

Basics of the Christian Faith
Lesson 11
Worship

A Bible believing church celebrates and enacts the Gospel of Jesus Christ in its worship. Worship centers in Christ. The good news of redemption in Christ brings rejoicing, thanksgiving, and celebration in the “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” of worship.

Jesus himself did not articulate the details of Christian worship, but he does set the standard of acceptable worship for all believers – “in spirit and in truth.”

Isaiah 6.1-11a: A Model for Worship

It is hard to say what worship style is the correct one. This passage from Isaiah is a good one to follow to guide you through a proper worship presentation/attitude. It is adaptable to many forms.

A Dialogue with God

The worship of God is a dialogue. This reality distinguishes biblical worship from the false worship of the world’s false religions (Psalm 115). The Isaiah 6 model provides a full and clearly expressed dialogue with God that contains the most comprehensive set of worship responses found in any single worship event recorded in Scripture.

Divine Revelation

This simply means “God’s revealing of himself to us.” This is a process – not an event. We learn that God is knowable and wants us to know him.

Revelation of God’s presence - In Isaiah 6 we observe the revelation of God’s presence. Without a word God made his presence known to Isaiah, and in that moment Isaiah saw the Lord, high and lifted up. This kind of initiative prompts all true worship. Seeing God with the eyes of faith compels us to worship him. It is his divine presence, not ours, that makes the greatest impact in worship.

Revelation of God’s person – God wants us to know him as he is, for God is only worshipped acceptably as he is. When people “see God” as he is, worship happens. Matt. 28.17 says, “When they saw him, they worshipped him.” The revelation of God’s person prompts worship.

Revelation of God's power – To behold the great works and the mighty deeds of God moves us to respond to him in awe and wonder and in thanks and praise.

Revelation of God's plans – The purposes of God ultimately translate into specific plans for our lives. The God we worship is committed to helping us know and live out his plans for us – “plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer. 29.11).

Our Responses to God

Isaiah 6 illustrates four fundamental responses to God's revelation.

Adoration and Praise – The song of the seraphs found in Isaiah 6.3 and Revelation 4.8 provides an excellent model for the way God should be worshipped:

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord (God) Almighty; (who was, and is, and is to come;)

The whole earth is full of his glory.

Biblical praise is rich with adoration and praise. Praise is an ongoing celebration of the God in whom we take greatest delight. To love, to adore, to enjoy, to honor, to exalt, to magnify, to glorify, and to praise the Lord is our first order of business as the worshippers of God.

Contrition and Confession – The revelation of God's holiness to Isaiah had a profound impact on the prophet. Not only did Isaiah see the Lord on the throne – he also saw himself in a way that he had never experienced before. Isaiah is moved to confess his unholiness before a holy God. Merely seeing God as he is – absolutely holy (pure) – the prophet sees himself as he is – a sinful member of a sinful race. Isaiah does what any one of us would do upon seeing God in this way – he admits his sinfulness to God.

Submission and Dedication – this response is of glad surrender to God. “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6.8). The act of yielding to the will and purpose of God and committing ourselves to whatever God is revealing at the time is a crucial moment in any worship encounter.

Our response in obedience is important. This is what Paul declares in Romans 12.1: “Therefore, I urge you... in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual worship.” The nature of our response to God is invested in the words ‘living sacrifices.’ This is a continual offering up of ourselves to

God, not a once in a lifetime experience. Commitment is a day-by-day, hour by hour, moment by moment yielding up of our entire person to God.

Supplication and Petition – it is encouraging to know that within the framework of authentic worship there is a place where we may lay our burdens before the Lord, make specific requests of him, and intercede for others. Christians are in fact encouraged to do so.

Eph. 6.18 – pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

Phil. 4.6 – Do not be anxious for anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

(See also 1 Tim. 2.1-3).

The Proper Style of Worship

We see in the Psalms both reverence:

Psalm 5.7 - But I, by your great mercy, will come into your house; in reverence will I bow down toward your holy temple.

We also see some celebration:

Psalm 150.3-5 - Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.

(This sounds quite noisy, doesn't it)?

There are some people who believe that true worship lies in just one of the expressions. We find the proper guideline of worship in the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1 – If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but have no love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

Let your style of worship be motivated by love. Judge no one according to his or her expression of praise. True worship is your obedience to the Lord and is motivated by your love for him and your love for your brothers and sister.