

# Experiencing God in WORSHIP

Andrew Isaacs -- December 13, 2009

## The Way RELATIONSHIPS Work

### INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS REQUIRES BALANCE

An intimate relationship must consist of a balance of knowledge and experience.

You cannot have an intimate relationship if it is only based on knowledge or only based on experience. Real intimacy is a balance of both.

### UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS ARE A RESULT OF UNBALANCE

If you think you have an intimate relationship with someone, but it's all Knowledge and no Experience (you know a lot about this person, but have never actually had an encounter with him/her), then you are a STALKER! - because you don't have a real relationship - you're not in reality.

If you think you have a good relationship with someone, but it's all Experience and no Knowledge (you have had lots of encounters with this person, but don't actually *know* anything about him/her), then you are Foolish and Naive (or worse!) - because you have no context or framework for interpreting your experiences.

## RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

A truly intimate relationship with God must be balanced with a sound knowledge of who He is (or who the Bible reveals Him to be) and ongoing encounters with Him.

My guess is that most of us are tilted slightly to one side or the other: either we relate to God more out of a knowledge base, or we relate to Him more through experience.

We need both, and we need to walk in both. We need to pursue more revelation and knowledge of God, and we need to pursue encounters with Him. We need to experience Him.

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## Experiencing God in Worship

### PREVIEW

- What worship is and isn't
- Practical Encouragement for Experiencing God in Worship

# 1. Worship is NOT...

**...the singing time of our service on Sunday mornings.**

**(...a genre of music we listen to.)**

Our time of singing on Sundays or in home groups is just a form that leads us into worship. The form is not worship -- the form leads us into worship.

We've labeled our Sunday morning services as worship (and more specifically our time of singing and praise) for so long it has become hard to see around it.

We need to resist substituting the form for the real thing.

## Worship IS...

**...our every-day response to the revelation God's given us of who He is and what He has done.**

**...the posture/attitude and direction of our lives.**

Worship is a daily discipline: it cannot be dependent on emotion:

If I worshiped God only when I was happy and things were going well, then worship would clearly be all about me.

But it's about HIM. We are called to offer our lives to Him every day because of who He is.

# 2. Worship is NOT...

**...optional.**

We can't wake up one morning and say, "I'm not going to worship today."

We cannot NOT worship. As human beings, it is part of our nature to be worshipers.

## Worship IS:

**...unavoidable.**

You WILL worship something. If you're not worshipping God, then you are worshipping something else.

Scripture: Romans 1:21-25 NIV

**21**For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22**Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools **23**and **exchanged** the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

**24**Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. **25**They **exchanged** the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

Listen to the first two commandments that God gave to Moses:

Scripture: Exodus 20:3-6 NIV

**3** "You shall have no other gods before me.

**4** "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. **5** You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, **6** but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments.

God puts worship at the very top of the list. He created us to be worshipers of Him, and he is jealous for our worship.

**Personal application:** Where do your affections lie? Is there a thing or a person in your life that you are serving with your time and affection and energy more than God?!

### **3. Worship is NOT...**

**...for our personal satisfaction or gain.**

In our society, how could we not assume that worshiping God is meant primarily for our enjoyment and fulfillment? All day long, we're bombarded with messages that tell us "we're worth it" and "we deserve it" and "do something for yourself" etc.

If you approach your daily worship (or corporate worship) as means for gaining personal satisfaction, then you're headed the wrong direction!

### **Worship IS...**

**...a sacrifice.**

OT SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM

In the Old Testament times, people came to the temple to worship God by offering him sacrifices. They came to lose something - there was a cost associated - worship was expensive!

### JESUS' SACRIFICE

Because Jesus died as the ultimate sacrifice, we are no longer required to offer blood sacrifices at a temple to atone for our sins. Jesus fully paid that price.

### A NEW KIND OF SACRIFICE IS NOW REQUIRED

However, the posture of worship did not change - there is still a sacrifice to be made, just a different kind:

Scripture: Romans 12:1-8 NIV

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer *your* bodies as *living* sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

\*\*we often stop there when we're using this scripture to talk about worship, but look at the next part:

<sup>3</sup>For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. <sup>4</sup>Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup>We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. <sup>7</sup>If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; <sup>8</sup>if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

**Worship and service are linked!** Paul is talking about offering your body by using your gifts to serve.

In fact, the word Paul uses in verse 1, which the NIV translates as "worship" is *latreia* which literally means service.

### Worship should cost something!

Scripture: 2 Samuel 24:18-25 NIV

<sup>18</sup> On that day Gad went to David and said to him, "Go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." <sup>19</sup> So David went up, as the LORD had commanded through Gad. <sup>20</sup> When Araunah looked and saw the king and his men coming toward him, he went out and bowed down before the king with his face to the ground.

**21** Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?"

"To buy your threshing floor," David answered, "so I can build an altar to the LORD, that the plague on the people may be stopped."

**22** Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take whatever pleases him and offer it up. Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and here are threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood. **23** O king, Araunah gives all this to the king." Araunah also said to him, "May the LORD your God accept you."

**24** But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."

So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them. **25** David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the LORD answered prayer in behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.

Illustration:

Story behind **HEART OF WORSHIP**:

The song dates back to the late 1990s, born from a period of apathy within Matt's home church, Soul Survivor, in Watford, England.

"There was a dynamic missing, so the pastor did a pretty brave thing," he recalls. "He decided to get rid of the sound system and band for a season, and we gathered together with just our voices. His point was that we'd lost our way in worship, and the way to get back to the heart would be to strip everything away."

Reminding his church family to be producers in worship, not just consumers, the pastor, Mike Pilavachi, asked, "When you come through the doors on a Sunday, what are you bringing as your offering to God?"

Matt says the question initially led to some embarrassing silence, but eventually people broke into a cappella songs and heartfelt prayers, encountering God in a fresh way.

"Before long, we reintroduced the musicians and sound system, as we'd gained a new perspective that worship is all about Jesus, and He commands a response in the depths of our souls no matter what the circumstance and setting. 'The Heart of Worship' simply describes what occurred."

*When the music fades, all is stripped away, and I simply come / Longing just to bring something that's of worth that will bless your heart... / I'm coming back to the heart of worship, and it's all about You, Jesus*

**Personal application:** when you come before the Lord, whose pleasure are you seeking? Yours or His? If worship is sacrifice and costs something, what price are you paying? How are you presenting your body to him as a sacrifice? How are you serving Him?

**TRANSITION:**

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**1st PART WAS ABOUT DEFINING WORSHIP**

**2nd PART IS ABOUT EXPERIENCING GOD IN WORSHIP.**

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If our understanding of worship is correct,  
if we are worshiping everyday in response to His mercy and grace,  
if we are worshiping sacrificially by offering our lives to Him,

then how could we NOT be experiencing deeper intimacy with Him!!!???

**I'm going to share three encouragements which are related to these three definitions of worship:**

- 1 - it's a daily response**
- 2 - it is unavoidable**
- 3 - it is sacrificial**

## **Practical Encouragement for Experiencing God in Worship**

**1. Practice** the presence of God daily.

- Have many different experiences of worship (forms)
- Break the mold of thinking you have to sing to worship! or that you need a guitar to worship!
- Do everything as a sacrifice of worship to the Lord: your work, your play, your chores, etc.

As far as corporate worship goes (Sunday mornings or home groups):

If you have spent the whole week serving God and others, praying, meditating, etc, then corporate worship is going to just be an overflow of what is already happening in your heart. And it's encouraging to be together, worshiping in unity, knowing that we are all going the same direction.

You ARE NOT going to have the same experience of intimacy with God if you ignore Him all week, serving yourself, and then show up Sunday morning hoping for a special "worship" experience.

"Practice" means you work at something and give energy and effort to it!

**2. Make** God the primary object of your worship.

- Worship is not optional. You ARE giving your attention, affection, and time to something (or someone). If that thing has taken the place of the Lord in your life, then make some re-adjustments. There is NOTHING worth exchanging for God's place in your life.
- Ask the Holy Spirit everyday to show you where there are idols in your life, then pray and commit yourself back to the Lord.

### 3. **Offer** yourself as a sacrifice of worship.

- Whether it's during the week or on Sunday morning, come before the Lord and offer your life as worship - not just your voice and your hands. Bring your whole life to the altar and give yourself to Him every day.

#### Illustration:

I read an article about why in the Old Testament the people would kill the animal before burning it as an offering. The author figured it was because a dead animal won't try to run away when the heat comes. Imagine putting a live bird on the altar and trying to keep it there until the fire burned it up!

How often do we offer ourselves to the Lord, then jump back off the altar when the heat starts rising?

We need to die to ourselves and offer ourselves completely to Him so we won't scramble away when the heat comes.

## **CLOSING**

Start thinking about worship as a daily response to the Lord, not just a weekly sing-along. Practice worshiping Him at all times in all that you do. You will undoubtedly begin to experience a more intimate relationship with Him.

Evaluate where your affections lie. Worship is not optional. You are a worshiper - it's up to you to decide who or what you will worship.

Understand that worship should cost something. The ultimate cost is your life. In your pursuit of intimacy with God, are you willing to lose everything in order to find life and relationship with Him?

**PRAY.**