

Doing What Disciples Do:  
“Worship”  
Hebrews 10:19-25

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According to the Westminster Catechism, the chief purpose of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. The Ten Commandments of Moses instructs us to “*Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.*” I can still hear my mother say, “Get out of bed; it’s time to go to church.” I will never forget that command. Thousands of you have made a commitment to worship at least once a week these fifty days as disciples should and do.

What is this thing we call worship? Why do nearly forty percent of Americans worship in some form or another each week? Why do the most primitive and isolated people of the world often develop elaborate forms of worship? Why has the Christian Church engaged in what some call “worship wars” over the last thirty years? Obviously I don’t have all the answers to such far-reaching questions, but even as we try to worship, let us try to understand the things we do and why we are doing them.

**WORSHIP HONORS GOD**

A seminary graduate on her way to her first pastorate asked her professor what she should preach about. The wise teacher replied, “Preach about God and about twenty minutes and you’ll be alright.”

Worship is not about the style of clothes or the style of music; worship is not about the building or the band; worship is not about the liturgy or the lack of it. Charismatic preachers and creative dramas are not essential to worship. Worship is not even about great musicians and talented choirs, though they have been known to redeem many a feeble preacher on any given Sunday.

Worship is about God. When the woman at the well met up with Jesus and they entered a discussion about her life, they began to discuss spiritual matters. She wanted to argue with Jesus about holy mountains. Jesus replied, “*God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.*” When it came to worship the woman would rather argue than adore, would rather speak than surrender, and would rather defend than follow, but Jesus would have nothing to do with that. He cut to the core. Worship is about God. Isn’t all this stuff about dress, music, style, instruments, symbols, the devil’s way of keeping our attention on the methods of worship and our minds off God—who alone is worthy of our praise?

We need to worship God because we were created to worship God. Nothing else will satisfy the soul. When Noah stepped off the ark, he built an altar and worshiped God. What else could he do after a boat ride like that, but to thank God?

In the year King Uzziah died, Isaiah went to the temple where he saw the Lord high and lifted up—where else could he go in hours of grief except to look beyond the shadows of death and try to catch a glimpse of eternity? When astrologers searched for the deeper meaning of life, they followed a star to Bethlehem where they knelt down and worshiped the new born King—there, their quest for meaning was completed. To worship is to honor God.

So my dear sojourners on the road of life:

Here we are to worship,  
Here we are to bow down,  
Here we are to say that  
You're our God.  
You're altogether lovely,  
All together holy,  
All together wonderful to me.

That is worship, thank God. To worship is to honor God.

### **WORSHIP ENGAGES PEOPLE**

In Hebrews 10:24 we read, *“Let us provoke one another to love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is.”*

Worship is not a spectator sport. Robert Weber said, “Worship is a verb, not a passive verb, but an active verb. It’s not something done for us, it is something we do.”

John Killinger, a long time ago, helped me understand worship as drama. Not a drama you sit in a theater and observe, but one of those Italian wedding extravaganzas where the whole audience becomes a part of the wedding party.

In real worship the choir and the preacher are the prompters. The actors and actresses include the whole congregation, and the audience is God. The question is not did worship please me? The question is, did our worship please God? I walk to my desk and bow my head after every time I preach and pray, “Oh, God, may you be honored with what I have said and done.” Since I’m meddling around, if you come in late, leave early, half-heartedly participate in the service, you might rightfully ask, “Was God pleased with my worship today?”

How do we engage in worship? Let me suggest some ways. We engage people in worship by scripture—*“God’s word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.”* The sermon, the songs, the liturgy need to be saturated in Scripture. It is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. It is more important that you know what happened in this Book than what happened on the news today. Worship is about Scriptures.

We worship by tradition. Tradition has fallen on bad times in recent years. I had a youth minister once who told me no one over thirty was in touch with the real world. On his thirtieth birthday, I called him up and asked if he was ready to

surrender his ministerial credentials since he was obviously out of touch with all of humanity.

It is easy to make icons of traditions. We can worship the altar instead of the Almighty, but I personally don't want to go to a church where I can't see a cross.

“For when I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride.”

I need to see a cross when I get to church. We worship by tradition.

We worship by Reason. In Isaiah 1:18 we read, *“Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow.”*

Christians need to be willing to ask the hard questions of life. Why do people suffer? Why do wars rage? Why are the poor ignored? How dare we turn our backs on the children of the world! We ought not to be satisfied with any cliché answers that religious people want to give. Church is a place to ask those questions. We ought to be convicted by them and until we do something good about them. That's what worship is about. Come now, let's reason together. Some of these problems of the world can be solved if we lose our selfishness and decide to do it.

We worship by Experience. Methodism was born in this part of the country through the camp meeting movement in the early 1800's. These frolics of faith brought isolated frontiersmen together in joyful shouts of praise giving rise to the phrase, “Shouting Methodists.” We have backslidden so far from our roots that an occasional “Amen” from someone in worship sends a shudder across the sanctuary. What's happened to us? Worship was never intended to be boring. That's why the Bible tells us to clap our hands, shout to the Lord, dance and rejoice for God deserves our total praise. Let the Amens sound from God's people again!

Put a family together and you've got a clan. Gather sports fans at LP Field and you get a crowd. Call a church meeting and you get a congregation. But when God gathers people together, not driven by their own interest, but centered on the mind of Christ, you have a community of faith that breaks barriers down and builds people up. May God help us become a community of Faith.

### **WORSHIP IS A FORETASTE OF GLORY DIVINE**

Mark Twain said, “If heaven is one endless choir rehearsal, he didn't think he would bother to try out for it.” In heaven there does seem to be a whole lot of singing going on. Maybe that's because there is a whole lot of joy to go around. I don't know about you, but every once in a while I could stand a little taste of heaven on earth. I need those little moments when heaven breaks through, even here.

The movie, [Places of the Heart](#), starring Sally Field begins in a church with people singing, “This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior, all the day long.” It ends in the same church with people singing the same song. In between Sally

Field's husband has been killed, her hired man is beaten up and driven away, she nearly loses her farm—but in the end, they are all back in that little church singing, "Blessed Assurance Jesus is Mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine!"

I was doubled up in bed the other night feeling sorry for myself with a digestive track that was raw from top to bottom leaving me far too sick to even think of food essential for my recovery. In my pain, I lamented to Sandy, "This is hell." She thought for a moment and in her kind way replied, "No, this is not hell; going through this without God and friends—that would be hell. But we have both!" There I stopped and bowed my head, thought about those words in the good Book written in red and thanked God that His grace is sufficient for every need.

I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,  
And when my voice is lost in death,  
Praise shall employ my nobler powers.  
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,  
While life, and thought, and being last,  
Or immortality endures.

We have come to worship God.

Amen.