

GENESIS: THE BEGINNING IS NOT THE END

Worshipping Together

TEXT: Genesis 4:26, Psalm 95, John 4:23-24

INTRODUCTION: Worship began as a private or family act.

Genesis 4:26

...Then *men* began to call on the name of the LORD.

I. WORSHIP IS SOMETHING WE DO!

- Worship is not something we watch, observe, examine, criticize, or imitate.
- We may sit in a worship service and watch, examine, criticize, or even imitate others as they worship, but when we do, we are not worshipping.
- Sometimes you hear one of our worship leaders inviting you to engage in worship. That is because of this truth. **Those who lead us in worship are not performers to be admired, but leaders to be followed as we ourselves engage in worship.**
- **We can attend church and never worship.**
- Yeh, I know people who come to Lifechange Groups but skip worship.
- Well you are right, but that is not who I am talking about.
- I mean that we can come into this worship center, sit, stand, bow the head, hear the sermon, and never really worship.
- If you sit on that pew but you are thinking about how others are dressed, or how they act, or you are planning out the afternoon, or figuring out where to go to lunch, you are not worshipping.
- Worship is not a function of where we are. Worship is something we do.
- Listen, young men. If that pretty little girl you like to sit by in church captivates your attention, and you spend the hour thinking about how lovely her hair is and how beautiful her eyes are and how much time you're going to get to spend with her next week, you are not worshipping! You better ask her to go sit behind you a few rows next to her big ugly dad so that you won't even be tempted to turn around and look her way and prevent you from worshipping the One True and Living God.

We are taught a lot about worship from the Psalms. We started worship today focused on part of Psalm 95, which calls us to worship. It calls us to do something to God.

Psalm 95 1 Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms

II. WORSHIP IS SOMETHING WE DO DIRECTLY TO GOD.

Help me here. What are some of the things that we should do to God as part of our worship?

1. **Sing to God**
2. **Shout joyfully to Him** (Hallelujah! – Praise the Lord!, Amen! – it is true!, Thank You, Jesus!)
3. **Express thankfulness to The Giver of All Things**
4. **Sing loudly to Him with psalms, with songs**

Other psalms tell us other things to do as part of our worship.

5. **Clap to Him**

Psalm 47:1 Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph!

6. **Praise Him**

7. **Lift Hands to the Lord**

Psalm 134:2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, And bless the LORD.

8. **Pray to Him**

9. **Give to Him**

10. **Listen to God's Word**

11. **Affirm His Word**

12. **Obey the Word of the Lord**

Even all these things do not comprise an exhaustive list of things we can do as a part of our worship.

But the psalmist not only describes what we do as a part of worship, he tells us what the heart, the essence of worship is.

Psalm 95:6-7 6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. 7 For He *is* our God, And we *are* the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand.

III. THE ESSENCE OF WORSHIP IS BOWING DOWN BEFORE THE LORD.

- A. The meaning of the word “worship” is to bow down, kneel down.
- B. The act of worship is one of humbling ourselves before the Almighty. It is declaring that He is high and exalted

And acknowledging that we are lowly and unworthy.**C. The picture is of our prostrating ourselves before the King of the Universe.**

Listen. I said earlier that worship is something we do. We looked at all the things we can do as acts of worship.

But here is the key:

- No matter what we do,
- or how many times we do it,
- or how well we do it.

When worship is over, if we have not bowed our heart, our mind, our will, our lives before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and said to Him,

- “You are everything, and I am nothing.
- You are right, and I am wrong.
- Your thoughts are higher than my thoughts.
- Your ways are better than my ways.”

If we have not so humbled our proud souls before Him in unadorned humility, we have not worshipped.

We may have done a lot of things, but we have not worshipped.

Some years ago, I had to personally wrestle with this truth in my own worship. It was while I was pastor of FBC, Slidell, probably 10 or 12 years before I left there to become your pastor.

The charismatic movement had been in full swing for a number of years, and some people who had been influenced by that had made their way into our church and on occasion would lift their hands in worship. They didn't speak in tongues; they didn't jump any pews; they didn't disturb in any way; they just lifted their hands in worship.

And after a while, some of our more traditional Baptists (much like myself) came to me and asked, “Pastor, what about this hand lifting in church?” So I went to the Scripture, and carefully studied every passage where the lifting of hands was mentioned.

Much to my surprise, I found it was not only encouraged in praise, worship, and prayer, it was actually commanded! The Holy Spirit in the Word of God tells us to lift our hands to the Lord as an act of worship and as a part of prayer.

So, why didn't Baptists do it, for the most part. Primarily because of tradition. It simply was not part of our tradition.

In the midst of wrestling with that, I came to better understand some very important words Jesus spoke about worship.

John 4:23–24 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

I had on occasion wondered why Jesus did not include the soul in this statement. After all, the soul is the center of our emotions, our feelings; and certainly when we truly worship, our feelings are greatly impacted.

But Jesus said worship in spirit and truth; He omitted the soul. And since it was Jesus giving us the instruction, we can be certain it was not an oversight. He even gave the same formula twice:

IV. TRUE WORSHIP IS IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH.

And my struggle with lifting my hands to the Lord helped me understand this more fully.

A. First, to be a true worshiper, my worship has to be guided by truth.

Where do I find truth? In the Bible. Therefore my worship must be guided by Scripture. **Did the Scripture show that lifting hands in praise, in testimony, in supplication, in expression of commitment and devotion had a place in worship?**

Without a doubt, in many places in God’s Word. That was truth.

B. So now my spirit had to obey. And I determined that I would obey. I would act on the truth of God’s Word.

So, I started lifting my hands in worship; and you know what happened inside of me? I felt awkward. I felt conspicuous. I felt uncomfortable. It did not feel good at all.

After having lifted my hands at points in worship the first time and it feeling so uncomfortable, I prayed. I said, “Lord, Your Word is clear on this, both Old and New Testaments. I have searched this thing out. Now in my spirit I worshipped You according to the truth of Your Word and yet I feel so uncomfortable.”

And then I got it! My feelings were uncomfortable. Feelings are generated in the soul, not the spirit. That’s why Jesus did not tell us to worship in the soul. He did not want our worship to be controlled by our feelings or our emotions.

**If our worship is controlled by feelings and emotions,
then we only do what we feel like doing,
not what God’s Word tells us to do.**

C. In more recent times I have discovered another application of this truth in my worship, in worshipping the Lord with some of the newer music.

Now, I love a lot of the newer music. The new song, "Isn't the Name of Jesus Beautiful, Wonderful, Powerful?" I loved it the first time I heard it when Katie and Hannah sang it for us one Sunday morning. We sang it as a congregation last week.

But the first time I heard "Good, Good Father," I did not like it at all. J Rob, whom I dearly love, sang it with his band during a D Now or Youth Sunday, and I just did not like the music. It was hard for me to sing. It seemed to lack melody. I can't explain it! I just didn't like it.

But then I looked carefully at the words. They were true words, Biblical words. God is a good, good Father. We are loved by Him. He is perfect in all of His Ways.

So I sang the song. I chose to worship in spirit and truth, and not according to my feelings and desires.

I chose to be a true worshipper by worshipping in spirit and truth, just like I did more than 20 years ago now when I chose to begin lifting my hands in worship and sometimes in prayer to the Lord as instructed by His Word.

And do you know what happened to my feelings? Well, like I told you, at first, they felt trampled. But in each case, with the lifting of my hands to the Lord, and with the singing of "Good, Good Father" my feelings caught up with my spirit and with the truth.

Now I love to lift my hands to the Lord, and I am not uncomfortable at all. I may make some of you uncomfortable. I hope not, but I may. But honestly, God has not called me to lead you to be comfortable, but to lead you to be obedient disciples.

And I have come to enjoy singing "Good, Good Father." It is still not my favorite, but I can sing it with sincerity and joy. I can lift my hands while I sing it and truly say from my spirit to God Himself, "You are a good good Father, and I am loved by you."

Dear brother and sister in the Lord, do you understand that ...

**If we only sing heartily the songs we like the best,
we are not worshipping in spirit and truth.**

**If we only lift our hands when we like the song,
we are not worshipping in spirit and truth.**

**If we only worship when we like the singer,
we are not worshipping in spirit and truth.**

True worship has no goal of pleasing self, only pleasing God!

Listen again to the psalmist.

Psalm 95:1–7 1 Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. 3 For the LORD *is* the great God, And the great King above all gods ... 6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. 7 For He *is* our God, And we *are* the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand. ...

Conclusion: The psalmist ended this psalm about worship in an interesting way.

Psalm 95:8-11 8 “Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, As *in* the day of trial in the wilderness, 9 When your fathers tested Me; They tried Me, though they saw My work. 10 For forty years I was grieved with *that* generation, And said, ‘It *is* a people who go astray in their hearts, And they do not know My ways.’ 11 So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’ ”

- **God wants a tender heart.**
- **God wants surrender in place of rebellion.**
- **God wants trust rather than testing.**
- **God wants us to quit grieving the Holy Spirit by our stubborn refusal to do His will.**
- **God wants obedience rather than waywardness.**

INVITATION: The words we use sometimes are interesting and misleading. Sometimes after church we might say, “Well, nobody responded today.” We mean by that that no one came forward at the invitation trusting Christ or joining the church. But you know, the truth is that everyone present responded. Everyone in the Worship Center responded to what the Spirit of God was speaking to their hearts out of the Word of God that was preached.

God wasn’t calling everyone to salvation or church membership, because many had answered that call. But He was telling everyone something. And the truth is that everyone responded. Some said yes. Some said no. Some said no in ways that sounded better but meant the same. They used words like maybe or later. It still meant no. But the point is everyone responded.

And so it will be today. I am convinced that God’s purpose for us today was that each of us should become better worshippers, worshippers who delight the Father by worshipping in spirit and in truth. And every one of us will respond. Some of you will prostrate your will before the Lord and say yes, and you will be a better worshipper, even today. Some of you will say no overtly, others will put it off, others will apply God’s truth to other people they know but never apply it to themselves.

All of us will decide. What kind of worshipper will you be?