

### Study 3 - What is worshipping?

It is easy to think of worship in terms of music and song. We are, after all called the worship team. We use words like 'leading people in worship', good job of worship today', or 'what worship songs are we doing this week?' An even narrower view of worship comes to us when we split the music into praise, then worship. Usually this is taken to mean fast songs, followed by slow songs. But worship is so much more than just music, or a style of music.

In fact slow songs, sung in church can actually *not* be worship at all, depending on the theme of the song and the heart of the worshipper. A song that is self focussed, that concentrates on my needs and wants, can be passed off as worship in a service, and never meet the pre-requisite of true worship. Similarly, the most praise-full, loving song to God, sung with a heart that is not focussed on the words, but on what we'd rather be doing, or thoughts of "I love singing this song, because I sound so good", will not pass as worship.

Such personal failings, of course, will not necessarily mean that our congregation won't enter into true worship, but the individual's offering is most likely to be rejected. Why? Because what is and is not worship is measured not by us, but by Him that receives and deserves it, i.e.: God!

How often have you heard someone say, "I really loved the worship today"? That's nice, but we must understand that it isn't *for* them. Sure, we facilitate their entering into worship, but whether they personally enjoyed it, or not, is not the point. Did you glorify God in your service today? Was Jesus' name lifted high? Did *you* worship? They are the real questions we as a music team should ask ourselves. It is nice to be encouraged in our service, but pleasing people is not the goal of worship – bringing pleasure to God is!

Others might come along to tell us that "the worship was too loud, too fast, too many old songs, too many new songs." What we need to ask is, too loud, fast, new, and old for whom? Sure, we should enjoy worship, it is a principle part of our being, to want to worship. And as a music team, we should be sensitive to the congregation's need to worship, and do our best to facilitate their participation. But ultimately, our role is to participate *in* worship first, and pray that the congregation chooses to join us. Amazingly, when we do manage to do that, more often than not, they will!

But as I am sure most of us know, worship is more than songs, music and words. In fact, the first musician, Jubal, is not mentioned until the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of

Genesis, yet Adam walked in the Garden of Eden and worshipped. So what is worship? It is a lifestyle! Sure, worship can express itself in music, song and poetry, but it is not limited to that.

Just like a song that is birthed out of the love, knowledge and thanksgiving of the One True God, the Lord of Heaven, any action that has as its root the love knowledge and thankfulness of God, is worship. Rick Warren states that true worship is anything that you do that brings God pleasure. And God is pleased with anything we do that is birthed from a love for Him.

That might be singing or music, or it might be cleaning the church, baking someone a cake, being involved in another area of ministry, driving an invalid to church / shops / doctors. It might be getting alongside someone who is struggling, it might be a donation to a charity, or it might be building something to make the lives of others more comfortable. Worship can extend to preaching, teaching, sound technicians, children's church, meals-on-wheels, crèche, even gardening, if the core motivation for the action is an appreciation and a love for God.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans, Paul declares to the church that we should (in view of God's mercy) present our bodies (i.e. our lives whilst we are in the flesh) as:

*"...living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God –  
this is your spiritual act of worship!"*

**(Rom 12:1)**

In the Amplified that last bit reads: *"...is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship."* In other words, when we consider all that God has done for us, who He is and how He first loved us, then all our actions from now until we are united with Him in heaven, should be done out of our thanksgiving and love. EVERYTHING!

Our agenda, our fleshly desires, all our wants must be sacrificed and our lives lived through the cross, the blood of Christ that sets before us new life! All that we do should be seen with the backdrop of Calvary firmly in place. This is what is meant by a living sacrifice, and we are told that if we live this way, we will be holy and **pleasing** to God. Rick Warren was spot-on! This is our spiritual act of worship.

God does not distinguish between our work life, school life, cleaning life, showering life, church life, music life etc. It's just life, and it is all supposed to be lived with God's love and grace as the reason for existing. It is why Paul writes:

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart...  
It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”*

**(Col 3:23a, 24b)**

In the rest of Romans<sup>12</sup>, Paul goes on to explain that we are all (in Christ) part of one body, but that we each have a different role. In effect, we are all God’s children, but our worship will look different. He then lists some of the giftings, telling the church to use those gifts liberally for the common good and the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

We are all given talents and abilities that we can use. A life given as a Living Sacrifice will take those talents and serve the church and the community with them liberally. Paul tells us that if our gift is serving – serve! If it’s teaching – teach! If it’s encouraging – do it! If you are gifted to give – do it generously! We could add, if you are able to play an instrument, let it rip! If you are able to clean, grab the ‘Spray & Wipe’! If you can cook – cook up a storm, doing everything in love!

When we serve God out of love and appreciation, giving liberally to the things that matter to Him, we bring Him pleasure, and this is worship. Onerous tasks become a joy. Lives of burden become easier. Our low spirits will be lifted to new heights. Why? Because when God is pleased, He grants His favour in our lives, and you can’t out give God. It is why Jesus said: *“Give and it will be given to you.”* **(Luke 6:38)**

However, the desire to receive should never be the motivation to serve – (and neither will that produce the blessing one might wish for, because God knows our heart). On the other hand though, people in the church often don’t serve because they fear they will be burdened, or because they are depressed or tired. But ask anyone who does something good for another person out of love. Ask the person who volunteers at Loxcare what’s in it for them. They may not be able to verbalise anything to you other than it makes them feel good to see other’s blessed. But do you know what that feeling is? It is God’s pleasure upon them, as they worship God with a living sacrifice. This is their spiritual act of worship and God’s love is pouring down on them.

So yes, we as a music team might well express our worship through song and music more than most, but let us not limit our worship of God to the music. Let us seek to give a daily, Living Sacrifice to God in all of our dealings, work, service and relationships – for this truly is our spiritual act of worship!

1. What usually comes to mind when you think of the word worship? Can you distinguish between a worship song and a praise song?  
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2. Can you think of a song in a chorus book or that we do in church that isn’t really a worship song? Maybe it is self-focussed or better used as an altar call?  
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3. Why do you think what we are thinking whilst we worship in song is so important, especially as a music team.  
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4. One of the music team’s most difficult jobs is to enter into worship themselves, whilst ensuring the best possible chance for the congregation to join in. What should we consider when we lead worship?  
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5. In what other ways can we as a music team be an example of worshippers, particularly outside of the music?  
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6. What do you think about Paul’s definition of spiritual worship and it being a Living Sacrifice? Does this spur you on to change your *worship*?  
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7. In the story, Chariots of Fire, Eric Liddell states that when he runs, he feels God’s pleasure. In this way he was worshipping God as he ran. What is it that you do, that makes you feel God’s pleasure?  
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