

## **What is Worship?**

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**Integration Question:** *How does our theology proper help us in discerning the very nature of worship?*

### Theological Statement

Worship is a response to God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do. The Greek word that most English Bibles translate as “worship” is *proskynēsēs*, which means to kneel or bow down in adoration. An example of this is in Matthew 14:33, when Jesus walked on the water to rejoin his disciples. Upon seeing Jesus, the disciples worshiped (*proskynēsēs*) Jesus, saying “Truly you are the Son of God.” The disciples act of worship was a response to the proclamation and astounding reality that Jesus was the Messiah. Similarly, a man covered with leprosy came and worshiped, knelt down before, Jesus and proclaimed Jesus to be the Lord, and, therefore, able to cleanse him of his leprosy (Matt. 8:2). The leper worshiped Jesus, kneeling down, out of the adoration and proclamation of Jesus as the life giving, Lord. The depiction given of the throne room of God in Revelation 19:4 brings these two concepts together, placing falling down/kneeling and worship synonymous with each other, proclaiming “The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne.” While there are other words used for falling/ bowing down, such as storms causing a house to *fall down*, seeds *falling down* amongst rocky places, or *falling down* in battle, *proskynēsēs* is always used in the context of expressing adoration and proclamation to Jesus for who He is.

Another Greek word that English Bibles translate as worship is *latreuō*, which means to serve God. A great depiction of this is seen when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by satan, who demanded that Jesus worship him. Instead, Jesus responded by quoting Scripture, saying, “it is written: worship the Lord your God, and serve (*latreuō*) Him only” (Matt. 4:8-10). Worship,

serving God, almost always involves living out His character in service of others. Jesus made this clear in Matthew 25:34-40 when He told his disciples that when they fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked, helped the sick, visited the lonely in prison, and showed hospitality to strangers, they were doing it to Him. Serving others is analogous to serving God, which means, when we serve others we are directly serving God. Furthermore, the Septuagint translates the Hebrew word *šāraṭ* as *latreuō*. *Šāraṭ* is typically used of the Levites and is what priests did as they usher and serve the people into the presence of God (Numbers 16:9). The fact that we are all New Covenant followers of Jesus are now called the priesthood of believers, we to worship, serve, God, as we serve and minister to others.

### Ministry Application

In the western world by large, worship has been redefined and minimized to a few songs sung on a Sunday morning. Sadly, this has resulted in people separating their everyday life as an act of worship, as well as church leadership falling prey to fostering an environment that erroneously promotes this way of thinking. On the contrary, with an applied knowledge of the proper theology of worship (presented above), every followers of Jesus can (and must) live every second of their live as an act of worship. For it was not the act of falling down that Scripture presents as focus of worshiping God, but rather, the heart posture of adoration behind the action. This means that going for a long walk or to the gym to exercise can be an act of worship if you adore God in your heart, with your voice, or with your body because you glorify Him as the giver of life and health. Going to get a scone and cup of coffee at the local coffee shop can also become an act of worship in so far as you posture your heart in adoration of Jesus who you revere as is the true bread of life. Even in the mundane process of changing diapers, making dinner, or doing laundry, you can be worshipping Jesus through a heart that truly believes

serving others is an act of serving God himself. No matter what you are doing or where you are doing it, I believe it can be done out of a heart posture of a response of adoration for who God is, what He has done, or what He will do, which is then becomes an act of worship. With the correct “why” behind every action, people can truly transform their everyday life into an act of worship.

For church leadership who lead a gathering containing committed followers of Jesus, it is imperative to foster a culture that sees worship more than something done by the “worship team” (usually another word for church music band). They must also create a culture that leads people to see every act of the gathering is an act of worship. From collecting an offering, to praying individually and corporately, to teaching and learning God’s word, to offering kind and encouraging words, it can all be an act of worship if it is done with a heart posture that adores and proclaims Jesus as King and serving other as unto the Lord. Practically, for church leadership, this might look like changing the title of a position, program, or ministry. This also might involve intentionally incorporating language that reflects the biblical meaning of worship in everyday church vernacular and culture. Or this might even look like teaching a couple sermons on the biblical theology of worship.