committee

I came to pastor the Valley View Church in October of 1988. At that time, the church service was put together by the pastor and the two presiding elders for the week. The pastor preached and told the children's story. One of the elders asked for the offering. The other elder read the Scripture and offered the prayer. Every church service included two hymns, one at the beginning of the service and the other at the end. The hymns were chosen in advance by the pastor; there was no song leader to lead them.

All this changed with the formation of the worship committee. The worship committee, in cooperation with the

pastor and the pianist, was to make the service fit into one unified theme. The sermon, children's story, song service, and special music were all to convey one overall arching theme.

Prior to November of 1988, the church had a music committee with the responsibility of finding special music for every Sabbath worship service. This responsibility was incorporated as part of the job description of the worship committee.

The committee felt that the best way to serve the needs of the congregation was to form four worship teams devising the services of each of the four Sabbaths of the month. (The teams rotate in taking responsibility for the fifth Sabbath.) Each team consisted of a worship coordinator, song leader(s), and a pianist. The responsibility of every worship service rests upon the worship coordinator. He/she is to contact the pastor at least two weeks in advance of his/her week, find out the sermon theme and convey the information to the song leader(s), pianist, and the elders, so they can fit their parts into one harmonious theme with the sermon. The worship coordinator must also find someone to tell the children's story and someone to do special music. Then, when all pertinent information is gathered, such as sermon title, Scripture reading, special music, who the presiding elders of the day will be, and children's storyteller,

he/she is to call the church secretary with the information to be typed into the bulletin. He/she is also responsible for the setting up of the PA system and any other arrangements necessary to make the worship service flow smoothly.

The worship committee felt that in order to keep the elders visibly in front of the people, it was best to let them be in charge of the offering, reading of the Scripture, and prayer. The head elder usually makes a schedule of rotation for the elders taking part in the reading of the Scripture, praying, and asking for the offering. The elders are members of the worship committee.

The worship committee meets once a month to evaluate the service and to plan for the upcoming Sabbaths. In addition, the pastor meets every week with the worship coordinator for that Sabbath to make sure that everything is taken care of and that the service is running smoothly.

In October of 1994, the committee, at the request of the pastor, voted to implement the worship educational service starting in February 25, 1995, and ending in April 1, 1995. The series was to follow up an evangelistic series, so that the educational program would benefit the new members as well as the established ones. The survey's questionnaire was to be handed out on February 25 just before the sermon, and the same questionnaire was to be repeated on April 8, one week after the end of the

educational program. The project was implemented exactly as it was voted by the worship committee.

A Six-Week Series of Worship Emphasis

In order to educate the East Wenatchee congregation regarding worship and its elements, I conducted a series of six consecutive weeks of worship education. During that time, the attention of the members was drawn to the principles of Christian worship, and to four of the elements of worship--the Word of God, prayer, offering, and praise. The sermon was chosen as the vehicle of communication. The presentation of the six sermons, based on the study of the theology of Christian worship, took place from February 25 to April 1, 1995.

Also, in order to measure the members' comprehension of worship, a survey was developed in consultation with the Institute of Church Ministry Department at Andrews University. The questionnaires were designed to reveal the congregation's understanding of worship and the significance of the elements of worship. Hymns and Scripture readings were selected, special music arranged, and special announcements were designed to draw the attention of the congregation to this important series. The above items were done in consultation with the worship committee.

On February 25, just before the sermon, the questionnaire was distributed to the congregation and, after a thorough explanation, the congregation was given ten

minutes to fill them out. Everyone was urged to participate, regardless of age. The attendance that day was 293, and 132 individuals filled out and returned the survey. The same questionnaire was given to the congregation on April 8, one week after I finished the last sermon in the series. Again the congregation was given ten minutes to fill them out. The attendance on April 8 was low--only 210, since it was a Communion Sabbath--and 88 individuals filled them out and returned them.

The questionnaire data were sent to the Statistical Department at Andrews University on April 13 to be analyzed. The analysis was completed on the first of June.

The Sermons

The intention was to communicate to the members of the East Wenatchee Church the scriptural meaning of worship. This was accomplished through a series of six sermons in which the theology of worship was presented with the goal of educating and edifying the congregation in their worship experience.

During the months of February, March, and April of 1995, these six sermons were preached:

1. Sabbath, February 25: "What Is Worship?"
2. Sabbath, March 4: "The Word of God & Worship"
3. Sabbath, March 11: "Prayer & Worship"
4. Sabbath, March 18: "Offering & Worship"
5. Sabbath, March 25: "Praise & Worship"

6. Sabbath, April 1: "Awe & Wonder & Worship."

The Planning of the Program

In order to guarantee greater involvement on the part of the congregation in the presentation of this worship program, several meetings with the worship committee were conducted discussing, assigning, and selecting particular musical arrangements for each sermon. There were four worship coordinators and singing groups that contributed to the success of the program. In harmony with the theme of the week, the song leaders often emphasized the importance of worship and praise, and how the sermon of the day is to contribute to a better understanding of worship.

The Members' Participation

To help the members of the Valley View congregation prepare for this series, several special announcements were printed in the bulletin and newsletter starting February 11, 1995. These announcements had been planned in such a way that they contained an increasing challenge and appeal to prepare the congregation for emphasis on worship. The first announcement was published on February 11, 1995, the second on February 18, the third on February 25, the fourth on March 4, the fifth on March 11, the sixth on March 18, and the last was placed in the bulletin on March 25.

The announcement for February 11 through 18, 1995, read:

Pastor Kidder will begin a sermon series on "Worship" February 25. This six-week series will cover the subjects "What is Worship," "The Word of God & Worship," "Prayer & Worship," "Offering & Worship," "Praise & Worship," and "Awe & Wonder & Worship." Don't miss this series if you would like to make your worship time more meaningful.

The announcement for February 25, 1995, read:

Pastor Kidder begins his sermon series on "Worship" this Sabbath with "What is Worship?" The remaining topics in the series are "The Word of God & Worship," "Prayer & Worship," "Offering & Worship," "Praise & Worship," and "Awe & Wonder & Worship." Don't miss this series if you would like to make your worship time more meaningful.

The announcement for March 4, 1995. read:

Pastor Kidder continues his sermon series on "Worship" this Sabbath with "The Word of God & Worship." The remaining topics in the series are "Prayer & Worship," "Offering & Worship," "Praise & Worship," "Awe & Wonder & Worship." Don't miss this series if you would like to make your worship time more meaningful.

The announcement for March 11, 1995, read:

Pastor Kidder continues his sermon series on "Worship" this Sabbath with "Prayer & Worship." The remaining topics in the series are "Offering & Worship," "Praise & Worship," and "Awe & Wonder & Worship." Don't miss this series if you would like to make your worship time more meaningful.

The announcement for March 18, 1995:

Pastor Kidder continues his sermon series on "Worship" this Sabbath with "Offering & Worship." The remaining topics in the series are "Praise & Worship," and "Awe & Wonder & Worship." Don't miss this series if you would like to make your worship time more meaningful."

The announcement for March 25, 1995:

Pastor Kidder continues his sermon series on "Worship" this Sabbath with "Praise & Worship." The remaining topic in the series is "Awe & Wonder & Worship." Don't miss this series if you would like to make your worship time more meaningful.

Liturgical Framework

The six sermons were delivered within a particular liturgical framework and sequence of order. The general sequence of each service was as follows:

- 10:45 A.M.: Welcome and Announcements
- 10:55 A.M.: Preparation of the Heart for Worship¹
- 11:00 A.M.: Call to Worship
- Call to Worship in Song
- Call to Worship in Giving
- Children's Story
- Worship in Praise and Singing
- Worship in Prayer (the pastoral prayer)
- Message in Music
- Scripture Reading
- Message
- Closing song
- Benediction

¹Preparation of the Heart for Worship is an appeal from one of the worship leaders to the congregation encouraging them to leave worldly things behind, focus on God, and enter into His worship. Usually the Preparation of the Heart for Worship lasts two to three minutes, at which time the organist plays a meditative song and the worship leader leaves the platform. After three minutes of meditative organ music, the worship leaders come back to the platform to lead in the rest of the service.

Attendance

The Valley View Seventh-day Adventist Church has a seating capacity of about 500 people. The membership of the church is about 350 members. The average attendance of the church is about 280. However, the average attendance during the worship emphasis series was 278, which is essentially the same as the attendance the rest of the year. The fourth of March was the highest attended Sabbath (I preached on the word of God and worship), and March 11 was the lowest (I preached on prayer and worship). See Table 2.

The following factors influenced the attendance:

1. On March 4, 1995, the choir from Cascade Christian Academy (our local church school that has two constituent churches) sang in our church. Parents and relatives of the children who are in the choir and usually worship in the other constituent church (the Wenatchee SDA Church) worshiped with us that day, increasing our attendance.

2. On March 11, the choir sang in the Wenatchee SDA Church, thus decreasing our attendance.

3. On April 8, the week we distributed the same questionnaire after the end of the educational series, the attendance was only 210. I believe the attendance that Sabbath was lower than average due to the fact that we had Communion. Traditionally Communion Sabbaths tend to have lower attendance. The low attendance in worship that

Sabbath may have contributed to the smaller number of people who filled out the questionnaires and returned them.

TABLE 2
ATTENDANCE DURING THE WORSHIP EMPHASIS SERIES

DATE	SERMON TITLE	ATTENDANCE
February 25, 1995	What Is Worship?	293
March 04, 1995	The Word of God & Worship	369
March 11, 1995	Prayer & Worship	220
March 18, 1995	Offering & Worship	257
March 25, 1995	Praise & Worship	286
April 01, 1995	Awe & Wonder & Worship	241

Sermon Outlines

The theme of the series was "You . . . And Worship." As has been mentioned, the purpose of this series was (1) to instruct the congregation concerning the meaning and significance of Christian worship and its essential elements, and (2) to encourage them to put into practice what they learned from the sermons during the series.

An outline of each sermon with the heading and the major texts was inserted in the bulletin for each week of

education. The outlines given to the congregation are found in appendix B.

It should be noted that the sermon covered two major areas: the meaning of worship and four of the elements of worship (Scripture, prayer, offering, and praise). The sermons closely followed the sequence and development of the theology of Christian worship as discussed in the theological section of this project.

CHAPTER 7

EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this chapter, the data gathered from the congregation are evaluated, comparing the post-test with the pre-test to determine if there was any improvement in the understanding and experience of worship of the participants.

The Questionnaire

On Sabbath, February 25, 1995, a questionnaire consisting of four sections and five variables was distributed to the members of the Valley View Seventh-day Adventist Church. The four sections consisted of thirty-two questions covering the congregation's understanding of worship, the essential elements of worship, as well as the feelings people might experience in worship. Section 1 contains questions designed to find out what people consider important in worship, such as offering praise and thanks to God, church attendance, participation in worship, etc. Section 1 of the questionnaire has a total of eleven questions, one asking for people to indicate in writing what they considered most important in worship.

Section 2 of the questionnaire has a total of six questions measuring the congregation's subjective feeling in worship. The congregation was asked to rate the degree of importance they attach to adoration, reverence, exaltation, awe and wonder, submission, and renewal in the worship service.

Section 3 measures in seven questions the importance the congregation places on the elements of worship: sermon, Scripture reading, prayer, praise, and singing, offering, and fellowship.

Section 4 of the questionnaire covers in eight questions the feelings people might experience in worship, and the members were asked to indicate the level of their feelings.

The five variables included the following items: the strength of the respondents' relationship with the Lord, their age, level of education, gender, and how long they have been a Seventh-day Adventist.

The same questionnaire was given to the congregation on April 8 to determine if the worship emphasis series made an improvement in the congregation's understanding of worship. Three questions were added at the beginning to determine the following:

1. Which of the sermons did the post-test respondents hear?

2. Did the series help the respondents in their understanding of worship?

3. What changes if any they have made as a result of the worship emphasis series?

General Observations Concerning the Data

The question in section 1, "Which of the above items are most important in worship for you?" is ignored in the final analysis of the data since there were too few entries.

Sections 3 and 4 of the questionnaire contain write-in questions, but since so little data were gathered, they were not entered into the analysis.

The data were analyzed independent of any variable. The purpose of this project was to find out if the worship emphasis series helped the congregation to appreciate worship more regardless of age, gender, education, and relationship with the Lord or with the church.

The results of the variables are reported but not in reference to the responses to the four sections of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was evaluated as it was given to the congregation. However, since the difference between "much" and "very much" is subjective and may vary according to moods or days, I have created a new column combining the two to provide a better understanding of the data. It is

important to mention that this is a common practice in the evaluation of any data.

In order to measure accurately the effectiveness of the sermons, I have compared the post-test results of those who heard all six sermons (twenty-seven in total) with the pre-test and post-test of the congregation.

Evaluation of Question 1 of the Post-Test Data

Question 1 of the post-test questionnaire asks, "Which of the following sermons on worship did you hear?" See table 3.

The data reveal that of the eighty-eight respondents to the post-test, sixty-one attended the first sermon, fifty-eight attended the second, fifty-nine attended the third, fifty-nine attended the fourth, sixty-one attended the fifth, and fifty-seven attended the sixth sermon.

Of the post-test respondents, three heard only one of the sermons, nine heard two of the sermons, fourteen heard three sermons, eleven heard four sermons, fifteen heard five sermons, and twenty-seven heard all six sermons.

Five of the post-test respondents stated that they did not hear any of the sermons.

TABLE 3

NUMBER OF SERMONS ATTENDED AND BENEFICIAL RESPONSE DATA

NO. OF SERMONS HEARD	NO. OF RESPONSES	NO. OF BENEFICIAL RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE OF BENEFICIAL RESPONSES
1	3	2	67.0
2	9	7	78.0
3	14	13	93.0
4	11	8	72.0
5	15	15	100.0
6	27	24	89.0

Evaluation of Question 2 of the Post-Test Data

Question 2 of the post-test survey asks, "Did this series of worship emphasis add to your understanding of worship?" See table 3.

Sixty-nine out of eighty-eight (74%) marked that the worship emphasis series had helped them in their understanding of worship; ten out of eighty-eight marked that it did not help them in their understanding of worship, and nine did not respond. This means the worship emphases series accomplished its purpose in educating the congregation and helping them to experience worship more fully.

Of those who heard all six sermons, twenty-four out of twenty-seven (89%) said that the worship emphasis was helpful to them, and only three felt that the series was not helpful.

Analyzing the data in table 3 reveals that the more sermons people heard, the more benefits they received.

Evaluation of the Data According
to the Five Variable Questions

The Composition of the Respondents by Their
Perceived Relationship with Jesus Christ

Of those who filled out the pre-test questions, about 57 percent felt that their relationship with Christ was either strong or intimate. Of those who filled out the post-test survey, 65 percent felt their relationship with Christ was either strong or intimate. The post-test was

TABLE 4

THE COMPOSITION OF THE RESPONDENTS BY
THEIR PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIS

TEST	NONE	WEAK	AVERAGE	STRONG	INTIMATE	NO. OF RESPONSES
Pre-Test	0.9	8.0	33.9	33.0	24.1	112
Post-Test	0.0	10.1	24.1	39.0	26.6	79
Post-Test-All	0.0	8.7	13.0	52.2	26.1	23

administered on a Communion Sabbath, and most of those who come to Communion feel that they have a strong relationship with Jesus. Notwithstanding, of those who attended all six sermons, 78 percent rated their relationship with Christ as strong or intimate. See table 4.

The Composition of the Respondents by Age

Looking at table 5, the data reveal that most of the respondents are between thirty-six and fifty years of age. Of those between one and nineteen, the percentage dropped from 20 percent in the pre-test to 7 percent in the post-test, and then dropped even further to only 4 percent in the group who indicated they heard all six sermons.

TABLE 5

THE COMPOSITION OF THE RESPONDENTS BY AGE

TEST	1-19	20-35	36-50	51-65	66+	NO. OF RESPONSES
Pre-Test	20.2	18.4	31.6	22.8	7.0	114
Post-Test	7.1	20.2	38.1	22.6	11.9	84
Post-Test-All	4.0	12.0	48.0	20.0	16.0	25

The Composition of the Respondents
by Level of Education

The data in table 6 reveal that the majority of those who responded has at least a high-school education. The percentage of the respondents who have only a grade school education dropped from 23 percent to 12 percent in the post-test. Of that group, 15 percent indicated they had heard all six sermons. The individuals who heard all the sermons seem to have a higher level of education. About 50 percent of them have either a college or a graduate degree.

TABLE 6
THE COMPOSITION OF THE RESPONDENTS BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

TEST	GRADE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL	COLLEGE	GRADUATE DEGREE	NO. OF RESPONSES
Pre-Test	23.0	45.5	24.8	7.1	113
Post-Test	12.2	43.9	34.1	9.8	82
Post-Test-All	15.4	4.6	38.5	11.5	26

The Composition of the Respondents by Gender

Table 7 reveals that the majority of those who filled out the questionnaires were females, almost twice as many as males. Nevertheless, it is very interesting to note that of those who heard all six sermons, the percentage of males and females is almost the same.

TABLE 7

THE COMPOSITION OF THE RESPONDENTS BY GENDER

TEST	MALE	FEMALE	NO. OF RESPONSES
Pre-Test	31.6	68.4	114
Post-Test	33.7	66.3	83
Post-Test-All	48.0	52.0	25

The Composition of the Respondents by Number of
Years They Have Been Seventh-day Adventists

The data show in the pre-test and the post-test most of the respondents were either new Adventists or had been in the church more than ten years. Few fell in the category of six to ten years. The data are consistent with the history and make-up of the church. About 200 new members have been added to the church in the last five years. See table 8.

TABLE 8

THE COMPOSITION OF THE RESPONDENTS BY NUMBER OF YEARS
AS MEMBERS IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

TEST	1-5 YEARS	6-10 YEARS	10 OR YEARS	NO. OF RESPONSES
Pre-Test	37.5	6.7	55.8	104
Post-Test	31.6	8.9	59.5	79
Post-Test-All	25.0	16.7	58.3	24

Evaluation of Section 1 of the Questionnaire

In section 1 of the questionnaire the congregation was asked to select from ten items what is important for them in worship. The ten items were: (1) Offering praise and thanks to God, (2) Receiving a blessing from God, (3) Hearing a good sermon, (4) Fellowship with other believers, (5) Corporate prayer, (6) Bible study, (7) Knowing God more intimately, (8) Attendance at church, (9) Participation (worship is a two-way street--God speaks and I respond), (10) All of the above. The congregation was given the freedom to mark as many of the above items as they felt were important to their worship experience.

Table 9 shows that the congregation considered offering praise and thanks to God the most important element of worshipping God. In fact, it was the highest in the pre-test, post-test, and the post-test of those who heard all the sermons. The data also reveal that the respondents to the pre-test considered corporate prayer to be the least important element of worship. However, the worship emphasis series seems to have helped the respondents in their understanding of the importance of corporate prayer. The percentages of the post-test respondents increased from 31 percent in the pre-test to 42 percent in the post-test and an even higher increase among those who heard all six sermons, 48 percent.

TABLE 9
 POSITIVE RESPONSES TO SECTION 1 of THE QUESTIONNAIRE
 (In Percentages)

Item	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Post-Test-All
a. Offering praise and thanks to God	63.6	71.6	74.1
b. Receiving a blessing from God	50.0	59.1	63.0
c. Hearing a good sermon	44.7	50.0	44.4
d. Fellowship with other believers	50.8	61.4	66.7
e. Corporate prayer	31.1	42.0	48.1
f. Bible study	47.0	51.1	59.3
g. Knowing God more intimately	56.1	63.6	66.7
h. Attendance at Church	34.8	43.2	48.1
i. Participation (Worship is a two- way street--God speaks & I respond)	39.4	55.7	63.0
j. All of the above	53.8	53.4	51.9

The data reveal that in the pre-test the congregation indicated that the following items were important in their corporate worship: offering praise and thanks to God, receiving a blessing from God, hearing a good sermon, fellowship with other believers, and knowing God more intimately. The congregation rated the following items as less important: corporate prayer, attendance at church, and participation in worship. The post-test shows that the respondents rated everything higher than before. The same happened for those who heard all six sermons except for "Hearing a good sermon," which rated about the same.

Evaluation of Section 2 of the Questionnaire

In section 2 of the questionnaire the congregation was asked to rate the degree of importance of the following items in worship: Adoration, Reverence, Exaltation, Awe & Wonder, Submission, and Renewal. They were to rate the above items from the following categories: None, Little, Some, Much, and Very Much.

Table 10 reveals that in the area of the subjective experience of worship, the congregation has a very high concept of the importance of adoration, reverence, exaltation, awe and wonder, submission, and renewal.

In the pre-test data, the figures ranged from 83 percent to 88 percent for those who rated these items to be important or very important. The figures were even higher in the post-test, ranging from 85 percent to 93 percent.

TABLE 10
 RESPONSES TO SECTION 2 OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE
 (In Percentages)

ITEM	TEST	NONE	LITTLE	SOME	MUCH	VERY MUCH	COMBINING MUCH & VERY MUCH
a. Adoration	Pre-Test...	2.4	2.4	10.2	26.8	58.3	85.1
	Post-Test..	1.2	1.2	4.7	32.6	60.5	93.1
	Post-Test-All	0.0	0.0	3.7	25.9	70.4	96.3
b. Reverence	Pre-Test.....	1.6	3.2	8.9	23.4	62.9	86.3
	Post-Test....	1.2	2.4	6.0	22.6	67.9	90.5
	Post-Test-All	0.0	3.7	3.7	14.8	77.8	92.6
c. Exaltation	Pre-Test.....	2.5	3.3	9.9	32.2	52.0	84.3
	Post-Test....	0.0	2.5	6.2	33.3	58.0	91.3
	Post-Test-All	0.0	0.0	4.0	32.0	64.0	96.0
d. Awe & Wonder	Pre-Test.....	2.6	5.1	16.2	24.8	51.3	76.1
	Post-Test....	1.2	3.7	9.8	31.7	53.7	85.4
	Post-Test-All	0.0	3.8	7.7	19.2	69.2	88.4
e. Submission	Pre-Test.....	1.6	1.6	13.9	24.6	58.2	82.8
	Post-Test....	0.0	2.3	11.6	20.9	65.1	86.0
	Post-Test-All	0.0	0.0	11.1	18.5	70.4	88.9
f. Renewal	Pre-Test.....	0.8	0.8	9.8	17.7	70.7	88.4
	Post-Test....	0.0	2.6	5.1	17.9	74.4	92.3
	Post-Test-All	0.0	0.0	4.0	21.0	72.0	93.0

The highest increase was shown in those who attended all six sermons: their figures ranged from 89 percent to 96 percent. In fact, most of the figures were in the 90s (when we combine "much" and "very much") except for two, "Awe and Wonder" and "Submission."

Evaluation of Section 3 of the Questionnaire

In section 3 of the questionnaire the congregation was asked to circle the degree of importance to them of the following elements of worship: Sermon, The use of Scripture (Scripture reading and sermon), Prayer, Praise and Singing, Offering as our response to God, Fellowship. Again they were to rate each item from None, Little, Some, Much, or Very Much.

A careful examination of the data in table 11 reveals that the change in attitude between the post-test and the pre-test in most areas has been negative. There are several explanations for this.

1. The group that took the post-test was a different group from the one that took the pre-test. The post-test group consisted of those who heard all the sermons as well as some who did not hear any of the sermons or heard only some of them. The data reveal that forty-four people who took the pre-test did not take the post-test.

2. Perhaps the sermons that dealt exclusively with the meaning of worship (the first and last sermons) were better than the rest. Since section 3 of the questionnaire

dealt exclusively with the essential elements of worship, it does reflect the negative change in attitude.

3. Possibly, the elements contained in section 2 of the questionnaire are not dealt with frequently in the church, while most of the elements in section 3 are. Therefore the attention of the audience was higher during the sermons dealing with section 2.

4. After consulting with a few people who attended the worship emphasis series, it was concluded that the quality of the program as a whole affected people's attitudes toward the elements of worship. Those people felt that the worship leaders did not do an adequate job in inspiring the congregation to worship. This brings us to an essential point in worship education, and that is the importance of the education of worship leaders.

5. Since the post-test was taken on Communion Sabbath, many felt inadequate in their relationship with God. That undoubtedly affected how they rated their responses. According to many who I talked to, they wished they could spend more time in prayer and Bible study.

6. Perhaps the congregation rated the importance of the sermon lower in the post-test than in the pre-test because of the strong emphasis that was placed on the other elements of worship.

TABLE 11
 RESPONSES TO SECTION 3 OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE
 (In Percentages)

ITEM	TEST	NONE	LITTLE	SOME	MUCH	VERY MUCH	COMBINING MUCH & VERY MUCH
a. Sermon	Pre-Test.....	1.6	4.1	13.0	26.0	55.3	81.3
	Post-Test.....	0.0	3.5	19.8	30.2	46.5	76.7
	Post-Test-All	0.0	3.7	18.5	14.8	63.0	77.8
b. The use of Scripture (Scripture reading & sermon)	Pre-Test.....	0.8	4.0	12.0	28.0	55.2	83.2
	Post-Test.....	0.0	2.3	16.3	23.3	58.1	81.4
	Post-Test-All	0.0	0.0	3.8	23.1	73.1	96.2
c. Prayer	Pre-Test.....	0.0	2.2	7.9	23.8	65.9	89.7
	Post-Test.....	0.0	2.3	12.6	21.8	63.2	85.0
	Post-Test-All	0.0	0.0	3.7	22.2	74.1	96.3
d. Praise & singing	Pre-Test.....	3.9	4.7	13.3	25.8	52.3	78.1
	Post-Test.....	1.2	3.5	24.7	20.0	50.6	70.6
	Post-Test-All	0.0	3.8	26.9	11.5	57.7	69.2
e. Offering as our response	Pre-Test.....	5.0	4.2	13.3	31.7	45.8	77.5
	Post-Test.....	0.0	11.0	20.7	35.4	32.9	68.3
	Post-Test-All	0.0	3.8	23.1	30.8	42.3	73.1
f. Fellowship	Pre-Test.....	2.5	2.5	13.3	33.3	48.3	81.6
	Post-Test.....	0.0	5.8	19.8	32.6	41.9	74.5
	Post-Test-All	0.0	0.0	14.8	25.9	59.3	85.2

It is interesting to note that the post-test for those who had heard all of the sermons was better than the rest. In three out of six areas, they scored higher in the post-test than in the pre-test (the use of Scripture, prayer, and fellowship).

Evaluation of Section 4 of the Questionnaire

In section 4 of the questionnaire the congregation was asked to rate their subjective experience in the following categories: A sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit, Awe in God's presence, Personal closeness to God, Happiness and joy, Apathy, Boredom, Turned off. They were to chose from None, Little, Some, Much, and Very Much.

Table 12 reveals that the change in attitude between the post-test and the pre-test in the areas of "a sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit," "awe in God's presence," "personal closeness to God," and "happiness and joy" is very small. The data are too incomplete to explain why this happened. Notwithstanding, since the congregation started with such high figures in the importance they place on these elements, the change would be expected to be low.

The change in attitude between the post-test and the pre-test in the areas of "apathy," "boredom," and "turned-off" was significantly lower in the post-test. I believe

TABLE 12
 RESPONSES TO SECTION 4 OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE
 (In Percentages)

ITEM	TEST	NONE	LITTLE	SOME	MUCH	VERY MUCH	COMBINING MUCH & VERY MUCH
a. A sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit	Pre-Test.....	0.8	5.8	15.7	20.7	57.0	77.7
	Post-Test....	1.2	3.5	24.7	23.5	47.1	70.6
	Post-Test-All	3.7	0.0	18.5	18.5	59.3	77.8
b. Awe in God's presence	Pre-Test.....	2.5	5.1	17.8	16.9	57.6	74.5
	Post-Test....	2.4	6.0	18.1	21.1	49.4	70.5
	Post-Test-All	3.8	0.0	7.7	26.9	61.5	88.4
c. Personal closeness to God	Pre-Test.....	0.8	5.8	10.0	16.7	66.7	83.4
	Post-Test....	0.0	4.8	13.1	34.5	47.6	82.1
	Post-Test-All	0.0	3.8	3.8	26.9	65.4	92.3
d. Happiness, joy	Pre-Test.....	2.5	2.5	17.4	21.5	56.2	77.7
	Post-Test....	0.0	3.7	18.3	29.3	48.8	78.1
	Post-Test-All	0.0	0.0	11.5	30.8	57.7	88.5
e. Apathy	Pre-Test.....	31.3	16.7	16.7	11.5	24.0	35.5
	Post-Test....	46.9	23.4	18.8	7.8	3.1	10.9
	Post-Test-All	40.9	36.1	9.1	9.1	4.5	13.6
f. Boredom	Pre-Test.....	47.0	20.9	16.5	4.3	11.3	15.6
	Post-Test....	54.7	25.3	13.3	4.0	2.7	6.7
	Post-Test-All	70.8	20.8	8.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
g. Turned-off	Pre-Test.....	62.8	15.0	10.6	0.9	10.6	19.6
	Post-Test....	73.3	13.3	10.7	1.3	1.3	2.6
	Post-Test-All	87.5	8.3	0.0	0.0	4.2	4.2

that since the worship emphasis series stressed repeatedly the importance of preparation and participation in worship, the level of "apathy," "boredom," and "turned-off" went down.

Written Testimonies

Question 3 of the post-test survey asked the respondents to write the changes they have made in their worship practice as a result of the sermon series. Out of the eighty-eight responses, forty-three did not write anything, and forty-five gave testimonies that seem to indicate increased understanding, or that expressed certain spiritual growth. There were no negative testimonies.

The content of the testimonies can be divided roughly into two categories: (1) the intellectual (i.e., evidence of an improved understanding of worship), and (2) the spiritual (i.e., indication that during this period of worship emphasis series the congregation experienced spiritual growth).

From these testimonies it is clear that many members listened to the presentation of the principles of Christian worship with interest. There is evidence that many in the congregation acquired additional information about Christian worship. Here is a sample of some of the testimonies.

1. "Offering became a part of my worship."
2. "I have learned to live a life of worship and praise throughout the week."

3. "I have added more meaning and knowledge to my understanding of worship."

4. "I have learned to pray more."

5. "This series has enriched my Christian experience."

6. "I have learned to pray more often and not to work on the Sabbath."

7. "I have added praise to my prayer life."

8. "I realize [now] that worship is more than just sitting through a sermon. God is the audience and we are the performers."

9. "I have learned to praise God for the awe and wonder as well as trial and tribulation."

10. "I have learned to practice the presence of God."

11. "I have learned the meaning of the elements of worship."

12. "I need to make even more [changes]. I always pray by myself but I need to pray more with my wife."

13. "I have decided to devote more time to the study of God's word. I am learning that God is number one above all."

14. "I feel the spirit of God working in my life and blessing."

15. "The daily reading of the Bible is more important than I thought."

16. "I recognize more the greatness and the majesty of God."

The systematic development and exposition of the principles of Christian worship as presented in Part One of this project and communicated to the congregation of the East Wenatchee SDA Church by means of this series of sermons seem to have been well received and understood.

Results of the Worship Emphasis Series

The analysis of the data reveals that the worship emphasis series accomplished its purpose in introducing and explaining the scriptural principles of Christian worship to the congregation of the East Wenatchee SDA Church. From their response it seems that the vast majority have benefited from the series.

In the post-analysis survey, sixty-nine out of eighty-eight (74%) marked that the worship emphasis series has helped them in their understanding of worship.

The data also revealed that the more sermons people heard, the better their understanding of worship and its essential elements. Twenty-four out of the twenty-six who heard all six sermons indicated that the series helped them in their worship experience.

It is clear from the analysis of the data that the worship emphasis series has significantly helped those individuals who heard all six sermons.

CHAPTER 8

REFLECTION, CONCLUSION, & RECOMMENDATION

Reflection

This project has been a tremendous help to me in my personal relation with God and in my ministry. Because of the time, effort, research, and energy invested in it, I have a much better understanding of worship and its essential elements.

As I reflect on the project and the last several months I have spent trying to implement it in the church, I make the following observations:

1. A worship emphasis series is vital in the life of every congregation because everything in the Christian life rises and falls on worship. If the worship experience of the believer is healthy, many of the Christian disciplines will follow suit.

2. Often throughout the implementation of the program I thought that perhaps the best method of implementing worship education would be through a small group or seminar approach where an opportunity for dialogue is present. But as I reflect on the experience, I believe that the preaching approach is valid since it reached most of the members of the congregation. I believe preaching is

effective since the congregation showed a better understanding of worship.

3. From my evaluation, the worship coordinator is the most important member of the worship committee. He or she is the one who oversees the worship service, making sure it flows naturally and conveys the theme for the service. Since we have started the worship committee, I have noticed a definite correlation between the preparedness of the worship coordinator, his or her organizational skill, and the time he or she spends on the worship service and the quality and effectiveness of that worship service. It becomes very imperative to select a coordinator who believes in prayer, for without the Holy Spirit the most effective service is of little value. He or she must understand worship and work well with the pastor and the congregation. Communication skills are of vital importance.

4. I feel very comfortable with the worship format of the East Wenatchee Church. It has provided us with ample opportunity to involve many individuals in the worship service. It is a truly participatory service. We have gone from three people leading out in each worship service--the pastor and two elders--to ten to fifteen now. We have moved from no song leader to several groups leading out in the song and praise service. The children's story is not told by the pastor only, we have a pool of twenty qualified storytellers to choose from. Greeting has also changed;

where the pastor used to greet the congregation, many people now participate. In the service, the elders no longer just offer prayer. This has become a time of praise, prayer request, and opportunity for several to come up front and present their special needs at the altar. I believe that as a result of these changes, the worship service is much more meaningful and spiritual.

5. After the implementation of the worship committee and the project of worship education in the East Wenatchee Church, I can say with conviction that to change the attitude of the church members regarding worship is not easy. There is often resistance from some in the congregation who are opposed to change. Leaders repeatedly take the easy way out and do little preparation and communication. Perhaps the solution is to keep on educating, inspiring, preaching, and leading. On those occasions when the worship service has been planned, organized, and implemented well, the spirit and unity of the church have been most meaningful. It is far better than at former times when there was no planning and coordination.

6. I believe the East Wenatchee congregation, as the result of the implementation of the worship committee and the worship education project, has come a long way in its understating of worship. Today the vast majority of the members comprehend and appreciate worship, as indicated by their responses to the post-test survey.

Conclusion

The worship emphasis series at Valley View Seventh-day Adventist Church was an attempt to (1) give the East Wenatchee congregation some theological information about Christian worship and its essential elements, (2) present that information in such a way that the attitude toward worship might change and spiritual development be experienced, and (3) improve the worship situation by means of education through a series of sermons.

The data seem to suggest that the worship emphasis series has accomplished its purpose. This is substantiated by many of the written testimonies on the post-test questionnaires.

Recommendations

1. I highly recommend that every church start a worship committee to plan, oversee, and evaluate every worship service. The worship committee at our church has improved significantly the quality and understanding of our worship experience.

The committee should meet once a month to plan and evaluate the worship services. The pastor, moreover, should meet with the worship coordinator of the week to go over the details of the service. All those who lead out in the worship service must meet on Thursday night or Friday night to rehearse the service and make sure it flows smoothly. This meeting must include ample time of prayer. I found

that the more we pray, the more effective our worship. It is not by might or planing or resources that the work of God is done but by His Spirit.

2. I recommend that every pastor preach a series of at least three sermons a year on worship. Worship is the most important activity of every believer, but unfortunately few seem to understand it.

3. I strongly recommend that the pastor spend plenty of quality time with the leaders of the worship committee. This time is not to socialize but to disciple, not only to organize but to pray.

4. I recommend that the pastor be engaged constantly in the education of the worship leaders. Many leaders have little idea of what it means to lead. They think of their roles as performers rather than leaders.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
FULL TEXTS OF THE SERMONS PREACHED

SERMON 1

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

John 4:4-26; Isa 6:1-8; Acts 2:42-47

In our family worship we have been reading through the Bible story. So the other day, after breakfast, I called the family to worship. Stephanie, my 8 year old daughter, looked at me and said, "What is worship?" "How do you worship?"

I said to Stephanie that worship is when we read our Bible Story and do what Jesus tells us to do. Apparently my answer did not strike a cord with her little mind. The following day she came to me and asked again, "What is worship?"

"What is worship?"

"Well, that is what we do in church; kneeling, standing and sitting. We have 3 times of kneeling, 4 songs, 1 or 2 prayers, 1 sermon, and oh, by the way an offering."

Ponder the phrase "worship service." Is your reaction "Oh, that's Sabbath morning at eleven?" Perhaps for some people the phrase worship service serves only as a means to distinguish the Sabbath morning service from the

Sabbath evening vespers and from the Wednesday evening prayer meeting.

Does the word worship make you think of preaching or communion? Of singing or prayer? Of praising or meditating? I believe that most of us think of the sermon as the essence of worship or at least the main ingredient. Everything else are just preliminary.

Whatever else the word worship suggests to you in your own experience, this word should speak mainly about one's responses to God. A worship service does not happen merely because a certain time period in the church schedule of events is so labeled. It is likely that we have all been in worship services where, by appearance at least, there seemed to be little true worshiping of God.

After attending church with his father one Sunday [Sabbath] morning, before getting into bed that evening a little boy kneeled at his bedside and prayed, "Dear God, we had a good time at church today, but I wish you had been there."¹

What, then, is worship? Worship is an active response to God whereby we declare His worth. Worship is not passive, but is participative. Worship is not simply a mood; it is a response. Worship is not just feeling; it is a declaration.

The English word worship is wonderfully expressive of the act that it describes. This term comes from the

¹Michael P. Green, ed., Illustrations for Biblical Preaching (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993), 407.

Anglo-Saxon weorthscipe, which then was modified to worthship, and finally to worship. Worship means "to attribute worth" to something or someone. When we say of someone that "he worships his money" or that "she worships her children," we are using the word a bit loosely. If, however the supreme worth for him is in his money, or the highest value for her is in her children, then it is an accurate use of the term.

In Great Britain, the title used to describe the leading citizen of a town is, "His Worship the Mayor." In the States we have changed this phrase to "His Honor the Mayor." To worship someone or something is to attribute supreme worth or to declare supreme value to that one or that thing. Along this line, Ralph P. Martin writes, "If we may elevate this thought to the realm of divine-human relationships, we have a working definition of the term worship ready-made for us. To worship God is to ascribe to Him supreme worth, for He alone is worthy."

Because of who God is and what He does, we attribute to Him the glory that is due His name. Such is the strong sentiment of Ps 96:7-8.

Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people,
 give unto the Lord glory and strength.
 Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name:
 bring an offering, and come into his courts.

This Old Testament text of Ps 96 is paralleled by a New Testament passage of great worship of the Living Christ, the Lamb Who is worthy:

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. (Rev 5:12)

Actually worship is an attitude--attitude toward God, an attitude that says God is God--He is the Lord, He is the Creator, He is the Savior and King. He is worthy of my adoration, worthy of my submission, worthy of my obedience, worthy of my love, worthy of my enthusiasm.

Worship is a personal response to a divine revelation. You haven't worshiped until you've responded. I want to obey Him, submit to Him and accept His will.

Worship is not a religious activity you perform out of duty or observe as a spectator. It is something you need to actually experience. It is not something you watch. It is something you become involved in. It is an event you own. It is a giving as well as a receiving event.

Scripture affirms that true worship is the *adoring response to God of sinners saved by grace*. This adoration may be experienced alone or in a corporate setting. A few Biblical examples may suffice to illustrate this view of worship.

Biblical Examples of Worship¹

Isaiah's Experience

Isaiah found himself in the ancient temple (Isa 6:1-8) after the death of King Uzziah, who reigned over Judah for 52 years. It was a time of national crisis, when--as

¹This section is adapted from Alf Birch, "What Is Worship?", Worship, ed., Alf Birch (Warburton, Victoria, Australia: Signs Publishing Company, n.d.), 4-5.

the tendency is as such times--people flocked to the temple.

As Isaiah worshipped he saw "the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up" (Isa 6:1 NKJV). He saw God as a great King whose robe illuminated the atmosphere. Cherubim and seraphim were about Him, symbolizing His eternalness and power. Burning incense, representing God's presence, filled the temple.

Isaiah's worship began with a clear vision (or revelation) of God--His presence, His majesty, His holiness, and His power. The result was that Isaiah was humbled. The sense of what God is led him to confess, "Woe is me, for . . . I am a man of unclean lips, and I will dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (vs. 5 NKJV).

Then Isaiah saw one of the seraphim, having a burning coal in his hand, fly to him touching his mouth with the flame, and saying, "Your iniquity is taken away" vs. 7 (NKJV). The certainty of God's forgiveness gave Isaiah a sense of selfworth, devotion and renewal. He was touched by God's plea, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (vs. 8 NKJV). Isaiah suddenly became aware of his own place in God's plan, as a prophet. In surrender, he responded, "Here am I! Send me" (vs. 8 NKJV). For Isaiah one worship event determined a future career.

But note again what happened. Isaiah had a *revelation* of God's majesty. He was overcome with a sense

of unworthiness. But he was forgiven, restored, renewed, commissioned. These dynamics describe a *relational event* in which God was "reseen" and a human was "remade." Indeed, it was an event that portrays the adoring response to God of a sinner saved by grace.

The Samaritan Woman

Jesus and His disciples had arrived in Sychar a small town in Samaria, about half a mile away from Jacob's well. Tired as He was from the journey, Jesus sat down to rest at the well while His disciples went into town to buy food. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, "Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'" John 4:7 (NKJV). The woman, recognizing Jesus as a Jew, expressed dismay that a Jew should ask a favor of a Samaritan. She knew very well that the Jews despised Samaritans. But by asking her to do Him a favor, Jesus wanted to make her feel at ease.

Just as her concern about their national differences seemed to be waning, Jesus surprised her the second time. "Go, call your husband, and come here" (vs. 16 NKJV). "I have no husband," she admitted (vs. 17 NKJV).

Jesus proceeded to disclose information about her that she could hardly believe a stranger knew. She had just had a *revelation*. "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet" (vs. 19 NKJV). The revelation she had just received wasn't only about herself, but about Someone who had her interest at heart.

That conversation shifted to questions about worship. About Gerizim and Jerusalem, traditional places of worship for Samaritans and Jews. But why talk about worship? Because for both Jews and Samaritans, worship meant *sacrifice*, and sacrifice meant *forgiveness, renewal, and even salvation*. The Samaritan woman needed forgiveness and renewal of life. She actually needed Jesus to renew her. She needed to worshipped Him "in spirit and truth" (vs. 23 NKJV).

Just then the disciples returned. Meanwhile the woman left her jar at the well and returned to her friends with the invitation and testimony: "Come, see a man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" (vs. 29 NKJV).

The story concludes wonderfully. "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in him because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me all that I ever did'" (vs. 39 NKJV). In short, they all experienced that *adoring response to God of a sinner saved by grace*, and that is what we call worship.

The Early Church

Worship in the early church, as recorded in the Book of Acts, found expression within a unique context (see Acts 2:42). The community was *nurtured* by the apostles' teaching, which in turn was founded upon the Old Testament scriptures and the teaching of Christ. The members'

relations with God and one another were bonded in fellowship, and were celebrated in *worship*. The gospel commission was fulfilled through this community interaction. So the church grew as "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47 NKJV).

Worship as exaltation! Let's think about that some more in the context of Acts 2. The church had just been born. Pentecost was the second great feast of the Jewish year, a harvest festival, when the first-fruits of the wheat harvest were presented to God. The resurrection of Jesus, some fifty days earlier was still the most talked-about event in Jerusalem. The disciples saw what happened and their response was most appropriate indeed--meeting together, breaking bread and praising God. Yes, *celebration* was the order of the day.

The focus of Pentecost was clearly God-directed. The crowd who heard the disciples speak in tongues testified that they heard them declaring "the wonderful works of God" (vs. 11 NKJV). True worship is always centered around praise to God because of "his saving acts" throughout history (Judg 5:11; 1 Sam 12:7 NKJV).

Only a few weeks earlier God had revealed Himself in His most supreme "saving act"--Christ's death and resurrection. It was cause for celebration then and it remains a cause for an adoring, joyous response to God from us today--sinners as we are, saved by His grace.

A Biblical Model of Worship

In the experience of Isaiah, in Jesus' discussion about worship with the woman at Jacob's well, and in the worship of the New Testament church, some distinct dynamics seem to interplay. These are *adoration, exaltation, reverence, submission and renewal*. Each of these found some form of expression and strengthened the divinely initiated relationship between God and individual. The same elements characterize a corporate worship event.

No one dynamic necessarily comes before or after another--for the Holy Spirit works as He pleases. Yet, seldom would one truly worship without sharing the inner precincts of God's presence. Both Old and New Testament Scriptures record the testimonies of those who worshipped God in adoration, exaltation, reverence, submission, and who found renewal in Him.

Adoration

All meaningful worship begins with adoration. God does not need our adoration as much as we need to give it. Adoration is like a thermostat that opens the heart to flow in communion with God.¹ When we think about God's nature we become open to experience afresh His glory in our lives. I read that in creative conversation, the key thing is: there

¹Lloyd John Ogilvie, You Can Pray with Power (Ventura CA: Regal Books, 1988), 28.

can be no deep exchange with another person until we have established the value of that person to us. Just as profound conversation with another person results from our communicating that person's worth to us, so too, we become receptive to what God wants to do in our lives when we have taken time to tell Him what He means to us.

The difference between adoration and admiration is that adoration always leads to submission. "In the strictness of the word, adoration is an expression by an outward, but much more by an inward act, of man's sincere conviction that his first duty to Almighty God is submission."¹

Tell God what He means to you, pour out your heart in unhurried moments of adoration. Allow Him to remind you of aspects of His nature you need to claim. The more we adore the Lord, the more we will be able to think His thoughts after Him. He loosens the tissues of our brains to become channels of His Spirit.

I've found it helpful to begin my Sabbath morning worship on Friday night by preparing my heart to receive the Holy Spirit. I start by reading the Bible and dwelling on God's work and attributes. I let the Word influence me and change me. Then I start telling God what He means to me. I tell Him, "I love you, Lord. Let me tell you why." Then I

¹Henry Parry Liddon, "Adoration," Classic Sermons on Worship, ed., Warren W. Wiersbe (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1988), 141.

rehearse in my mind all that He's been for me. Soon He takes over and leads me in remembering His goodness and grace. In times of difficulty, dark moods are lifted, troubled spirits are transformed, and an unwilling heart is made receptive. In bright times of success and smooth sailing, my happiness is maximized into pure joy. But whatever the circumstances of life, adoration creates the sublime delight of being in the presence of the Lord. Worship in the ancient English means "worth-shape," or establishing the worth, the wonder, and the glory of God in our minds and hearts. Adoration is the beginning of powerful worship. God created us to receive and return His love.

God wants us to express our love to Him. He wants to hear us say: "Lord I love You, Lord I adore you, Lord I worship you, Lord I thank you, because of who you are, because of your majesty and greatness."

Adoration reminds us who God is and the greatness of His character. It reminds us whose presence we have entered, and whose attention we have gained. How often our problems and trials and needs seem so pressing that we reduce worship to self occupation! But when we commit ourselves to adoration, we have to slow down and focus our attention on God.

I often begin my worship private or corporate by saying, "Lord I worship you for being omnipotent." When I

say that, I'm reminded that God is able to help me, no matter how difficult my problem seems to me. I also worship Him for His omniscience. No mystery confounds God; He will not have to scratch His head about anything I say. I worship God for His omnipresence. Whenever I'm praying--in a church, in an airplane, in my car or on some remote island--I know He is present with me.

You can adore God for being faithful, righteous, just, merciful, gracious, willing to provide, attentive, unchanging. When in a spirit of adoration you begin going through God's attributes, you will soon say from the heart, "I am worshipping a tremendous God!"

Adoration, also is the means God uses to purify us. When you have spent a few minutes praising and adoring God for who He is, our spirit is softened and our agenda changes. Those burning issues we were dying to bring to God's attention may seem less crucial. Our sense of desperation subsides as we focus on God's greatness, and we can truly say, "I am enjoying you, God; it is well with my soul." Adoration purges our spirit and prepares you to listen to God.¹

Ways That Adoration Manifests Itself²

Affirmation of God's goodness

¹Bill Hybels, Honest To God? (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 21.

²Taken from Alf Birch, 6.

"Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases; he redeems my life from the pit and crowns me with love and compassion. He satisfies my desires with good things, so that my youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. Now then, stand here, because I am going to confront you with evidence before the Lord as to all the righteous acts performed by the Lord for you and your fathers." (Ps 103:1-6 ; 1 Sam 12:7 NKJV)

Recognizing God's worthiness

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise! To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" Rev 5:9, 12, 13 (NKJV).

A sense of awe and wonder

"Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other. Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! When I consider your heavens, the work of

your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?" (Deut 4:39; Ps 8:1, 3, 4 NKJV)

Acknowledgement of God's sovereignty

"For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom." (1 Chr 16:25; Ps 45:6 NKJV).

Exaltation

While reverence and adoration are basically passive responses, exaltation is an active response whereby we audibly or in our thoughts, "lift up" the Lord. *Exalt* means "to raise high; to elevate; to dignify; to magnify; to extol; to glorify; to lift up with joy and pride."¹ When we exalt the Lord, we praise his dignity, His power, and His attributes. We thank Him for what he has done and express our joy at being His children.

"Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples. Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; speak of all His wonders. Glory in His holy name; let the heart of those who seek the Lord be glad" (Ps 105:1-3 NKJV). These verses are rich with meaning for the worshiper. *Give thanks, make known his deeds, sing praises,*

¹Sorge, 1.

Speak of His name, be glad-all of these are elements of exaltation and commands repeated throughout the Psalms.

The New Testament reiterates this theme. "Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name" (Heb 13:15 NKJV). Don't just praise Him now and then on special occasions or in carefully created settings. Worship Him always, everywhere. Learn to live with a constant attitude of praise and thanksgiving.

Worship means "to attribute worth" to something or someone. For Christians, the object of our worship is God; so true Christian worship is an active response to God whereby we declare His worth. In worship, we consciously focus our attention on *who* God is and *what* He has done and promises to do in the future. Worship is not just a carefully designed ritual, nor is it simply a feeling or a mood or a passive acknowledgement of God's existence and authority. It is an active, directed, conscious, meaningful exaltation of *who* God is.

"And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, you *greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory*" (1 Pet 1:8 NKJV).

That is true worship. Not a solemn duty, but a high privilege and matchless delight. "Shout *joyfully* to the Lord. . . . Come before Him with *joyful* singing" (Ps 100:1,

2 NKJV). These verses paint for us the picture of a joyous exaltation--a celebration of our great and glorious God!

Arturo Toscanini had just finished conducting a brilliant performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. There was a moment of stunned silence, and then, as though one person, the audience rose to its feet and applauded and shouted its approval. Toscanini waved his arms violently for it all to stop. He pointed to himself and shouted, "I am nothing!" Then he shouted, "Beethoven is everything, everything, everything."

That's the way it is with us and God: we are nothing, and he is everything, everything, everything! In our worship and our work, it is the beginning of wisdom to realize this.¹

Ways Exaltation Manifest Itself²

Rejoicing in the cross of Christ

"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" Gal 6:14 NKJV.

Proclaiming God's Word

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. Preach the Word. All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped at every good work" Rom 1:16; 2 Tim 4:2; 3:16, 17 NKJV.

¹Ben Patterson, Serving God--The Grand Essentials of Work & Worship (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 111.

²Adapted from Alf Birch, 6.

Praise and thanksgiving

"Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who make us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture" (1 Chr 16:8-10; Ps 100:1-3 NKJV)

Testimony

"So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord. Those who feared and loved the Lord spoke often of him to each other and he had a Book of Remembrance drawn up in which he recorded the names of those who feared him and loved to think about him" 2 Tim 1:8; Mal 3:16, TLB.

Bringing gifts to God

"Bring an offering and come before him; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. 'Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and

pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it'" 1 Chr 16:29; 2 Cor 9:7; Mal 3:10 NKJV.

Community participation

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God," Heb 10:25; Col 3:16 NKJV.

Reverence

The psalmist says, "Worship the Lord with *reverence*, and rejoice with *trembling*" (Ps 2:11 NKJV). "At Thy holy temple I will *bow in reverence* for Thee" (Ps 5:7 NKJV). Lest we conclude that such concern for reverence was limited to Old Testament times, the writer to the Hebrews says, "Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with *reverence* and *awe*; for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12:28-29 NKJV).

Reverence, trembling, bow, awe--these are not words that we usually associate with a celebration and exaltation. But when the object of our celebration and exaltation is the God "*greatly feared*" in the council of the holy ones, and *awesome* above all those who are around Him" (Ps 89:7 NKJV),

our exaltation must not be careless or lighthearted. Yes, we are called to celebrate. Yes, we are called to rejoice with "joy inexpressible." But we are to do so with reverence.

When we think of reverence we think of being silent. Now you may have silence, but it has nothing to do with worship. You could be silent and think about buying a car or going shopping or having hard feelings against your brother. Reverence is worship when the individual is concentrating on God. In fact reverence is an act of silence when the believer is engaged in an intense concentration on God.

Have you ever been to a funeral? I was at one two months ago. Before the service started people were mingling, talking and even laughing. The service started and a dramatic change took place. Suddenly there were no more talks, no more jokes--and no more trivial things. People quietly and reverently took their places. They talked in hushed tones. There was no one telling us to be quiet or stand still. Everyone understood that the moment demanded silence.

True reverence is the natural silence, that sense of awe, that healthy fear that for some inexplicable reason seems appropriate to the occasion. At funerals no one has to tell us the rules. There is something about the situation that demands that we take it very seriously.

When we see a scene of breathtaking beauty--an ocean sunset or a snowcapped mountain--we don't try to capture it in words. We know that nothing we could say would adequately express the majesty of the sight, so we willingly appreciate it in reverential silence.

It is that way in worship. When we come before God, we come before a Being so mighty in power, in majesty, and in beauty that the only fitting attitude is one of sincere reverence. Without that attitude we can't be true worshipers.

"The Lord is in His holy temple" says the Prophet Habakkuk. "Let all the earth be silent before Him" (Hab 2:20, NIV). *Be quiet!* he says. *Don't say a thing!* Don't rush into God's presence with a heart and mind spilling forth thoughtless words. Still your mind. Quiet your heart. Realize what it means to stand in the presence of the Holy God.

Submission

Our worship of God begins with adoration and reverence, with silence, with awe, with a holy fear--but it doesn't end there. The natural outgrowth of sincere reverence is submission. When I quiet myself before God and concentrate on *who* He is and *what* He had done for me, I can in good conscience do nothing but submit to Him. If I have really caught a glimpse of His majesty, His power, His mercy, His loving-kindness, and all else that He is, I will

be irresistibly drawn to commit myself to pleasing and obeying Him.

The Greek and Hebrew words for worship mean bowing down or prostrating oneself in humble submission and serving the Lord. *Proskyneo* and the Hebrew equivalent *shahah* had the meaning "to be brought low," "to humble oneself," "to have one's arrogance knocked out of him," and serving the Lord in complete submission (see Isa 2:11,17; Ps 107:39; Job 9:13).

When Jesus was tempted by Satan and promised the kingdoms of this world if He would fall down and worship the Devil, the Lord rebuked Satan with these words, "It is written, thou shalt worship (*proskyneo*) the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt 4:10 NKJV).

In the Old Testament and the New Testament the relationship of man to God is expressed in terms of service and obedience. Man is the servant or slave of God. He demonstrated his worship of God in terms of faithfulness, service and obedience.

In Gethsemane, Jesus said, "Not My will, but Thine be done" (Luke 22:42 NKJV). Like Him, we too must give voice to our willingness to cast off our own personal aspirations and selfish desires, and consciously submit ourselves to God's designs.

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God" (1 Pet 5:6 NKJV). That is what we do in worship.

First we stand silent before God in reverence. Then we bow down before Him in humble submission. We acknowledge and welcome His authority, and commit ourselves to faithful obedience. If we worship Him from any other position, we are offering Him nothing more than an empty ritual. We are offering Him the outer garment of worship, but not the heart--not the essence--of true worship.

Often when we think of worship we think of going to church to listen to a sermon. Now you may listen to ten powerful, polished, elegant, original sermons and still you have not worshipped if you did not respond and make a commitment to live the demands of Jesus.

Yet, you could be a worshiper if you just listen to two verses and you make a decision to live your faith. Worship only is experienced when you come here, give worth to God, glory, honor, adoration, and praise.

But all too often we settle for flabby worship. The vast majority of Western Christians are church members, pew-fillers, hymn-singers, sermon-tasters, Bible-readers, even born-again believers, but not true worshipers of Jesus. If we were willing to become true worshiper the church in the West would be transformed, and the impact on society would be staggering. This is no idle claim; it happened in the first century. The Christian church is not a club that we

belong to so that our needs will be met; it is a family that exist to worship God and give Him glory, honor and majesty.¹

So what is worship? It is adoration, exaltation, reverence, and submission. In reverence, we acknowledge God's worth; in submission, we acknowledge His authority. In exaltation, we lift Him up with our expressions of adoration. That, in summary, is *true* worship.

The Result Of Worship-Renewal²

Wholeness

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing. 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 walk humbly with your God. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it." (Ps 23:1; Mic 6:8; 1 Thess 5:23 NKJV)

Peace and Rest

"But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green.

¹Adapted from David Watson, Called and Committed (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1982), back cover.

²Taken from Alf Birch, 7.

It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God." (Jer 17:7,8; Heb 4:9 NKJV)

Sense of Destiny

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" Isa 40:31; Heb 11:10 NKJV.

Restoration to God's Image

"He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. . . . To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy--to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority." (Ps 23:3; Jude 24,25 NKJV)

Glorifying God in Life and Service

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep

is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" Matt 28:19,20; Eph 3:17-21 NKJV.

A Personal Response

Not long ago I heard my eight-year-old daughter say to her friend, "My Daddy's nice, isn't he?" It was just one short sentence uttered in the peculiar dialect common only to eight-year-old's, but what joy those words brought me!

I will never tire of overhearing those spontaneous praises, nor feeling little arms encircling my neck, accompanied by an unprovoked, "I love you, Daddy." Why? Because I love my children! In fact, I love them so much that what they think of me is just about the most important thing in the world. I receive a tremendous amount of pleasure from knowing that they love me and appreciate the things that I do for them. My deep love for them makes their responses very important.

Isn't it the same with God? Though I do not claim to completely understand why God desires our worship, I'm certain that part of His reason is the pure joy of hearing our heartfelt response to His unfathomable love. He has created and redeemed us. He has called us by name and loved

us with an everlasting love. Shouldn't we expect Him to desire our loving response?

When I was at Andrews taking some of my doctorate degree classes. I had plenty of time to think about Denise and remember special things she had done for me and to appreciate her role in my life. Often my thoughts led to such feelings of love that I just had to call and tell her how I felt. Since I did not have a telephone in my room, I had to use a public phone in the seminary lobby. Though that arrangement was far from convenient, the calls were well worth the effort and the cost.

So it is with worship. As my telephone calls to Denise were prompted not by duty but by love, so our offerings of worship should be a means of expressing not just our resigned obedience, but our sincere love and admiration for our gracious father.

SERMON 2

THE WORD OF GOD AND WORSHIP

Neh 8:5-8

The use of God's Word in worship is traced back to the beginnings of corporate worship at Mount Sinai. Nevertheless, it was the emphasis of Ezra, the scribe, that made the Scripture central to Jewish public worship. Ezra was a Babylonian Jew who went to the Holy Land as the head of the second wave of immigrants. Because he was shocked to discover the weak spiritual conditions of the people of Jerusalem, he rent his garments, fasted, and prayed for renewal. Then, under his leadership, far-reaching reforms were initiated, including renewal of worship. This restoration is recorded in Scripture in these words:

Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

The Levites . . . instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing their. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read. (Neh 8:5-8 NIV)

It is interesting to note all that is going on in this incident: the reader standing in a place where he

could be seen; the people standing as the book was opened, lifting their hands, saying "Amen," bowing to the ground; the Levites reading, making it clear, giving the meaning; the people understanding. This was no passive mumbling of Scripture, no mere preliminary to the sermon!¹

The Bible provides the parameter of our worship. The Bible tells us how to worship, Who to worship, the purpose of worship, and the power of our worship.

The Word Reveals To Us The God We Worship

The Nature and Character of God

The Bible reveals what kind of God we worship. (Ps 145:5 NASB) says, "On the glorious splendor of Thy majesty, and on Thy wonderful works, I will meditate," and in the remainder of the chapter the psalmist does just that. He mentions specifically God's greatness, His mighty acts, His power, His goodness, His righteousness, His grace, His mercy, His compassion, His graciousness, His loving-kindness, His holiness, His glory, His sovereignty, His sustaining power, and His nearness to those who call upon Him. In short, the author focuses on God's attributes.

Well what do we do with these attributes?

When the scripture is being read in church (or for that matter at home) and then the interpretation is given through the sermon there are several way to react: one way

¹Webber, Worship Old and New, 122-123.

is to start analyzing the sermon; its content, delivery, and effectiveness. Another way is to relate it to the life of some one else, or do the right thing and ask, "What is God saying to me today? How does he want to change my life?"

I discovered over the years that God, through His word, His character, His attributes and His acts as revealed in His word, is leading me to a higher experience with Him. For instance, when the Word reveals God's holiness, I see it as a brilliant white light focusing on me making my sins stand out as intolerable stains. This experience coupled with the experience of His love often moved me to confess my sins and renew my commitment to Him. I was able to "see" myself in the light of God's perfection. Now, whenever I think of God's holiness, I am immediately reminded of who I am--a sinner who desperately needs the cleansing that only comes from Christ.¹

What we need to remember is to make the right decision. I gave a friend of mine a Bible some time ago and urged him to read it. He came to me a few weeks later and gave it back to me. He said, "This book requires too many changes and I am not willing to make them. Not yet anyway."

It is told that many years ago, while on a visit to England, a wealthy businessman was fascinated by a powerful microscope. Looking through its lens to study crystals and the petals of flowers, he was amazed at their beauty and detail. He decided to purchase a

¹Lynn Hybels, The Joy of Personal Worship (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1984), 117-118.

microscope and take it back home. He thoroughly enjoyed using it until one day he examined some food he was planning to eat for dinner. Much to his dismay, he discovered that tiny living creatures were crawling in it. Since he was especially fond of this particular food, he wondered what to do. Finally, he concluded that there was only one way out of his dilemma--he would destroy the instrument that caused him to discover the distasteful fact. So he smashed the microscope to pieces!

"How foolish!" you say. But many people do the same thing with the Word of God. They hate it and would like to get rid of it because it reveals their evil nature.¹

Here is another example illustrating how we should react to the scripture and its interpretation, the sermon: Isa 40:26 (NASB) tells us that God created the stars, called them by name, and "because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power not one of them is missing." God has displayed His power, by filling the sky with stars.

As I focus on His power and greatness, I am filled with wonder that the God whose power hung the stars in space could reach down, in infinite love, and care for me. Why does He, the God who is behind this supreme Power, love me. I don't know why, but He does. And my experience of the God of all power has brought me back to a wonderful appreciation of the God of all love and that drove me to bow down in submission and adoration and worship.

¹Green, 29-30.

The Nature and Character of Jesus Christ

The Bible does not only focus on the character and nature of God, but also on the character of Jesus Christ. Paul's desire for the Christians at Colosse was "that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, *Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (Col 2:2-3 NASB).

Nothing will lead our hearts to worship more readily than knowing *who* Jesus is and *what* He has done for us. I have a book in my library with a list of the names given to Jesus in Scripture. Just a quick reading through this list provides a wealth of worship material. Consider a few of His names: Advocate, Almighty, Bread of Life, Bridegroom, Chief Cornerstone, Counselor, Deliverer, Door, Good Teacher, Great Shepherd, Holy One of God, King Eternal, King of Glory, Lamb of God, Life, Light, Messiah, Prince of Peace, Redeemer, Rock, Savior, Truth, Way, Wonderful, Word of Life.¹

Christ Jesus is *all* of these and so much more. Think for a moment what it means to know that Jesus is our Great Shepherd. He guides us on the path of righteousness. He protects us from evil. He leads us to spiritual

¹Dick Eastman and Jack Hayford, Living & Praying In Jesus Name (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1989), 192-201.

refreshment and provides for us the refuge of His presence. He has even laid down His life on our behalf.

Or think of what it means to know that Jesus is Truth, that we have no need to seek elsewhere for absolutes or for wisdom. In Him we have "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3 NASB).

Or think about Jesus, the Deliverer. Meditate on all that He has delivered you from--fear, loneliness, condemnation, confusion, frustration--and all that He has given you in exchange--peace, freedom, eternal life, fellowship with God, joy, love, and meaningful service.

There is a story about a teenage boy who was deeply interested in scientific subjects, especially astronomy. So his father bought him a very expensive telescope. Since the young fellow had studied the principles of optics, he found the instrument to be most intriguing. He took it apart, examined the lenses, and made detailed calculations on the distance of its point of focus. The youth became so absorbed in gaining a technical knowledge of the telescope itself that he never got around to looking at the stars. He knew a lot about that fine instrument, but he missed seeing the wonders of the heavens.

As Christians, to know all the facts and figures contained in the Bible is not the end for which God has given us this Book. The purpose is that we might see God and His son Jesus Christ and know them.¹

Surely in the work and ministry of Jesus we can find much cause for worship. We know Christ through the Bible, and we understand the Bible through the knowledge of Christ and the Spirit He sent.

¹Green, 32.

The Word Reveals to Us the Purpose of Our Worship

The Word is the Means of the Operation
of the Holy Spirit¹

We are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit:

"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18 NIV). How does the Spirit come? In Gal 3:2 (NASB), Paul asks, "Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?" The answer, of course, is "hearing with faith." Hearing what? The Word of God!

The Spirit inspired the Word and therefore he goes where the Word goes. The more of God's Word you know and love, the more of God's Spirit you will experience. Instead of drinking wine we should drink the Spirit. How? By setting our minds on the things of the Spirit: "Those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit" (Rom 8:5 NKJV).

What are the things of the Spirit? The teachings of Scripture are the "things of the Spirit." We drink in the Spirit by setting our minds on the things of the Spirit, namely the Word of God. And the fruit of the Spirit is true worship. Jesus said, "Those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24 NKJV).

¹This section is adapted from John Piper, Desiring God (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1986), 121-122.

The Word Gives Hope¹

It does not take much intelligent to recognize that the greatest need of the world today is hope.

Sometimes faith and hope are virtual synonyms in Scripture. "Faith is the assurance of things *hoped for*" (Heb 11:1 NASB). Without this hope for the future we get discouraged and depressed and our joy drains away. Hope is absolutely essential to Christian worship. We worship a God who gives us hope and direction.

And how do we maintain hope? The psalmist puts it like this: "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commands our fathers, to teach their children . . . so that they might set their *hope* in God" (Ps 78:5,7). In other words the "testimony" and the "law"--the Word of God--are kindling for the hope of our children.

Paul puts it so plainly: "Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that, we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have *hope*" (Rom 15:4 NKJV). The whole Bible has this aim and this power: to create hope in the hearts of God's people. And when hope abounds, the heart is filled with worship.

¹Ibid., 122.

The Word Shall Make You Free¹

Another essential element of worship is freedom. None of us would be able to worship if we are not free from what we hate and free for what we love. And where do we find true freedom? Ps 119:45 (NKJV) says, "I will walk at liberty, for I seek your precepts." The picture is one of open spaces. The Word frees us from smallness of mind (1 Kgs 4:29) and from threatening confinements (Ps 18:19).

Jesus says, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32 NKJV). The freedom he has in mind is freedom from the slavery of sin (vs. 34). Or, to put it positively, it is freedom for holiness. The promises of God's grace provide the power that makes the demands of God's holiness an experience of freedom rather than fear.

"By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4 NKJV, cf. John 15:3). Freed from corruption, freed to share the likeness of God--by the precious and very great promises! Therefore we should pray for each other the way Jesus prays for us in John 17:17 (NASB)--"Sanctify them in the truth; thy Word is truth."

"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14 NKJV). How important then is the truth that sanctifies! "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps 119:105 NASB). "Your word

¹Ibid., 123.

have I hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You"
(Ps 119:11 NKJV).

Mark Twain once said: "Most people are bothered by those passages of Scripture which they cannot understand; but as for me, I have always noticed that the passages in Scripture which trouble me most are those which I do understand."

The ships in the oceans are kept on course by what is known as the "Celestial Fix." With the instruments fixed on the stars, they can tell exactly where they are on the trackless ocean, and whether or not they need to correct their course.

Believers need a "Celestial Fix" on God for daily guidance. Prov 15:3 (NKJV) says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good." His eyes scan like a surveillance camera. When we tune in daily with open hearts, desiring direction, He will show us where we are and guide us back on course if we have drifted.

Before God gave the Ten Commandants to Israel, He freed them so they may worship Him.

The Word Reveals to Us the Power of Our Worship

More than a collection of words on pages, the Bible is *God-breathed*. God's authority and power are present in every word and can penetrate into the deepest parts of our being. God describes His Word as a *seed*, a *sword*, a *hammer*, and *fire*. Multitudes, from kings to peasants, have had

their lives radically changed through the Word. Through the Bible, God speaks to us by the power of His Spirit.

Faith Comes by Hearing the Word of God

The Word of God begets and sustains spiritual *life* because it begets and sustains *faith*. "These things are written," John says, "that you might *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that *believing* you may have *life* in His name" (John 20:31 NASB). "Faith comes by hearing," writes the apostle Paul, "and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom 10:17 NKJV). The faith that starts our life in Christ and by which we go on living comes from hearing the Word of God.

Our spiritual life begins by the Word of God: "Of His own will He brought us forth by the Word of truth" (Jas 1:18 NKJV). "Having been born again . . . through the Word of God which lives and abides for ever" (1 Pet 1:23 NKJV).

The Bible is as necessary to our spiritual life as oxygen is to sustain our physical life.

Not only do we *begin* to live by God's Word, but we also *go on* living by God's Word: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4 NKJV; Deut 8:3). Our physical life is created and upheld by the Word of God, and our spiritual life is quickened and sustained by the Word of God.

There were two climbers who were caught in a snow storm in the mountains and took refuge in a cave. One was a

believer and the other was not. The non-believer was a smoker. When the non-believer smoked all his cigarette, he wanted to smoke the Bible of the believer. The believer initially refused, but finally consented on the condition that he would give the smoker the Bible page by page to read before he smoked them. The smoker became a believer in the book of Psalms and was converted in the book of John.

Indeed, the Bible is the source of our life-- physical as well as spiritual. All this is owing to the Word of God's power. By that same power He has spoken in Scripture for the creation and sustenance of our spiritual life. Therefore, knowing that God is the source of my life lead me to a life of worship and adoration.

Faith is born and sustained by the Word of God, and out of faith grows the ingredient of meaningful worship.

The Evil One is Overcome by the Word of God¹

Satan's number-one objective is to destroy our worship. We have one offensive weapon: the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Eph 6:17). But what many Christians fail to realize is that we can't draw the sword from someone else's scabbard. If we don't wear it, we can't wield it. If the Word of God does not abide in us (John 25:7), we will reach for it in vain when the enemy strikes.

¹This section is adapted from David Ralph Barnhart, "It Is Written," Good News For All Seasons (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), 171-176.

But if we do wear it, if it lives within us, what mighty warriors we can be! "I have written to you, young men, because you are strong and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one" (1 John 2:14 NASB).

Nearly two thousand years ago, Satan engaged our Lord in deadly combat in the wilderness of Judea. In similar struggles over the centuries against scores of brave Christian warriors, Satan has launched waves of fierce attacks, winning a skirmish here and there, but always losing in the end. Defeat has seemingly not discouraged him. He continues still to fight the people of God at every turn.

Let us then look together at Jesus' great battle with Satan. Let us look and learn. Let us look and be empowered in the same manner.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took Him to the holy city and had Him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command His angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'"

Then the devil left Him, and angels came and attended Him. Matt 4:1-11 (NIV)

Matt 4, presents one of the greatest scenes of combat in all of human history. This combat was not unique because of the technology of the armaments or the number of combatants. It was unique because the outcome of this battle would determine the destiny of the world and of every human being, including you and me.

Satan was truly prepared for this conflict with Jesus. His arsenal was ready. His arguments had been meticulously prepared and his strategy rehearsed. Jesus also was prepared. It was he who chose the weapon with which the battle would be fought. His was the most powerful weapon the world has ever seen. It dwarfs even our great nuclear arsenals of today. That weapon is the Word of God.

This great weapon of warfare, which Jesus so expertly used, is graciously given to us today by our heavenly Father. It worked for Jesus, for Luther, for Wesley and Moody, and it will do its work perfectly for you and me also. It never fails.

Man may try to eradicate the Word, and Satan may attempt to choke out the seed, but the Bible will stand. The fact that the Bible is alive and life-giving gives it both power and longevity, "The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates

even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart: (Heb 4:12 NIV).

God's Word is a personal Word. It is a practical Word, and it is a powerful Word. The Bible is a book of comfort. It is a book of hope. It is a book that may disturb you and shake you to the foundations, but it will always comfort you and enable you. Surely Matt 4 is written for our instruction. Jesus could have chosen and used many weapons. He might have responded by calling a legion of angels to trample Satan under foot. He could have been transfigured before that rascal and proved His divinity on the spot. But instead, Jesus, in his full humanity, to identify with you and me, chose to use the Word of God. This was His common practice. All through his earthly ministry, He spoke about and used the living Word of God. When He taught, He taught Scriptures. When He shared about Himself, His resurrection, and His coming again, He used the Scriptures. The Word of God was constantly on His lips. So it ought to be for us. "I have hidden your word in my heart. . . ." (Ps 119:11, NIV). "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Ps 119:105, NIV).

An Earnest Exhortation

The Bible is the Word of God. It is the source of life and faith and power and hope and freedom and wisdom and comfort and assurance and victory over our greatest enemy.

Is it any wonder then that those who knew best said, "The precepts of the LORD are right, *rejoicing* the heart" (Ps 19:8 NASB)? "I will *delight* myself in thy statutes, I will not forget thy Word" (Ps 119:16 KJV).

Let us labor to memorize the Word of God--for worship and for warfare. If we do not carry it in our heads, we cannot savor it in our hearts or wield it in the Spirit. If you go out without the kindling of the Word of God, the fire of Christian worship be quenched before mid-morning.

What do we mean by worship? Worship is when the Lord God would come down to the garden of Eden to commune with Adam and Eve (see Gen 3:8-9). Worship is, therefore quite simply, walking and talking with the Lord. Worship has always been ordained of God to be more than a monologue of my telling Him how I feel about Him. Worship is more than just my talking to God--it is also His talking to me! Worship is an exchange--it is two-way communication.

Worship has been called the "language of love." When we worship, we express our love to God. But love must flow as an exchange between two individuals. There must be give and take, talking and listening, transmitting and receiving. Worship must contain both elements in order to be complete. It must consist of our expressions unto God through praise, offering, and prayer, and then it must also include listening to His responses through the Word.

Mortimer J. Adler, in *How to Read a Book*, has observed that the one time people read for all they are worth is when they are in love and are reading a love letter. They read every word three ways. They read between the lines and in the margins. They read the whole in terms of the parts, and each part in terms of the whole. They grow sensitive to context and ambiguity, in insinuation and implication. They perceive the color of words, the order of phrases, and the weight of sentences. They may even take the punctuation into account. Then, if never before or after, they read carefully and in depth.

So should believers read the "love letter" that the Eternal Lover has given to us so that we may better know him and his purposes.¹

¹Green, 32-33.

SERMON 3

PRAYER AND WORSHIP

John 15:1-8

Every time we meet to worship on Sabbath morning there are at least three major prayers. We pray at the beginning of the service (the invocation prayer), at the middle (the pastoral prayer), and we pray right at the end (the benediction prayer). Why? Why pray at all? Custom? Suppose to? This is a church and people expect us to pray at church. There are needs and we want to make God aware of these needs. We do it so we can experience the presence of God.

Do you give much thought to the prayers that we offer on Sabbath morning or do you just endure them so you can get to the sermon? Moreover do these prayers involve you? Make a difference in your life? Do they touch you?

How do you view prayer in general? What is the purpose of prayer? Is it simply to draw up one's list of requests and petitions and problems and present them in an acceptable fashion to God? Or is it to become aware of God's answers and guidance? God doesn't instruct us to pray

without ceasing just so He can be the genie that fulfills all of our wants and needs.

The purpose of prayer goes deeper than that. Prayer is a way to maintain constant and meaningful communion with God. Prayer is about knowing God, worshiping Him, loving Him, adoring Him, having a deep and intense relationship with Him.

Corporate prayer in church is all of the above and much more. It is about glorifying God through the utter dependency that His children show toward Him. It is about experiencing God's presence, forgiveness, power, wisdom, joy, love, compassion, and confidence together.

Let's look more closely at prayer and its role in worship.

Prayer Is Seeking God's Presence¹

The Old Testament tells of many ways God let His people know He was among them: through the tabernacle that accompanied Israel on its journeys; through His Shekinah glory that rested over the ark in the temple; through a whole succession of prophets that spoke His word to the people.

¹This section is adapted from Bill Hybels, Too Busy Not to Pray (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 141-147.

Going to the Bible, I discovered that throughout recorded history God has taken pains to let His people know of His presence among them.

After leading the Israelites out of Egypt and into the desert, God knew they would feel frightened and alone. Responsible for their children and livestock, they were camping in a place with wild animals, little food, and practically no water. They had no armies and no walls to protect them from enemy attack. They didn't even know the way to the Promised Land.

In their heads, they knew they were God's people and He had promised to protect them. But it was hard to feel His presence. And so God, wanting to convince them that He was with them wherever they went, gave them a visible sign of His presence. "By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light" (Exod 13:21 NIV).

If ever the people began to wonder if their journey was headed in the right direction, all they had to do was look up and see the pillar of cloud. If ever they grew frightened of animals, or of enemies that might be stalking them by night, all they had to do was look at the pillar of fire casting its glow over the whole camp. God made sure that they could feel His presence in their midst.

The New Testament begins with God offering us His presence in the person of Jesus Christ, His Son. The

promised baby was to be called *Immanuel*, "God with us" (Matt 1:23s NIV). John explains the significance of Jesus' birth: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14 NIV). Theologians call this the *Incarnation*--God putting on human flesh and actually living with His people.

God's presence through Jesus was powerful. It transformed ordinary, sinful people into apostles who "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6, KJV). Even unbelieving leaders recognized what it was that made the difference in these men: "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13 NIV).

But powerful as God's presence in Christ was, it still lacked something. Jesus' ministry on earth lasted only about three years. He never left Palestine. Only a relatively small number of people ever met Him personally. The vast majority of people who have lived on earth have never come in direct contact with Him. That is why Jesus promised His disciples, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17 NIV).

Shortly after Jesus ascended to the Father, that promise was fulfilled. On the day of Pentecost, God sent the Holy Spirit to take up permanent residence in the lives of believers.

Ever since Pentecost, all believers have a strong sign of God's presence with them. The moment you bow to Christ and become His, God cleanses you of your sin and simultaneously fills you with His Holy Spirit. Over a period of time, you grow to realize you are never alone. God's presence is real. You can feel it. It's with you wherever you go.

When you practice being aware of God's presence, you pick up His signals all through the day. At work, at home, in your car, or wherever you are, you begin to dialog with the Lord. You share your heart with Him, and you know He's listening. It has nothing to do with being in a church building or on your knees. It has to do with God's presence in and around you--"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27 NIV).

Brother Lawrence, a cook in a seventeenth-century French monastery, gave the world a phrase that well describes such a deep friendship with Jesus: *the practice of the presence of God*. As this humble monk washed dishes and served food to his brothers, he communed with God, and the glow of God's presence gave his menial kitchen duties richness and significance.

I have been a Christian all my life, but only recently I started to practice God's presence in my own life. From Brother Lawrence I learned that in my car, on the job, at home, while working out, while helping somebody

move, while lying in bed at night, anytime, anywhere, under any circumstances, I could commune meaningfully with the Lord. God is near me and wants to enjoy a friendship with me.

If Jesus were to talk to me personally, He would say, "I want to relate to you as your forgiver and Lord, but I also want to be your friend. I want our conversations to bring you comfort. I'd like for you to think about Me all day long. I want you to know you're never alone; to feel that wherever you go and whatever you do, there's a companion by your side. I want you to discover My presence in your daily life."¹

Prayer Is Seeking God's Companionship.²

You don't have to live long to discover that God created people to thrive on companionship. Children love to play with friends, and adolescents enjoy socializing. Adults maintain relationships with friends and colleagues and make lifetime commitments to a spouse and children.

No matter how many or how deep your friendships, however, at some point you begin to realize that human companionship is not enough. Even the best of friends can't be around you all the time. They move away, fade away, or die. They don't always understand what you are going

¹Hybels, 143-146.

²Ibid., 147-148.

through. They aren't always faithful and dependable. If you try to meet all your companionship needs through human beings, you are doomed to perpetual, unfulfilled yearnings.

But God does not expect us to have only human friends. Prov 18:24 (NIV) says, "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother". Heb 4:15 (NIV) tells us that Jesus, having been "tempted in every way, just as we are," understands us completely. Ps 121:3 (NIV) assures us that our divine friend is always available to us: "He who watches over you will not slumber."

Your heavenly Friend always listens. He freely communicates with you with no barriers. When He expresses affection, He means it. He is patient with your immaturity, He forgives you when you wrong Him and He stays committed to you even when you ignore Him for long periods of time. He is always faithful.

Prayer Is Seeking God's Confidence¹

Companionship is wonderful. Even more wonderful is realizing who your closest companion is--God almighty, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, able to empower you to face anything that comes your way.

Last summer at Camp MiVoden I wanted to learn to sail a sailboat. So a friend of mine took me out to the deep part of the lake to teach me how. It was very easy.

¹Ibid., 148-149.

Very easy, that is, when he did it. But when I tried to maneuver the boat alone, I discovered how hard it was. I kept falling over and over. But with my friend in the boat, I had confidence. With him on board, I had both companionship and confidence.

As you enjoy God's presence in your life, you become increasingly aware of your companion's identity and power and character. Nothing is too difficult for God to handle. There are no limits to His power. Life can't throw anything at you that you can't handle with God.

You may be experiencing clear sailing right now. Having the all-powerful God as your companion may not seem very important. But your life will not be free of storms for long. You are going to have your share of heartbreak, disappointment, trial and tragedy. With God's presence in your life, you will be able to face these storms with confidence.

The more you know God, the more at peace you should be. Yes, negative circumstances do come, and they can throw you off kilter. I mean that, if you are not a peace--if you do not experience a growing sense of inner peace--it's because your knowledge of God is not increasing.

When you experience the presence of God, He can make you sleep in troubled waters. When you experience the presence of God and you have no money, you know it's not the last word. When you experience the presence of God and your

enemies move against you, you understand that they will not make a final decision. When you experience the presence of God and people reject you, you can say, "No, never alone." The presence of God comforts the heart, because He dictates the final circumstances.

Prayer Is Seeking God's Compassion¹

The more time you spend with Christ, the more you begin to act like Him. People matter to Jesus, and what matters to Him matters to His followers. His concern and compassion begins to rub off on you.

Look at what happened to the apostle John. At one point he wanted to destroy a whole city because some of its residents didn't want Jesus to stay there (Luke 9:54). After a lifetime in God's presence, John wrote, "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love" (1 John 4:8 NIV).

Or, look at Peter, the apostle who--even after Pentecost--couldn't bear to associate with certain people (Gal 2:11-14). In his famous "ladder" of Christian virtues, he shows how Christlike character develops: "Add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love" (2 Pet 1:5-7

¹Ibid., 149-151.

NIV). Through his life-long association with Christ, Peter came to value brotherly kindness and love. He knew that it is God who helps us grow in "brotherly kindness" and at the same time makes us aware of His presence through the compassion and love of other Christians.

When we live in constant communion with God, our needs are met, our faith increased, our love expanded. We begin to feel God's peace in our hearts, and we spontaneously worship Him.

If you hang around radioactive material, it's going to do something to you. If you hang around God, it's going to do something to you. God will change you. God is in the business of changing people.

Prayer Is Seeking God's Power

John 15:5-8 (NIV) says:

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

An old farmer walked into the tool department at the local hardware store.

"May I help you?" asked the clerk.

"I'm lookin' for a new saw, young man."

"Just what kind of saw do you need? What do you plan to use it for?"

The old man scratched his head. "Well, I suppose I'll be needin' it mainly for cuttin' firewood.

"Right over here," the clerk said as he led the man through the aisles. "This," he said, pointing to a chain saw, "would be just what you need."

"Never did use one of those," said the old man. "Is it faster than a handsaw?"

"There's no comparison. In fact, I bet you could saw 20 trees with this chain saw in the time it took you to saw one with a handsaw."

So the old farmer bought the chain saw and left the store. Two weeks later the clerk was surprised to see him back with the chain saw in hand.

"Well, what do you think?" the clerk asked.

"It's the worst saw I've ever used. I've been tryin' to cut down one tree for almost two weeks. And I'm still cuttin'. I'm returnin' this and buyin' myself a handsaw."

"Let me take a look at it," said the clerk as he picked up the chain saw. Stepping back from the counter, he pulled the starter rope and the saw roared into action.

The old farmer nearly jumped from under his straw hat. "Land sakes, where did that noise come from?"¹

¹Renee Kempf Coffee, The Official 1993 Devotional Book for Super Kids (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1992), 118.

When we don't pray our lives are like the old farmer. We operate and live depending on our own human resources, talents and power. Yet the power of the Holy Spirit, which could do the impossible, is available to us by a strong connection with God. The intensity of our worship is in direct proportion to the intensity of our prayer life. Worship is giving God His worth. Worship is attributing to God His power.

Prayer Is Seeking God's Glory¹

Hear Jesus' words in John 14:13 (NASB): "Whatever you ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Suppose you are totally paralyzed and can do nothing for yourself but talk. And suppose a strong and reliable friend promised to live with you and do whatever you needed done. How could you glorify your friend if a stranger came to see you? Would you glorify his generosity and strength by trying to get out of bed and carry him?

No! You would say, "Friend, please come lift me up, and would you put a pillow behind me so I can look at my guest. And would you please put my glasses on for me?" And so your visitor would learn from your requests that you are helpless and that your friend is strong and kind. You

¹This section is adapted from Piper, 132-143.

glorify your friend by needing him and asking him for help and counting on him.

In John 15:5 (NASB) Jesus says, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." So we really are paralyzed. Without Christ we are capable of no good. But according to John 15:5, God intends for us to do something good--namely, bear fruit.

How then do we glorify him? Jesus gives the answer in John 15:7 (NASB)--"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it shall be done for you." We pray! We ask God to do for us through Christ what we can't do for ourselves--bear fruit. Verse eight gives the result: "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit." So how is God glorified by prayer? Prayer is the open admission that without Christ we can do nothing. And prayer is the turning away from ourselves to God in the confidence that He will provide the help we need. Prayer humbles us as needy, and exalts God as wealthy.

A failure in our prayer life is generally a failure to know Jesus. "If you knew who was talking to you, you would ask me!" A prayerless Christian is like having your room wallpapered with Nordstrom gift certificates but always shopping at Mary's Mart because you don't know.

And the implication is that those who do ask--
Christians who spend time in prayer--do it because they see

that God is a great Giver and that Christ is wise and merciful and powerful beyond measure. And therefore their prayer glorifies Christ and honors His Father. The chief end of man is to glorify God. Therefore, when we become what God created us to be we become people of prayer.

Prayer is the essential activity of waiting for God: acknowledging our helplessness and His power, calling upon Him for help, seeking His counsel. So it is evident why prayer is so often commanded by God, since His purpose in the world is to be exalted for His mercy. Prayer is the antidote for the disease of self-confidence that opposes God's goal of getting glory by working for those who wait for Him.

An Appeal¹

One of the main reasons so many of us don't have a significant life of prayer is not so much that we don't want to, but that we don't plan to. If you want to take a four-week vacation, you don't just get up one summer morning and say, "Hey, let's go today!" You won't have anything ready. You won't know where to go. Nothing has been planned.

But that is how many of us treat prayer. We get up day after day and realize that significant times of prayer should be a part of our life, but nothing's ever done.

¹Some ideas for this section were derived from Charlie Riggs, Learning to Walk With God (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1988), 100-113.

Nothing has been planned. No time. No place. No procedure. And we all know that the opposite of planning is not a wonderful flow of deep, spontaneous experiences in prayer. The opposite of planning is the rut. If you don't plan a vacation you will probably stay home and watch TV. The natural, unplanned flow of spiritual life sinks to the lowest ebb of vitality. There is a race to be run and a fight to be fought. If you want renewal in your life of prayer you must *plan* to see it.

Therefore, my simple exhortation is this: Let us take time this very day to rethink our priorities and how prayer fits in. Make some new resolve. Try some new venture with God. Set a time. Set a place. Don't be tyrannized by the press of busy days. We all need mid-course corrections. Make this a day of turning to prayer-- for the glory of God and for the fullness of your life.

Lorne Sanny said, "I don't need another book on prayer. I know enough about prayer. I simply must take time to pray. We will never find time, we must take time."¹

Let me encourage you to give your life back to God at a deeper level--a level where you seek God's help to fulfill your responsibility. Commit yourself more deeply to the Lord, to pray for His help, and begin to experience His good helping hand daily.

¹Ibid., 113.

I have learned that prayer is more of an attitude than a posture or a form of expression. It is an attitude of dependence on God. I realize I am not sufficient and need help. I can't do it, but God can help me do it. As the songs say, "I Need Thee Every Hour," and I am "Learning to Lean." Our whole life, when it is lived to the glory of God, can be a form of prayer. We learn to lean on Jesus throughout every day, for help to live a supernatural life in a tough, worldly environment. It is like praying "without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17, KJV).

I challenge you to respond to God, to get to know Him. It's going to be some work. You may need to get up a little earlier so you can spend time in His Word and time on your knees. You'll need to spend time with His people and time in His presence, because our great God deserves a response.

SERMON 4

OFFERING AND WORSHIP

Heb 13:15-17

When John Wesley preached his great sermon on stewardship, his first division was "Make all you can," and a deacon farmer down in front said, "That is right." The second division was "Keep all you can, save all you can," and the farmer said more emphatically, "That is better." And the third division of the sermon was, "Give all you can," and the farmer's face dropped and he said, "That has spoiled the sermon." Now that farmer had a vision of stewardship in making and in saving, and that is Scriptural; but he lost the vision, if he ever had it, of giving.¹

Today we are going to consider another element observed in our worship: offering. We are not going to speak about money but about worship. We are not going to speak about budgets and church needs, but about lordship, allegiance, and trust.

From the very beginning, worshiping God meant bringing an offering to Him. Looking at worship in the Old

¹ A. Gordon Nasby, 1041 Sermon Illustrations, Ideas, and Expositions (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953), 340.

Testament we see that in the first recorded act of worship by Cain and Abel, each of them brought an offering unto the Lord. It is significant that Abel's offering was a sacrifice offered by faith while Cain's was an offering of the fruit of the ground. It is, therefore, important to note that the worship of God began with offering.

Throughout the history of Israel, God's people erected altars and made offerings upon them to the true God. Whether it was during the lives of the great patriarchs, or in front of the tabernacle in the wilderness, or within the courts of the temple of Jerusalem, to worship God was to bring an offering to Him. The psalmist gave the invitation clearly, "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts" (Ps 96:8). This is perhaps the simplest statement in the Scriptures as to what is involved in the worship of God.

Worship is not to be considered chiefly as getting from God; worship is giving. Worship is offering. If there is anything that we need to understand today, it is this fact.

The great majority of the offerings of the Old Testament were sacrifices. Since Jesus Christ offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sins, there is no longer any need for blood sacrifices. However, because the sacrifice of Christ is the basis of all Christian faith and hope, if we are to be faithful to Him, that sacrifice must

always be prominent in our worship. Christ's sacrifice involves not only His death on Calvary, but it also involves His resurrection from the dead and His ascension into heaven itself with the blood of the eternal covenant as well as His present intercession for the believer (see Heb 13:20, 21). All this is included in His offering of Himself for sinners. Nothing can ever be added to that sacrifice; it is sufficient for our salvation.

It is clear, nevertheless, that Christians are to continue to sacrifice to the Lord as a part of their worship. One of the most precious doctrines of the NT is the priesthood of all believers. The apostle Peter said, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet 2:4, 5). Here it is evident that those who belong to the Christian priesthood are to be exercising that priesthood in the offering up of spiritual sacrifices. These are in no sense to replace or to increase the efficacy of the one offering of Christ. Rather they are made possible by that one eternal sacrifice and are to be offered as a response to and in perfect union with that sacrifice.¹

¹Rayburn, 132-134.

What are the spiritual sacrifices which the apostle Peter tells us that believers offer to God? Let us look at what the Scriptures tell us about them in Heb 13:15-17.

We Are to Offer the Lord Our Praises

First, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that we are to offer the sacrifice of praise. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Heb 13:15). This does not mean that the mere singing of songs or the recitation of prayers with our lips in the worship service constitutes acceptable sacrifice. The "fruit of the lips" must be the response of the heart to the incomprehensible grace of God in Jesus Christ. As we sing and praise God, let us remember that our songs are to be sung to the Lord, to His glory and to His honor, even though they also serve to edify and admonish other believers as well as ourselves. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col 3:16). This is spiritual our sacrifice.¹

Howard Hendricks tells this story, "I had an elder who would have failed an audition for a deaf choir, but during the hymns he would stand down in front of me with a hymnbook open, mouthing the words. One day I said to him, "Mr. McFadden, what are you doing?" He said, "I'm worshipping." I asked, "You mean you're repeating the

¹Rayburn, 134.

words?" He replied, "That's right. Remember, Pastor, you haven't worshiped until you've told God your personal response."¹

We Are to Offer the Lord Our Good Work

A second spiritual sacrifice the Christian is urged to offer is the doing of good works. "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb 13:16). Not all the good deeds of men are acceptable to God. The man who presumes to offer to God his own good works instead of placing his full trust and confidence in the sacrifice of Christ is offering a mockery to God. The apostle Paul spoke of the sad condition of the Jews, who in "going about to establish their own righteousness [had] not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom 10:3). He warned such men that "wrath is come upon them" (1 Thess 2:16).

However, the true believers were reminded by the same apostle that they were to "be careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8). These are the works that are a spiritual sacrifice. What is included? Any deed which is done because of the love of God and the desire to honor Him is a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God.²

¹Harold Myra, ed., Leaders (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 115-116.

²Rayburn, 134-135.

The first priority of God's people is to Build His kingdom, is to serve Him, is to glorify His name, and is to honor Him in every thing they do. They do these things by offering Him their good work.

The focus of the faithful Christian is: his master. The goal of the faithful Christian is: to bring glory to the Master. This is done by acts of mercy, love without boundaries, and giving without limits.

Often I hear people saying, "but I do not have talent to serve the Lord. I can't sing. I can't preach or witness. And I don't have money to give." It's not the gift we have but how we allow God to use it for His Glory.

One of Ripley's "Believe It or Not" items pictured a plain bar of iron worth \$5. The same bar of iron if made into horse shoes would be worth \$50. If it were made into needles, it would be worth \$5,000. If it were made into balance springs for fine Swiss watches, it would be worth \$500,000. The raw material is not as important as how it's developed. God says we have spiritual gifts, but their worth to Him will be dependent on how we develop them.¹

As believers in Jesus Christ, we need to offer our good works to Him. We need to offer Him our talents, kindness, love, and even our lives.

We Are to Offer the Lord Our Possessions

The third spiritual sacrifice, mentioned in Hebrews is sharing (Heb 13:16). Whenever the believer in sheer thanksgiving to God shares his material substance with those

¹James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1988), 232.

who are in need or with those who are engaged in the ministry of the Word, or when he cheerfully places a generous check in the offering plate to support the work of God and His church, he is making an acceptable offering to the Lord.

The receiving of an offering in the worship service should never be looked upon as a necessary interruption of the service, required for the maintenance of the church. It is an important part of worship. Worship is not exclusively offering, but the sincere offering of our possessions and money to God is worship. In the service the presentation of the offering should be impressive; it should be clearly evident that this is a response of the entire congregation to the goodness of God.

There are 31,173 verses in the Bible. About 500 of them are on faith, 500 on prayer, 1,000 on love, and 700 on peace. But, on money and money management, there are 2,385 verses in the Bible. That amounts to 7.65% of all the verses in the Bible. Fifteen percent of Jesus' words and 23 of the 40 parables of Jesus are on money. Why so much emphases on money? Because as Larry Burkett said, "Money is an outside indicator of an inside spiritual condition."

Richard Halversen, the chaplin of the senate once said:

Jesus Christ said more about money than about any other single thing because when it comes to a man's real nature, money is of first importance. Money is an exact index to a man's true character. All through Scripture

there is an intimate correlation between the development of a man's character and how he handles his money.¹

Tithes and Offerings Are Signs
of Our Allegiance to God

Offering is not a means of paying the church bills but a way to worship God and show allegiance to Him. When you write the check for the church offering, gather the family together and pray over it to help bring out the spiritual significance.

I visited the University of Chicago Museum a few years ago. Going through the various section and noticed that tithing was a common practice in Biblical times. It was a sign of Lordship and allegiance.

Abraham demonstrated his worship in returning his tithe to God. This simple yet significant act of worship was a public acknowledgment of God's sovereign claim and ownership as well as His Lordship. Love and gratitude in worship are thus expressed in a tangible way even as God blessed Abraham in the fullness of life, prosperity, strength, blessing and hope.

Tithes and Offerings Are Associated
with God's Blessing

Of all the promises in the Bible, none are more specific than the passages regarding giving. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give,"

¹Source Unknown

Paul say, "not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7). When we give gladly, willingly, or cheerfully, we demonstrate an unselfish attitude of appreciation for what God has done for us by giving us new life and hope through Jesus Christ. God loves a cheerful giver. To be loved by God gives us inner security, joy, and peace of mind.

In spite of the promised blessings and periodic teaching on giving, most Christians fail to give back to God what is required and rightfully belongs to Him. Lack of giving could be the result of biblical ignorance on our part, but most likely it is due to lack of obedience to the admonitions in Scripture. It could be selfishness on our part and unwillingness to share what we possess. Someone has said, "Jesus Christ must be Lord of all or not Lord at all; including, of course, our purse or wallet."

Givers can be divided into three types: the flint, the sponge, and the honeycomb. Some givers are like a piece of flint--to get anything out of it you must hammer it, and even then you only get chips and sparks. No matter what the need is, or the appeal in church, nothing comes out of them. Others are like a sponge--to get anything out of a sponge you must squeeze it and squeeze it hard, because the more you squeeze a sponge, the more you get. Therefore, the more skilled the one who ask for the offering, or the more guilt he has woven into it, the more money he can get out of them.

But others are like a honeycomb. They have experienced God's blessing, God's acceptance and love and overflows with generosity, love, giving and sweetness. That is how God gives to us, and it is how we should give in turn. When we give in that kind of spirit we are indeed worshiping God.

Tithe and Offering Are Clear Indicator
of the Priorities of Our Lives

In Matthew, Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt 6:19-21).

Charles Riggs tell this story, "I have had my home broken into twice, and I can identify with this passage. We did not have a lot of goods that thieves can market easily; therefore, our loss was minimal. But the experience has given my wife and me a better perspective on life and personal possessions. Our real home is in heaven, not here on earth."¹

That is the lesson Jesus teaches in this passage. He is not against savings accounts. He is against our getting preoccupied with money and things: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Greed can

¹Riggs, 158-159.

cause us to be so preoccupied with secular pursuits and cause us to forget why we are here. We are to "lay up treasures in heaven." The more we give to God of our money and service, the more treasure we are laying up in heaven. For our investment, God offers great dividends here in this life.

Billy Graham once said, "Tell me what you think about money, and I can tell you what you think about God, for these two are closely related. A man's heart is closer to his wallet than almost anything else."¹

Tithe and Offering Are Indicators of Our Level of Trust in God

God has a purpose in everything he asks us to do. The tithe is important to the one who gives it--as an obedient response to God's command, as an event in our lives which frees us from self-centeredness, and as a means to develop our level of trust, and as an opportunity for God to bless us in return.

A church member was having trouble with the concept of tithing. One day he revealed his doubts to his minister: "Pastor, I just don't see how I can give 10 percent of my income to the church when I can't even keep on top of my bills."

¹Riggs, 154.

The pastor replied, "Gary, if I promise to make up the difference in your bills if you should fall short, do you think you could try tithing for just one month?"

After a moment's pause, Gary responded, "Sure, if you promise to make up any shortage, I guess I could try tithing for one month."

"Now, what do you think of that," pondered the pastor. "You say you'd be willing to put your trust in a mere man like myself, who possesses little materially, but you couldn't trust your Heavenly Father who owns the whole universe!" The next Sabbath, Gary gave his tithe, and has been doing so faithfully ever since.¹

I love the story of the young lad in Africa who trusted in God so strongly that he tithed even before he got his fish. One day after going fishing he knocked on the door of the hut occupied by the missionary. When the missionary opened the door, he found the boy holding a large fish in his hands. The boy said, "Pastor, you taught us what tithing is, so here--I've brought you my tithe." As the missionary gratefully took the fish, he questioned the young lad. "If this is your tithe, where are the other nine fish?" At this, the boy beamed and said, "Oh, they're still back in the river. I'm going back to catch them."²

¹Hewett, 461-462.

²Ibid., 458.

We Are to Offer the Lord Our Lives

Finally, all true Christians are called upon to offer their bodies continually unto the Lord for the living of pure and holy lives before Him. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom 12:1). In offering our bodies as living sacrifices we are united with Jesus Christ "who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God" (Heb 9:14). At some point in every corporate worship service individual believers should make this climactic dedication of their entire lives to God. This may come in a hymn following the sermon. It may at other times come as part of the corporate prayer, or in coming forward in response to an appeal at the end of the sermon. Included in such an offering is the willingness to do His will no matter what the cost, to love the brethren with pure Christian love, and to seek in all aspects of life to demonstrate the reality of the living Christ dwelling within. No sacrifice which man can offer to God can be a substitute for self-sacrificing and self-offering.

The purpose of life is not marriage, success, happiness, accumulation of money, or any of that. The purpose of life is to glorify God. We were created to know and worship God. Paul says that so elegantly, "Whether

therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor 10:31).

In Exod 29 we read some interesting instructions regarding the worship practices of the Israelites. "And thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the alter: it is a burnt offering unto the Lord: it is a *sweet savor*, an offering made by fire unto the Lord" (vs. 18).

Later we read about several other types of offerings and the instructions are the same. (see vs. 25; vv. 41-42,30; vv. 7-8).

The primary significance of the sacrificial system of the Old Testament was that it was predictive of the redemptive work that Jesus would accomplish at Calvary. There is, however, another secondary significance to the burnt offerings. God was not just concerned about the animal that was slain and sacrificed. Also important to Him was the fragrance, the soothing aroma. God wanted this pleasing aroma to be drifting upward continually, perpetually, all the time, throughout all generations--as a symbol of worship.

It was as if He were saying, "It is My desire that there be an unending flow of worship rising heavenward, forever. Each time you walk by the doorway of the tent of meeting, you will see the smoke rising from the altar and remember that you ought to be living in a perpetual state of

worship. From your heart there ought to be a fragrant aroma of worship rising heavenward at all times."

The smoke and the aroma were visual aids used by God to impress upon the Israelites the importance of continual worship. Day and night, the soothing aroma of the burnt offerings ascended to heaven serving as a symbol of adoration and worship.

What does this insight mean for those of us who desire to be true worshipers of the living and true God? It means we have to make worship a continual part of our lives—a moment by moment gift to God¹.

A Personal Appeal

An excellent model of true worship that involves the offering of our praise, good work, possession, and lives is demonstrated in the experience of the magi.

Worship is something these magi came a long way to do. We learn in Matt 2:16 that Jesus may have been two years old by the time the wise men showed up. That means that they may have been traveling for two years. They must have considered the worship of Jesus a high priority. They spent 2 years of their lives, time and possessions to come and see the new born king and worship Him.

Their worship was also accompanied by gift-giving. It is worth noting that these gifts were substantial gifts.

¹Hybels, 145-147.

The wise men didn't run out to K-Mart and get a blanket or something on sale. They gave expensive presents. Their gifts were part of worship. This is also illustrated in their act of bowing down to symbolize their worship to the new born king.

The magi gave of their time as well as their possession. They gave of their lives as well as their obedience and worship.

In 1815 Napoleon was defeated in the battle of Waterloo, and the hero of that battle was the Duke of Wellington. The duke's most recent biographer claims to have an advantage over all the other previous biographers. His advantage was that he had found an old account ledger that showed how the duke had spent his money. That, says the biographer, was a far better clue to what the duke thought was really important than reading his letters or his speeches.

Can you imagine that? If someone wrote your biography on the basis of your checkbook or your income-tax return, or your work, or your time what might it say about you, your loyalties, your focus, and about whom you serve?

SERMON 5

PRAISE AND WORSHIP¹

Ps 103:1-5²

The Essence of Praise

Praise is not a difficult concept to understand, for it is part of our everyday lives. We "praise" our children when they please us; we "praise" employees for a job well done; we "praise" dogs when they perform tricks nicely. But above and beyond all that, praise is something we direct toward God or something we express to others about God.

Some of the definitions for "praise" in the dictionary highlight its simplicity: "to commend; to applaud; to express approval or admiration of; to extol in words or in song; to magnify; to glorify." Notice the bi-directional focus of praise inherent in these definitions: we praise God directly by extolling Him or expressing our admiration of Him; we praise God indirectly by commending Him or magnifying Him to others. Praise can be given

¹This sermon is based on Chapter 1 of Bob Sorge's, Exploring Worship (Canadaigua, NY: Bob Sorge, 1987), 1-27, and Chapter 16 of Morris L. Venden's, The Answer Is Prayer (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988), 175-182.

²Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural references in this sermon are taken from the New King James Bible.

directly to God, or it can be expressed to others in reference to God.

Praise is preoccupied with who God is and what He has done. It focuses on both His incomparable character and His wondrous acts on behalf of His children. When God does something glorious for us, we love to lift high His praises. And yet praise is not simply our thankful response to His provision; praise is also very fitting even when we have no specific gift of God in mind. He is worthy to be praised solely for who He is.

Many times praise is a function of the will. We must will and determine to praise the Lord, even when we do not feel like it. Praise is not contingent upon our feelings--it is based upon God's greatness, and that never changes! Notice how David spoke, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name" (Ps 103:1). Sometimes we are "down in the dumps" or dry spiritually, and it is at these times that we must say, "Bless the Lord!" Praise must function according to our will and not our emotions.

"But how can I praise," you may ask, "when I feel completely deflated emotionally?" We can find an answer in the Psalms, for they were written by men who, like us, experienced deep emotional valleys. One psalmist described his feelings in this way: "My soul is downcast within me." So he asked himself: "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why

so disturbed within me?" Then he proceeded to get tough on himself: "Put your hope in God." His next statement so beautifully shows the discipline of praise: "*For I shall yet praise Him*" (Ps 42:5). The Lord wants all of us to come to that same point where we determine to praise Him regardless of our feelings and circumstances.

Why Should We Praise the Lord?

First of all, we praise Him because we are commanded in His word to do so. "Praise ye the LORD" (Ps 150:1, KJV). "Why does God demand our praise?" You may ask. "Is He some sort of egomaniac who feeds off our adulation?" No, it is not that God needs our praises, but He knows that we need to praise Him! God has commanded praise for our own good. Not until we praise Him are we able to come into proper relationship with Him. Without a thankful and praising heart, we will never grow in the grace of Christ Jesus. God is enthroned in our praise (see Ps 22:3, NASB). He loves our praise! He is so pleased with our praise that He literally surrounds Himself with our praise. We praise Him because He loves it!

Second, there is power in praise. When we stop trying to fight our battles and simply begin to praise the God who has said He will fight for us, God is free to release His power and provision on our behalf. Praise is our weapon in spiritual warfare. It will bring victory, power, deliverance and blessing.

Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of praise and worship is seen in Jehoshaphat's confrontation with the Moabites and the Ammonites, as recorded in 2 Chr 20. The first step the king took was to call a fast and gather the people together for prayer. In that prayer, Jehoshaphat reminded the Lord of His promises and His past performances on behalf of the people of Israel. The result was a Spirit-given message from the priest of Jahaziel that God would give them the victory.

The next day, the king assembled the people for battle, but he did a strange thing: he put the singers ahead of the soldiers! "And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: 'Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever'" (vs. 21).

The result? God caused the invading armies to defeat each other! Jehoshaphat and his people did not need to fight at all! They simply claimed the spoils and returned to Jerusalem for a great praise service at the temple.

Our human tendency, when facing crisis, is to fight for ourselves--or perhaps, when we see we cannot possibly overcome, to run to God and beg for His protection. He wants us to come to Him for deliverance, and we come the way Jehoshaphat and his army came, with songs of praise instead

of fearful and tearful pleas. He honors the faith that praises Him before the battle is won, not just afterward.

A third reason for praising God is simply because He is worthy of our praise. "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised" (Ps 48:1). "Thou art worthy O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev 4:11, KJV). Consider these beautiful words of Martin Luther: "A person cannot praise God only, unless he understands that there is nothing in himself worthy of praise, but that all that is worthy of praise is of God and from God. But since God is eternally praiseworthy, because He is the infinite God and can never be exhausted, therefore they will praise Him for ever and ever."

When we are truly impacted with the greatness of God, praise comes easily. One delightful way to concentrate on the character of God is to study the names of God. Old Testament praise occupied itself with the name of God. "I will praise your name, O Lord, for it is good" (Ps 54:6). "Oh, magnify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together" (Ps 34:3). The Hebrews praised God's name because for them a person's name was indicative of his character. I even remember that the people in the middle east, where I grow up, would even wait a few years to name their children so they could choose names in keeping with the children's personalities and character. God liked that custom and

decided to reveal His character to the Israelites by giving them a variety of names for Himself.

This is what happened in Exod 15:26, when the Lord said, in essence, "You can call me 'Jehovah-Raphah,' because I am the Lord who heals you!" In Gen 22, God reveals Himself as "Jehovah-Jireh" when He wanted to show that He would provide for His people. In the last verse of the book of Ezekiel, God gave His name as "Jehovah-Shammah," which means "The Lord is there" (Ezek 48:35). God was revealing His omnipresence--he will never leave us or forsake us! It is appropriate, therefore, for praise to focus on all that is represented by the various names of God given in Scripture.

Forth, we were created to praise Him. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever. This is clearly brought out in the Scriptures. Jer 13:11 shows us that God called the house of Israel unto Himself specifically for His praise. This is echoed in 1 Pet 2:9, which tells us, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." We have been chosen of God for the express purpose of declaring His praises! Isaiah capsulized this so beautifully: "The people I have formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise" (Isa 43:21).

Many people in the world today are longing for fulfillment and are searching desperately for it in all the wrong places. They will never find complete fulfillment in their innermost beings until they come into proper relationship with God through praise. A. W. Tozer has so aptly said, "The purpose of God in sending His Son to die and live and be at the right hand of God the Father was that He might restore to us the missing jewel, the jewel of worship; that we might come back and learn to do again that which we were created to do in the first place--worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."¹ Praise should not be a difficult task to master, but it should flow from our lives in a most natural way, for it is in fact a normal tendency inherent within our very fiber, placed there purposely by our Creator and Father.

When Should We Praise?

Israel experienced God's deliverance time and time again. They received blessing after blessing from Him, but they quickly forgot what He had done for them. Instead of offering praise, they offer complaints (see Pss 105, 106).

We are told that if we praised God every time we had an evidence of His love and care for us, we would be continually praising Him. It's so easy instead to take His blessings for granted, isn't it?

¹A. W. Tozer, The Missing Jewel of the Evangelical Church (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publication, [n.d.]), 1.

We are invited to praise in good times--and in bad times. We don't have to wait to praise God until something good happens. We are invited to praise Him when things are going wrong. "Praise the Lord even when you fall into darkness. Praise Him even in temptation."¹

But why would you want to praise God when things go wrong? What can you find to praise Him about then?

The story is told of an old preacher who was walking to town one day and met a robber who took all that he had. That evening he wrote in his diary, "Today I was robbed, and I praise God for the following reasons: first, that I have never been robbed before. Second, that although he took my money, he did not take my life. Third, although he took all I had, it wasn't much! And fourth, I am thankful that it was I who was robbed, and not I who robbed."

Even in the darkest times of our lives, we can be thankful for the light that we have had before. We can be thankful for the light we are promised up ahead. And we can be thankful for the One who stays with us, even in the darkness. We may not be able to sense His presence, but we can know He's there.

The point is this: we are to praise the Lord at all times. "I will bless the LORD at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Ps 34:1, KJV). No matter

¹Ellen G. White, Testimonies, 2:593.

what time of day it is, and regardless of where we find ourselves, it is always fitting to bless the Lord.

But is it appropriate to praise the Lord in the hard times, when everything is going wrong? The answer resounds from the hills: *YES!* The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk gave his remedy for times when everything is going wrong:

Though the fig tree may not blossom
 Nor fruit be on the vines;
 though the labor of the olive may fail,
 and the fields yield no food;
 though the flocks may be cut off from the fold,
 and there be no herd in the stalls--
 yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
 I will joy in the God of my salvation.

(Hab 3:17-18)

A modern rendition of this passage might read like this:

"Though the economy is unstable,
 and unemployment is rising,
 though Communism may be growing,
 and terrorism is rampant,
 though the car is broken down and my wife is
 stranded downtown,
 though my kid just broke his arm and the medical
 insurance ran out,
 yet I will rejoice in the Lord,

I will be joyful in God my Savior!"¹

It is not hypocritical to praise the Lord in hard times: that is precisely the time we need to lift our voices in praise to God! It is God's will that we offer up thanks in every situation in which we find ourselves.

How Should We Praise the Lord?

There are a number of ways to praise God. If you are looking for as many ways as possible to make your experience of praise a delight, perhaps you will want to consider some of the methods used by others in their worship of God.

We can praise God in song. Singing is probably the most common form of praise we employ today. "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand" Ps 149:6.

Paul and Silas used this method when they were in jail. Do you remember the result? God responded to their praise in the spectacular way.

Morris Venden tells the story of two students he met at Pacific Union College who had been into black witchcraft. They had experienced the miracle of conversion. He asked them "Do the spirits ever come around now that you have been converted?"

They said, "Oh yes. We recognize them well."

¹Sorge, 12.

"What do you do?"

"We sing songs of praise. When we sing songs of praise, the spirits don't like it. They have to leave. They cannot bear to listen."¹

There is power in praise. When we sing songs of praise, the spirits don't like it. They have to leave. They cannot bear to listen.

Martin Luther said, "The Devil hates music because he cannot stand gaiety. . . . Satan can smirk but he cannot laugh, he can sneer but cannot sing."²

There is power in praise. Perhaps this is why we have been told that singing is as much a part of worship as is prayer. The psalms were often set to music, and are filled with praise to God for what He has done for His people in the past.

"Let praise and thanksgiving be expressed in song. When tempted, instead of giving utterance to our feelings, let us by faith lift up a song of thanksgiving to God."³

We can praise God in playing musical instruments. The Old Testament is full of references to the playing of musical instruments in praise to God. Those of us who use musical instruments in praise must be careful not to become

¹Venden, 178-179.

²Sammy Tippit, Worthy of Worship (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 90.

³Ellen G. White, Ministry of Healing (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1974), 254.

too dependent upon those instruments so that when the music stops, the praise and worship immediately cease! Our praise should ascend to God even when no instruments are readily available. But God has ordained that musical instruments be used to help facilitate our praises. He had created us with musical sensitivities that immediately respond to good musicianship, and he had shown us that the proper response to music should take the form of praise. The Old Testament shows that musical instruments are more than merely things that are played to accompany worship; they are in and of themselves a praise to God: "Praise him with the sound of the trumpet . . . with the lute and harp . . . with timbrel and dance . . . with the stringed instruments and flutes . . . with loud cymbals . . . with clashing cymbals" (Ps 150:3-50).

We can praise God in our prayer. Prayer is one of the most effective means of praising the Lord. Prayer doesn't have to be public in order to praise God. We can praise Him privately as well. If you wish to express appreciation to some friend of yours, you don't have to pay for a spot on the evening news or run an ad in the newspaper. You can speak to that person personally.

The same is true of our praise to God. At times we will want to share with others through a public statement of thanksgiving for His blessing to us. But perhaps the most personal worship and praise will be private on our knees.

"We do not pray any too much, but we are too sparing of giving thanks. We are the constant recipients of God's mercies, and yet how little gratitude we express, how little we praise Him for what He has done for us."¹

We can praise God by witnessing to what He has done for us. Here is one of the reasons why Christians should witness. As we share with others what God has done for us, their interest is often aroused. They are drawn to Him as He is uplifted through our praise.

The demoniacs who wanted to follow Jesus were told to go back home and tell what great things God had done for them. This avenue for outreach is available to every Christian. You may not be skilled in presenting doctrinal arguments, but you can share your experience with Jesus.

The Benefits of Praise²

The benefits of praise are numerous. Praise is not just good for God--it's good for us! That's one of the beautiful aspects of God's kingdom. He always arranges to give back to us whatever we give to Him--and with interest! The more we praise Him for His blessings, the more we are blessed. Notice some of the specific ways, along with the inspired comments for reference.

¹Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1977), 103.

²Venden, 180-182.

More Praise Equals More Power In Prayer

"If the loving-kindness of God called forth more thanksgiving and praise, we would have far more power in prayer. We would abound more and more in the love of God and have more bestowed to praise Him for. You who complain that God does not hear your prayers, change your present order and mingle praise with your petitions. When you consider His goodness and mercies you will find that He will consider your wants."¹

More Praise Equals More Victory

"The exercise of praise 'drives back the power of Satan.' It expels the spirit of murmuring and complaint, and the temper loses ground."²

"If there was much more praising the Lord, and far less doleful recitation of discouragements, many more victories would be achieved."³

More Praise Equals More Faith

"If more praising of God were engaged in now, hope and courage and faith would steadily increase."⁴

¹Ellen G. White, Testimonies, 7:317.

²Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, 300.

³Ellen G. White, Evangelism, 499.

⁴Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, 202; see also idem, The Ministry of Healing, 100.

More Praise Equals More Souls Won to Christ

"There is no more effective means to winning souls to Christ than praise."¹

More Praise Equals More Efficiency in Service

"Efficiency in His service would be greatly increased by recounting His goodness and His wonderful works in behalf of His children."²

More Praise Equals More Physical Health

"Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise."³

More Praise Equals a Closer Relationship With God

"The soul may ascend nearer heaven on the wings of praise."⁴

More Praise Equals More Glory For God

"Whoever offers praise glorifies me" (Ps 50:23).

"So praise the Lord! Praise Him for who He is, for His love and mercy and kindness. Praise Him for what He has done in the past. Praise Him for what He is doing for you today. Praise Him for the promise of what He is going to do

¹Ibid.

²Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, 300.

³Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing, 251.

⁴Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, 104.

in the future. We can praise Him not only in words, but by consecrating to Him all that we are and have.

Would you like to offer to God the greatest praise possible? The greatest praise is to become consecrated channels through whom He can work (see Acts of the Apostles, 566). You are invited to do that today!"¹

No matter when, where, or how we praise the Lord, we are to praise with our entire beings. "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name" (Ps 103:1, KJV). In Mark 12:30 Jesus highlighted for us the foremost commandment of all: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the pinnacle of praise: to love and praise him with everything that is within us.

¹Venden, 182.

SERMON 6

WONDER AND WORSHIP¹

Rev 5:9-10, 12²

True worship involves wonder. Wonder is an overwhelming feeling of the majesty, awesomeness, and greatness of God. Wonder is adoration born out of a sense of catching a vision of the attributes, character, and love of God. The trouble is that wonder is a rare ingredient. You do not often find it present in most modern worship. After all, what is there to wonder about? We know all about God. We study; we listen to sermons; we read books that explain what God and the Christian life are all about. We have outlined the Bible, and analyzed God's attributes. What is there to draw our wonder?

Furthermore, we live in the space age and have watched rockets and space shuttles take off and return. We have witnessed man land and walk on the moon. Thanks to TV, we have seen everything from the conception of a baby to the eruption of a volcano. There is no more mystery, no more

¹This sermon is based on chapters 4 and 5 of Wiersbe, 43-62.

²Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are from the New King James Bible.

wonder in our world. We are no longer struck by the wonder and mystery of God nor by His awesome creative power nor even by His revelation of grace. We have descriptions and definitions for everything scientific and theological.

If worship is to be meaningful, it must involve wonder. Which means that we learn to accept things we cannot understand, and appreciate things that we can admire but not explain. T. F. Torrance, states it elegantly: "Worship is the exercise of the mind in the contemplation of God in which wonder and awe play an important part in stretching and enlarging our vision, or in opening up our conceptual forms to take in that which, by its nature, far outruns them."¹

The Meaning of Wonder

Many different words encompass the idea of wonder: *amazement, surprise, astonishment, bewilderment, admiration, awe, and fascination*, to name but a few. The word in the Hebrew Bible ("His name shall be called Wonderful . . ." Isa 9:6) means "to distinguish, to separate." It carries the idea of that which is unique, distinguished, or different. In our English versions, the word is translated "hidden, marvelous, too high, and too hard." The Greek words in the

¹Wiersbe, 44.

New Testament are similar: "amazement, marvelous, admiration, wonderful work."¹

In harmony with of these synonyms, we must recognize the fact that true wonder is not a passing emotion or some kind of shallow excitement. It has depth and value to it. It enriches your life. Wonder is not cheap amusement that brings a smile to your face. It is an encounter with God that brings awe to your heart. You are overwhelmed with an emotion that is a mixture of gratitude, adoration, reverence, fear, and love. You are not looking for explanations; you are lost in the wonder of God.

Wonder is not born of ignorance: it is born of knowledge. The more a truly reverent person knows about God and His Love, the more overwhelmed he is. Scientific or theological *facts* may give some people a big head, but *truths* give to the reverent saint a burning heart, a thrilling encounter with God.

Wonder is the seed of spiritual knowledge and understanding. Moses staring at the burning bush and Peter struggling with the breaking nets illustrate this truth clearly. Both men had their lives changed because they were amazed at something God did in their lives.

When we are in our private devotions, our daily work, or the corporate worship of the church, we must cultivate this attitude of wonder. We can never tell when

¹Ibid.

we may encounter our own burning bush or breaking net. And that encounter could mark the beginning of the transformation of our lives.

God is wonderful in what He is, what He says, and what He does; and this wonder is beyond us. "Behold, God is great, and we do not know him," said Elihu (Job 36:26). "Can you search out the deep things of God?" asked Zophar of Job. "Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?" (Job 11:7). Paul asserts: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Rom 11:33).

The Wonder of the Creator

The wonder of God is revealed in many ways throughout the Scripture, but I want to focus on four of the worship hymns recorded in the book of Revelation. What the hosts of heaven are saying and doing in their worship ought to be worthy of our study and imitation.

The first hymn is found in Rev 4 where the emphasis is on the wonder of God as Creator.

Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night saying: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"

Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives

forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created." (Rev 4:6-11)

You note, of course, that the theme of their worship is God the Creator. David expressed the same attitude centuries ago: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Ps 19:1).

What we see in creation pretty much depends on what we have in our hearts. The adoring believer joyfully accepts the creation as a window through which the Creator may be seen. The covetous unbeliever as well as the covetous *believer* looks at creation and sees, not a window, but a mirror. When we look at creation and see only ourselves, then we start to think that we are the Creator; the result is idolatry.

As you listen to the "creation hymn" recorded in Rev 4, you discover a great deal about God. He is certainly the sovereign God, for He is enthroned (the word throne is used fourteen times in this chapter) and His name is "Lord God Almighty." In the Greek text, this name is used six times in Revelation, and "Almighty" is used nine times. The only other book in the Bible that uses this name as extensively is the book of Job, where God is certainly seen in His sovereignty and power.

The heavenly hosts worship a sovereign God Who is holy. There is none like Him. He is pure: "God is light" (I John 1:5). This means that creation is not sinful, for a holy God would not create sinful matter. Creation is God's holy gift to us and, as stewards, we must use this gift for the good of man and the glory of God.

In Rev 4 we have the twenty-four elders falling down at God's throne and worshiping the Creator (4:11). In Rev 5 you will find this same group worshiping the Redeemer (5:9), but the book begins with their worship of the Creator. Why? Because until man admits he is a creature who is answerable to a Creator, he can never confess that he is a sinner who needs a Redeemer. This explains why Paul, when addressing Gentile audiences, began with God the Creator (Acts 14:5-17 and 22-31). To the Jews, Paul's emphasis was on God's covenant with Israel; to the Gentiles, his emphasis was God's covenant with creation. We need this same emphasis today both in our witness and our worship.

In early years as a Christian, I would argue, "The important thing is the cross!" How wrong I was! I did not realize then as I do now that the God of creation and the God of salvation are the same God, and that these must not be divorced from each other.

I'd like to suggest what it might mean to us to worship an awesome and great God who had created all things. We know, for instance, that we are living in a galaxy that

is moving like a great, oblong pinwheel through time and space. At the point where we're riding in this great galaxy, on planet Earth, we're moving along at about 136 miles per second, or 490,000 miles an hour. At this speed we make one rotation in 200 million years. Now, our galaxy is a fairly expansive place. If you want to go across it the short way, and you move at the speed of light--we know that the speed of light is about 186,000 miles per second; that's moving right along--you can cross the narrow expanse of our galaxy in 20,000 years. Twenty-thousand light-years to cross it. If you want to take the scenic view it is 100,000 light-years. Our galaxy is about five times as long as it is wide; 100,000 light-years to go its length.

I don't want you to feel inferior about this, but our sun is a relatively minor star--not mediocre, but minor to a degree. It is about 110 times, roughly, the size of our earth in diameter, or about 860,000 miles in diameter. However, we do have a star in our galaxy--1 Antares--that is large enough that if it were like a regular size globe, you could put our sun, our moon, and our planets out to the orbit of Mars inside it.

There are about one billion other galaxies like our own. Astronomers now tell us the number of stars in the

universe exceeds the number of grains of sand on all the beaches of all the seas of the entire earth.¹

How does this relate to me? If the God who made the heavens and the earth is my God, there is absolutely no problems too big for Him. It's impossible that I've come up with a problem too big for the God who made the heavens and the earth. I'm serving the creator God, and there's no problem that I face that He cannot solve. God is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He is the almighty God.

What problem have you been struggling with all week? What problem has so consumed your mind that you can't even concentrate on your family or your work? Is the problem, perhaps, that you're bringing it to a God who's too small, and you need to bring it to a God who is big enough to handle it?

I often think, *how strange it is that as man has expanded his ability to understand the universe, he has diminished his ability to understand the greatness of God!*

Another result ought to be faithful stewardship of what God has given us. People who know how to worship the Creator will also know how to use their means in His service. The proper worship of God the Creator could be a step toward solving some churches' budget problems. "The

¹Paul Lee Tan, Encyclopedia Of 7700 Illustrations (Rockville, MD: Assurance Publishers, 1979), 549-551, 1340-1342.

earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness" (Ps 24:1). David knew this truth, and this is why he said to the Lord, "For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You" (1 Chr 29:14). If we all worshiped the Creator as did King David, we would be as generous as he was.

Knowing the Creator is also a great help in practical Christian living. Your adoring response of worship to your Creator ought to help cure you of worry. At least this is what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:19-34). The rich worry because they do not have enough and struggle to secure what they need. Jesus did not give a lecture on budgets. Instead, He pointed to God's bounty in creation--His care of the birds and flowers--and then made His point: put God first, trust Him, and you will not have to worry.

"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth," admonished Solomon as he brought Eccl to a close (Eccl 12:1). Knowing and worshiping the Creator is a sure antidote to pessimism and cynical approach to life. The believer who sings the praises of the Creator is not likely to go around muttering, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (Eccl 1:2). Rather, he will join with Paul and shout, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor 15:58).

Finally, when we know and worship the Creator, we can face personal suffering and take it and use it for God's glory. "Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator" (1 Pet 4:19). Not a "faithful King" or even a "faithful Savior," but "a faithful Creator." Only a faithful Creator can make "all things work together for good" (Rom 8:28).

The Wonder of the Redeemer

The wonder of God in creation is but the beginning. We must now consider the wonder of God in redemption.

You are worthy to take the scroll,
 And open its seals;
 For You were slain,
 And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
 Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
 And have made us kings and priests to our God;
 And we shall reign on the earth . . .
 Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
 To receive power and riches and wisdom,
 And strength and honor and glory and blessing!
 (Rev 5:9, 10, 12)

Most of us feel very much at home with the theme of redemption, because the cross of Christ is central in our theology and our worship, and rightly so. "The atonement is the crucial doctrine of the faith," wrote Leon Morris. "Unless we are right here it matters little, or so it seems to me, what we are like elsewhere." According to the hosts of heaven, the cross means *redemption*.

It is tragic when a believer loses the wonder of what it means to be redeemed. Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

once defined a Christian as a person "who is amazed at the fact that he is forgiven. He does not take it for granted."¹ One reason why we have baptism and the Lord's Supper is that we might be reminded of the price Jesus paid to save us. He has taken the wounds of Calvary to heaven with Him, perhaps to remind us *forever* that He died in our stead.

Twenty-eight times in the book of Revelation, Jesus is referred to as "the Lamb." The Greek word means "a little pet lamb," the kind you would not want to see slain for any reason. The major themes of Revelation are all related to the Lamb. God's wrath is "the wrath of the Lamb" (6:16). The second coming saints are washed "in the blood of the Lamb" (19:7), and the church is "the bride, the Lamb's wife" (21:9). The heavenly throne is "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (22:1, 3). Eliminate the Lamb--redemption--from the book of Revelation and there is very little left!

We worship the Lamb, and wonder at the Lamb, because of Who He is. He is both human and divine, for He is "the Root of David" (Rev 5:5) as well as the Lamb of God. This refers to our Lord's human Jewish ancestry (Isa 11:1, 10). He has both humanity and sovereignty, for He is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev 5:5; see also Gen 49:8-10). He is both Redeemer and Ruler; Savior and Sovereign. The wonder

¹Wiersbe, 56.

of the nature of our Lord, His birth, life and death, is enough to excite the wonder in our hearts! Paul was right: "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim 3:16).

Consider John's symbolic description of the Lamb: "having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into the earth" (Rev 5:6). Seven, of course, is, in the Bible, the number of perfection. Here we have "seven horns," symbolizing perfect power; "seven eyes," symbolizing perfect wisdom; and "seven Spirits," symbolizing His perfect presence in all the earth. The Lamb is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent!

We worship Him because of what He is and because of where He is--at the very throne of heaven. The Father is on the throne, and the Lamb is "in the midst of the throne" (vs. 6). Jesus Christ stands in the center of that series of concentric circles that includes all the hosts of heaven. Jesus Christ is not on earth in a manger or a boat, or even on a cross. He is in heaven! He is at the center of heaven's worship! He is exalted "far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come" (Eph 1:21).

We worship Him not only for Who He is and where He is, but also what He has done for us. His was a sacrificial death for the sins of the whole world, "every tribe and

tongue and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). When we worship the Lamb, we are bearing witness to the good news of the gospel that must be taken to the ends of the earth.

The praise of the heavenly hosts recorded in Rev 5 contains the elements of a balanced worship. They sang a gospel song about the blood of the Lamb that redeems sinners; they sang a missionary song about every tribe and tongue and people and nation; they reminded the church of its exalted position as kings and priests; and they even touched on future events; "we shall reign on the earth" (vs. 10). This is a good model for us to follow if we want our worship to be balanced.

When telling his young daughter the story of Abraham and Isaac, a father related how God had finally told Abraham not to kill Isaac and had provided a sacrificial lamb instead. The little girl looked up with a sad expression and said, 'I don't like killing lambs.' The father was speechless for a moment and then realized what traumatic and memorable events such sacrifices were. How serious the killing of a lamb for sacrifice and how distractive the reason for the sacrifice: sin. If the killing of a pure white lamb seems horrendous, how immeasurably more was the crucifixion of the Lamb of God.¹

The Wonder of the King

The third worship scene is recorded in Rev 11:15-18 where the emphasis is on praising Christ the King.

We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty,
The One who is and who was and who is to come,
Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.
The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come,

¹Michael P. Green, Illustrations for Biblical Preaching (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 310.

And the time of the dead; the they should be judged,
And that You should reward Your servants the prophets
and the saints,
And those who fear Your name, small and great,
And should destroy those who destroy the earth.

This is actually a hymn of thanksgiving, and the participants are praising Jesus Christ for three specific blessings.

First, they praise Him because He reigns supremely. This hymn was triggered by loud voices in heaven saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (vs. 15). The King has taken His throne!

To be sure, Jesus Christ is reigning today as our Priest-King, seated on the Father's throne (Rev 3:21). He is our Melchizedek, King of Righteousness and King of Peace (Heb 6:20, 7:1-3). He graciously rules in the lives of willing believers and exercises His authority through His Word and His Spirit. But one day, He will exercise absolute authority when He takes His great power and reigns.

It is not too difficult for us to worship the King of Kings and Lord of Lords Who wore a crown of thorns for us. It is the next blessing that baffles us: they praise Jesus Christ because He judges righteously. He shall judge the rebellious nation, the wicked, and the destroyers of the earth.

Is it right to praise a God of judgement? If we worship the Lamb that was slain then we must believe in

God's holy judgement on sin. If God could judge His sinless Son, Who became our substitute, why can He not judge sinful nations and rebellious sinners. A sentimental view of the Cross leads to a sentimental view of sin; the result is a condescending God Who is complacent toward sin and tolerant of sinners. But this is not the God Who elicits the praises of the hosts of heaven!

Most of the songs about future events emphasize the more positive doctrines: the redemption of man, the reunion of God's people, and the everlasting life. Why praise the Lord because He is coming to judge? Because that is what the hosts of heaven do! In fact, all of nature anticipates the arrival of the Judge and deliverance from the bondage of sin.

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
Let the sea roar, and all its fullness;
let the field be joyful, and all that is in it.
Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the Lord.

For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth.

He shall judge the world with righteousness,
And the peoples with His truth. (Ps 96:11-13)

If we are unmoved by the wonder of God's judgement, then either we have forgotten what sin is really like, or we have lost our vision of the holiness of God. It is not enough to preach, "God is love." We must also declare, "For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12:29).

The third blessing that calls forth the praises of the heavenly hosts is the fact that Christ rewards

righteously. He rewards His servants, small and great. They all have this in common: they fear His name. They stand in awe of God and His holy name, and by their faithful lives and service, they seek to honor that name.

The Wonder of the Bridegroom

The fourth worship scene focuses on the conquering Bridegroom and presents the great "Heavenly Hallelujah Chorus."

After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are his judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and he has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" (Rev 19:1-3)

Unable to remain silent, the elders respond with, "Amen! Alleluia!" And then a great multitude climaxes this heavenly "Hallelujah Chorus" with: "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" (vs. 6). The Hebrew word *hallelu* is an imperative meaning "Praise! Boast!"; and, when you add *jah*, the name of God, you end up with *hallelujah*, "Praise Jehovah!" (The Greek is *alleluia*.)

The word *hallelujah* is used as an expression of rejoicing. The praise in Rev 19 is in contrast to the lamentation in Rev 18, where the world rulers mourn over the fall of Babylon. The heavenly hosts rejoice at the destruction of the harlot and at the marriage of the Lamb. Jesus Christ comes forth to conquer and to establish His

righteous kingdom. "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready" (19:7).

The apostle John was so moved by this heavenly worship that he fell at the feet of the angel and started to worship him! I wonder how many of us today would be that stirred by the contemplation of the judgment of the world, the victory of the King of Kings, the marriage of the Lamb, and the establishing of the kingdom?

In this message, we have been carefully considering the wonder of God: the Creator, Redeemer, the Victorious King, and the Conqueror. We have hardly scratched the surface of heaven's praise, and yet our hearts have been stilled and stirred by the wonder of God.

The better we know the Word of God, the better we shall know the God of the Word. Throughout Scripture, the wonder of God is revealed in both declaration and demonstration. "You are the God who does wonders" (Ps 77:14). The God of creation is the God of redemption. He is the King Who reigns and the Conqueror Who defeats every enemy. The better we understand these wonders, the better we shall worship Him.

When Queen Victoria had just ascended her throne, she went, as is the custom of Royalty, to hear "The Messiah" rendered. She had been instructed as to her conduct by those who knew, and was told that she must not rise when the others stood at the singing of the Hallelujah Chorus. When that magnificent chorus was being sung and the singers were shouting "Hallelujah!

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth," she sat with great difficulty.

It seemed as if she would rise in spite of the custom of kings and queens, but finally when they came to that part of the chorus where with a shout they proclaim Him King of Kings suddenly the young queen rose and stood with bowed head, as if she would take her own crown from off her head and cast it at His feet.¹

The Wonder of It All

Former Vice President Dan Quale visited Seattle in October of 1991. Unexpectedly, he went to a Denny's restaurant. He saw a man sitting by himself, so he went and sat beside him. This man was so impressed that Dan Quale, the Vice President of the United States of America, took the time to sit with him and spend a few minutes with him, that he said, "I am a Democrat, but I will most likely vote Republican this election."

Now I want to tell you that Jesus, Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Jesus Christ the Son of God, Jesus Christ the Creator, Jesus Christ the Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ the King of Kings, thinks you are so special that He, not only took a few minutes of His busy time to talk to you, but he put His life on the line for you.

The Son of God, the Ruler of the Universe, became a man just because he loves you.

The Son of God, The Royal Being, died for you just because He loves you.

¹Tan, 1651.

Jesus Christ, the Savior, loves you so much, He can't be away from you. He sends the Holy Spirit to be with you while He prepares a wonderful heaven for you. All of this just because He loves you.

Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, is coming back soon, just because He loves you.

Jesus Christ lives in your home. Jesus Christ lives in your heart. Jesus Christ lives with you and your family. He is always with you.

The proper response is Wow! Wow! Wonder and worship.

APPENDIX B

SERMON OUTLINE HANDOUTS

SERMON 1

WHAT IS WORSHIP

John 4:4-26 Isa 6:1-8 Acts 2:42-47

I. What is Worship?

II. Biblical Examples of Worship.

1. Isaiah's experience. Isa 6:1-8

2. The Samaritan Woman. John 4:4-26

3. The Early church. Acts 2:42-47

III. A Biblical Model of Worship.

1. Adoration. Exod 33; I John 3:1
 Adoration manifests itself in:

a. An affirmation of God's goodness. Ps 103:1-6; I
 Sam 12:7

b. Recognizing God's worthiness. Rev 5:9, 12, 13

c. A sense of awe and wonder. Deut 4:39; Ps
 8:1,3,4

- d. Acknowledgement of God's sovereignty. I Chr 16:25; Ps 45:6

- 2. Exaltation. I Pet 1:8, Ps 100:1-2, Ps 105:1-3
Exaltation manifests itself in:
 - a. Rejoicing in the cross of Christ. Gal 6:14

 - b. Proclaiming God's Word. Rom 1:16; II Tim 4:2, 3:16, 17

 - c. Praise and thanksgiving. 1 Chr 10:8-10; Ps 100:1-3

 - d. Testimony. II Tim 1:8; Mal 3:16

 - e. Bringing gifts to God. I Chr 16:29; II Cor 9:7; Mal 3:10

 - f. Community participation. Heb 10:25; Col 3:16

3. Reverence. Pss 2:11 & 5:7

4. Submission. Luke 22:42; I Pet 5:6

IV. The Result of Worship-Renewal

1. Wholeness. Ps 23:1; Mic 6:8; I Thess 5:23

2. Peace and rest. Jer 17:7 & 8; Heb 4:9

3. Sense of destiny. Isa 40:31; Heb 11:10

4. Restoration to God's image. Ps 23:3; Jude 24:25

5. Glorifying God in life and service. Matt 28:19 &
20; Eph 3:17-21

V. A personal response.

SERMON 2
WORD OF GOD AND WORSHIP
Neh 8:5-8

- I. The word reveals to us the God we worship.
1. The nature and character of God. Ps 145:5; Isa 40:26

 2. The nature and character of Jesus Christ. Col 2:2-3
- II. The Word reveals to us the purpose of our worship.
1. The Bible is the means of the operation of the Holy Spirit. Eph 5:18; John 4:24

 2. The Bible gives us hope. Heb 11:1; Rom 15:4

 3. The Bible shall make you free. 1 Kgs 4:29; Ps 18:19; John 8:32-34
- III. The Word reveals to us the power of our worship.
1. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Rom 10:17; John 20:31
 2. The evil one is overcome by the word of God. Eph 6:17; 1 John 2:14

SERMON 3
PRAYER AND WORSHIP
John 15:1-8

- I. Prayer is seeking God's presence. Exod 13:21; Matt 1:23; 1 John 1:14.

- II. Prayer is seeking God's companionship. Prov 18:24; Heb 4:15.

- III. Prayer is seeking God's confidence. 2 Tim 1:12.

- IV. Prayer is seeking God's compassion. 1 John 4:8; 2 Pet 1:5-7.

- V. Prayer is seeking God's power. Zech 4:6.

- VI. Prayer is seeking God's glory. John 14:13; 15:5

SERMON 4
OFFERING AND WORSHIP
Heb 13:15-17

- I. We are to offer the Lord our praises. Heb 13:15;
Col 3:16
- II. We are to offer the Lord our good work. Heb 13:16;
Rom 10:3; I Thess 2:16; Titus 3:8
- III. We are to offer the Lord our possessions. Heb
13:16; Phil 2:17 & 4:18; Rom 15:16; Matt 6:19-21
- IV. We are to offer the Lord our lives. Heb 9:14 &
13:16 & 17; Rom 12:1

SERMON 5
PRAISE AND WORSHIP
Ps 103:1-5

- I. The essence of praise. Pss 103:1 & 42:5-6
- II. Why should we praise the Lord?
1. We praise Him because we are commanded to do so.
Pss 150:1 & 22:3.

 2. We praise Him because there is power in praise.
2 Chr 20.

 3. We praise Him because He is worthy of our praise.
Pss 48:1, 54:6, & 34:3; Rev 4:11

 4. We praise Him because we were created to praise
Him. Jer 13:11; 1 Pet 2:9; Isa 43:21
- III. When should we praise Him? Pss 105 & 106;
Hab 3:17-18
- IV. How should we Praise the Lord?
1. In songs. Ps 149:6; Acts 16:25-34

 2. In playing musical instruments. Ps 150:3-5

3. In Prayer. Matt 6:5-14.

4. In testimony. Mark 5:1-20 especially verse 19

V. The benefits of praise.

1. More praise equals more power in prayer.

2. More praise equals more power in victory.

3. More praise equals more power in faith.

4. More praise equals more souls won to Christ.

5. More praise equals more efficiency in service.

6. More praise equals more physical health.

7. More praise equals more glory to God.

SERMON 6
AWE AND WONDER
Rev 5:9-10,12

I. The wonder of the Creator. Rev 4

II. The wonder of the Redeemer. Rev 5:9-10,12

III. The wonder of the King. Rev 11:15-18

IV. The wonder of the Bridegroom. Rev 19:1-3

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE HANDED OUT ON

February 28, 1995

QUESTIONNAIRE ON WORSHIP

Doctor of Ministry Project

S. Joseph Kidder

Read the following questions very carefully and indicate the answer which you think is right for you. You may also write your own opinions freely on the place provided.

1. Circle the appropriate number(s). You may circle as many as you like. Worship for me at church is...
 - a. Offering praise and thanks to God.
 - b. Receiving a blessing from God.
 - c. Hearing a good sermon.
 - d. Fellowship with other believers.
 - e. Corporate Prayer.
 - f. Bible study.
 - g. Knowing God more intimately.
 - h. Attendance at church.
 - i. Participation. (Worship is a two-way street--God Speaks and I respond).
 - j. All of the above.

Which of the above items are most important in worship for you?

Answer: _____

2. Circle the degree of importance the following items have for you in worship

	<u>None</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Much</u>	<u>Very Much</u>
a. Adoration	1	2	3	4	5
b. Reverence	1	2	3	4	5
c. Exaltation	1	2	3	4	5
d. Awe & Wonder	1	2	3	4	5
e. Submission	1	2	3	4	5
f. Renewal	1	2	3	4	5

3. Circle the degree of importance the following parts of worship are for you.

	<u>None</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Much</u>	<u>Very Much</u>
a. Sermon	1	2	3	4	5
b. The use of Scripture (Scripture Reading & Sermon) ..	1	2	3	4	5
c. Prayer	1	2	3	4	5
d. Praise & Singing	1	2	3	4	5
e. Offering as our response to God	1	2	3	4	5
f. Fellowship	1	2	3	4	5
g. Others (write) _____	1	2	3	4	5

4. Feelings people might have during a worship service are listed below. Circle the number which indicates the degree in which you might experience each of these.

	<u>None</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Much</u>	<u>Very Much</u>
a. A sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit ...	1	2	3	4	5
b. Awe in God's Presence	1	2	3	4	5
c. Personal closeness to God	1	2	3	4	5
d. Happiness, joy	1	2	3	4	5
e. Apathy	1	2	3	4	5
f. Boredom	1	2	3	4	5
g. Turned off	1	2	3	4	5
h. Others (write)	1	2	3	4	5

5. Circle the number indicating the relationship that you have with Jesus Christ.

<u>None</u>	<u>Weak</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Strong</u>	<u>Intimate</u>
1	2	3	4	5

6. Age 1-19, 20-35, 36-50, 51 -65, Over 65

7. Highest level of education you have achieved, Grade School, High School, College, Advanced Graduate Degree (Master's, Doctorate, Etc.)

8. Gender: Male or Female (please circle)

9. How long have you been a Seventh-day Adventist? Circle the years group.
 1-5 yrs 6-10 yrs More than 10 yrs

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE HANDED OUT ON

APRIL 1, 1995

QUESTIONNAIRE ON WORSHIP
Doctor of Ministry Project
 S. Joseph Kidder

Read the following questions very carefully and indicate the answer which you think is right for you. You may also write your own opinions freely on the place provided.

1. Which of the following sermon(s) on worship did you hear. Circle as many:
- a. What's Worship?
 - B. The Word of God and Worship
 - c. Prayer and Worship
 - d. Offering and Worship
 - e. The Power of Praise
 - f. Awe and Wonder

Yes No

2. Did this series of worship emphasis add to your understanding of worship.
3. What changes have you made (if any) in your worship practice as a result of the sermon series?

4. Circle the appropriate number(s). You may circle as many as you like. Worship for me at church is...
- a. Offering praise and thanks to God.
 - b. Receiving a blessing from God.
 - c. Hearing a good sermon.
 - d. Fellowship with other believers.
 - e. Corporate Prayer.
 - f. Bible study.
 - g. Knowing God more intimately.
 - h. Attendance at church.
 - i. Participation. (Worship is a two-way street--God Speaks and I respond).
 - j. All of the above.

Which of the above items are most important in worship for you?

Answer: _____

5. Circle the degree of importance the following items have for you in worship

	<u>None</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Much</u>	<u>Very Much</u>
a. Adoration	1	2	3	4	5
b. Reverence	1	2	3	4	5
c. Exaltation	1	2	3	4	5
d. Awe & Wonder	1	2	3	4	5
e. Submission	1	2	3	4	5
f. Renewal	1	2	3	4	5

6. Circle the degree of importance the following parts of worship are for you.

	<u>None</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Much</u>	<u>Very Much</u>
a. Sermon	1	2	3	4	5
b. The use of Scripture (Scripture Reading & Sermon) ..	1	2	3	4	5
c. Prayer	1	2	3	4	5
d. Praise & Singing	1	2	3	4	5
e. Offering as our response to God	1	2	3	4	5
f. Fellowship	1	2	3	4	5
g. Others (write) _____	1	2	3	4	5

7. Feelings people might have during a worship service are listed below. Circle the number which indicates the degree in which you might experience each of these.

	<u>None</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Much</u>	<u>Very Much</u>
a. A sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit ...	1	2	3	4	5
b. Awe in God's Presence	1	2	3	4	5
c. Personal closeness to God	1	2	3	4	5
d. Happiness, joy	1	2	3	4	5
e. Apathy	1	2	3	4	5
f. Boredom	1	2	3	4	5
g. Turned off	1	2	3	4	5
h. Others (write)	1	2	3	4	5

8. Circle the number indicating the relationship that you have with Jesus Christ.

	<u>None</u>	<u>Weak</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Strong</u>	<u>Intimate</u>
	1	2	3	4	5

9. Age 1-19, 20-35, 36-50, 51 -65, Over 65

10. Highest level of education you have achieved, Grade School, High School, College, Advanced Graduate Degree (Master's, Doctorate, Etc.)

11. Gender: Male or Female (please circle)

12. How long have you been a Seventh-day Adventist? Circle the years group.
 1-5 yrs 6-10 yrs More than 10 years

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