

NEW DIMENSIONS CHURCH

FOCUS ON WORSHIP

Introduction: Read Psalm 96:9 "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth" (KJV). The Book of Psalms is filled with hundreds of poetic anthems used in the religious celebrations of the children of Israel that clearly instructed them (and us) how to worship God. Yet, even though I heard the word *worship* in conversation, testimonies, songs, and Scripture, I didn't completely understand what it meant.

THE PRIORITY OF WORSHIP

Worship is not the slow song that the choir sings. Worship is not the amount you place in the offering basket. Worship is not volunteering in children's church. Yes, these may be acts or expressions of worship, but they do not define what true worship really is. There are numerous definitions of the word *worship*. Yet, one in particular encapsulates the priority we should give to worship as a spiritual discipline: Worship is to honor with extravagant love and extreme submission (Webster's Dictionary, 1828).

True worship, in other words, is defined by the priority we place on *who* God is in our lives and *where* God is on our list of priorities. True worship is a matter of the heart expressed through a lifestyle of holiness. Thus, if your lifestyle does not express the beauty of holiness through an extravagant or exaggerated love for God, and you do not live in extreme or excessive submission to God, then I invite you to make worship a non-negotiable priority in your life.

We worship God because he is God. Period. Our extravagant love and extreme submission to the Holy One flows out of the reality that God loved us *first*. It is highly appropriate to thank God for all the things he has done for us. However, true worship is shallow if it is solely an acknowledgement of God's wealth. Psalm 96:5-6 says, "*For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary.*" In other words, our worship must be toward the one who is worthy simply because of his identity as the Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent One, and not just because God is wealthy and able to meet our needs and answer our prayers. We must focus our practice of worship on the worthiness of God and not his wealthiness.

THE PERSON WE WORSHIP

Think about this: Would you continue to worship God if, from this day forward, God's miraculous signs and wonders were not so profoundly evident in your life? Would God still be worthy of your worship? Or is your worship completely dependent upon the abundance of God's blessings upon your life? Do you only worship God for what he can do for you?

THE PROMISE OF WORSHIP

Because of our God's unimaginable generosity toward us, God, in all of his glory, chooses to respond to us through our worship. This is the promise—that when we worship God with extravagant love and extreme submission, God will come and commune with us. The promise is not that we will feel great or that our heavy load will be lifted, but that God will come. And when God comes in his own time as a response to our worship, Psalm 96:13 declares, *"Let all creation rejoice before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness."*

BIBLICAL WORDS FOR "WORSHIP"

- A. Hebrew word *shachah* - "bowing down before an object of honor"
 - Neh. 8:6 - Israelites "bowed low and worshipped the Lord"
 - Ps. 95:6 - "let us worship and bow down"

- B. Hebrew word *abad* - "service or work for God"
 - Deut. 6:13 - "fear the Lord your God and worship Him"
 - Ps. 2:11 - "Worship the Lord with reverence"

- C. Hebrew word *segid* - "showing respect" or "doing homage"
 - Dan. 3:5-18 - "worship the golden image"

- D. Greek words *gonu* and *gonupeteo* - "bending the knee"
 - Eph. 3:14 - "bow my knees before the Father"
 - Phil. 2:10 - "every knee should bow at the name of Jesus"

- E. Greek words *sebo* and *eusebeo* derived from *sebas* - "fear or reverence"
 - Acts 18:13 - "worship God contrary to the law"
 - Acts 17:23 - "worshipped in ignorance"

F. Greek word *proskuneo*, derived from *pros*, "toward" and *kuneo*, "to kiss"
Matt. 4:10 - "You shall worship the Lord your God"
John 4:24 - "worship Him in spirit and truth"

G. Greek word *latreuo*, derived from *latris* - "servant"
Rom. 12:1 - "spiritual service or worship"
Phil. 3:3 - "worship in the Spirit of God"

H. Greek word *leitourgeo*, derived from *laos*, "people", and *ergeo*, "to work"
Acts 13:2 - "ministering to the Lord"
II Cor. 9:12 - "ministry of service"

I. Greek word *therapeuo* - "to heal"
Acts 17:25 - "God not worshipped by human hands" (KJV)

J. English word "worship" derived from old Anglo-Saxon *weorthscipe*, meaning "worth-ship"