



Worship:

Worship features prominently in Luke's writings. Luke presents people praising God in response to experiencing God's loving help or saving grace. Praise and worship flow from gratitude for who God is and what God has done.

The book of Acts reveals that worship is essential to the establishment of the Early Church. It is at the heart of who they are, spirit filled, offering praise in their homes, the temple and on the streets around them.

Worship isn't what we've necessarily perceived it to be. In westernised culture we can limit our understanding of worship to a moment attached to a specific experience. When we limit worship to our experience of the songs we sing at a designated service or gathering, we neglect the opportunity to live a lifestyle of worship which is dedicated to God.

There are times when worship is instinctive and perhaps obvious, a deep sense of joy that we cannot help but worship God for who He is. There are also times when due to situations or varying circumstances, the last thing we may feel like doing is worshipping God.

Worship can arise from a glad heart, but it can also be the deliberate choice of a hurting one. All of life can be worship when lived out from a position of keeping God first. The Psalms portray this particular paradox which displays honesty with God in both good times and bad, whether praising or lamenting there primary focus is demonstrated through a conversation with God. In many Psalms, there is this present tension in the realisation and excitement of who God is, yet also troublesome groans at a present situation that is deeply affecting them. Worship comes from accepting that God is still God even when it doesn't feel like it.

Expressions of worship can differ! These can include prayers of praise, singing, or particular actions such as kneeling, the raising of hands etc. However, serving God with our gifts is also an opportunity to worship God. To serve is a conscious decision to choose to worship God. Worship is the entire process of surrendering our entire lives into God's hands. Serving others is not just about doing something for other people, it is an opportunity to help us, whilst helping others to focus on God. When we limit our understanding of worship to a purely sung experience, we miss the opportunity to encounter and worship God through the gifts that He has blessed us with. Serving doesn't cancel out your chance to worship, it is worship.

A false perception that is often encountered in churches across the UK is that you have to be able to sing to be able to worship. However, if worship is a lifestyle that is lived out, rather than merely experienced, then it must be recognised that there is an attitude to worship that is to be developed and reflected through a growing relationship with God. The pursuit of God, starts with a recognition that we must come to the end of ourselves.

Worship is an attitude and a posture that must be pursued. Many translations in Greek and Hebrew describe worship as an adopted bodily posture – to bow, to kiss, to fall towards God. Worship is seen by all of one's actions, through every action. Worship is an active, all life response to the worth of who God is and what He does. Therefore, it is not determined by emotional encounter, or spiritual manifestations, though these are apparent demonstrations and encounters, rather the heart of worship pursues God with an attitude that encompasses a whole life commitment, to knowing Him and knowing Him more deeply than we do today!

The message translation refers to a live in the spirit and a life of worship like this –

Romans 12:1-2 – The Message

'So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life, your sleeping, eating, going to work and walking around life and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognise what He wants from you, and quickly respond to it.'