



# Corporate Worship

## The Church Gathered

### Communal Worship

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Our English word worship comes to us from the old English “worth-ship,” meaning to attribute worth to a person or thing.

*Worship is ...*

- Bowing down
- Reverence
- Humility
- Submissiveness

### ***Histahawah***

Found 170 times in the Hebrew Bible, this is the most common word in the Old Testament for worship. It means “to bow down” in reverence and humility before another, whether to a superior person or to God.

### ***Proskuneo***

This is the basic Greek equivalent to *histahawah*. It has the same overtones of submissive lowliness, humility, and deep respect. *Proskuneo* literally means “to kiss toward.” It also means to do obeisance, to prostrate oneself. Found 59 times, it is the primary verb for worship in the New Testament.

*Worship is ...*  
Worship and  
service are very  
closely related ...  
one could say that  
*all of life* is worship  
for the saint who is  
set apart for service  
to God

### ***Abad***

This is the second most frequently used Hebrew word in the Old Testament to describe worship. It means “to serve,” and that is the way it is often translated in English. It is from the same root as the term “slave” or “servant.”

### ***Latreuo***

This is the Greek word that most closely corresponds to *abad*. It is found 18 times in the New Testament. It highlights the close connection between worship and service.

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship [“reasonable service” NKJV; “spiritual service of worship” NASB].<sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Romans 12:1-2

Worship, on the one hand, involves the inner attitude of the worshiper (*proskuneo*) and, on the other hand, worship is expressed through those external acts of obedience the worshiper renders in worship (*latreuo*).

Awe

Humility

Obedience

Ignore / Pride / Rebellion (Romans 1)

## *Some definitions of worship*

At its heart, worship is the reply of the creature to the Creator. It is the response of the beloved to the lover (Randall Harris & Rubel Shelley)

Worship in its broadest sense is a meeting between God and His people in which God becomes present to His people, who respond with praise and thanksgiving (Robert Webber)

Ordinarily it is thought that worship consists of the actions of singing, praying, giving, expounding God's word and sharing in the Lord's Supper. But these external performances are not worship *per se*; rather they are the outward expressions of it. Worship is an attitude of the soul. It is a subjective experience of the soul in its adoration of God, which may find expression in overt forms  
(adapted from Waymon D. Miller)

Definitions cited in Dan Dozier, *Come Let Us Adore Him* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994).

However, I admit that I worship (*latreuo*) the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect.

Paul's defence before Felix, Acts 24:14

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:15-17

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. <sup>16</sup> And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Hebrews 13:15-16

The Christian's life is worship (humbly living in awe of God and being submissive to his will); a worshipful life that is regularly punctuated with communal worship.

“We will have Sunday only Christians as long as we have Sunday only worship ... worship is synonymous with sacrifice, praise, obedience and service ... Our religion has become a performance or a series of acts that have become the object of our worship instead of pointing us to the object of our worship”

Mike Root, *Spilt Grape Juice* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995).

## *A theology of Christian worship*

Christian worship is Christ-centered

Christian worship is Trinitarian

God is a reciprocal, relational Being of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is love! Trinitarian worship is reciprocal and relational – revolving around love (spurring one another towards love and good deeds, encouraging one another)

Christian worship is the mission of the church

Reconciling the world to a right (i.e. worshipful) relationship with God in Christ

The practice of the church described in the New Testament Scriptures and orthodox Christian church history both highlight these four basic actions that give shape to communal Christian worship:

- Assembling as the people of God (Gathering)
- Scripture reading and preaching (Service of the Word)
- Responding to God's grace (Eucharist, Thanksgiving in Song, Prayer and Sharing)
- Sending God's people forth (Dismissal)

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,<sup>20</sup> by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,<sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God,<sup>22</sup> let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.<sup>23</sup> Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.<sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,<sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

<sup>26</sup> If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left,<sup>27</sup> but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.<sup>28</sup> Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.<sup>29</sup> How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?<sup>30</sup> For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.”<sup>31</sup> It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Hebrews 10:19-31

***Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshiping together as some do but spurring each other on ... The Message***

## *A glimpse of the character and purpose of worship in the early church*

### 1 Corinthians 11

<sup>17</sup> In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. <sup>18</sup> In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. <sup>19</sup> No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. <sup>20</sup> So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, <sup>21</sup> for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. <sup>22</sup> Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter! ...

... <sup>33</sup> So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together. <sup>34</sup> Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment.

## *A glimpse of the character and purpose of worship in the early church*

### 1 Corinthians 12

<sup>4</sup> There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. <sup>5</sup> There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

<sup>7</sup> Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good ...

... <sup>12</sup> Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. <sup>14</sup> Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many ...

... <sup>25</sup> so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. <sup>26</sup> If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

## *A glimpse of the character and purpose of worship in the early church*

### 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup>If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup>If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing ...

... <sup>13</sup>And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:34-35

## *A glimpse of the character and purpose of worship in the early church*

### 1 Corinthians 14

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.

<sup>2</sup> For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. <sup>3</sup> **But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.**

<sup>4</sup> Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies **edifies the church.** <sup>5</sup> I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, **so that the church may be edified ...**

<sup>18</sup> I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. <sup>19</sup> But in the church I would rather speak five **intelligible words to instruct others** than ten thousand words in a tongue ... **Everything must be done so that the church may be built up ...** <sup>33</sup> For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people ... <sup>40</sup> **But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.**



# One Body

The fundamental purpose of communal Christian worship is to join in praising God as the covenant people of God (creation and redemption: *proskuneo*) and to provoke one another unto love and obedience and good deeds (mission: *latreuo*)

- Mutual consideration
- Mutual & complementary service
- Mutual love & encouragement
- Mutual edification & instruction