

# WORSHIP TODAY

*by Marty Kendall*

## INTRODUCTION

A lot has been said lately about the forms of worship, (i.e. how to run a good 'worship service', how to have a professional 'worship team', etc.) while very little has been said about what worship is and why we worship. This document is a discussion of the substance of worship and its relationship to music, the gospel and the church.

'Worship Today' was originally written as the basis of the Discussion Group questions for SMURF (Song Music UnReal Fun) Camp '96, and hence most of it follows a question and answer format, while the remainder has been added for completeness.

These are issues that I have had to face and check regularly in my life. I hope that by sharing my journey of discovery that you may have a fuller experience of worship.

### *Definition*

By definition, worship is:

- Aligning ourselves with God's will (Geoff Bullock).
- 'The English word 'worship' is derived from the Anglo-Saxon 'weorthscipe' - 'worth' and 'ship' meaning one worthy of reverence and honour' (derivation).
- The act of revering or honouring God; obedient service (Heinemann Australian Dictionary).
- To pay great honour and respect to (World Book Dictionary).
- The celebration of God's supreme worth in such a manner that God's worthiness becomes the norm and inspiration of human living (Ralph Martin - *The Worship of God*).

Thus, in this document, it will be understood that the word 'worship' refers to the way we acknowledge God's worth; the way our knowledge of God affects the way we live.

## *Colossians - Spirit produces fruit of worship*

Although Paul never mentions the word worship in the book, the subject of Colossians is indeed our acceptable worship of our Creator.

‘Then you will live a life that honours the Lord, and you will always please Him by doing good deeds. You will come to know God even better. His glorious power will make you patient and strong enough to endure anything, and you will be truly happy. I pray that you will be grateful to God for letting you have a part in what He has promised His people in the kingdom of light. God rescued us from the dark power of Satan and brought us into the kingdom of His dear Son, who forgives our sins and sets us free.’ Colossians 1:10-14

‘You have accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord. Now keep following Him. Plant your roots in Christ and let Him be the foundation for your life. Be strong in your faith, just as you were taught. And be grateful.’ Colossians 2:2&7

‘Christ gives meaning to your life.... Don’t be controlled by your body.... Don’t be greedy, which is the same as worshipping idols.’ Colossians 3:4&5

‘God loves you and has chosen you as His own special people. So be gentle, kind, humble, meek, and patient. Put up with each other, and forgive anyone who does you wrong, just as Christ has forgiven you. *Love is more important than anything else.* It is what ties everything completely together.’ Colossians 3:12-14

‘With thankful hearts we sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. Whatever you say or do should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as *you give thanks to God the Father because of Him.*’ Colossians 3:16-18

It can be seen from the above texts that the basic reason for Christians to praise and worship God is what He has done through Jesus; He has set us free from the condemnation of sin. The life of a Christian is a celebration of what God has done for us by releasing us from our debt to Him. When this fact is the focus in our lives, everything we do will be a worshipful act.

The Holy Spirit transforms submissive believers into people who will honour God by all their life’s actions. Worship begins when we give up control of our lives and give it over to God to produce the fruit in us that He desires. We can take no credit for this process. So then, if we are living in an obedient relationship with God through the Holy Spirit, God will delight in everything we do; from preaching, to singing, to tripping over the door step as we rush to work in the morning.

A loving parent delights in everything their growing toddler does. They delight in his first cry, his first step, first word... everything he does excites and pleases them as they participate in his growth. They don’t wait until the child is old enough to buy his parents birthday and Christmas presents to be thrilled by what their child does. In the same way, God participates and delights in everything we do, not just when we are participating in church.

## What is Church?

But what is church? Before we can define the function of worship and music in relation to Christian meetings we need to look at why Christians should meet together (the original Greek word for church (ecclesia) simply means meeting or assembly).

‘And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.’ Hebrews 10:25 (NIV)

‘When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.’ 1 Corinthians 14:26

‘Wherever two or three of you come together in my name, I am there with you.’ Matthew 18:20.

Churches may use buildings and organisational structure to achieve their purpose, but essentially, church occurs when Christians assemble with the intention of building each other up. This can happen whenever and wherever we interact with other Christians. Because of our mutual love for God, our interactions with other believers should bring us closer to God in some way.

‘They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.’ Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

In the New Testament, groups of believers met whenever and wherever they could to teach and encourage each other so that they could go out and be the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13).

Church is about relationships with those who inspire you to come closer to God. We meet together so that we may be strengthened (through teaching, fellowship and prayer) so we can continue to worship God in our daily life. Every Christian, as part of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5), must be both equipped and encouraged to exercise ministry to build up other believers.

*‘You say, ‘Love is a temple, love the higher love...  
You ask me to enter but then you make me crawl.  
And I can’t be holding on to what you’ve got when all you’ve got is hurt.*

*One love, one blood, one life, you’ve got to do what you should.  
One life with each other, sisters, brothers. One life but we’re not the same.  
We’ve got to carry each other, carry each other.’ U2 ‘One’*

Many people have been hurt by a church which has built itself up to be something that God never intended it to be. We must be careful not to follow this pattern of history. The church is about community and fellowship; people who will listen to each others’ stories, dreams and visions and then support and pray for each other so they can go out and reach the world. The world is not looking for ‘Hey Hey it’s Saturday’ twice a week, it’s looking for a church which displays the integrity of its love by meeting each others’ need every day of the week.

# 1. WORSHIP = ?

## **Share your personal experiences of 'worship.'**

Today's church culture suggests that worship is predominantly something related to music. There are people who, as suggested by their church's culture, think praise is the fast, boppy warm up songs which happen at the beginning of the service and that worship is the slower, more emotional, mellower songs that happen after the offering is taken and the announcements are done. This is not what is meant by praise and worship in the Bible, at least not in the New Testament. In a society that doesn't do a lot of group singing, maybe we should reconsider the cultural appropriateness of the way we use music in our meetings.

*'It is far too easy, within the current upsurge of creative input in the realm of worship, to find ourselves chasing spiritual or aesthetic experiences, as if the highest achievements of our whole pilgrimage on earth was to enter some kind of praise-induced ecstasy. I wonder sometimes whether it is worship we worship, whether what we experience in music and song is actually our primary motivation, rather than honouring God.'*

*Fundamentally, authentic worship is about pursuing that which pleases God, not us. It is about lives lived in service to God and neighbour, lives which are 'living sacrifices', which are engaged in God's work in the world.'* Steve Bradbury, *Target Magazine*

Praise is basically advertising. As Christians, we are both the product and the advertisement of our faith. God is the object of and reason for our praise, while those around us are our target group. Praise serves to build up others in their faith, not God.

Also, the word 'worship' is never used in the context of Christians meeting together. Worship in the Bible refers to the way we live our whole life, not just what we do when we meet together.

## **Discuss the Old Testament models of worship (the temple, the priests, the sacrifices).**

'Believe me, the time is coming when you won't worship the Father either on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans don't really know the one you worship. But the Jews do know the God we worship, and by using us, God will save the world. But a time is coming, and it is already here! Even now the true worshippers are being led by the Spirit to worship the Father according to the truth. These are the ones the Father is seeking to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship God must be led by the Spirit to worship Him according to the truth.'

John 4:21-24 (see also Hebrews 9)

Worship in the Old Testament was carried out by means of sacrifices at the temple through priests. The function of these sacrifices was to remind the Jews of their debt to God (see Appendix A. Humanity + God in History = ....).

## **What was the significance of the ripping of the temple curtain?**

'But Jesus, with a loud cry, gave His last breath. At that moment the temple curtain ripped right down the middle. When the Roman captain standing guard in front of Him saw that He had quit breathing, he said, 'This has to be the Son of God!'' Mark 15:37-39

The ripping of the temple curtain signified that we no longer need to come to God through a temple building or any form of priest. The old shadows have become real (Hebrews 10:1). We can now, through faith, dwell in the 'the most holy place' (i.e. God's presence) at all times (Hebrews 4:16).

### ***What does it mean to worship God in spirit?***

‘Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit and His worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.’ John 4:23&24 (NIV)

Worship is not purely an academic exercise. It is a loving relationship with our Creator, involving our whole being (body, mind and soul). Because we love Him we will do His will. The Holy Spirit inhabits us and empowers us to do His will as we release ourselves more and more to God’s control and live in constant communion with Him. If we live according to the direction of God’s Spirit then we will live a worshipful life.

### ***What does it mean to worship God in truth?***

‘God is Spirit and those who worship God must be led by the Spirit to worship Him according to the truth.’ John 4:24 (CEV)

We know and acknowledge God for who He is according to the way He is portrayed in His Word. Jesus, especially in John’s gospel, is the truth. Hence, we come to the Father through the Son who is the truth.

‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’ John 14:6 (NIV)

### ***Is worship bound to a place, day or style in the New Covenant as it was in the Old Covenant? Why/why not?***

We now have a restored relationship with God through the death of Christ. Hence, every moment of the day we can commune with God. The Spirit led life, according to the truth, is worship, whether we are conscious of it or not. Despite our sinful nature, Jesus’ gift of forgiveness allows us to enter spiritually into God’s presence all the time. Through faith in Jesus we can live in an intimate relationship with God all day every day.

The New Covenant consolidated the whole law. Today, if we live a life guided by love towards God and towards those around us we satisfy the law and hence our whole lives will be pleasing to God (Mark 12:30&31).

### ***What was the purpose of sacrifices in the Old Covenant? What did they achieve? Why did they have to be repeated over and over again?***

‘The priests do their work each day, and they keep on offering sacrifices that can never take away sins. But Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice that is good forever. Now He is sitting at God’s right side, and He will stay there until His enemies are put under His power. By His one sacrifice He has forever set free from sin the people He brings to God. The Holy Spirit also speaks of this by telling us that the Lord said, “When the time comes, I will make an agreement with them. I will write my laws on their minds and hearts. Then I will forget about their sins and no longer remember their evil deeds.” When sins are forgiven, there is no more need to offer sacrifices. My friends, the blood of Jesus gives us courage to enter the most holy place by a new way that leads to life! And this way takes us through the curtain that is Christ Himself.’ Hebrews 10:11-19

The sacrifices of the Old Covenant had to be repeated over and over again because they were only a symbols, or a shadow (Hebrews 10:1), of what was to come. They were repeated over and over again, to bring the focus of God’s chosen people back to Him, and their unceasing need for His forgiveness. Also, the fact that they needed to be repeated over and over again showed that these sacrifices did not fully atone; a more perfect sacrifice was needed.

### ***Who is this new priest? What did this new priest do?***

Jesus is the new High Priest. He paid the sin debt of all humanity with His own blood on the cross. Through this sacrifice He restored the pre-fall relationship between humanity and God. Every Christian now has priestly status (1 Peter 2:5) and can therefore come boldly into God's presence (Hebrews 4:16).

### ***In what ways can what we do when we come together become an unpleasing, non-Christian act of sacrifice?***

'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?" Then I will say to them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"' Matthew 7:22&23 (NIV)

'All of you praise me with your words, but you never really think about me. It is useless to worship me, when you teach rules made up by humans.' Matthew 15:8&9

'I, the Lord, hate and despise your religious celebrations and your times of worship. I won't accept your offerings or animal sacrifices - not even your very best. No more of your noisy songs! I won't listen when you play your harps. But let justice and fairness flow like a river that never runs dry.... You sing foolish songs to the music of harps, and you make up new tunes, just as David used to do. You drink all the wine you want and wear expensive perfume, but you don't care about the ruin of your nation. So you will be the first to be dragged off as captives; your good times will end.' Amos 5:21-24, 6:5-7

'Your sacrifices mean nothing to me. I am sick of your offerings of rams and choice cattle, I don't like the blood of bulls or lambs or goats. Who asked you to bring all this when you come to worship me? Stay out of my temple! Your sacrifices are worthless, and incense is disgusting. I can't stand the evil you do on your New Moon Festivals or on your Sabbaths and other times of worship. I hate your New Moon Festivals and all others as well. They are a heavy burden I am tired of carrying. No matter how much you pray, I won't listen. You are too violent. Wash yourselves clean! I am disgusted with your filthy deeds. Stop doing wrong and learn to live right. See that justice is done. Defend widows and orphans and help those in need.' Isaiah 1:11-17 (see also Jeremiah 6:20, Hoseah, 6:6, Malachi 1:7, 10&11 and Micah 6:6-8)

We can sometimes do church with a sacrificial mentality (i.e. thinking that we can do something to get right with God). Our natural minds think that we are doing something for God by making our church services better. Outward religious acts are not necessarily worship. In fact, if we think we can gain favour with God by religious acts, then we have failed to see the importance of obedience to the Spirit.

If the primary aim of our meetings is to put on an entertaining performance then we run the risk that our congregation will follow our example and think their primary duty as Christians is their external appearance. It doesn't matter how grotty our exterior is, if we are really submitted to the Holy Spirit then in time God will change who we are into what He wants us to be. When we offer our lives submitted to God (i.e. our living sacrifice - Romans 12:1), He makes us holy and acceptable to Himself through the death of His Son Jesus.

### ***What then is acceptable worship? When and where do we worship?***

Our worship today is the way we live our lives every moment of the day. We please God by our obedience to His Spirit, as He leads us deeper into the truth of Jesus as found in the Bible.

‘Believe me, the time is coming when you won’t worship the Father either on this mountain or in Jerusalem.’ John 4:21

‘Later, Jesus and His disciples were having dinner at Matthew’s house. Many tax collectors and other sinners were also there. Some Pharisees asked Jesus’ disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and other sinners?” Jesus heard them and answered, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor, but sick people do. Go and learn what the Scriptures mean when they say, ‘Instead of offering sacrifices to me, I want you to be merciful to others.’ I didn’t come to invite good people to be my followers. I came to invite sinners.”’ Matthew 9:10-13

Today, God wants us to live a life of love and mercy to those around us, and a life of love, respect and obedience towards Him. We honour God and show that we love Him by following the example that Jesus set. We need to take our worship to the streets by loving, socialising with, caring for and meeting the needs of those around us.

## 2. WORSHIP + ME = ?

### ***When your non-Christian friends hear the word 'Christian' what do they think of?***

Christians do a lot of good in society. Sometimes they have the image of nice, good, helpful, loving people. However, the image of Christianity has at the same time become tarnished by the actions of some Christians. Throughout history it can be seen that when Christians put anything above the basic gospel of Jesus Christ then it is inevitable that they will lose the plot in some way. For example:

- The Jews forgot the importance of their heart attitude in their sacrificial worship (see Appendix A. Worship + Humanity in History = .....).
- In the Reformation Martin Luther and John Calvin and many others rebelled against the way the church of the day had made itself into an organisation which was focused on building itself up through various means, including the selling of indulgences for salvation. They had turned church into a performance which the average person could not understand, but felt obligated to be a part of and to support.
- Even today Christianity has lost respect through the likes of tele-evangelists who exploit their position for their own financial gain or don't practice what they preach. We have a responsibility to live our Christianity louder than we preach and therefore honour God in all situations.

### ***What are the pressures of being in the limelight?***

People who are in the limelight, including Christian artists, can become objects of adoration. People will love a good artist without having any idea of who they are or what they stand for. This can create an alienation from normal everyday relationships which can frequently lead to some sort of identity crisis. Pride and self sufficiency can easily dominate the thoughts of a public figure.

### ***What does it mean to be 'poor in spirit'?***

Jesus said 'blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God...' (CEV) 'You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and His rule.' Matthew 5:3 (The Message)

'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.' (NIV) 'The way to please you is to feel sorrow deep in our hearts. This is the kind of sacrifice you won't refuse.' Psalm 51:17 (CEV)

You're blessed when you acknowledge your spiritual poverty. God does not want us to be proud of ourselves or self sufficient. God created us to live in an intimately dependent relationship with Him. We should always remember that we are dependent on Him for everything, especially in ministry situations.

### ***On what does God want us to base our self worth?***

God does not want us to base our identity on our comparison with others. He wants us to base our self worth on the fact that we were created by a loving God for a purpose; a God that loved us so much that He didn't hold back His own life when it was required to restore our relationship with Him. He went through the agony that we deserved. He loves us and wants an intimate relationship with us. What more do we need to feel good about ourselves? (see Appendix B - The Christian's Identity)

### ***What can we give to God that He needs?***

‘Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgements, and His paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has ever given to God, that God should repay Him? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen. 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.’ Romans 11:33-12:1 (see also Psalm 50).

We cannot give anything to God because He is the Creator of all.

### ***If we cannot do anything for God, what then are we to do?***

‘Then the ones who pleased the Lord will ask, ‘When did we welcome you as a stranger or give you clothes to wear or visit you while you were sick or in jail?’ The King will answer, ‘Whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me.’ Matthew 25:37-40

We honour and serve God by honouring and serving His people (i.e. the church). We also have an obligation to love and serve all those created in God’s image (Luke 10:30-37).

### ***What did Satan want Jesus to do in return for the world?***

Satan said to Jesus: ‘I will give all this power and glory to you. It has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. Just worship me and you can have it all.’ Luke 4:6&7

I don’t remember reading anywhere that Jesus could sing or play an instrument!?! What Satan wanted was Jesus’ submission to himself.

### ***How and why did Jesus’ disciples worship Him?***

‘Suddenly Jesus met them. ‘Greetings,’ He said. They came to Him, clasped His feet and worshipped Him.’ (Matthew 28:9)

‘When He had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem and stayed continually at the temple, praising God.’ (Luke 24:52)

‘And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshipped Him, saying ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’ (Matthew 14:32&33)

Did they whip out their guitars from under the seat of the boat and sing a chorus at Jesus? No, worship in these examples actually consisted of some form of physical prostration. Whatever the form of worship though, the substance of their worship was their acknowledgment of Jesus as God. They knew that they weren’t even worthy of being in His presence and the outward expression in these cases happened to be physically bowing down. Whatever the form of worship, it is the heart attitude of the worshipper that matters to God.

### ***What is our acceptable sacrifice as gentile Christians living under the New Covenant?***

*‘The best measure of a spiritual life is not its ecstasies, but its obedience.’ Oswald Chambers*

*‘Lawful worship consists in obedience alone.’ John Calvin*

*‘Community worship and lives lived as living sacrifices serving God and our neighbour are a seamless continuum of response to the being, character and deeds of God who desires that worship be manifested in caring for one’s neighbour in all aspects of life.’ Florinda Toledo-Juarez*

‘Does the Lord really want sacrifices and offerings? No! He doesn’t want your sacrifices. He wants you to obey Him.’ 1 Samuel 15:22

‘Jesus told the people who had faith in Him, ‘If you keep on doing what I have said, you truly are my disciples. You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.’ John 8:31&32

“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” The second is this: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” There is no commandment greater than these.’ Mark 12:30&31

### ***How do we offer our bodies as ‘living sacrifices’?***

‘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.’ Romans 12:1 (NIV).

Like the woman with the single coin in the offering box (Luke 21:1-4), it is not the quality, or quantity of our worship, but the motive with which we offer it. What God wants from us today is not just our first fruits but everything we are (Colossians 3:16&17). When the Jews offered a sacrifice it is given totally to God, burnt up completely; never to be gotten back. We offer our whole lives not because we are obliged to or need to get right with God, but ‘in view of God’s mercy.’

When a child is young his relationship with his Father is essentially based on rules (or laws); ‘don’t touch the hot plate’, ‘don’t play on the road’ etc. But when the child grows up he has hopefully learnt to love and respect his Father. He knows his Father and therefore knows what pleases and displeases him. The child wants to do everything he can do to please his Father, not because he has to for fear of punishment but because he wants to out of love for the one that has given life and provides for his needs.

It is the same for Christians living by the Spirit today (see Galatians 3). Now Christ has come God treats us as if we were mature. We know our heavenly Father through reading His Word and through His Spirit living in us. God has the right to demand everything we are in constant slavery to him. But he doesn’t. The greatest expression of God’s love is the fact that He makes serving Him our decision; we have the power to decide whether or not to fulfil the purpose for which we were created.

When you are in love with someone you naturally want to share everything you are and own with them. You want to share your whole life with them. The same is true of our relationship with God. In our restored relationship with Him we give everything we have and are to Him for His glory and, conversely, we know that He will love us and share everything He owns with us.

In view of God’s mercy; because we are grateful to God for what He did for us through the death of Jesus; because we have a restored relationship with God when we deserved death; our only appropriate response is to give everything we have to God for His glory.

### 3. WORSHIP + MUSIC + HOLY SPIRIT = ?!?!

#### **What did the prophets of Baal think they had to do to get their man-made god to show its power (1 Kings 18:24-40)?**

At first the prophets of Baal called on the name of their god, then they shouted louder and louder and even slashed themselves with swords. Their natural minds thought they could bring their god down from heaven by their actions.

#### **What did Elijah do to get God to show His power?**

Elijah simply prayed, 'God, please show your power, for your glory' and instantly the sacrifice, the altar and the water in the trench around the altar were instantly consumed by fire.

#### **Why did God honour Elijah's prayer?**

'Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you can live together whole and healed. The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with. Elijah, for instance, human just like us, prayed hard that it wouldn't rain, and it didn't - not a drop for three and a half years. Then he prayed that it would rain, and it did. The showers came and everything started growing again.' James 5:13-18 (The Message)

God honoured Elijah's prayer because he was an obedient servant who wanted to see his God glorified. He knew the one true God, and sought to honour Him by his actions throughout his whole life.

#### **What does Elijah teach us about being worshippers?**

Our natural minds think that we can do something to please God. We can't. We are fully dependent on God's power which comes through prayer. Nothing more, nothing less. If we really want to be used by God He requires us to be available, faithful, obedient and prayerful people.

#### **Why do we sing?**

'After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.' Acts 16:23-26

'Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Ephesians 5:18-20 (NIV)

'Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.' James 5:13

'What should we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.' 1 Corinthians 14:26 (NIV)

Our singing is an expression of our joy and excitement about God and what He has done for us. In a church situation music can be used as an expression of corporate adoration of God, but its main focus must be the strengthening of the members of the church.

### ***What role does the Holy Spirit play?***

If we give the Holy Spirit control of our lives through obedience, He makes everything we do acceptable to God. The Holy Spirit takes our natural gifts and makes them spiritually effective. Without the power of the Spirit nothing can be achieved spiritually.

### ***Do we see the role 'musician,' 'singer,' or 'worship leader' in this list of spiritual gifts that build up the church?***

'Christ chose some of us to be apostles, prophets, missionaries, pastors and teachers, so that His people would learn to serve and His body would grow strong.' Ephesians 4:11&12

'If you really want spiritual gifts, choose the ones that will be most helpful to the church..' 1 Corinthians 14:12

No, we don't see these roles in this list because musical talents do not necessarily build up others. Music is a very spiritual medium. Every effective cult knows the power of manipulation in hyped up, emotional music. The Spirit of God doesn't work like that.

'He wasn't in the wind... He wasn't in the fire... He wasn't in the earthquake... but in the gentle whisper.' 1 Kings 19:8-12

We must ask ourselves 'would I have a ministry without music?' If not, then we probably don't have a ministry at all. We shouldn't need music to minister to those around us. Our main ministry as Christians is the way we relate to and love those around us.

### ***How then are we to use our natural gifts?***

Artistic expression is not an end in itself; it is a tool to reach, preach, teach, challenge and to encourage those around us.

'Artistic ability and creative gifts are only a medium; a tool God has given us to achieve a greater purpose. It is my desire to take people beyond their passion for their natural gifts (the medium) to a point of discovering and developing their spiritual giftings (the purpose).

'A passion for artistic performance and professionalism is only fruitful when it supports a greater vision to serve and extend God's Kingdom through the active expression of our spiritual gifts.' *Peter Shurley*

## SUMMARY

- Worship is the way we acknowledge God's worth; the way our knowledge of God affects the way we live.
- The word 'worship' is never used in the Bible in the context of Christians meeting together let.
- Christians want to live lives that honour God because they love and adore Him because of what God has done for them. When Christians submit to God, the Holy Spirit comes in and produces God-pleasing fruit in their lives.
- Praise is basically advertising. As Christians, we are both the product and the advertisement of our faith. God is the object of and reason for our praise, while those around us are our target group. Praise serves to build up others in their faith, not God.
- Humanity has a natural tendency to go it alone without God. We naturally think we can do something for God when we can't. Our lives are lived in celebration of what God has done for us.
- Music is not an end in itself; it is a tool to preach, to teach, to challenge, to serve and to encourage those around us. Music is valuable, but not essential. If it is culturally appropriate for the people we are trying to reach, use it. If it isn't, then don't.
- Through our submission God wants to live through us. He doesn't ask us to make ourselves into something acceptable, He asks us to present ourselves to Him, as we are, so He can make us into what we were created to be.
- Worship is not primarily what we do in church, it encompasses every moment of a believer's life. If we are living in an obedient relationship with God through the Holy Spirit then He will delight in and be honoured by everything we do.
- Worship today is the way we live our lives every moment of the day. We show that we acknowledge God's sovereignty by our love and respect for Him. This is carried out by obedience to His Spirit, as the He leads us deeper into the truth of Jesus found in the Bible.
- If we love God and those around us then we are truly worshipping God.

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All Bible quotes taken from the Contemporary English Version unless stated.

## APPENDIX A. WORSHIP + HUMANITY IN HISTORY = ....

'If you want to last, learn from the past, but don't remake it.' D.I.G. 'Futures'

### *The Garden of Eden*

When God first created humans (Adam and Eve) He created them in intimate communion with Himself. They daily walked and talked in the Garden with God (Genesis 3:8). Everything they did was pleasing to God because it was without sin. They loved God, and because of this everything they did glorified Him. After the fall (when they turned from God and tried to do it their own way) they could not please Him in the same way because they had become sinful (sin is the decision of the creature to live independently of the Creator).

### *Abraham*

Abraham (the father of the Jewish race) was credited as righteous by faith in God when he showed that he was willing to sacrifice his only son at God's command (Genesis 22). He showed that he had faith in God; he put the will of God before his own will. He showed, by his actions, that he believed that God's will is sovereign. Because of this, God promised Abraham that the whole world would be blessed through his descendants.

### *Exodus to Christ*

'At the time I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, I didn't command them to offer sacrifices to me. Instead, I told them, 'If you listen to me and do what I tell you, I will be your God, you will be my people, and all will go well for you.' But your ancestors refused to listen. They were stubborn, and whenever I wanted them to go one way, they always went the other.' Jeremiah 7:22-24

When the children of Israel were released from the captivity of the Egyptians they were a simple people. They knew very little of their God. What they did know was the Egyptians' culture and how they worshipped their gods. They did not seem to grasp what God really wanted from them. Because of this, God gave the Children of Israel a simple system of worship; a system that they could understand. The purpose of this system was to remind them again of God's power and sovereignty and their debt to Him because of their sins.

The purpose of the sacrificial system, as part of God's covenant with Abraham, was to make them look forward to when the promised Messiah was going to cleanse their sins and restore their relationship with God. They were continually reminded that they had sinned and that the shedding of blood was required for justice to be served.

God commanded the Children of Israel to erect a tabernacle (Exodus 25) and later a temple (1 Kings 6) in which they worshipped God. They did not understand that God could not be bound to one physical place (Acts 17:24). The priests acted as intercessors between the people and God. Once a year the one High Priest would go into the most holy place to offer a blood offering for the sins of all the people. They were given the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) so they would know how to interact with their God and the people around them. All these things were merely a shadow (Hebrews 10:1) of things to come.

## *After Christ*

When Jesus came to earth and was crucified by the system that had waited for Him for so long, the shadows became reality. Jesus made the perfect sacrifice, once and for all, with His own blood for the sins of the world (John 3:16). The temple curtain was ripped from top to bottom and later the Jewish temple was destroyed (70AD) signifying that people no longer needed to come to a particular place to worship God (John 4:23-24). The temple of God was now in the hearts of all believers through the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 9:14, 10:19&20).

Jesus became the High Priest (Hebrews 5) for all and established the priesthood of all believers (Hebrews 7, 1 Peter 2:5). Now, through faith, we dwell in the most holy place at all times (Hebrews 10:19). We can also all minister to one another to build up the body of Christ without the need for a worship service or leader to intercede between us and God.

Jesus gave a new commandment that summed up all the law and the prophets (Matthew 5:17, 7:12 & 22:40); 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these.' (Mark 12:30&31) This new commandment exploded the Old Covenant. Not only must we not murder but we must not hate or despise anyone. Not only must we not commit adultery but we must not lust etc... (Matthew 5). In the Old Testament, the Jews lived according to the guidelines of the Law (i.e. the Ten Commandments and the sacrificial system). Today Christians live according to the spirit of the Law; love. The New Testament is basically a how to be a better lover guide. If we love then we fulfil the law and hence please God.

## *The Reformation Period*

We can see that the church has a tendency to degenerate until people start praying and God steps in and brings about revival; a return to the teachings of the Bible. The Reformation period is no exception.

In Martin Luther's day, Mass was the primary focus of church services. It had become a performance with no participation from the everyday church-goer. The Bible wasn't even read in the language of the people. It was considered heresy for the Bible to be in a language the ordinary people could understand.

The church was characterised by empty liturgy, which was distant from people's needs. Communion was a spectacle. There was no such thing as the priesthood of all believers ministering to one another; it was a church heaped in status quo with a focus on building up the organisation.

There was financial exploitation of the people through the sale of indulgences (to buy your dead relatives out of purgatory) which was used to build larger buildings.

The reformers corrected many of the doctrinal faults (that is grace alone, faith alone, Bible alone) but inherited many of the forms of the past. Because of their cultural situation they never totally went back to the new testament apostolic model.

## *Present*

We must not merely accept what is handed down to us. We must continually check our church practices by the guidelines given in the Bible.

## APPENDIX B. THE CHRISTIAN'S IDENTITY

From 'The Bondage Breaker' by Neil T Anderson.

### *I am accepted*

I am God's child (John 1:12).  
I am Christ's friend (John 15:15).  
I have been justified (Romans 5:1).  
I am united with the Lord, and I am one in spirit with Him (1 Cor 6:17).  
I have been bought with a price. I belong to God (1 Cor 6:19&20).  
I am a saint (Eph 1:1).  
I have been adopted as God's child (Eph 1:5).  
I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit (Eph 2:18).  
I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins (Col 1:14).  
I am complete in Christ (Col 2:10).

### *I am secure*

I am free forever from condemnation (Rom 8:1&2).  
I am assured that all things work together for good (Rom 8:28).  
I am free from any condemning charges against me (Rom 8:31).  
I cannot be separated from the love of God (Rom 8:35).  
I have been established, anointed and sealed by God. (2 Cor 1:21&22).  
I am hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:3).  
I am confident that the good work that God has begun in me will be perfected (Phil 3:6).  
I am a citizen of heaven (Phil 3:20).  
I have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a self control (2 Tim 1:7).  
I can find grace and mercy in time of need (Heb 4:16).  
I am born of God, and the evil one cannot touch me (1 John 5:18).

### *I am significant*

I am the salt and light of the earth (Matt 5:13&14).  
I am a branch of the true vine, a channel of His life (John 15:1,5).  
I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit (John 15:16).  
I am a personal witness of Christ (Acts 1:8).  
I am God's temple (1 Cor 3:16).  
I am a minister of reconciliation for God (2 Cor 5:17f).  
I am God's co-worker (2 Cor 6:1, 1 Cor 3:9).  
I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realm (Eph 2:6).  
I am God's workmanship (Eph 2:10).  
I may approach God with freedom and confidence (Eph 3:12).  
I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil 4:13).

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## 1. *Worship = ?*

1. Share your personal experiences of worship.
2. Read John 4:21-24. See also Hebrews 9. Discuss the Old Testament models of worship (the temple, the priests, the sacrifices).
3. Read Mark 15:37-39. What was the significance of the ripping of the temple curtain?
4. What do you think it means to worship God in spirit?
5. What do you think it means to worship God in truth?
6. Is worship bound to a particular place, day or style in the New Covenant as it was in the Old Covenant? Why/why not?
7. Read Hebrews 10:11-22. What was the purpose of sacrifices in the Old Covenant? What did they achieve? Why did they need to be repeated over and over again?
8. Who is this new priest? What did this new priest do?
9. Read Matthew 7:22&23 & Isaiah 1:11-17. See also Matthew 15:8&9 Amos 5:21-25, 6:5-7. In what ways can what we do when we come together become an unpleasing, non-Christian act of sacrifice?
10. What then is acceptable worship? When and where do we worship?

## 2. *Worship + me = ?*

1. When your non-Christian friends hear the word 'Christian' what do they think of?
2. Kurt Cobain used to walk off stage and listen to the audience applauding, cheering, practically worshipping him and think 'if these people only knew who I really was they would hate me'. What are the pressures of being in the limelight?
3. Read Matthew 5:3, Psalm 51:17 & Galatians 6:3-5. What does it mean to be 'poor in spirit'?
4. On what does God want us to base our self worth (see Appendix B - The Christian's Identity)?
5. Read Romans 11:33-12:1. See also Psalm 50. What can we give to God that He needs?
6. Read Matthew 25:37-40. If we cannot do anything for God, what then are we to do?
7. Read Luke 4:6&7. What did Satan want Jesus to do in exchange for the world?
8. Check out Matthew 14:32&33, Matthew 28:9 and Luke 24:52. How and why did Jesus' disciples worship Him?
9. Read 1 Samuel 15:22, John 8:31&32, John 13:34 & Mark 12:28-31. What is our acceptable sacrifice as gentile Christians living under the New Covenant?
10. How do we offer our bodies as 'living sacrifices'?

## 3. *Worship + music + Holy Spirit = ?!?!?!*

1. Share what you have learnt so far. What has impacted you?
2. Read 1 Kings 18:24-40. What did the prophets of Baal think they had to do to get their man-made god to show its power?
3. What did Elijah do to get God to show His power?
4. Read James 5:13-17. Why did God honour Elijah's prayer?
5. What does this teach us about being worshippers?
6. Read Acts 16:23-26, James 5:13 and 1 Corinthians 14:26. Why do we sing?
8. What role does the Holy Spirit play?
9. Read 1 Corinthians 14:12 and Ephesians 4:11-13. Do we see the role of 'musician,' 'singer', or 'worship leader' etc in this list of gifts that build up the church?
10. How then are we to use our natural gifts?