

An expert in the Jewish Law once asked Jesus, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” The Lord’s 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

Expressing our Love

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 everything else—indeed, the obedient practice of everything else is not even possible without first loving the Lord our God with all of our being.

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

Our love for God is first and foremost manifested in worship and praise. 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 will make its boast in the Lord;
The humble will hear it and rejoice.
O magnify the Lord with me,
And let us exalt His name together.

Psalms 34:1-3

In worship we make the presence of the Lord larger in our minds and hearts by proclaiming who He is. We express our love

for Him by extolling and embracing—by reveling in—the immensity, the fullness of who He truly 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 around us. In such an environment our true position of submission under God is easy to forget.

So He created worship to keep the Creator/creature balance in alignment.



In worship we remind ourselves that God is indeed who He claims to be, and we remember and call out His countless attributes—among which are His omnipotence, His grace, His wisdom, and, surprisingly, 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!”



Expressing our devotion to holy God is the root and essence of worship. By its very nature it is directed upward—only. Any benefits accrued to the worshiper are irrelevant in pure worship, and are there only by the grace and generosity of a loving heavenly Father. Direct worship does not include thanksgiving, testimony or entreaty, for all these include reference to ourselves. Distilled, unadulterated worship looks only upward to the throne of God.

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.

