

# WORSHIP

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Worship is a conscious, spontaneous self-expression by a person to God as a present, superior, second person. It is first an interpersonal activity toward God, then a deliberate affirmation of allegiance to him, acknowledging not only his existence and nature (goodness and greatness), but his superiority and supremacy over us in life's purpose.

I. WORSHIP IS a conscious, spontaneous, self-expression by a person to God as a present, superior second person.

A. Conscious (nature): involves awareness, imagination, concentration

1. Not automatic (has not happened just because we are present with the right people)
2. Not habit: does not happen just because we are at the right time or place)
3. Not subliminal: We are aware of what we are doing in worship.
4. Not an altered state of consciousness

B. Spontaneous (origin): arises from what happens between persons

1. Not artificially induced
2. Not dependent on form
3. Not stimulus-response or conditioned reflex (Pavlov's dog)

C. Self-expression (Worship expresses me.)

James 5:16            (righteous man)

1 Corinthians 11:28 (test ourselves)

Isaiah 6:5            ("woe is me")

1. Not vain repetition: Matthew 6:7

Not rattling something off, reciting your "piece"

2. Not self-negation: God does not want to get rid of us; he wants to relate to us, which means we continue to individual existence.

D. By a person (All the aspects of a person are involved.)

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| 1. Understanding: 1 Corinthians 14:14-15 | NOT JUST A FEELING |
| 2. Heart: Matthew 15:8 (Isaiah 29:13)    | NOT A MACHINE      |

E. To God (motive)

1. Not to be seen by other people: Matthew 6:5-6
2. Not to draw attention to ourselves (not attention-getting behavior, grand-standing)
3. There can such a thing as public worship and prayer without such defects.

F. As present (God who is here, not distant)

1 Kings 18:25-29 (omniscience; Psalm 139:7-10)

G. Superior (humility—προσκυνέω (*proskyneō*, fall down toward, bow the knee toward, kiss the feet of)

1. Not an equal  
closeness and respect (cp. relationship to Dad or Mom)
2. Not overly familiar

A word of caution in leading worship: we do well to avoid acting silly before God, trying to be cute, trying to be funny, being shallow and flippant. These are things we sometimes do up front when we cannot do the real things or when we feel out of place.

H. Second (direction): You = God

1. Not to other people: benediction  
fellowship  
exhortation  
celebration  
witness      though these are done in gathered services
2. Not meditation: thinking about vs. directing ourselves to
3. Not communion: having a sense of not being alone
4. Not part of us (not directed inward)

We do not look inward for a spark of divinity as in panentheism, the idea that deity is mixed in the substance of space-time-electro-chemical reality. Deity is not a force, but a person. By creation from nothing, we the natural realm are distinct from God.

5. To life in general: witness

Not everything we do in a “worship” service is worship. We encourage, teach, fellow, and so on, in the songs and other activities during the assembly. One complicating factor in studying worship is the frequent use of Romans 12:1 as a starting point for defining it. The NIV, for example, translates the phrase “spiritual worship” instead of “spiritual/reasonable [in contrast to “body”] service.” The word λατρεία (*latreiā*) carries a

broader significance than προσκυνέω (*proskyneō*) as we can see in texts like Matthew 4:10 (“serve only him”), John 16:2 (“*They think they serve God [by putting you to death]*”), Romans 4:9 (the advantages that the Israelites have in serving God and receiving promises), Hebrews 9:1, 6 (ordinances of divine service). In a way, it does not matter how we define a particular term; the point is that we be involved in I-You activity with God.

A couple advantages come from limiting “worship” to activities that approach God as second person—as You. We realize that we do not do much of it, and that encourages us to be more intentional about such activities. On a completely different note, defining worship as relationship to God in the second person helps remove the objectionableness of using instruments in “worship,” which is a concern to some. Use an instruments is more directly for fellow worshipers to help maintain tempo and pitch during singing or to help set the desired atmosphere for them for the occasion.

### I. Person

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| 1. Not a thing<br>2. Not a force<br>3. Not an idea | idolatry; God = universe or part of the universe<br>particularly the Holy Spirit<br>God of the gaps, symbol of perfection |
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#### General observations:

1. Distinguishing worship from life (even though we do everything as to the Lord). Doing as to the Lord is a motive, more than a direction of our attention.
2. Distinguishing worship distinguished from witness
3. Under this definition, not everything we do in a “worship service” is worship—and it need not be.
4. Worship is not primarily an atmosphere or aura.

### II. EXAMPLES OF WORSHIP

- A. Prayer
- B. Singing to God
- C. Lord’s Supper
- D. Giving (except for alms directed to the needy though from godly concern)

### III. VALIDITY OF WORSHIP DOES NOT DEPEND ON . . .

- A. Where: John 4:23
- B. How many are present: Matthew 18:20
- C. How often: Acts 2:46
- D. Particular style

A worship service does not have to be “exciting,” physically or emotionally expressive, contemplative, loud, or quiet. We can use different atmospheres in worship at different times for different needs, with different age groups, and so on.