

Worship

Opening Prayer

The bible sets the standard for how we engage in worship. In bible school they teach a principle called the law of first mention. One of the evidences of bible unity is the internal consistency. One of the areas where this consistency is very apparent is evident in what is called the Law of First Mention. This is simply described as whenever an important word is mentioned in the bible our scripture gives its most complete and accurate meaning. This phenomenon gives us great insight into how to interpret the meaning of a biblical concept. Examples of this are numerous:

- Light – Genesis 1:1
- Perfect – Genesis 6:9
- Covenant – Genesis 6:18

I urge you to check this out as it will help in your bible study. But before I get off track I want to get to into what the characteristics of worship are.

So... Turn with me to Genesis 22:1-14

What are characteristics of Worship?

Worship is first mentioned in Genesis 22:5

The word “worship” means “reverence or devotion for a deity”. This word derives from the Anglo-Saxon word “weorthscipe” which means “to ascribe worth to a person or object”. This is the word that most closely matches in the English. This means that we are to give God our reverence, love and devotion because he is worthy.

Going deeper on the word worship we look at original Hebrew word “saha” – This word means to lay prostrate, to bow down, to crouch, to lie flat, to humbly beseech, to make obeisance, to be reverent, to worship.

When we look at the New Testament the word used means to kiss the hand in a token of reverence. It is uses in the context of “a dog licking his master’s hand.

***Are we getting the picture here people? Worship is an image of complete trust, love and devotion that is expressed in many forms, not the least of which is music.

People get some strange ideas about what worship is... Some of these ideas include:

- Worship is something that can only be done on Sunday
- Worship can only be done in Church
- Worship is only the music that we sing on Sunday morning

As we examine what the word of God says in Genesis 22 we will see how worship reveals itself through the trials of Abraham. Let's examine through this example, what the characteristics of worship really are...

Worship is obedient and submissive to God

When we look at these scriptures in Gen. 22 God's command was very hard. How many of us today would be questioning if such a commandment was from God. We have much grace from Jesus, but Abraham trusted God. In fact, Abraham wasn't a righteous man of his own accord, but he was considered righteous by God because of his faith. There is a whole sermon in that alone, perhaps one day we will cover it but for now let us press on.

God said: "Go, worship and sacrifice your son." Abraham did not hesitate; he did as commanded, he did not seek excuses, he got up early and went. During his journey he spoke prophetically to his son. He said God will provide the sacrifice. He trusted God, he knew that even if he sacrificed his son, God could bring him back to himself, he had absolute confidence in who he was worshiping.

God has said that without faith it is impossible to please him. (CF. Heb. 11:6)

When we look to see worship in a person's life, we examine servant-hood and obedience

Let's examine John 14:15, 14:21

We are his and we love him. We show him this through obedience to his word. John 3:22-24, 5:2-3

I really want to emphasize this. So read, bold here, underscored, italic and exclamation marks.

"Worship is not just what we do it is who we are, when we are obedient to God's will, it is an act of worship." Every obedient moment in our lives is an act of worship. For example:

- Attending Services
- Tithing & Giving
- Witnessing
- Baptism
- Communion
- Praying
- Studying the Bible
- Singing to the Lord
- Making Disciples
- Loving one another

The bible tells us to pray without ceasing in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. It is impossible to literally pray continuously without eating, bathroom breaks and getting things done, so... what is Paul telling us? We are to offer our lives up in worship to the Lord as a continual prayer of worship to God. Do our actions reflect our praise? Faith without works is dead, so how do we show the fruit of our faith?

Worship is wholehearted, dedicated and unfaltering

When we start at Gen 22: verse 2 we see:

Genesis 22:2

King James Version (KJV)

²And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

Abraham is our subject of study today but there are many. When we consider Abraham we see a man with a life is marked by worship.

Genesis 21:33 shows us that he had just finished worshipping at Beersheba, his life was marked with richness and prosperity. Why is this relevant? Well... Abraham worshipped God when everything was going well and he had life by the tail.

How easy it is for us to praise God and worship him when things are going our way. But how about when things are not good? Paul in prison thanked God for his deliverance and stated that in whatsoever state he was in he had learned to be content. He had learned to worship and trust God in all circumstances. Things start going sideways and yet Abraham still worships God. Abraham was considered a friend of God not because he was perfect, but because of his faith. The fruit of that faith was his unwavering worship and trust in God. He did not understand what God was doing, but did that matter? Does it matter to us if we don't understand why we are in circumstances? Do we trust God or not?

We must look beyond where we are at and what we are going through. We don't serve God for what we can get out of it. It is not a magical card to getting our hearts desires. We serve God because of who he is. If we are sincere about our worship we see a God who is worthy of our worship and praise regardless of how our current circumstances are playing out. Are we prepared to worship God regardless of circumstance?

Let's look at: Psa. 37:23, Rom. 8:28, 2 Cor. 12:7-11

Psalm 37:23

New International Version (NIV)

²³The LORD makes firm the steps
of the one who delights in him;

Romans 8:28

New International Version (NIV)

²⁸And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[a] have been called according to his purpose.

2 Corinthians 12:7-11

New International Version (NIV)

⁷ or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul's Concern for the Corinthians

¹¹ I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the "super-apostles,"^[a] even though I am nothing.

Worship is Personal

Can we only worship when we are together at church?

In Gen. 22:5 we read:

Genesis 22:5

New International Version (NIV)

⁵ He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

What this is saying is that he separated himself from the group, he let his servants take care of the mundane everyday issues and made himself ready to worship God.

When we worship we need to intentionally shut out the rest of the world and our problems. We need to not mentally channel surf about our problems or our mortgage payments or that new Quad we want. We need to separate ourselves unto the Lord and give him our undivided attention. We don't want to have our worship of God contaminated by worldly things or distraction on the platform when we are singing.

Many pastors put policies in place for worship team dress etc. Many don't understand why... I personally don't care if a person wears shorts or t-shirts or sandals on the platform if they are decent. God doesn't look at how we look per se. the reason that needs to be clearly understood is that God inhabits the praises of his people so anything that is a distraction from connecting people to God should be avoided. For example shorts are not an issue for me, but let's say that they are tight spandex and

leave little to the imagination. Would some people be distracted by their offense or affront to their holiness standard, would others be distracted by sexual attraction? Would still others be thinking the singer is pitchy? Are others distracted by jealousy? Is the worshipper up there to cause attention to themselves or to connect people with God?

Genuine worship shuts out the world and separates itself unto the Lord. I for one don't want my worship of God to be contaminated.

When I worship, I lift my hands and close my eyes occasionally. Do I do this to be righteous or pious – nope, it is because I will myself into obedience and I will not to be distracted.

When I raise my hands it is not to appear holier than anyone else. I think of Moses when he raised his hands to the Lord and his people were winning the battle against the enemy. When he lowered them they started to lose. The people caught onto this and Aaron and Hur held up Moses hands. Make no mistake about it we are in a spiritual battle and I want Gods people to win.

This is not a ritual or and ordinance etc. I just raise my hands to show God I love him. I am like a little child who holds up his hands and wants his dad to pick him up and love him. You don't have to lift your hands to praise God, but for me it is a way for me to serve the Lord, to love him to show him I want him in my life and I am ready to receive what he has for me. I don't care who is around, I have raised my hands in the street or out on a hike. I will praise God and shut out the world whenever and wherever I need to. In short – Worship is separate and apart as well as corporate. We need as a body to connect with the Lord, but we must connect on a personal level separate and apart from the distractions of the world.

Worship time is not for thinking about the fight you had with your spouse on the way to the church or the offense the pastor may have given inadvertently. It is not time to plan your next shopping trip to Seattle. It is time to worship God.

Worship can Cost

When we look at verses 5-10 we see that Abrahams worship was going to cost him dearly. God called upon him to give up the "Son of Promise" his son Isaac. God has made the demand and Abraham responds. Notice here that he doesn't waver in his pursuit of worship. He puts together what he needs and regardless of the cost to him, he sets out to do Gods will. Remember that he was called to be the father of many nations and that his 100 year old wife is not, in the natural at least, likely to bear another son. He is to give up everything at Gods command. When we are given the opportunity to worship God are we in this place? Are we truly prepared to worship God regardless of the personal cost?

Fortunately we have a very loving God. For us we are not called to sacrifice our children, but we are called to sacrifice other things that our culture holds dear... We are sometimes called to sacrifice such things as our:

- Time
- Plans

- Fun
- Will
- Toys
- Secret Sins

This is why so few Christians genuinely worship. It can be costly.

We need to bring ourselves to a place in our Christian walk where at we are prepared to place everything that we value on the altar.

*** Talk about giving up Job for Christ – Cost me financially dearly – Discuss rewards

Worship is Secure in Gods promises

As we touched on earlier Abraham believed God for a miracle. He told his son that God would provide the sacrifice. He trusted God for a miracle and that is exactly what he received. He believed and his worship was not in vain.

Heb 11:8-12

⁸ By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹ And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she^[a] considered him faithful who had made the promise. ¹² And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

Heb 11:17-19

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, ¹⁸ even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."^[b] ¹⁹ Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

Are we starting to see how the precepts of God are interconnected? The Great Commission, Discipleship, Faith in Action and Worship?

When we worship we are like Peter in the Boat. When Jesus called to him he did not have a concrete path to the Lord he had to step out of the boat in faith. He worshipped the Lord and it wasn't until he took his eyes off of Jesus that he began to sink...

Real worship is having faith in God even when we don't like where the road is taking us. It trusts God unreservedly. Real worship expects our obedience despite our understanding. Real worship is given to God for who he is not for the expected rewards.

When we think about it carefully real worship is a miracle given to us by and infinite and incomprehensible God. He has through his word revealed to us the part of his nature that he wants us to comprehend. Worship is an infinite God creating a way for us to touch him. This is a privilege that I for one will not take for granted. John 4:23 tells us that God seeks real worshipers. Will we play a role or will we sacrifice ourselves to serve and worship the almighty God.

Practical Expression of Worship

C.S Lewis once said: "I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed."

Besides singing and praising what are some of our responsibilities of worship:

Preach Christ

Teach Christ

Witness Christ and Make Disciples

Show Christ in how we live our lives

Show Christ in our relationships

Show Christ in our service

Love with the Love of Jesus

Give without regret or complaint because we love God

Fellowship with believers

Endure hardships with Christ

Equip others in Christ for the Great Commission

Lean heavily on Christ

Look to Christ for grace in frustrating situations

Confess your sins and short-comings to Christ and ask for his help

Don't tie your joy to your circumstance but to your faith

Be empowered by the Holy Spirit and be equipped by the reading of the word

Develop in yourself the character and qualities of Jesus

John 4:23 tells us that God wants worshippers who will adore him in spirit and in truth

Psalm 95

New International Version (NIV)

Psalm 95

- ¹ Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
- ² Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.
- ³ For the LORD is the great God,
the great King above all gods.
- ⁴ In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.
- ⁵ The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.
- ⁶ Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;
- ⁷ for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.
Today, if only you would hear his voice,
- ⁸ "Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah,^[a]
as you did that day at Massah^[b] in the wilderness,
⁹ where your ancestors tested me;
they tried me, though they had seen what I did.
- ¹⁰ For forty years I was angry with that generation;
I said, 'They are a people whose hearts go astray,
and they have not known my ways.'
- ¹¹ So I declared on oath in my anger,
'They shall never enter my rest.'"

So let's examine this a little more closely

- In verses 1-5 worship is a call to rejoice
- In verses 6-7a worship is a call to reverence
- In verses 7b-11 worship is a call to respond

... and all this time you thought the three R's were reading, writing and arithmetic...

In verses 1-5 we see characteristics of worship:

Worship can be collective as a body note the “let us...” while we are responsible for our individual worship all week long we must not neglect corporate worship.

Worship can be vocal as well as private but it must be exemplified in our lives. God desires for us to sing out to him.

Worship can be vibrant and vigorous. We are called to participate joyfully, showing gratitude in our praise. It is okay to be exuberant in our worship. We should not worry so much about people being excited in the lord,

... but let us all take steps to ensure it is not a distraction or attention seeking.

David disrobed and danced before the Lord. Not suggesting this at church... but he stated when he was seen that he would be even more undignified than this... David was sincere in his expression of worship before the Lord.

In 2 Samuel 6 Verse 14 &15

¹⁴ Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the LORD with all his might,¹⁵ while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

we see that David danced before the lord with all his might and that the worship was filled with shouts and the sounds of trumpets.

When we seek to criticize this worship let us consider verse 16... then 21

2 Samuel 6:16

New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶ As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart.

2 Samuel 6:21

New International Version (NIV)

²¹ David said to Michal, “It was before the LORD, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD’s people Israel—I will celebrate before the LORD.

He didn’t care how he looked to others even his wife... he was real and intentional in his worship and celebration of the Lord.

You see... our collective, vocal, vibrant, exuberant, loving worship of God must be based on who he is and what he has done. It should not be out of duty, but it should be because real worship is a call to rejoice, reverence and respond to God. Worship should be God-Centered not just getting emotional or

singing loudly for our own sake. As humans we judge actions, but God looks at the intentions of our hearts.

Examples of Worship

Ezra 3:11

11 With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord:

“He is good;

his love toward Israel endures forever.”

And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

Psalms 32:11

11 Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous;
sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Psalms 35:27

27 May those who delight in my vindication
shout for joy and gladness;
may they always say, “The Lord be exalted,
who delights in the well-being of his servant.”

Psalms 47:1

1 Clap your hands, all you nations;
shout to God with cries of joy.

Isaiah 12:6

Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion,
for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.”

Zephaniah 3:14

14 Sing, Daughter Zion;
shout aloud, Israel!

Be glad and rejoice with all your heart,
Daughter Jerusalem!

another example wherein we are called to reverence the Lord. The scripture says in Psalms 95:6-8

Psalm 95:6-8

Common English Bible (CEB)

⁶ Come, let's worship and bow down!
Let's kneel before the LORD, our maker!

⁷ He is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
the sheep in his hands.

If only you would listen to his voice right now!

⁸ "Don't harden your hearts
like you did at Meribah,
like you did when you were at Massah,
in the wilderness,

Do we reverence him this morning, or are we so stuck in playing church that we have truly forgotten why we are here?

Now reverence...

What does it mean when the scriptures says? "If you would only Listen to his voice right now"

It is a call to respond to the Lord. How will you respond today?

People it all comes down to our attitudes and our intentions:

I am reminded of a story of a young boy on a porch where he is throwing a baseball into the air... He says I am the greatest hitter in the world and throws the ball into the air swings and misses. Then he throws the second ball into the air swings and misses. Finally he throws the ball a third time into the air and strikes out... he was disheartened and sat for a minute after which a smile crept onto his face as he declared, I am the best pitcher in the world, I just struck out the greatest hitter.

Attitude really matters Chuck Swindol once said that he was convinced that life is 10% what happens and 90% how we respond – to – It...

Our perspective needs to reflect Gods perspective, we need to come before him joyfully with an attitude of reverence but most importantly we need to listen to him and respond to his desires.

Worship is more that singing - although that is a significant part.

Is what we are doing in our everyday lives glorifying God? Are we really worshipping today or do we need to examine where we are at?

Worship is an attitude of the heart, expressed outwardly in Joy, reverence and response. We have looked today at many aspects of our lives. Do we worship God in all that we do?

Are we then:

Preaching Christ

Teaching Christ

Witnessing Christ and Making Disciples

Showing Christ in how we live our lives

Showing Christ in our relationships

Showing Christ in our service

Loving with the Love of Jesus

Giving without regret or complaint because we love God

Fellowshipping with believers

Enduring hardships with Christ

Equipping others in Christ for the Great Commission

Leaning heavily on Christ

Looking to Christ for grace in frustrating situations

Confessing our sins and short-comings to Christ and ask for his help

Tying our joy to our circumstances instead of our faith

Being empowered by the Holy Spirit

Being equipped by the reading of the word

Developing in ourselves the character and qualities of Jesus

Singing for joy with reverence and awe

Responding to what The Lord is asking of us

Remember that without faith it is impossible to please God and God inhabits the praises of his people.
do we believe enough to put action to our faith and embrace the heart of true worship?

What kind of fragrance will your worship reach The Lord with? Will he be pleased?

i close today with this final thought from Zephaniah 3:17

The Lord your God in your midst,

The Mighty One, will save;

He will rejoice over you with gladness,

He will quiet you with His love,

He will rejoice over you with singing.”

Jesus loves you and sings over you today, I want my life to be something worth singing about - just a thought.

Prayer ***