

Part Two: Worship is for God

The Word says we are to bless the Lord! Worship is not a spectator sport! It is a direct action taken on our part and directed at God. It is God centred. It is God's command! And it is the privilege of the saints.

In the Bible, a picture of God's people develops. We see a humble people who show reverence and honour to God. And we see God responding to His people by stirring up their hearts to praise and thanksgiving. They dance with joy, lift their hands and bow low in respect. An activity we find both foreign and uncomfortable.

Jesus said, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4.23-25

He is drawing us into an intense, intimate and expressive worship – not marked by outward expression but worship which causes us to come before Him with renewed expectancy. This worship is not satisfied with an intellectual knowledge of His reality. We are coming together with the expectation of His manifest presence to give expression to this reality.

Do not take God for granted! Do not turn which once was the altar of God into the stage for man. We have given praise to individuals, churches, events, programmes when anything that a church can do that is worthy of praise has come about as a result of the blessing of God.

When we give our praise to man, we rob God! Man starts attributing the fruit of God to their own abilities and develop a taste for the praise of men. Let's love our pastors, encourage and pray for them, but at the same time, let's bless God and give praise to Him.

It is time to obey God's first and foremost command. Time to return to our first love, to do what we were created for, in our quiet times and in the congregation – openly and ashamed.

In Celebration of Discipline, Richard Foster writes, "**The divine priority is worship first and service second**". Our lives are to be punctuated with praise, thanksgiving and adoration. Service flows out of worship. Service as a substitute for worship is idolatry. God declared that the primary function of the Levitical priest was to "Come near to me ministers to minister to me" Ezekiel 44.15. In the Old Testament priesthood, ministry to God was to precede all other work and that is no less true of the universal priesthood in the New Testament. One grave temptation we all face is to run around answering calls to service without ministering to the Lord Himself.

Return God to the central focus of our gatherings. Not only speak about Him and of Him, but speak to Him, sing to Him, give Him the glory and praise He deserves.

God is calling His people back to a true understanding of worship. This call involves a "rediscovering" of the book of Psalms. In Psalms, we see relationship and intimacy with God as primary.

Psalm 145

- 1 I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
- 2 Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.
- 3 Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.
- 4 One generation will commend your works to another;
they will tell of your mighty acts.
- 5 They will speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty,
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.
- 6 They will tell of the power of your awesome works,
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
- 7 They will celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.
- 8 The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
- 9 The LORD is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.

- 10 All you have made will praise you, O LORD;
your saints will extol you.
- 11 They will tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,
- 12 so that all men may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.
- 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.
The LORD is faithful to all his promises
and loving toward all he has made. [©](#)
- 14 The LORD upholds all those who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.
- 15 The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food at the proper time.
- 16 You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.
- 17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways
and loving toward all he has made.
- 18 The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
- 19 He fulfils the desires of those who fear him;
he hears their cry and saves them.
- 20 The LORD watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.
- 21 My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD.
Let every creature praise his holy name
for ever and ever.