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A Christian Worldview Perspective on Worship

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People conceive of the word worship in numerous ways. For some, it is a reference to a worship service held in a church. For others, it refers to that portion of a public worship service composed of prayer and singing. Still others conceive of it in private terms, as they spend personal time with God.

Certainly worship involves all of these things, but there is much more to it. While specific acts are involved in worship, worship itself is more an attitude than an act. Beyond that, worship is the personal interaction we have with God.

To truly understand Christian worship, we must first grasp the most important element of a Christian worldview. That most important element is that God is an objectively real person who can be known in an objectively real personal relationship. The God of the Bible is not some transcendent, impersonal being who exists inaccessibly in heaven; he is a person who created us, loves us, and wants to interact with us in a personal relationship.

When God created mankind, he created us in his image. He made us to be persons like himself. Of course, we don't have the characteristics of personhood to the same degree he does – he is God, after all. But we do have those characteristics to the degree that it is possible for us to know and interact with him in a personal relationship. Beyond that, he has revealed himself to us and provided the means which allow us to make a personal relationship a reality.

In actuality, we should not even be able to know him. Even though we are created in his image, we are also fallen: that means we have within us a sin nature which causes us to naturally rebel against him. Because of this tendency to sin, we make ourselves unworthy to even enter his holy presence.

But God loved us so much, he provided a way for us to have our sin forgiven. By becoming a man and dying on the cross, he received the just punishment for sin in our place. When we recognize that, and willingly give our lives to him, he applies Christ's sacrifice to our lives individually, forgives our sin, and declares us worthy to enter his presence.

Those who have taken this step have recognized how wonderful and loving God is – and it is deeply personal. We recognize that we were doomed to separation from him without his loving act of salvation, and it causes us to have a deep love for him, as well. And it is from this deep love that our worship emerges.

The word "worship" means to acknowledge a person's worth or worthiness. When we worship God, we are recognizing and acknowledging his worth as the God of all creation.

So just how do we express this worship? There are several ways we can do it.

Prayer - Spending time with him

One way to worship is by prayer. Many people have a formulaic concept of prayer and simply run through the formula by offering a word of praise, thanksgiving, intercession, and petition. The only problem is, while

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not necessarily so, formulaic praying can easily become mechanical.

Mechanical praying must be avoided at all costs. Prayer, in its essence, is personal communication – personal communication with God. It is actually possible to say all the right things in a prayer-like formula, yet there be no communication with God. True prayer is personal, and meaning is transferred back and forth between God and the believer as prayer occurs.

As we communicate with God, we have opportunity to humble ourselves before him and express, from our heart, his worthiness. In this process, we offer worship to him.

Singing

Another expression of worship is singing. Many people evaluate singing based on the personal enjoyment they receive as they sing and listen to various songs. But it is important to keep in mind that the object of worship is God, not ourselves. When we sing as an expression of worship, it is to give pleasure to God. In that act, we are to express praise to him from our hearts; and in the process offer worship to him.

Giving/Stewardship

A third expression of worship is expressed in our giving; characterized in the Bible as stewardship. The concept of stewardship is much more profound than most people imagine. The most common notion people have about their giving is that they accumulate resources as they live life, then, to express their devotion to God, give a portion of that back to him.

That, however, is not a truly biblical concept. The biblical understanding is that everything already belongs to God. So, as we work to accumu-

late resources, we are not using our own time, strength, and knowledge to get them, we are doing it based on abilities God has given us. Then, when the resources come in, they are not ours, but God's. As his stewards (managers) we are tasked with discerning how he wants us to use those resources to accomplish his purposes through our lives.

Based on this paradigm, then, it is not just the resources we accumulate which we are to acknowledge as from God, but also the abilities we have which allow us to accumulate them. So, as we work, and as we distribute the fruit of our labor, all of it should be expressed as worship. There is, literally, no part of life which lies outside of our worship of God.

Your Worship Life

Worship is not simply a service you participate in with other believers as you sing, pray, give, and listen to a sermon. It is not merely an expression of devotion that you take time out of your busy day to convey to God. It is, literally, the expression of EVERY part of your life.

Of course, the difficulty of living life this way is that we have this sense that in order to express devotion to God, we have to be consciously thinking about him. Obviously, when we are engaged with most of life's daily activities, that is impossible. But that premise, itself, is wrong. Our devotion to God is an expression of our will, not our consciousness. If you decide that what you are doing is an act of worship to God, and you participate in it with that motivation (provided, of course, that the act itself is not a act of sin), then it is an act of worship, and God will be glorified in it.

All that is left is for you to devote your life to God in that manner. The more you do it, the more proficient you will become in worship. And the more you do it, the more you will grow spiritually.

Our very life, and everything we do in it, is to be an offering to God. As you live your life in that manner, you will express pure worship to him.

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