

Chapter 5

The Heart of Worship

Up until this point I have refrained from giving a definition of worship, but now may be a good time to do so.

For many years I have been asked to define worship, and over the years my definition has changed. First I looked at it as *the act* of worship, and studied it that way for years. Many books on the subject have been written from that perspective, and I did learn much about the ritual of worship and why it has the effect that it does on the human heart and mind, some of which I will get into later on in this work. Yet something was missing and I could not bridge the gap between the act of worship and the lifestyle of a worshiper.

Then over the years I began to see that people were not changed by the act of worship, they basically remained the same. I began to see that two people would be in the same service and one would change and the other did not. So my quest began anew with the goal of finding God, not a program to be like Him.

Over the years I have found a groundswell of people that have a sincere hunger for Him. They don't want another sermon about Him, they want Him, they don't want to sing another song about Him they want to be with Him.

So over the years I have come to acquire this definition of worship: the humbling of oneself and the exalting of God above everything that we would deem important, making Him the center of Everything that we are and do.

After some events in my life that caused me to seek Him I began to understand that if people were going to change they needed to be with Him. And my studies brought me back to the basics with a new insight that I didn't have before.

It says in Psalms 100 that we enter *His gates* with thanksgiving and *His courts* with praise. They are His gates, and

I'm suppose to go to where He is. God never leaves me, I leave Him by making Him inconsequential in my life. People don't do it on purpose, they do it out of habit.

Psalms 89:15 (NIV) took on new meaning,

*Blessed are those who have **learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of Your presence.***

Wow I'm beginning to learn how to acclaim Him and walk in the light of His presence, not just go there for a visit.

Did you ever experience the manifest presence of God in a worship service and the worship team stopped playing music for a short interval of time? The presence of God is still strong but there is no music playing. At that moment peoples' hearts are worshipping God; that's real worship. We really can worship Him without the music. Some of my most intimate times of worship came during silence.

It's funny, our religious nature makes us want to ask the question, What do I need to do to get to heaven? Just give me the minimum requirement so I can do it and get back to my life. We just visit Him once a week and never want to dwell there.

Likened unto modern day Pharisees

In Johns gospel chapter 5 verses 19-47 Jesus speaks to the religious leaders of his time and explains to them their lack of relationship with God. They were angry that he called God his father, and that he made people that were sick well on the day that God ordained for rest. Imagine wanting to make a person well rather than resting from our labor. You may be laughing but we do much the same with our religious nature, even after we are saved.

One of the scriptures Jesus used in his dissertation to the religious leaders sums up the whole idea of religion verses relationship. That is verse 7:

*“You diligently study the scriptures because you think by them you possess eternal life. **These are the scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.**”*

Out of all the times that the Lord was asked about getting into the kingdom, the terminology that was used by Him was that of relationship. In Mathew 7, Jesus said that not everyone that called Him Lord would enter the kingdom of Heaven. To those that did not He said *“**I never knew you.**”* Sounds like relationship. When Elijah proclaimed a drought he did it through his relationship with God. 1 Kings chapter 17 verse 1 says that Elijah said to Ahab

*“As the Lord God of Israel lives, **before whom I stand**, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.”*

You see he was in Gods presence while he made such a statement. It is relationship that brings change to peoples lives, not religion.

Did you ever notice that Jesus didn't do his miracles the same way all the time. To some he laid his hands on them, to others he told them to go wash themselves in the river, to other he said to go and his word that was spoken had already preformed the needed results. To some he even spit and made mud to heal them. He did things out of relationship with his father not out of a set of rules. Relationship is the key to spiritual growth and that comes from intimate times of worship with Him, it is the heart of worship. For the father is seeking those with that kind of heart to worship Him.