

Chapter 4

Devoted To the Worship of God

The first Christian church, “devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). They also met day by day, “praising God” (Acts 2:47). They were essentially responding to God and to the good news of Jesus.

We often think only of singing when we think of worship, but our devotion to praising God includes much more. Worship by definition is the responding to who God is, what God has done, and what God has said. It is the act of expressing our reverence of God and there are many ways in which we as the church devote ourselves to worship.

Worship through _____

1 John 2:3-6 ³ And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.⁴ Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵ but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

JOINING TOGETHER

What does our obeying God say about God?

When we obey God, we proclaim that He is infinitely wise and truthful in His instruction to us. When we disobey God, we proclaim through our actions that we are wiser than He and that our way is better than His way. Obedience, therefore, is one of our greatest acts of worship and it undergirds all other forms of worship.

Worship through _____

Matthew 6:9-13 ⁹ Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven
¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors
¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

In the passage above, Jesus gives us an example of what prayer to God can look like. Prayer is the way we praise God and it is the way we request God's provision. It is also the way we relate to God relationally.

The Christian church in the book of Acts grew through the prayers of God's people (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 3:1; 4:24-31; 6:4; 13:2-3).

Worship through _____

Fasting is abstaining from food for a period of time to focus on prayer. Jesus assumes that his followers will fast.

Matthew 6:16-18 “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

There are several examples throughout the Scriptures of the people of God fasting and praying for particular requests. (2 Chron. 20:1-5; Neh 1:1-4; Matt. 4:1-4; Acts 13:1-3)

Why Fasting?

- Fasting frees up time for prayer.
- Fasting creates a hunger for food that reminds us of our hunger for God.
- Fasting reminds us that God is the provider of our physical and spiritual sustenance.
- Fasting denies the idol of our own comfort.

Worship through _____

The book of Psalms is an entire book of the Bible devoted to spiritual songs in response to God. This emphasis of singing spiritual songs is also re-emphasized in the New Testament in Colossians 3:16 when Paul urges the church to “sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”.

Why is God pleased with our singing?

- Singing puts our prayers to music.
- Singing puts on display the splendor of God's creativity. He is the ultimate designer of all music and is the reason that certain rhythms and sound tones are pleasing to the human ear. When we sing songs we put God on display.
- Singing also takes the truth known about God in our head and gives us an opportunity to express that truth with our heart.

Worship through _____

One of the primary ways of worship throughout the Bible is through sacrificially giving to God that which is valuable.

In the Old Testament, God was worshipped through the ministry of the priests and the sacrifices offered at the temple. The priests were so consumed with leading the people in their worship of God that they were unable to grow their own crops or provide for their families. God commanded that all the people give a tithe (a tenth) of all their earnings as an offering of worship and for the support of the priests in the ministry of the temple.

Some of God's sharpest rebukes come when Israel selfishly held on to their possessions rather than giving them for his glory.

A MEMBERSHIP CLASS FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

Malachi 3:8-10 ⁸Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. ⁹You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. ¹⁰Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

While the concept of tithing ten percent is not explicitly taught in the New Testament, the cheerful giving to the church for the support of the church leaders and church ministry is very highly emphasized.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 ⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

1 Timothy 5:17-18 ¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."

JOINING TOGETHER

Giving sacrificially of one's finances is taught so often in the New Testament that it seems to be a non-negotiable spiritual discipline for the Christian.

Why Give?

Church members give because God has _____ every good gift.

James 1:17 ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change

Church members give because God has given us more than we _____ to help those that are in _____.

Acts 2:45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Church members give _____ treasure because we look forward to an _____ treasure.

Matthew 6:19-21 ¹⁹“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for

yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

What is the wrong motivation for giving?

Due to the “*prosperity gospel*” teachers that can be found on the television, there is a great deal of confusion when it comes to Christianity and money. The “*prosperity gospel*” is **the false teaching** that financial and physical blessing is God’s will for those who have enough faith, use positive speech, and give enough money. These prosperity gospel adherents regard money as God’s ultimate blessing upon His faithful, but neither health nor wealth are the ultimate blessings of God in this life.

Jesus makes numerous statements throughout the Scriptures that imply that following Him will actually include poverty, suffering, and persecution. In fact, Jesus’ closest and most faithful followers faced severe poverty and persecution.

Philippians 3:8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his **sake I have suffered the loss of all things** and count them as **rubbish**, in order that I may gain Christ.

Luke 9:23-25 ²³ And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his

cross daily and follow me. **24** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. **25** For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

Luke 14:33 So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

When someone gives their life to Jesus, the things of this world grow strangely dim in the light of his mercy and grace. The cross centered life and the money centered life are not and cannot be the same life.

Worship through _____ **(The Lord's Supper)**

Luke 22:17-20 ¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves."¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do **this in remembrance of me.**" ²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

We are so quick to forget what God has done for us. In God's infinite wisdom, he established the ordinance of the Lord's Supper as a reminder of what Jesus Christ did to

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accomplish our salvation. His sacrifice motivates us to, likewise, sacrificially love him and others.

- The Lord's supper cultivates community as we take it in fellowship with one another and God (1 Cor. 10:16-17).
- The Lord's supper calls to remembrance the cross that leads us to repentance (1 Cor. 11:27-28).
- The Lord's supper celebrates the future coming of Christ (Matt. 26:29; Rev. 19:6-9).

The Lord's supper should be taken regularly among the body of believers, but only Christians are permitted to partake in this act of remembrance for it is only born again believers who have a redemption to remember. The Lord's supper is such a sacred act of worship that the apostle Paul warns against anyone partaking of it in an unworthy manner lest they drink judgment upon themselves (1 Cor. 11:28-29)

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

In our sinful nature, we naturally gravitate to the worship of ourselves and material things. We must be disciplined and intentional to worship God as He deserves. He deserves all of us. What can you do this upcoming week to intentionally engage in the worship of God in ways that you may have been neglecting? Prayer is the starting point for worship. Create a prayer list for you to pray through every day next week. Prayer lists are extremely helpful for maintaining a consistent prayer life.