



In

Unison

The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the Lord.
2 Chronicles 5:13

Up Words

How do we do that? How do we love God? He is invisible to us. In John 4 Jesus says that God is spirit—and we are flesh. How can we love someone so unlike us?

Magnify the Lord

The Bible says that we love God both vertically and horizontally.

Our *vertical* love for God is manifested in praise and worship. We love Him by *telling* Him we do, by singing out His goodness—by verbally proclaiming His greatness:

I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear it and rejoice. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.
Psalm 34:1-3 nasb

In corporate worship we come together to make the presence of the Lord larger in our minds and hearts by proclaiming who He is. Our worship does not change God at all, but changes the condition of our heart toward Him. Day after day we struggle through our lives, spending our time with thoughts and activities in which it is easy to forget that God is not only greater than ourselves, but greater also than anything taking place down here. In such an environment

our true position of submission under God is easy to forget.

So He created worship.

From Thee comes my praise in the great assembly. Psalm 22:25a nasb

Blessing

In worship we remind ourselves that God is indeed who He says He is, and we remember His countless attributes—among which are His omnipotence, His grace, His wisdom, and His own love for us.

So worship is a time to reconnect with our God. But, as David says in Psalm 34:1, it is also a time to *bless* Him—which means to kneel before Him in humble adoration. As one would look deeply into the eyes of a wife, a husband, a child, or a betrothed, we look deeply into the holiness of our God and cry out, “I love You!”

A

n, expert on the Jewish

Law once asked Jesus:

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus’ answer was direct, simple, and clear.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.” Matthew 22:36-38

The First Thing

There are many things that are important in and to the Christian life. Evangelism is important. *Koinonia* fellowship is important. The preaching of the word, study, intercessory prayer are all important things we are called to do.

But Jesus said that there is one thing we are to do before anything else—indeed, the successful execution of the items listed above is not even possible without first *loving the Lord our God*.

“Worship cannot be isolated or relegated to just one place, time, or segment of our lives. We cannot verbally thank and praise God while living lives of selfishness and carnality. That kind of effort at worship is a perversion. Real acts of worship must be the overflow of a worshipping life.”
John MacArthur, Jr., *The Ultimate Priority* (Moody Press, 1983).



The necessary emphasis on corporate worship in this context should not overshadow the fundamental need for every individual to be a consistent worshiper of God in his or her daily life.

The Habit of Praise

Humans are creatures of habit, and the best habit to establish is the one that keeps us in constant, adoring communion with our affectionate Father. Sunday worship should not be a solitary nodule, an isolated hill in the desert of our self-centeredness, but rather the crowning peak of an ever-ascending mountain of praise. Daily praise is the rehearsal that energizes the formal performance of our Sunday worship.

Does the word “performance” offend?

The audience for Sunday morning worship is not the congregation, but God. Does the choir rehearse on Wednesday or Thursday to impress the pastor, the deacons, or the membership in the pews? If so, it is an effort that will ultimately be consumed.

If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with

fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

1 Cor: 3:12-15

The Symphony of Common Love

Over the centuries the metaphor of church worship has become distorted. The narcissism of the corporate body has created a theatre-like setting, in which those on the stage or platform are performing for (i.e., attempting to please and

voices united by our common love for Him—raised heavenward as a pleasing sacrifice of adoration. In this we *all* join, for that is why we are there. Those on the stage are not there to perform for the crowd, but to *lead* the crowd into more effective worship of the Father. The gold and silver of worship are the thoughts and words that flow upward to Him, unimpeded by our more selfish considerations. Everything worth doing goes up.

“When you try to focus your spirit on worship, there will be one major hindrance—self. When you get in front of God, your worship will be hindered. You see, we often have things that we want to do to fulfill our own desires, so we don’t have time for discovery, or prayer, or meditation, or worship. And it’s hard to have an undivided heart because we’re always thinking about our projects or our activities, or our needs. Self always gets in the way of worship. And we can’t really be free to worship God until we eliminate self altogether and become lost in worshipping God.”

John MacArthur, Jr., *True Worship* (Moody Press, 1985).

impress) the audience in the pews. But this is nothing more than hay and straw. The soloist sings to produce applause, the choir sings to produce approval and praise, and the preacher crescendos into his three points to produce a rousing chorus of “Amen!”

Instead of the cloying, cloistered worship of ourselves, God desires to hear the symphony of disparate voices—

And these moments of corporate praise have their beginning in the quiet solitude of the prayer closet, the intimate familiarity of the dinner table, the extravagant joy of an overflowing heart. We love Him on Sunday because we are in the *habit* of loving Him every other day of the week.

Scripture

Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he left.

I will extol the LORD at all times;
his praise will always be on my lips.

My soul will boast in the LORD;
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

Glorify the LORD with me;
let us exalt his name together.

Psalm 34:1-3

My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night. Psalm 63:5-6

Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.

Psalm 73:25-26

I will remember the deeds of the LORD;
yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

I will meditate on all your works
and consider all your mighty deeds.

Your ways, O God, are holy.

What god is so great as our God? Psalm 77:11-13

From Thee comes my praise
in the great assembly;

I shall pay my vows before
those who fear Him.

Psalm 22:25 nasb

“The word in the original is ‘from Thee’ [as opposed to ‘shall be of Thee’ in the KJV]—true praise is of celestial origin. The rarest harmonies of music are nothing unless they are sincerely consecrated to God by hearts sanctified by the Spirit. The clerk says, ‘Let us sing to the praise and glory of God’; but the choir often sing praise and glory of themselves. Oh, when shall our service of song be a pure offering?”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon on Psalm 22:25,
The Treasury of David.

Hymns and Choruses

Lord of All Being (Holmes)
Our midnight is Thy smile withdrawn;
Our noontide is Thy gracious dawn...

O Jesus, King Most Wonderful (Bernard)
...Thy love exceeds a thousand fold,
Whatever we can say.

Come, Thou Almighty King (unknown)
To the great One in Three
Eternal praises be Hence evermore!

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee (van Dyke)
...Wellspring of the joy of living,
Ocean depth of happy rest!

Glorify Thy Name (Adkins)
Father, we love You,
we worship and adore You.

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