

WORSHIP:
A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING OUR PERSONAL CALL

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Typically when we hear the word "worship", we automatically assume we're talking about music. Even though most of Western church culture fuels this assumption (anything music-related is always labeled as "Worship": staff members, contemporary music, praise teams, bands, etc.), **true worship** is actually much deeper and more important than words we sing or notes we play. In this guide, we will break down what worship *is* and what it is *not*, outline some differences between *actual* worship and *expressions* of worship, and, finally, look at what Jesus had to say about worship and how we should respond. Let's get started...

WHAT WORSHIP *IS*:



The English word "worship" is a compound word that comes from two other words: *worth* and *ship*. In the Greek, the New Testament word most often translated as "worship" (*proskuneo*) means: "to fall down before" or "bow down before". Essentially, worship is bowing down before God and showing or displaying His worth.

Because of this definition, worship is most often thought of as an external, very physical act, which is based on some action to be completed or place to be present. However, Jesus made it clear that worship does not depend on place or situation (John 4:21), and because of the Holy Spirit's dwelling within us, worship is actually an internal, individual practice. Therefore, Christians can, and should, worship all the time (1 Cor. 10:31). When Christians formally gather together in a worship service, the emphasis should still be on individually worshiping The Lord, because no one else can worship for you or in your place.

Humans were actually created by God (Gen. 1:26-27) to worship God (Ps. 29:1–2; Phil. 2:9–11). God should be the object of our worship because He alone is worthy of worship (1 Chron. 16:25; Ps. 96:4–5). Worshiping God means crediting to Him the absolute worth that He alone deserves.

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He is our Creator (Acts 17:28; James 1:17; Rev. 4:11), Redeemer (Col. 1:12–13; 1 Pet. 1:3), and Lord (Ps. 22:27). We say this often at Battlefield: worship isn't based on how we feel, but on God's worth and who He is; and no matter how we feel on any given day, His worth never changes.

Another thing to remember is that "it is impossible for any of us to worship God without the impartation of the Holy Spirit. It is the operation of the Spirit of God within us that enables us to worship God acceptably through the person we call Jesus Christ, who is Himself God" (A.W. Tozer). In other words, we can't even worship God without Him allowing us to do so: we are only alive because God gives us life (Acts 17:24-25, 28a), He alone allows us to come to Jesus (John 6:44), anything we know about God is because of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26), and Jesus even makes it clear that we can't do anything—breathe, eat, walk, talk, think, speak, and especially worship—without Him (John 15:5).

WHAT WORSHIP IS *NOT*:



Jesus makes a distinction between internal worship and external expression in Matthew 15:8–9: ***"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."***

For Jesus, this worship amounts to nothing. That's what "vain" means. ***"In vain do they worship me."*** Worship is NOT simply doing things for The Lord. We can do as many deeds as we want and go to as many church services as we want, but never truly worship. If it is all external and nothing is happening in our heart toward God, then it is not worship.

Which means that worship is NOT singing songs, playing music, serving, praying, reading our Bibles, being nice, feeding the hungry, helping the poor, etc. Any of these activities can be done without a proper heart attitude towards God (whether to impress others or make ourselves feel good), which means that they themselves are not worship.





> "Worship isn't primarily about music, techniques, songs, or methodologies. It's about our hearts. It's about what and who we love more than anything."
> - Bob Kauflin

Knowing that worship is an internal and individual practice, knowing that we were created by God to worship Him, and knowing that worship is not simply a list of actions that we complete, one question remains: **how do we worship?** Jesus pointed us toward an answer in John 4:23–24 when He said, *"But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."* Notice that worshiping in spirit is not contrasted with worshiping in the body or with the body. Instead, it is put alongside worshiping in truth.

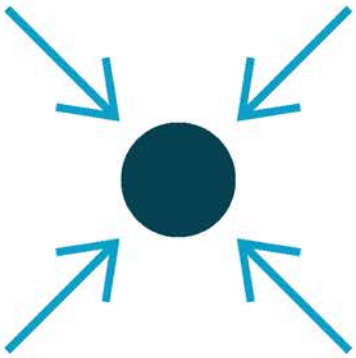
> "It must be the truth of God and the Spirit of God. When a person, yielding to God and believing the truth of God, is filled with the Spirit of God, even his faintest whisper will be worship." - A.W. Tozer

SPIRIT & TRUTH:

In order to better understand what Jesus means, let's break up these two pieces and dig deeper into each one. First, worshiping *"in spirit"* has nothing to do with our physical posture; it has to do with our innermost being and requires several things:

1. **We Must Be Born Again (or Saved) – As we pointed out earlier, without the Holy Spirit residing within us, we cannot respond to God in worship because we do not know Him (1 Cor. 2:11b).**

2. **Our Minds Must Be Centered (or Focused) on God – Only when our minds are changed from being centered on worldly things to being centered on God can we worship in spirit (Rom. 12:1-2).**



3. **We Must Have an Open and Repentant Heart – When King David's heart was filled with guilt over his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11), he found it impossible to worship. He felt that God was far from him and he "groaned all day long" feeling God's hand heavy upon him (Ps. 32:3-4). But when he confessed, fellowship with God was restored and he couldn't help but worship and praise Him. Praise and worship toward God cannot come from hearts filled with unconfessed sin.**

The second part of true worship is worship *"in truth"*. All worship is a response to truth, because we must, at least partially, understand who or what it is that we're worshiping and why we think they are worthy of our worship. Many people worship false gods based on what they *believe* to be true; that which is *actual* truth, however, is contained in the Word of God (John 17:17b; Ps. 119:142b, 160a).

To truly worship God, we must understand who He is and what He has done, and the only place He has fully revealed Himself is in the Bible. If we do not have the truth of the Bible, we do not know God and we cannot be truly worshiping. This means that we need to be continually seeking to learn the truth contained within Scripture. We can't fully love someone that we know nothing about; we can't bow down before God and display His worth if we don't know *why* He's worthy.

IN SUMMARY:

The internal, individual nature of true worship is to know God truly (*"in truth"*) and then respond from the heart (*"in spirit"*) to that knowledge by valuing God, or being satisfied with God, above all earthly things. And then that deep, restful, joyful satisfaction in God overflows in noticeable acts, or expressions, of praise and love for God and others.

Spirit and Truth. ***This*** is the kind of worshiper God is looking for.