

**"Being Church God's Way"**  
(Values that Determine Vision)

Study 3

**Worship**  
(Ps 103:1-22; Eph 5:15-20)

VERSE (to ponder and/or memorize)

**"Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name."  
(Ps 103:1).**

**WHAT?**

1. Nervousness?

What is your first reaction when you hear the word "worship?" Some think automatically of the Sunday morning service. Others have a picture of a large gathering, loud music, intense expressions, highly-charged emotions and hands raised in praise. Some of us feel a knot in our stomachs: "Is someone going to put me on the spot? Will the worship leader try to get me to do something I don't feel inclined to do?"

2. A Definition

Probably the most sublime definition of worship is that of Archbishop William Temple. But, for our purposes, Warren Wiersbe's definition is more helpful:

Worship is the believer's response of all that he is - mind, emotions, will and body - to all that God is and says and does. This response has its mystical side in subjective experience, and its practical side in objective obedience to God's revealed truth. It is a loving response that is balanced by fear of the Lord, and it is a deepening response as the believer comes to know God better.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Real Worship* (Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1986), 27.

Rather than overcomplicate the matter, it is important to draw some practical lessons from this thought-through definition.

- Worship is our *response* to God's revelation of himself to us.
- It should involve *every part of our being*. Citing Deuteronomy 6, the Lord instructs us to love God with our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30).
- Reverence and a sense of awe are essential if we are worshipping the living God.
- There are both "mystical" and "practical" sides to worship. This is Wiersbe's way of saying that we worship God mentally, spiritually, emotionally and by our actions.

### 3. Individual and Corporate

This definition does not specifically address the corporate dimension of worship. It is, of course, true that we can worship God in any place, alone or together with other worshippers (John 4:19-24). But there is something special about corporate worship. We are enriched as we worship God together (Heb 10:23-25).

### 4. Different Forms

It is significant that we don't have a full description of a typical "worship service" anywhere in the New Testament. Yes, there are allusions to services, but the Holy Spirit didn't see fit to leave us an 'order of service' or a precise liturgical pattern. It is not that difficult to 'reconstruct' a service with the help of these references and a few references from the early church fathers. But perhaps God intentionally left us free to be both authentic and creative in the way we worship him. And surely services should take different forms in different communities. Worship should look different in the same community on account of different needs and circumstances. If there is a sameness about our worship come what may, we have to wonder whether we are indeed meeting with the living God.

### 5. The Value of Across-the-Board Participation

One passage that gives us a little glimpse into the worship practice of the early church is Ephesians 5:18-20. We are instructed to be (continually) filled with the Spirit.

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead *be filled* with the Spirit (Eph 5:18). The verb here is *plural*. It is written to the whole Christian community. Naturally, since more than one person is being addressed, the verb

needs to be plural. *All* of the Ephesians, and indeed, all Christians, ought to be filled with the Spirit. But as we read on, we get the impression that we have a corporate responsibility in this regard. It's not just every person for himself or herself. *Together* we have a responsibility to see to it that we are *all* filled with the Spirit. And this is done in part by raising the spiritual temperature so that we can *all* be being filled with the Spirit. Yes, by our attitude and participation, we have a spiritual effect on the service of worship and contribute to the lives of our brothers and sisters.

The verses that follow this command provide us with a description of the context in which the fullness of the Spirit is expressed. What we have here is a single finite verb (present, imperative, passive) - "be filled" - and five dependent present participles - speaking, singing, making melody, giving thanks and submitting (the English translation turns these into finite verbs to make for easier reading). *Being filled with the Spirit arises from and gives rise to worship.* In a similar passage, Paul urges us to "let the word of Christ dwell in (us) richly, as (we) teach and admonish one another (present participles again) with all wisdom and as (we) sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in (our) hearts to God" (Col 3:16). A comparison of these two verses should help us to see that certain concepts are interchangeable. Being filled with the Spirit occurs in a similar climate to letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly. Paul no-doubt means the same thing when he says "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit (Gal 5:25).

### **SO WHAT?**

1. What do you find most helpful about Wiersbe's definition?
2. Respond to the following statement by a worship leader, some twenty minutes into a service: "Let's now enter a time of worship."
3. Another one: "Let's invite the Lord to be with us this morning."
4. What do you make of the assertion: "I feel more worshipful on my own surrounded by the beauty of God's creation than in a church full of people"?
5. Why is corporate worship important?

### **NOW WHAT?**

1. What contribution do you think you can make to the worship service?

2. What do you do if the choice of service elements is not your "cup of tea?"
3. What would you like to see incorporated in to the worship service? Perhaps the group can compile some suggestions and pass them on to Donna or me.