

Believers Backpack Series 005

Worship

Ed Horak

Worship

2nd Edition

Scripture taken from the New King James Version.

Copyright © 1979,1980, 1982 by

Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used with permission.

All rights reserved.

Worship

© 2010 Ed Horak.

Contents

- Chapter 1 **Called to Worship**
- Chapter 2 **God's Presence**
- Chapter 3 **All out Worship**
- Chapter 4 **Shifting Focus**
- Chapter 5 **Ways of Worship**
- Chapter 6 **Persistence in Worship**
- Chapter 7 **The Benefits of Worship**
- Chapter 8 **A Heavenly Mixture**
- Chapter 9 **Practicing His Presence**

Chapter 1

Called to Worship

*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name;
bring an offering, and come before Him.
Worship the Lord in the beauty of His holiness.*

1 Chronicles 16:29

The Lord deserves our worship. He is the creator and sustainer of our lives, and is worthy of our praise and adoration. We are to give Him glory, bring an offering and come before Him in worship. These are all appropriate responses to His call to worship.

When God takes His proper place in our lives in worship, our attention shifts from what we can get from our relationship with Him, to spreading His fame to all men. We are thankful for what He has done for us, and want to declare His goodness to others. Thanksgiving, praise and worship thus become the foundation of our witness, the priority of our lives. When we open up to the revelation that God is good and has called us to lift up His name amongst men, we establish the priority of worship. We move from the traditional song service that serves as a mere prelude to the Sunday sermon, to a daily expression of passion towards the greatest lover of our soul: the Lord Himself. We love Him because He first loved us. We respond to His goodness and favor in our lives.

It all begins with the light that comes when we are born again and saved from a life filled with self, sin and satan. We are created, or recreated in our spirits to bring honor to the Lord. We are now called to praise Him, and will experience a measure of lack and frustration if we do not fulfill our first ministry to the Lord and bless His name. This priority of passionate love for the Lord is expressed in both music and song through thanksgiving, praise and worship.

Consider these Definitions

Thanksgiving: Expressed gratefulness to God meeting our needs.

Praise: Joyful and exuberant lifting up of God's name for what He has done.

Worship: Reverential and intimate adoration of God's person.

We are called as a holy nation and royal priesthood to express our devotion to God through thanksgiving, praise and worship.

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood...that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

1 Peter 2:9

God is Looking for Worshipers

God still seeks worshippers who will walk in the fullness of their priestly calling. Every believer is a 'priest' or one who draws near to God. We all have the privilege of responding to God's invitation to worship Him.

Worship

God looks out across the world and seeks those who will respond to His advances. We are chosen for the purpose of being a holy nation, set apart to praise Him and be a witness to a world lost in confusion and spiritual darkness. As Christians, we have found the pursuit of our lives, and now share this with others by boldly declaring His fame to those around us who have yet experienced His goodness.

...for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

John 4:23

God loves intimacy and close fellowship and desires to draw near to us with His manifest presence. The Bible teaches that it was God who made the move to seek us out and to save us. He does not want to relate to us from afar. He came real close in Jesus, and wants us to respond to Him by drawing close to Him.

We must realize that we have our part to play. Through our desire and obedience, we set in motion a process of intimacy.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

James 4:8

God has already made His move by sending Jesus who paved the way into the presence of God through His blood sacrifice. As we follow Jesus, and obey the command to worship, we get closer to God and He gets closer to us. We can say that we ‘attract’ the presence of God through our desire expectancy and obedience. The contrary is also true: we ‘repel’ God with complacency and disobedience.

Faith is Our Response to God’s Advances

In addition, faith is a vital feature of our interaction with God. Faith is simply responding to God’s desire: we draw near to God expecting in faith that He will meet with us as He has promised. Personally, I have found that every time I make the effort to give thanks, praise and worship Him in simple faith and obedience, He rewards me with His presence. It is not a matter of hit or miss. You can be certain that God will honor His promise. He will respond to your faith as you draw near to Him through the blood of Jesus.

But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Deuteronomy 4:29-30

Notice the certainty here. If you seek God, you will find Him! Never doubt that He is there for you.

God's Presence

Proper Protocol

There is a proper protocol in entering the presence of God the King. As the King of Kings He has a divine order, or the way things are done. It works the same way in the natural. For example if you wish to see the President or king of a nation, you don't simply show up and demand an audience on the spot without following the proper protocol. There is a proper way of approaching any dignitary. I believe it is also true to say that our approach to any person, dignitary or not is vital to ensuring a warm reception.

Many people relegate protocol and proper manners to something irrelevant, a relic from a bygone age. Yet the word of God teaches that the manner of approach to God is as important as a pure heart attitude. God is still God, whether we have been taught protocol or not. When our hearts are set on learning about God and His ways, we will pay attention to what The King demands and expects.

Entering God's presence is not a casual thing, with hands in pocket, so to speak, but a great privilege that has been bought for us at a high price. The only reason why we can boldly enter into the throne room of grace is through the precious blood of Jesus. In Old Testament times, the priest dare not enter into God's presence without the proper approach. He had to be cleansed from his sins and present the blood of sacrifice to be received. The same applies in the New Testament. We now have permission to enter into God's presence because of Jesus blood of sacrifice.

Thanksgiving and Praise

Like the Old Testament priests, we as New Testament priests, enter into God's presence by first acknowledging His goodness towards us with thanksgiving and praise.

*...Enter into His gates with thanksgiving.
And into His courts with praise...
For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting.*
Psalm 100:4-5

It is appropriate and fitting that God be thanked and praised for His goodness and mercy. The fact we are even still alive today, shows God's goodness to us. We owe God worship for the ground we stand on, the food that sustains us, even the air we breathe. Without His abundant provision we would be instantaneously lost and without hope.

We thank God for our salvation, then for His mercy where we yet fall short of His glory. Begin all your times of prayer and worship with thanksgiving and praise. Don't launch straight into a 'shopping list' of what you need from God. First give Him what He seeks: your worship! He is our heavenly Father and He knows what we have need of before we even ask Him. So follow the protocol. Hallow His name first and foremost. Jesus taught us this priority in what is commonly known as the Lord's Prayer.

*Our father in heaven
Hallowed be Your name...*
Matthew 6:9

Worship

All prayer should begin with honoring God. The Lord is holy, and our worship must be offered in the beauty of holiness. When we acknowledge God's holiness or worship goes deeper than thanksgiving and praise. We respond to God's holiness by being holy ourselves. As we live uprightly before Him we can then bring our sacrifice of worship before Him with much confidence. Our holy upright living is the 'platform' for acceptable worship, and as we walk in obedience to His word we draw near to Him with a clear conscience. We can stand uncondemned before God. It is little use to live in the 'flesh' all week, and then suddenly put on a Sunday morning religious face and march into church and expect to worship God in the beauty of holiness. He is not impressed, neither is anyone else for that matter. Living for God is a lifestyle, not a weekly put on man pleasing event. Worship is about pleasing God and not about fulfilling some religious duty.

It is a reassuring to know that not only is the Lord holy, but we are holy though what Jesus did! We are reconciled to God, who is neither angry with us, nor holding our trespasses and sins against us.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:1

Nor even does God deal with us according to our sins or iniquities! Rather, He relates to us through His covenant promises and is greatly merciful to us.

*He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;
As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

Psalm 103:10-12

We can boldly enter into His presence and stand before Him with our hearts cleansed from a sense of shame and guilt. We stand before Him clothed in a robe of righteousness that He gave us in Christ. It pleases your Father in heaven when you worship Him in the beauty of holiness.

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Psalm 29:2

What freedom! What a privilege to meet with our creator in such intimacy where sin is no longer the issue, but righteousness peace and joy.

All out Worship

God wants all out worship

God expects us to worship Him with our total being: spirit, soul, and body. In God's sight there is no artificial separation between the inner and outer man. They are all interconnected and so our worship becomes an expression of our whole being.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Deuteronomy 6:5

Our innermost heart motivations are to honor God. Even our thinking must be focused on Him, and our bodies must harmonize with the rest of our beings. Worship involves an expression of all that we are. It is no trivial practice that we casually engage in during suitable song service moments.

It is sad to see even church folk stand during a time of praise and worship with their mind apparently 'at the beach' and their bodies disengaged. They neither understand nor express their worship acceptably with raised hands and outstretched arms to the Lord. Their hands remain glued to their pockets and there is no connection.

I can speak this way because I have been there myself. There was a time when worship was foreign to me. My reluctance was born from ignorance and pride, and did not honor God. But thank God I saw the light and was taught the way of worship. The church I grew up in had three key thrusts in its fellowship: worship, the word and a strong witness through evangelism. I was taught to accept the word as God's will for me and so I started to raise my hands in obedience to what I saw in the Word. My self-awareness became less important than touching the heart of God with my worship. I learnt to abandon myself in adoring God, and know by faith that my worship was acceptable to Him. I learnt to become more conscious of God than the issues that faced me in the natural. The Bible teaches that joy is found in God's presence, and that this joy is our strength.

How Worship is Expressed

Worship is expressed through music, song, and a variety of physical actions and postures. What's in our hearts will and must come out. In true worship, our spirits overflow into the natural realm where we lift our hands, clap, shout, sing, dance, bow and kneel before God.

The Bible teaches that all expressions of worship are considered by God to be holy, appropriate and reverential.

Shouting and Singing

Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!

Serve the LORD with gladness;

Come before His presence with singing.

Psalm 100:2

God encourages our enthusiasm, and our displays of exuberance and emotion are totally acceptable! When we are grateful for His goodness, our shouts of praise please God. It is true to say the converse is also

true. When we are silent when God expects a shout, is to be irreverent. Reverence is not necessarily some quiet, supposedly 'dignified' moment. God is neither nervous nor deaf. The scripture is full of occasions where the people of God shout joyfully. His definition of dignity is surely not that of religious prune faced 'Pharisees' bound by tradition that invalidates the word of God. Let us be sure not to quench the Spirit by remaining silent when God is urging us to give a victory shout of praise. There is a release of God's anointing in shouts of praise, especially when it is directed in honor of God.

Our approach to God is one characterized by festivity. When Jesus was greeted at His entry into Jerusalem and palms were laid at his feet, there was shouting and much festivity. The children reveled in the freedom that Jesus brought. In stark cold contrast, the religious establishment was shocked, outraged and downright envious of Jesus as He received the praise and worship of the happy multitude.

Dancing

*Let them praise His name with the dance;
Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp.*

Ps 149:3

Dancing before the Lord is scriptural, especially when expressed in a way that does not detract from a focus on the Lord. Dancing should allow all worshippers to participate rather than merely spectate. Worship is not to be a 'performance' but a corporate experience where the Lord's beauty remains central. Historically, the cultural Hebrew dancing was all associated with worship and praise of God and involved both sexes and all ages. It was mixed with exuberant singing and festivity and was totally acceptable to God who Himself rejoices over us with singing!

*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."*

Zephaniah 3:17

God is the author of singing, and we are to listen for and enjoy God's singing over us! I have heard angels sing during a particularly anointed worship service and what a beautiful experience. I know by faith that God's own voice is far better.

Musical Instruments

*Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;
Praise Him with the lute and harp!
Praise Him with the timbrel and dance;
Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!
Praise Him with loud cymbals;
Praise Him with clashing cymbals!*

Psalms 150:3-5

A variety of string, percussion and wind instruments are listed as acceptable in praise and worship. Throughout history people who are liberated through faith in Christ's salvation alone, have always expressed their worship with music and instrumentation. Trumpets, timbrels, and clashing symbols all suggest loud and exuberant expressions are acceptable to God. Of course there are moments of intimacy

Worship

where quieter adoration is appropriate. Sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit is of central importance here. God does have moods and the Holy Spirit knows the heart and innermost thoughts and intentions of God the Father.

For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.
1 Corinthians 2:10-11

Clapping of Hands

*Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples!
Shout to God with the voice of triumph!*
Psalm 47:1

Clapping is not merely a way to keep the congregation in time with the music. It is a joyful means of expressing praise. Notice the injunction to shout with a voice of triumph. Many of our worship services are far too sedate. When we realize the greatness of our deliverance and God's great goodness, we will shout and clap to the glory of God. Although people clap in applause of human achievement at ball games and other performances, it is nevertheless a legitimate expression that God encourages amongst His worshippers. Once again, it is necessary to clap at appropriate times as led by the Holy Spirit.

Lifting of Hands

*Lift up your hands in the sanctuary,
And bless the LORD.*
Psalm 134:2

As we lift up our hands we indicate submission, surrender and a loving profession of blessing towards God. We express trust when we empty and lift our hands to God. It is hard for many to surrender to God's supremacy. I have learnt to enjoy the freedom that comes from acknowledging my own inadequacy through empty hands to the God whose hands are full of provision and protection.

Singing with Understanding: hymns, choruses And with the Spirit: tongues, a new song

...I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.
1 Corinthians 14:15

God has provided different ways of touching His heart. When we yield our minds to compose songs that express our devotion to Him, this is good. So too, when we give our spirits over to Him and worship Him in tongues with the Holy Spirit's help, this is acceptable. (This expression is different to the ministry gift of a message in tongues with an interpretation given for the purpose of edifying, comforting and exhorting the congregation. The focus is different. In the one the focus is on God, in the other on the congregation.)

Be open and sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to express your worship in the above ways. Learn to yield yourself to singing to the Lord. He will not force you to worship Him in any way. He wants your cooperation

Chapter 4

Shifting Focus

From 'Me to You'

The whole worship experience involves a shift of focus from self - our needs and desires, to a total concentration on God Himself and His desires. We move from the benefits we get from interacting with God to the benefits He gets from interacting with us. This shift occurs as we 'enter in' and become more consumed with God's person, and not so much His provision.

*Oh come, let us sing to the LORD!
Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving;
Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.
For the LORD is the great God,
And the great King above all gods.
In His hand are the deep places of the earth;
The heights of the hills are His also.
The sea is His, for He made it;
And His hands formed the dry land.
Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.*

Psalm 95:1-6

Notice that thanksgiving is offered first and then worshipful adoration. When a person kneels before the Lord, he has reached a point where his needs no longer count. He becomes focused on God alone. Thanksgiving expresses our gratefulness to God for meeting our needs. We give thanks to God for what He has done for us.

We then exalt God's Name before others. We spread His fame amongst all men as we praise Him. His greatness is underlined as we shout joyfully.

Worship finally focuses our adoration on His person alone. Worship is what we do for Him. We actually give of our innermost beings to Him in worship, as we gaze upon His beauty and become enraptured with His presence. We are 'caught up' in God, surrounded by Him and the things that trouble us and hold our attention fade into insignificance. As we focus on Him we gain perspective of we are in comparison to God and we kneel in adoring submission. It is in this place of concentration, that God's desires are met, and our joy is made full.

*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth;
for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.*

John 4:23

Begin your personal and public devotion or worship with thanksgiving, then give praise and then move to worship. Choose prayers and songs that reflect this progression. Be led by the Holy Spirit who will guide you in what is acceptable to God.

Be sure to mix in thanksgiving praise and worship into your prayer habits too. It is the ingredient that gets God's attention.

Worship

While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live." So Jesus arose and followed him....

Matthew 9:18-19

The ruler understood the protocol. When you approach God and make a request, it is proper to offer worship. We see Jesus immediately respond to his request. Worship gets God's attention. When we obey Him and show the proper respect, the way is clear for our needs to be met.

Ways of Worship

Worship has suitable physical postures that reflect our hearts and minds that are turned towards God.

Bowing and Kneeling

*Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.*

Psalm 95:6

Both these physical postures indicate surrender and respect. Personally I find a release from self-reliance and pride when I bow and kneel before the Lord, both in private and in public worship services.

In Old Testament times, rebellious and proud people were described as ‘stiff necked.’ They would not bow, but remained upright in arrogant defiance. However, those that bow and kneel show their God that they are prepared to receive His love, mercy, and direction in their lives.

Submission and surrender is encouraged by revelation of God’s love and care for us as well as a simple recognition of His majesty. It is easy to bow before Him in surrender when we remember that He is the Lord and King who cares for us.

Modern western culture does not always appreciate nor teach the value of these practices. They are relegated to something old fashioned and obsolete in a society bent on self-aggrandizement. Yet God is the same as He has always been, and His grandeur transcends any particular cultural focus on self. Be sure to renew your mind to the importance of showing your subservience to the King of Kings.

Standing

*Behold, bless the LORD,
All you servants of the LORD,
Who by night stand in the house of the LORD!*

Psalm 134:1

Sitting when you are supposed to be standing is improper. Where do you see a servant sitting down when his master needs his service? He stands up in readiness. In the days in which the psalms were written, it was common for servants of the king to stand ready for service all night long, just in case he needed something. Such was their devotion. They were always ready to serve. They were on His timetable, not their own. Whether anything happened or not was not the issue. They were to be ready. In the end time spent in God’s presence is never wasted.

When we stand before the Lord in quietness, ready to serve Him, He is sure to engage with us and speak a command. To be seated at rest when the king calls, is to be out of order.

When we stand before Him it indicates to that we are not easily drawn aside by some distraction or other pursuit. Our hearts are for Him and we are committed to stand in His presence as a sign of reverence and respect.

Practically, I am not advocating you spend the whole night standing up. You might fall over with fatigue. There are times however, where the Lord requires you to adopt a posture of readiness in your heart which at times finds expression in simply standing on your feet in quiet submission to Him.

Prostrate on Your Face

Also He brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple; so I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD; and I fell on my face.

Ezekiel 44:4

In this account, the glory or manifest presence of God was so powerful that it caused men to fall prostrate on their faces.

I have experienced occasions where God's presence was so strong that you cannot but fall on your face. I remember when I was standing in the presence of the Lord during a worship service and fell forward flat on my face, even ripping a button from my shirt. I have also fallen backwards under the power of God and rested there in submission to His dealings during what some have called 'carpet time.' These occasions may best be described in these terms: where the supernatural meets with the natural, the natural has to give way.

Then there are occasions where one's will is involved. It is totally appropriate to prostrate oneself before the Lord simply as an act of willful devotion. Exercising your will out of faithful obedience pleases God.

Lying on Your Bed and Singing

*Let the saints be joyful in glory;
Let them sing aloud on their beds.*

Psalms 149:5

Faith has a rest. As you lie on your bed and sing aloud to the Lord, do so from a heart of faith. When you are lying down, there is no more that you can do that day. Our own efforts cease, as we anticipate God's protection and provision as we sleep. Our sleep is restful when we commit our trust to Him. He commissions His angels to watch over us like sentries standing guard at night. We can rest assured that all is well, as God our watchman by night stays awake and alert. Praise is fitting on our beds for such a God who cares for us.

Chapter 6

Persistence in Worship

Devoted despite Difficulties

There is a difference between having devotions or praise and worship sessions, and being devoted to the Lord as a lifestyle. “Devotions” are typically confined in set moments in time, like church song services, whereas a “lifestyle of devotion” brings the Lord into the center of all that you are and do at all times. Most churchgoers praise God only at the set time of a public worship service, and when they are feeling good. Yet God wants us to be devoted to Him in both the good times and the bad.

God is raising up a generation of worshippers that will praise Him at all times. That means at work, at home, and at play. In this lifestyle of worship, there is no artificial separation between the secular and the spiritual. Worship becomes woven into our everyday activities. Worshippers who are marked by the abiding presence of God release a ‘spiritual fragrance’. Jesus maintained a lifestyle of worship and surely fulfilled this psalm as He persisted in worship.

Every day I will bless you...

Psalm 100:4-5

The writer to Hebrews encourages us as Christians to persist in our worship.

...let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God...

Hebrews 13:15

When we give our worship to God, we must offer it in spirit and truth. This means that not only that we offer it with the right heart attitude, but also that we do not limit our worship to a specific place and time.

In the Old Testament, the religious tendency was to restrict worship and sacrifice to special feast days and certain seasons, yet God’s best was for His people to draw near to Him and walk with Him by faith no matter what day or the circumstance, good or bad. God is to be honored at all times, not as a matter of convenience, but out of conviction. Our response to God's call to worship ought to be act of our will in obedience, and not depend on a particular set of emotions or feelings. Our motivation is based on a revelation of the goodness of God, and it takes faith to worship God in the face of adverse circumstances. We worship God when things go well and when they don’t. In the midst of difficulty we have the hope that God will intervene on our behalf and we praise Him at all times.

I will bless the LORD at all times;

His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Psalm 34:1

Paul and Silas were thrown into extreme circumstances. They had been serving the Lord faithfully and were severely persecuted for their obedience. As they sat in prison at midnight, they had a choice. Praise God at all times or feel sorry for themselves. As an act of their will, they chose to praise God, not for the circumstances, but for His goodness and the hope of their deliverance. Their praises were heard not only by the other prisoners, but also from God, and an earthquake jolted the prison setting them free! Their praise precipitated the miraculous.

But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

Acts 16:25-26

When faced with difficulty, praise God anyway, not for the problem, but for His goodness. He has promised to deliver you and provide a way of escape from your problems.

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

1 Corinthians 10:13

Chapter 7

The Benefits of Worship

Praise and Worship Benefits Both God and Us

Worship may be described as a divine exchange of blessing. God blesses us first, then we bless Him in return, and the cycle continues.

As we choose to draw near to Him in worshipful obedience, God's heart is satisfied and blessed. His needs are met!

Praise the LORD!

For it is good to sing praises to our God;

For it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful.

Psalm 147:1

In turn, our needs are also met in God's presence. When we touch the 'heart' of God through worship, His 'hand' of provision touches us. God is committed to our well - being and delights in our prosperity. It is His heart to bless his children. May your heart be to bless Him.

Your Worship Establishes His Lordship

When we praise and worship God, we establish His lordship over our lives. He is literally 'enthroned' as King of our hearts. He governs, guides and guards our hearts as we yield to His kingly rule. God's throne is made of our praises!

But You are holy,

Enthroned in the praises of Israel.

Psalm 22:3

God's Name and Fame is Lifted Up

We play a part in spreading His fame as we join together and magnify God in our communities. Praise ought to catch the attention of the public. Of course our motive is not to show off, but to lovingly declare to a world in need that God is so good that we simply want everyone to know it.

Oh, magnify the LORD with me,

And let us exalt His name together.

Psalm 34:3

More and more worshippers are realizing that worship is not to be restricted to the four walls of the church building on Sunday mornings when most folk are still quite groggy from the day before. Worship is beginning to take place in the market squares, highways and byways of the world. Praise marches are now held world wide, right out in public. God is magnified in the world He created.

We Fulfill our Calling as 'Priests'

God has called every believer to be a 'priest' to Him. A priest is one 'who draws near' to His God carrying a suitable sacrifice. As we have seen, our sacrifice in today's terms is that of praise and worship. When we praise and worship the Lord we fulfill our calling as priests.

Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

Hebrews 13:15

We Engage in Spiritual Warfare as We Worship

*Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
To execute vengeance on the nations,
And punishments on the peoples;
To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
To execute on them the written judgment--
This honor have all His saints.
Praise the LORD!*

Psalms 149:6-9

Satan craves the worship rightfully due to the one true God. He knows that worship is the central feature of our relationship with God. When we praise and worship Him we indicate our total devotion to Him, and this leaves Satan out of the picture totally. He can't stand it so he works hard to distract our worship. The worshipper who stays focused on God wreaks havoc in Satan's kingdom in the spirit realm. It is the honor of God's people, His saints or sanctified ones, to 'execute vengeance, bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron.'

In Old Testament times this was manifest in actual wars where ungodly nations were subdued physically with God's help. Today in New Testament terms, we bind the works of the enemy and exercise our authority in Christ as we praise God. It's all about focus. If we keep our focus on Jesus, looking to Him at all times as the author and developer of faith, and praise Him continually, we literally engage in spiritual warfare and Satan's works are bound. The demons cannot stand to be around the praises of God. The key way to rid the atmosphere of demonic activity is to praise God!

Satan craves our worship because he knows that as a person worships him, he becomes lord of their lives. That is why he tempted Jesus to worship him. He wanted Jesus to sin and give His allegiance to him rather than to God. Thankfully, Jesus resisted this evil temptation, and remained true in His devotion to almighty God.

Chapter 8

A Heavenly Mixture

Our Hearts His Home

Throughout time God has sought to settle down and make His 'home' in our hearts. Since the garden of Eden, God's desire has always been to walk intimately with us. He created us for close fellowship and friendship. Through Christ's completed work at the cross, the broken fellowship that happened through sin, has been restored. The way is now clear for all men to walk in close communion with God.

A lifestyle of prayer and worship facilitates this close fellowship. God draws near to those who draw near to Him.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

James 4:8

Mix it Up

When we approach God, we 'mix' our prayer with thanksgiving, praise, and worship. The following scriptures show the close connection between prayer and worship.

Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be Your name...

Matthew 6:9

...do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.

Ephesians 1:15

...Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God...

Acts 16:25

Jesus, Paul and Luke all show that prayer and worship are connected.

The apostle John went so far as to say that God hears the prayer of the worshiper whose heart is turned towards Him. God readily answers the prayers of those who express their faith in Him through praise and worship.

Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.

John 9:31

The 'House of Prayer'

When we read of Jesus entering the Temple, a place of sacrifice and worship, He describes it as a 'House of Prayer'! Worship and prayer thus form a heavenly mixture, and should be combined to bring honor to God and release the miraculous. For where God is, there is the potential for the miraculous. The

Worship

temple had to be cleansed of the commercialization of religion that had set in. Jesus drove out the moneychangers who preyed on the religious affections of the worshippers.

Our relationship with God should never be profaned by a trafficking spirit bent on merchandizing the religious affections of needy people. Prayer and worship are holy practices and we must guard our hearts against worldliness and profanity. Allow Jesus to drive any semblance of evil motivation for physical gain at the expense of someone else's spiritual need far from your heart.

Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.

Matthew 21:13

It may be true, but sad, that a key reason why many churches today do not see the miraculous is because they are so 'worldly' in spirit. The gospel cannot and should not be commercialized.

Chapter 9

Practicing His Presence

He is Worthy All the Time

If God is worthy to be praised at all, He is worthy to be praised all the time and under all circumstances. God is still worthy of our worship whether things are good, bad or indifferent. His worth does not change at any time. He is constant, does not change and is altogether without fault.

As for God, His way is perfect;

Psalm 18:30

"For I am the LORD, I do not change;

Malachi 3:6

God does not change and He deserves our worship at all times as we learn to be unchanging in our devotion to Him. Be open and sensitive to expressing thanksgiving, praise, and worship to God at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. We don't know everything. The Bible says we know only in part. So continue to praise God even when you have questions about why this or why that!

Worship Him at Home with Your Family

Now all Judah, with their little ones, their wives, and their children, stood before the LORD.

2 Chronicles 20:13

Judah established worship as a practice at home. He stood before the Lord with his wife and children. Many Christians are caught in a mindset that confines worship to a few short minutes at a worship service on the weekend.

However, when worship is practiced at home, God's presence is invoked there too. If ever there was a place where His presence is needed in these days of family life, it is the home. Worship God at home. Play Christian worship music and sing along. Mix thanksgiving, praise and worship into your family prayer times. Saturate your home with praise and worship.

In our home we play Christian music all the time. Personally when I study and work I play praise and worship music. It helps create the right spiritual atmosphere and even invokes God's presence in our household. Choose scripturally based music which will build your faith as the scripture is sung to music.

The book of psalms serves as a treasure trove of praise that can be used at home when you pray. Simply read out loud relevant psalms and passages that the Holy Spirit quickens to you, and thank God continually for His person, provision and protection in your life. In this way you will 'practice' the presence of God in your personal devotion.

The word is our medium of exchange. It is what God responds to. He has promised to watch over His word in our lives as we present it back to Him both in thanksgiving, praise and in petitioning for particular needs.

At Large, at Work and in Public

When we practice worship at home and in private, we make ourselves ready for public worship. Personal devotion to the Lord serves as a platform or foundation for our public worship together. A special corporate dynamic develops when we join together in unity and worship God. My experience has been that worship often deepens and broadens when engaged in with other believers in unity.

A multiplier effect operates in corporate worship. I have enjoyed many precious moments of intimacy with the Lord in private worship, but never so deep as when together with others in Spirit-filled abandonment to God in worship.

*I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go into the house of the LORD."*

Psalm 122:1

As the Lord's second appearing approaches, let **us** joyfully join together in worship of **our** Father in heaven.

Praising God in Public?

Then there is the matter of praising the Lord in front of those who don't know Him. Should we or shouldn't we openly express our worship in public? I believe it is proper to do so. Much of our time is spent rubbing shoulders with people who do not know Jesus as Lord and savior, and the scripture encourages it.

Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles, And sing praises to Your name.

Psalm 18:49

*Declare His glory among the nations,
His wonders among all peoples.*

Psalm 96:3

So however it works for you, feel encouraged to praise the Lord in public. This may be quite a stretch for those who struggle to praise the Lord in a cosy church setting even, but the time is coming where public praise will be more and more common.

Musical groups who support the work of street evangelists, fulfill this scripture as they sing out the praises of God in the market place. Perhaps you are not gifted or called to do this, but support those that do. The Salvation Army has been doing this for over a century on streets around the world.

*He has put a new song in my mouth--
Praise to our God;
Many will see it and fear,
And will trust in the LORD.*

Psalm 40:3

In the workplace, at least our cheerful disposition towards the Lord is a witness to others there.

Be bold in your praise.

God be merciful to us and bless us,

Worship

And cause His face to shine upon us.

Selah

That Your way may be known on earth,

Your salvation among all nations.

Let the peoples praise You, O God;

Let all the peoples praise You.

Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy!

For You shall judge the people righteously,

And govern the nations on earth.

Selah

Let the peoples praise You, O God;

Let all the peoples praise You.

Then the earth shall yield her increase;

God, our own God, shall bless us.

God shall bless us,

And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

Psalm 67:1-7

If you have never accepted Jesus as your Lord

God has made it possible for you to get into right relationship with Him.

He sent His Son Jesus into the world to live, die and rise again from the dead so that you could be forgiven of your sins, live a life that pleases Him, and joined to Him forever in heaven when you die.

God expects you to **acknowledge** your need for His forgiveness, **believe** that He raised Jesus from the dead, and be prepared to **confess** Jesus as Lord before witnesses in the world you live in.

Accept His free gift of eternal life today. Turn away from your sinful past, wholeheartedly put your trust in Him today. Pray this prayer out loud from your heart, you will be giving your life back to him, and He will love, protect and provide for you all the days of your life.

Dear God in heaven,

*I accept that I need your forgiveness for my sin.
I repent and acknowledge that I cannot save myself.
I believe that you raised your only begotten son Jesus from the dead.
I ask you to come into my heart right now and be my Lord.
I confess you Jesus as the Lord (master) of my life.
I promise to serve you all my days.*

Thank you for saving me. I am now your child, accepted into your family.

In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Friend,

Now that you have prayed this prayer, get into a good Bible believing church that focuses on Jesus and His word, read your Bible starting with the Gospel of John in the New Testament, and tell someone that you have accepted Jesus as Your Lord. Pray to your new Heavenly Father every day, and look to God to help you in every area of your life.

God bless you.