



IN HIS LIKENESS SERIES

Private Worship

THE KEY TO JOY

NANCY
MISSLER



Private Worship: The Key to Joy

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“Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; Thou shalt make me full of joy with Thy countenance.”

Acts 2:28

Foreword

Sooner or later, all journeys must end. And it's only right in the grand experiment of life that this be so. After all, only the fool travels merely for the sake of traveling. The warm home, late night talks with old and valued friends, the restful bed in familiar surroundings, relaxation in that certain place that seems to have been made just for us—these are the rightful rewards for enduring the dangers of the journey.

And the journey of life **must** lead us Home to that certain place that really has been tailor made just for us, if I read Christ's words in John 14:2 aright. God's "house of many mansions"—to use that old King James term—is ringed with many townhouses, each of them lovingly crafted from before the foundation of the world by a wise and omnipotent Architect.

These rooms have been custom-designed to house the souls of each one of God's Elect. And our hearts are restless, Christian believers of long ago have reminded us, until they find their rest in Him.

Now I think the real challenge we Christians face all too often is how to find our way home in this life. Frankly, it's just not possible unless you understand how to find joy on the journey. And that's where Nancy Missler's edifying book **Private Worship: The Key to Joy** finds its rightful place in the Christian's library. By reading this book, I am reminded—I always knew it to be true, I just tend to forget it too easily—that

the place of worship is the place of rest on that symbolic journey called the Christian life.

Nancy Missler's insightful volume is the culmination of her insightful trilogy that began with **The Way of Agape**, continued on with **Be Ye Transformed**, and then concluded with the problem of how to have **Faith in the Night Seasons** of life. Or at least I thought the trilogy concluded with Faith in the Night Seasons. As it turns out, **Private Worship: The Key to Joy** is where the journey of **Faith in the Night Seasons** will rightfully end.

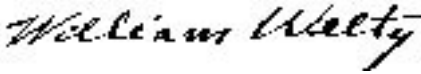
Several principles keep coming to mind as I read **Private Worship: The Key to Joy**. Here are four of them:

1. The first requirement for being effective in your Christian life is to remember that only those who love God will serve him with joy.
2. But only those who know how to worship Him can successfully contain that joy.
3. Jesus Himself warned five of the seven pastors to the churches of Revelation 2-3 that various sins of omission or commission can lead to a flaccid spirituality. But all of these sins can result in a quiet refusal to worship Him. And that leads to uselessness.
4. If heaven is our destined home, worship is our destined pastime. As a result, now is the season of time in which we must learn how to do it effectively.

Private Worship: The Key to Joy is one of the finest resources I've read to date that can serve as a practical guide on

helping all of us learn how to return to the love we had at the first. So come back home by reading Nancy Missler's **Private Worship: The Key to Joy**. Come home to worship. It's the place where you belong. You always have belonged there. And deep inside your heart you know that's true. You belong there. Forever. It's the place of Joy. You were made for it.

If you've lost your way for a season, maybe because your faith has been tested in the darkness of night, Nancy's **Private Worship: The Key to Joy** may be just the thing to set you back on the straight and narrow. For worship of our great God truly is the key to joy.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William P. Welty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

William P. Welty, M.Div.
Executive Director of The ISV Foundation
Translators of the Holy Bible: International Standard Version®

Introduction

Worship is the single most important thing a Christian can learn to do.

A.W. Tozer once wrote, “Why did Christ come? Why was He conceived? Why was He born? Why was He crucified? Why did He rise again? Why is He now at the right hand of the Father?” The answer to all of these questions, Tozer says, is: “...*in order that He might make worshipers out of rebels.*”¹

Worship is what distinguishes the Church from the world. When we worship, God’s presence ceases to be something we only talk about and, instead, becomes a personal experience out of which we build an intimate relationship. In other words, worship is an experience by which we touch the unseen. It’s a divine encounter that not only brings Him glory, but also unveils His Word a little more clearly to us. Worship not only opens the doorway to God’s Love, but also to His revelation and joy.

When do we Worship? *How* do we Worship?

When God put it on my heart to write a book about worship, I questioned my friends, my family and others how and when they worshiped. “Do you worship the Lord on a daily basis, or just on Sundays?” The answers I received were surprising: One friend said, “Oh, I worship the Lord all the time!” Another commented, “I worship when I’m cleaning the house.” Another actually replied, “I worship the Lord when I’m with the children.” A gentleman responded, “I worship the Lord when I’m driving in

¹ *Experiencing God in Worship*, page 155.

the car.” Another commented, “I worship Him when I’m at the office;” etc. In other words, the general response I received was “*I worship the Lord all day long, no matter what I’m doing.*”

Now, I understand what these believers are saying—they have an *attitude* of worshiping the Lord all day long. And that’s fine and that’s good, but is that really what God means when He says in John 4:23-24, “The hour cometh, and now is, when the *true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*”

The question remains: can we really “worship the Lord” while cleaning the house, while being with the children, while driving our cars or being at the office? Is this really what God desires? This is what we want to explore in this little book.

What is worship? How important is it? Do we worship the Lord *only* on Sundays in church or are we to worship Him privately at home every day? If the latter, how do we do it? And, most importantly, how does *God* want us to worship Him?

My Story

Let me start at the beginning:

Several years ago, I was experiencing so many disappointments in my life (those “little foxes” that Song of Songs 2:15 talks about) that I just shut down emotionally. I simply disengaged. It was as if the life in me just drained out. I think our physical body instinctively knows how to defend itself from more emotional

attacks, and it does so by simply shutting down and closing off. And that's exactly what happened to me.

Maybe some of you can relate.

The problem is that when we shut down like this, we also quench God's Life (in our hearts) as well. I felt as if His Life in me wasn't just quenched or blocked, it was gone completely. The joy of my salvation had completely evaporated. I continued going about my daily business—Bible studies, prayer, fellowship—but it was almost by rote, mechanical at best.

The scary part to me was that I was daily making all the right "faith" choices: I was confessing my sin and self, repenting of those things, giving myself totally over to the Lord and choosing to walk by faith. (I've been teaching these principles and doing them personally for over twenty years.) But this time, something was really very wrong because my feelings were not aligning with my faith choices (as they always have in the past), and the really frightening part was that the joy of my salvation wasn't returning!

No matter how much I prayed, confessed, repented and gave things to God, I remained shut down, with absolutely *no joy*. I so identified with Proverbs 17:22 which says, "...a broken spirit drieth the bones." In the Living Translation the words are, *a crushed spirit saps our strength*. It's so true: when we are really spiritually depressed, *everything* in our life is affected. It's almost as if our blood supply is dried up. It frightened me because: how can I teach these cleansing and renewing principles to others if they're not working in my own life?

Those who know me well saw right through my forced outward smile and were very concerned. Others saw my grin and were oblivious to my hidden struggle.

But *I* knew something was terribly wrong. Either God wasn't who He said He was, and walking by faith doesn't really work (which I knew in my heart wasn't true), or, He was again "cornering me" to teach me something new. (All of my previous books have come about through personal experiences that the Lord has allowed in my life to teach me His ways. My books are simply a chronology of my walk with Him over the last 25 years.) So I began praying that this might be the case here also.

It was interesting because the very week that all of this was going on, two different people—unexpectedly and out of the blue—prayed that God would give me "new revelation" for the next book that God would call me to write. That became my prayer also.

There's that Word, "Worship"

During the second week that I was in this horrible state of mind, I picked up an article that actually was intended for Chuck but had mistakenly come across my desk. I casually began reading it over when one word in the first paragraph absolutely leaped out at me: *worship!*

The article, entitled *Tired of a Tired Pastor*, by Francis Frangipane. This is what I read:

“In the early 1970s, during the beginning of my ministry, the Lord called me to consecrate to Him the time from dawn until noon. I spent these hours in prayer, *worship* and the study of His Word. I would often worship God for hours, writing songs of Him that came from this wonderful sanctuary of love. The presence of the Lord was my delight, and I know my time with Him was not only well-spent, but well-pleasing to us both.

“However, as my life began to bear the fruit of Christ’s influence, the Holy Spirit would bring people to me for ministry. In time, as more people would come, I found myself cutting off forty-five minutes from the end of my devotional time. On occasion, ministry to people would extend into the night, and I stopped rising as early as I had.

“Church growth problems began to eat at the quality of my remaining time; ministerial expansion, training younger ministries and more counseling crowded the already limited time I had left. Of course, these changes did not happen overnight, but the months and years of increasing success were steadily eroding my devotional life. In time I found myself in a growing ministry but with a shrinking anointing to sustain it.

“One day an intercessor called who prayed regularly for me. He told me that during the night the Lord had spoken to him in a dream concerning me. I was eager to hear what the Lord had revealed to my friend, thinking

perhaps He was going to increase our outreach or maybe supply some needed finances. I asked him to tell me the dream.

“What the Lord said had nothing directly to do with the projects and the priorities that were consuming my time. He simply said, ‘Tell Francis I miss him.’”

The author went on to say that he had become so tired and so dry from doing the Lord’s work that he needed to get back to reading the Word more, praying more and *worshipping the Lord more*.

“Worshipping the Lord more?” I thought for a moment. Do I really worship the Lord? I know I pray, I know I praise and I know I read the Word, but do I really worship Him? My mind continued to race, “How is worshipping God any different from praising Him or from blessing Him? In fact, what does it really mean to worship?”

The rest of the evening, I continued this line of personal questioning: Is worship something we do just in church on Sundays, something we do all day long (at the office, in the car, etc.), or are we to personally worship the Lord in some special way *daily* at home? And, if that’s the case, how exactly do we do that? These questions plagued my mind all night long. How would *you* answer these questions?

No Joy

The next day, I was in the office with the head of our prayer ministry and, unexpectedly, she showed me a letter from a woman who was concerned about her daughter losing “the joy of her salvation.” As I read the letter, the Lord totally convicted me, because that letter perfectly described my life *at that moment!*

Many things had happened in this young woman’s life (just as they had in mine) that had left her almost “shell-shocked.” The mother wrote that her daughter “is there in body only, but with absolutely no emotions and no joy.” And, of course, that was exactly how I felt! She said it was tearing her family up because none of them was able to minister to her. Then she closed her letter by saying, “Please, can you help us...”

I left the prayer office in total shock, because I knew exactly what that young woman was experiencing. How, Lord, I thought, does one restore his joy? (No matter how hard we try, I know it’s impossible to change our own feelings. There’s no way we can manufacture them, hype them up or counterfeit them.) So, what is the answer, Lord? I walked away from my friend’s office feeling totally helpless and even more confused than ever, with all these unanswered questions racing in my mind.

That afternoon in my daily reading of the Word, I came to Psalm 65:4, “What joy awaits us inside Your Holy Temple.” (New Living Translation) The word *joy* caught my attention and I found it fascinating that it was somehow connected to God’s Holy Temple. Lord, I cried, what are You trying to show me through all of this?

God's Voice

The event that finally put everything into perspective, and sparked a whole new level in my spiritual walk, happened later that night. After dinner, I sat down to finish my Bible reading and I happened to be in Luke 4, which talks about the three temptations of Christ. As you may recall, Christ's rebuttal to Satan in the third temptation is that we should *worship* and serve the Lord only: "Thou shalt *worship* the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Wow! There's that word *worship* again, I thought, which automatically propelled the same line of questioning:

Lord, do I worship You? I know I praise You; I know I pray to You; and, I know I read Your Word; but do I really worship You?

God's answer to me was almost audible, "*You don't even know what worship means, and that's why you have no joy!*"

My mind raced: What are You saying, Lord? Worship and joy are linked? How?

God began to lovingly unfold His wisdom to me. He first showed me that, *yes*, I had been praising Him; and, *yes*, I had been confessing and repenting my sins; and, *yes*, I had been reading His Word. But, after I did these things I would get up and go about my business, without so much as a thought about *worshiping Him*. Oh yes, every once in a while, I would raise my hands in church or fall on my face to pray for something specific

or cry if I heard a moving tape, but He showed me that I had never really entered into worshiping Him and adoring Him on a daily or personal basis. The truth was I didn't really know how!

As a result of all of this, I had lost the joy of my salvation and my spiritual strength had evaporated.

Only "in Thy presence, is fulness of joy..." Psalm 16:11 tells us.

Course of Action

God has called me to be a teacher and I absolutely love the "treasure hunts" that He puts me on. After the above encounter with Him, I got out every book, every commentary, every Bible translation, every Bible dictionary and every concordance that I could find about *worship* and about *joy*. The first night, I literally stayed up all night, lost in my quest for understanding. I was determined to find out what He meant when He says, "Worship Me." *How* are we supposed to worship Him? And finally, how is joy tied to worship?

I was aware of the above Psalm 16:11, but I never realized that worship is really the only "key" that opens the door to His presence. In other words, being before Him in *worship* leads to His presence and thus, to fulness of joy. I never put these together. This realization also brings Nehemiah 8:10 into better perspective: "...the joy of the Lord is our strength." What this means is: *without worship (without being in His presence), we will have no joy; and without joy, we will have no strength.* Our life's blood will dry up, and we'll wither and die spiritually.

This is so true. Look at the body of believers today. As a whole, we are joyless, powerless and loveless. Why? Because we are not worshipers! We don't worship the Father *in spirit and in truth*. In reality, most of us worship other things (other people, careers, sports, fame, wealth, etc.). We put these things first in our lives, not the Lord. This is why Tozer, in the quote on the first page, intimated that *learning to worship the Lord is the most important thing a Christian can do. It's the key to His presence and thus, to our happiness.*

After my encounter with the Lord, I was hooked. I was determined, at all costs, to find out *what* authentic worship really is; *how* we are supposed to worship; and *when* are we supposed to worship.

This little book will attempt to explore some of the incredible things that the Lord is showing me and how they are changing my life...

Chapter One

What is Worship - Why is it so Important?

Definition of Worship

Worship simply means *a divine encounter with God*.

Worship comes from love. Where love is deep, worship will overflow. In other words, we really can't worship the Lord, unless we love Him. This is why worship is often called "the language of love." It's the means by which love flows from a believer back to the Lord. It's bringing the *Agape* Love that Christ originally put in our hearts when we were first born again, full circle back to Him in adoration and exaltation.

The Greek word for worship is *proskuneo*, which means to bow down, stoop down, fall down, adore, show absolute reverence, homage or submission. It means to *kiss, to prostrate oneself* or touch one's nose to the ground. Throughout Scripture you will see how the saints always "fell on their faces," bowed down or prostrated themselves before the Lord when they worshiped.

In the Old Testament, 2 Chronicles 7:3 tells us "...when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshiped, and praised

the LORD...” In the New Testament, Revelation 4:10 exclaims, “The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne.” (See also Revelation 5:8, 14; 19:10; 1 Corinthians 14:25.)

Worshiping means extolling, magnifying, glorifying, exalting, honoring and celebrating the Lord. *Proskuneo* is something that is done on the “inside”—in our spirit—defined by Jesus in John 4:23-24: “...the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.” Worshiping in the spirit is prostrating and bowing down our inner man before the Lord. It’s asking nothing of Him, but losing ourselves in adoration, reverence and homage.

The definition of worship that I really like is that worship means *to catch fire*. I can almost visualize catching fire with the Love of God! When something catches on fire, it is literally *consumed by it*. This is exactly what happens in worship. We become consumed in our love for the Lord and *one* in spirit with Him. It’s a uniting or a becoming one of two separate spirits. Worship means binding ourselves or joining ourselves to the object of our love. God is a Spirit and only that which is spirit can abide in His presence. Thus, worshiping the Lord “in the spirit” means adoring, praising and loving Him *in the same nature as He is*—in the Spirit.

This kind of worship can happen even in our darkest hour. It can happen even when life seems hopeless, even when all we can do is affirm our love and His Lordship.

Worship, then, is simply an act of our heart—it’s being so overwhelmed by the revelation of God’s Love, that we respond

in unabashed loving gratitude. Our external act of prostration simply denotes our “inward” spiritual attitude of love, meekness and reverence.

King David is a perfect example of one who truly worshiped the Lord. Listen to Psalm 63:1-4 as an expression of His love: “O God, thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see Thy power and Thy *glory*, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary. Because *Thy lovingkindness is better than life*, my lips shall praise Thee. Thus will I bless Thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in Thy name.”

David had a passionate love for God and desired, more than anything else, to know His presence in His life. Because David was so confident that God loved him, he was able to continually surrender and yield his own life.

Do we worship the Lord like this? Do we daily, like David, surrender our lives and prostrate ourselves before Him?

George Barna, the famous author and statistician says, “Virtually every church in the nation provides opportunities for worship, yet, *we rarely really worship God. Most Christians admit they seldom feel like they have connected with Him.*”

Most believers know that they have a responsibility to worship, but when asked to define what true worship means or how to do it, they are unable to offer any answers.

Difference Between Believers and Non Believers

Man, in general, has an inbuilt need to express His love and gratitude to some deity and that “someone” determines his worship.

Believers can worship and love the Lord with all their heart and soul because they have already invited Him into their lives—their spirits have already been united with and quickened by His Spirit. Consequently, believers in Christ can internally communicate their love of the Father through the spirit. John 6: 63 validates this: “It is the spirit that quickeneth (or makes alive); the flesh profiteth nothing.”

Non-believers, on the other hand, cannot really worship the Lord this way because their spirits are not yet united with or quickened by His spirit. Consequently, they cannot internally communicate or fellowship directly with the Father. They can only have an external form of worship. Therefore, they cannot personally or intimately know the Father. Listen to John 3: 5-6: “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water *and of the spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” We often read about being created with a “God-shaped hole” in our hearts. And, it’s so true: without an intimate relationship with Christ, nothing on earth will ever fill us.

Though God doesn’t need our worship, He *is* seeking those who are worshippers. (John 4:23-24) Thus, one of the reasons we worship is to minister to and bless Him. Worship is the time we forget about ourselves, concentrate on Christ and experience *His* presence.

What Makes Worship So Important?

Worship is important because, as Tozer said, "...it's the reason Christ came, the reason He was crucified and the reason He rose again." Furthermore, the entire book of Revelation concerns the importance of worship and what God thinks of worship. Again, Revelation 4:8-11 is an example: "The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." Other pertinent Revelation Scriptures are Revelation 11:16 and 19:4.

There are also many other Scriptures in the Word that tell us God is seeking true worshipers. Scriptures like Psalm 95:6-7: "Oh, come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand..." And Psalm 99:5, "Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at His footstool; for He *is* holy."

Worship is critical because it's the key to God's presence and the means by which we enjoy intimacy with the Father. Worship is a two-way communication. We come into His presence by loving, adoring and exalting Him. He then makes Himself known by communicating His Love back to us. This, of course, results in inexpressible joy for us.

This daily communion is what allows us to endure difficult circumstances. If we are hearing from the Lord, we can withstand

anything. Thus, worship is the *key* to intimacy, to withstanding trials and problems and to restoring the joy of our salvation.

Another reason worship is so important is because we become like what we worship. (Psalm 135:18) Thus, if we want to become more like Christ, we need to learn to worship more. Worship is the means by which we are changed into Christ's image.

Our Modern Worship Services

Our ability to worship the Lord is developed through application. In other words, *we learn to worship by worshiping*. The problem is, most of us have not been taught exactly "how." Sadly, the motivation for most Christians to worship, especially in church, is so that we might have "an enjoyable time"—not necessarily to honor and please God. Our cultural context has defined our worship services. They are simply an hour where we study the Bible and sharpen our discipleship rather than bringing us face to face with God. Modern worship has become "horizontal" rather than "vertical," and thus is often made up of ritual without reality, form without power.

Unfortunately, the music in many of our church services is what determines how effective the worship is. This is not at all what the Word of God says. The Bible tells us that worship is not just to engage the audience, but to *have them change as a result of it*. Consequently, worship that is directed toward "entertaining" the congregation is not Scriptural worship but simply a form of pleasure and gratification.

The real problem is that many of us don't really have a heart thirsty for more of God, nor do we know how to express our love to Him. We talk about worshipping God, we exhort others to do it and we sing worship songs, but how many of us really, personally worship Him? Most of us don't have the faintest idea of *how* to worship, let alone *when* to worship.

An example: There are more worship CD's being sold today than ever before. Yet, there are more Christian's lives falling apart. Something is very wrong. We are listening to worship music, but we are not true worshipers. We're not being changed into His image.

Our heart is what matters in worshipping, not our voice. Consequently, we can only worship God to the degree to which we know Him—the degree to which our heart is filled with love for Him. When we really know and love Him, it becomes easy and natural for us to worship. When we love other things more than Him, we end up serving two gods. (Exodus 20:3; Jeremiah 25:6) Anything that is more important to us than the Lord—money, other people, careers, status, beauty, sports, etc.—becomes another god.

Truly, we do *become like that which we worship*. My Chuck often uses the example of the Egyptians who worship the dung beetle. If you visit Egypt, you will notice the dung piles everywhere. It's a graphic illustration of the above truth!

Our true relationship with God is, thus, expressed and shown in our worship of Him!

What Is the Purpose of Worship?

The goal and purpose of worship is to magnify, exalt, love and adore the only true God, Jesus Christ. *Worship is simply a prayer of relationship in which the “created” lauds and magnifies the “Creator.”* It’s our expression of *His* worthiness. When we worship, we join the angels, the cherubim, the seraphim, the prophets, the apostles and the host of heaven falling down on their faces and exalting the one and only true God. Listen to Revelation 7:11-12, “And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen! Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might be unto our God forever and ever. Amen.”

Seven further reasons *why* we worship are:

- 1) Worship is the primary reason behind all creation.
- 2) It’s our realization of the holiness of God.
- 3) It’s the prescribed ritual of the Temple in the Old Testament.
- 4) It’s the proper response of a believer.
- 5) It’s the recognition of our unworthiness before God.
- 6) It’s the result of our fearing and reverencing God.
- 7) It’s the manifestation of our relationship towards God and it’s what makes everything else secondary.²

I truly believe that *if the body of Christ was really taught how to genuinely worship, it would revolutionize the Church!* Noah worshiped God, and as a result a brand new creation was born.

² David Hocking, *Hope for Today*, Tustin, California.

(Genesis 6:9,18; 8:16-9:3) Abraham built an altar and worshiped the Lord and a whole nation resulted. (Genesis 12:7) Moses worshiped the Lord, and because of his obedience, God freed an entire people from the bondage of slavery. (Exodus 34:1-8) Men and women who truly learn to worship *can* change their world!

It's interesting to note that *prior* to Moses' revelation of God's glory on Mt. Sinai, he prayed, interceded, wept and pleaded with God, but he *never* worshiped. Exodus 34:8 is the first mention of him worshiping the Lord. This tells us that we too can pray, seek, weep, plead and call on the Lord, and yet never really worship. I know I did! (See Introduction)

Even though the Lord is a Spirit, He still is passionate and expresses emotion. Thus, our worship can also be emotional and passionate as we express our love for Him. Worship is not simply an act of our willpower, but an all-consuming yearning in our spirit, as well as an overflowing of our emotions of gratitude and love. Throughout the Bible, you will see the prophets, the priests and the people of God unabashedly prostrating themselves and worshiping the Lord.

Consequently, worship involves all of our mental, emotional and spiritual facilities, *but the specific place we worship and express our love is in our spirit.* Remember John 4:23-24, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the *true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*"

Thus, the purpose of worship is to adore, praise and love Him *in the same nature as He is—in the spirit.*

Faithful Is He Who Promised

Our external act of prostration simply denotes our inward attitude of humility and submission to His will. Worship communicates to the Lord that we are more concerned about *His Being* than *His gifts*. How often we confuse these two! We beseech the Lord for what He can give us, not simply for who He is. In other words, we worship and pray for *the gift*, not the Giver. I know I have certainly been guilty of this in the past.

Back in 1990, God gave me some incredible promises about future events in my life that would be mind-boggling. As I began to wait for these events to unfold, my eyes began to slip from a preoccupation with the *Giver* of the promise to the *promises* themselves. As I wearied myself through seven long years of waiting, God finally showed me my sin: *His promise had become more important than His Presence*. He began to teach me that real transformation can only occur when we learn to worship Him, occupied and satisfied with Him only, asking nothing in return.

A graphic example we might all relate to is that of being loved by our children. One mother recently wrote me this precious account: “Nothing gives me more pleasure than to receive a kiss or a hug from my daughter *without my asking for one*. I love it when she extemporaneously takes me by the hand and wants me to be involved in whatever it is that she is doing.”

Well it's the same thing with our Heavenly Father. Nothing brings Him more joy or pleasure than to receive a kiss or an expression of our adoration when He least expects it.

Our ability to worship Him does, however, depend upon our relationship to His promises. In other words, being assured that He will perform what He has spoken in His Word is absolutely essential. We must know that He will be faithful even amidst our greatest doubts and fears. In Romans 4:20, it is recorded that Abraham and Sara "...staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but were strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform." *They believed the promise because they believed the Promiser. They saw, they embraced and they received, even though it took 13 long years for that promise to be fulfilled.*

When God's promise seems to fail and the vision tarry, it's not a time to grow weary and give up, but a time to trust the Lord even more. Doubt is what robs us of our vision; faith is what allows us to unabashedly accept His promises, even though we cannot see or understand how they will ever come about. This was expressed in the life of Abraham "who against hope believed in hope." (Romans 4:18) The triumph of faith is seen just as much in the bearing of a temporary defeat, as it is in the securing of a victory. Overcomers are the ones who, in faith and love, find their way into the Holy Place and experience an intimacy with the Lord they never thought possible.

Fulness of Joy

How then is worship tied to joy?

The word *joy* actually means, “to brighten up, to rejoice or *to be happy*.” But the definition I find absolutely fascinating is from the root of the word joy, which means “to join.” In other words, joy is the result of coming into God’s presence, worshiping Him and being joined in spirit. This is simply saying that *joy is the result of the union and the communion of our spirits*.

“...I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:” ... “Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.” (Acts 2:25-26, 28)

Nehemiah 8:10 goes on to tell us that this joy is our strength. It’s His joy that we receive when we become one with Him and this joy is what gives us our strength. Proverbs 17:22 validates this when it says “a merry [or joyful] heart makes us strong, but a broken spirit saps our strength.”

If you search the Scriptures, you’ll find the word *joy* is most always associated with *the Lord’s presence* and with the offering of incense. Remember Psalm 16:11 which tells us, “Only *in His presence* is fulness of joy;” and other Scriptures like Psalm 51: 11-12: “Cast me not away from Thy presence...restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation.” (See also Psalm 21:1; 43:4; Matthew 25:21; John 15:11; Jude 24.)

Consequently, the kind of joy that we are talking about here—the joy of our salvation (or the “fulness of joy”)—is a gift that comes directly from God and comes only as a result of our being before His presence in worship.

What Keeps us from Worshiping?

Worship, then, is not something we do just on Sundays and in church, but something we must learn to do every day. Look at the lives of Moses, Elijah, Samuel, Jeremiah, Daniel, Isaiah, John and Paul. These men didn’t constrict their worship to just one day a week. They worshiped and loved the Lord continually, every day, all day long. And, as a result, Moses came to know the Lord “face to face” and was given incredible revelation (Exodus 33:11, 18); Isaiah was rewarded with incredible dreams and visions (Isaiah 25); and the glory of the Lord was certainly seen in the lives of Daniel, Elijah and Samuel.

The same can be true of us.

What, then, is it that keeps us from worshiping? Why wouldn’t every believer want to experience the presence of the Lord like this? The first thing that comes to mind is that worship not only allows us to experience the Lord’s revelation, joy and Love, but it also is the vehicle that God uses to expose more sin and self in us. Obviously, many Christians *do not* want to see this. Most of us know that more sin and self exists in us, but we think if we don’t see it, then we don’t have to deal with it. Those of us willing to risk exposure of these things, however, will enter His holy place and experience indescribable blessings in our lives.

Another reason we don't worship as we should, is because of our misplaced priorities. Things like work, parenthood, ministry, busyness, etc., have become more important in our lives than sitting at the feet of Jesus. The Lord, of course, knows our hearts and the real truth. We can fool each other with our excuses, but He knows our hearts! Remember, He is seeking those who will worship Him, not only in spirit, *but in truth!*

The Key

The bottom line is that there's a proper order or procedure that we must follow in order to enter God's presence and worship Him. In other words, we cannot simply walk into His presence with unconfessed sin in our lives.

Debbie Holland, my precious sister in the Lord and partner in ministry, came up with a beautiful word picture that's appropriate here: We cannot go from the *covering* of the Lord to *communion* with the Lord, without first experiencing the *cleansing* of the Lord and the *consecration* of the Lord.

God is holy and thus, we can worship Him only when we, ourselves, are holy. Psalm 24:3-4 perfectly describes God's procedure for entering His presence: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place? *He who hath clean hands [or soul] and a pure heart [or spirit]....*" (See also Psalm 32:6)

The Lord is telling us here that the only ones permitted to worship Him are those with a cleansed soul and a purified spirit. Again, John 4:24, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him

must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” Worship is not some sort of ritual that we do *externally*, but a bowing down and a surrendering of ourselves *internally*.

The story of Korah in the Old Testament dramatically portrays the importance God puts on properly entering His presence. (Numbers 16) Korah and 250 princes rose up against Moses and accused him of pride and of taking too much upon himself. Moses went to the Lord, sought His counsel and then powerfully spoke back to them, saying that God would show them the proper, required procedure for approaching Him: “Tomorrow the Lord will show who are His and who is holy...” He told them to take their censers, put fire and incense in them and then put them before the Lord. He, then, would make it very apparent who was clean and who was not. Korah and his men did as Moses said. But Korah’s incense was “strange incense” and “strange fire,” meaning that it was not prepared as God ordained. The Lord then appeared unto Moses and told him to “separate yourselves” from Korah and his congregation because He was going to “consume them.” And it came to pass that the Lord did just that! The ground under Korah gave way, opened up and swallowed him. Not only did he perish, but all his men and their houses also. The consequences of disobedience can be huge.

God means what He says and says what He means.

He makes the rules and our responsibility is not only to understand them, but also to apply them. 1 Chronicles 16:29 validates God’s proper procedure for worshipping: “Give unto the Lord the glory due His Name; bring an offering and come before Him; *worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.*” (Psalm 29:2)

This Scripture tells us that in order to worship the Lord, we must *first* attain “the beauty of holiness.”

The Beauty of Holiness

Worshiping “in the beauty of holiness” simply means *sin* has been dealt with and *self* has, for the moment, been set aside, so that Jesus’ Life can come forth. In other words, it must be Jesus’ holiness that others see, not our own. Just as God’s *Agape* Love is not our love and His Power, not our power, so this kind of holiness is not our holiness. Jesus is the only One who is holy and He is the only One who makes holiness beautiful. Consequently, when we are clean and purified, the Lord is able to shine forth His holiness through us. This way, we become “*partakers of His holiness.*” (Hebrews 12:10) We don’t have to work at being holy, but instead, simply relinquish ourselves and allow Him to be holy through us. Holiness is the result of repentance and continuous sanctification.

“According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that *we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.*” (Ephesians 1:4)

This does not mean to say that “experientially” we will *always* stay in the beauty of holiness, even though “positionally” this is an accomplished fact. The reality is that none of us are able to do this on a permanent basis! Romans 3:10 confirms this, “There is none righteous, no not one.” Only Jesus was consistently holy. However, we can moment by moment go before the Lord, confessing and surrendering the things in our lives that are not of faith, and, then, be filled with the beauty of His holiness.

A holy person, consequently, is one who is not afraid of the light. In fact, he invites the light. He avows, “I want *all* the hidden things in my life to be revealed, because I want more of Jesus in me.” He continually says, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

A holy person is one who continually prays, “Let death work in me, so that [His] Life may be [seen and] received by others.” (Paraphrase of 2 Corinthians 4:12) As God’s people, we are to forsake all darkness and all secrecy and become open books read by all men. (2 Corinthians 3:2)

Leviticus 20:26 adjures us, “Ye shall be holy unto Me; for I, the Lord, am holy, and have severed you [sanctified] from other people, that ye should be mine.”

Worshipping Is Different Than Praising

Dr. R. A. Torrey, the great author and evangelist, testified that “transformation only came into [my] experience when [I] learned not only to give thanks [praise] to the Lord, but [also] to worship Him, asking nothing from Him, occupied and satisfied with Him alone.”³

You see, worshipping the Lord is very different from simply praising Him. We praise God all day long—in our car, at the office, at home, etc. However, we worship God only when we can truly enter His holy place and His presence. As we have seen, this only occurs when we are clean and holy. In other words,

³ *Intimacy with God*, page 21.

praise can be soulish (it can be done when we are in the “flesh”), whereas worship can only be done in the “spirit.” Another difference between the two is that praise is often *seen*, whereas worship is secret—only God knows who the true worshipers are. Also, praise is one-way, whereas worship is meant to be two-way (i.e., it evokes a response from both parties). Next, praise is often horizontal in purpose, whereas worship is solely vertical. And finally, praise can sometimes be distant, whereas worship is always intimate.

A graphic example of the difference between praise and worship can be seen in the religious ceremonies that the priests of Solomon’s Temple performed in the Old Testament. The priests praised the Lord when they *first* entered the Outer Courts of the Temple. There they raised their arms and hands straight up towards heaven, singing and praising the Lord as they proceeded through the outer gates. Worshiping the Lord, however, was something totally different. The priests worshiped God *last* and only in the Holy Place. In other words, they worshiped Him only *after* they were cleansed, only *after* they brought their incense offerings to the Golden Altar and only *after* they had prostrated themselves before the Incense Altar in the Holy Place.

This validates that as far as the priests were concerned, *worship was contingent upon their cleansing*. They could not go from the blood *covering* to *communion* without first going through *cleansing* and *consecration*. And the same thing holds true for us: we can only worship the Lord *after* we have given ourselves totally over to Him; and after we have received not only cleansed hands but also the purification of our spirit.

Remember Psalm 24:3-4, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His Holy Place? *He who hath clean hands [or soul] and a pure heart [or spirit]...*”

Thus, if we adhere to the priestly pattern, the very *first thing* we are to do when we begin our prayer time with the Lord is to praise and thank Him. Scripture tells us that God “inhabits our praises” and this is exactly what we are imploring Him to do. The *final thing* we are supposed to do is to worship the Lord from our hearts. Consequently, worship comes *after* we praise and *after* we are cleansed!

The bottom line is: we can only worship the Lord—we can only “catch fire”—when we have *already* gone through the steps of cleansing and we are *already* in the “beauty of His holiness.” This is the point at which we can truly enter His presence, become united as one in spirit and able to worship God as He desires.

God gave me a visual picture that might graphically help distinguish praise from worship. When we praise the Lord our arms and hands are often outstretched towards heaven, symbolizing our adulation of the Lord. But when we worship Him, not only are our arms and hands outstretched towards heaven, our souls and spirits are also joined and intertwined with Him, symbolizing our union, our oneness and our love relationship.

How About Us?

The question becomes, “How about us?”

How many of us fall down on our faces and worship the Lord daily in our prayer closets? *How many of us have caught fire with the Love of God and are being absolutely consumed by it?* How many of us are walking around exceedingly joyful (regardless of our circumstances) simply because we are in the presence of the Lord?

Of course, we all pray, we all sing praises and on Sunday many of us raise our hands when we hear a moving song. But how many of us *really* come into His presence on a daily basis, prostrate ourselves (if not physically, at least our hearts) and truly worship Him?

Jesus wants us to become so lost in our love for Him that we’re able to experience His presence even in the midst of our most difficult circumstances. Experiencing His presence is what will bring us unfathomable joy and what will restore the thrill of our salvation. The Lord wants us to be so *consumed* in the fire of His Love, that we will be able to withstand anything that He allows in our lives. We must be *passionately* in love with the Lord.

My Debbie looked up the word “passion” in Webster’s Dictionary and what she found was surprising! The definition for passion is *extreme suffering*. Wow! Those who are passionately in love with the Lord have learned to be so, by extreme suffering. Now don’t be frightened! In my book *Faith in the Night Seasons*

I share that *suffering* simply means being “willing to set ourselves aside.” This makes perfect sense; those who are willing to totally relinquish themselves to the Lord will experience a passionate relationship with Him.

Remember Mary in the New Testament? She is a perfect example of one who passionately loved the Lord. In Matthew 26:6-13, it says that she was so consumed in her love for Him that she didn’t cease to kiss His feet, wash them with her tears and wipe them with her hair. Because of her display of love and worship, Scripture tells us that she will be remembered throughout eternity. She set an example for all of us to follow—she single-mindedly worshiped the Lord *in spirit and in truth*.

How many of us worship like this?

Without this kind of passion and without this kind of zeal, however, our love for the Lord can easily “grow cold.” Matthew 24:12 tells us this is exactly what will happen in the end times.

Chapter One

Questions

- 1) What is the *source* of our worship and what makes it a *two-way* communication?
- 2) What does the word *worship* really mean? (Luke 7:45; 1 Corinthians 14:25)
- 3) Share some of your favorite Scriptures that demonstrate the definition of worship.
- 4) One of the definitions of *worship* is “to catch fire.” Why is this definition so appropriate?

- 5) “Worshiping in the spirit” means what? (John 4:23-24) Give a Scriptural example of a man or woman who did this. (Psalm 63:1-4; Matthew 26:6-13)

- 6) Why is *worship* so important? (Exodus 20:3; Matthew 24:12) What is the purpose of *worship* and how is it perfected?

- 7) Our ability to worship depends upon what? (Psalm 24:3-4; 1 Chronicles 16:29) What does the “beauty of holiness” really mean? (Hebrews 12:10; Leviticus 20:26)

- 8) What is the definition of *joy* and how is it tied to worship? (Psalms 16:11; 43:4; 51:11-12; Acts 2:28)

