

Praise and Worship: Two Different Things

Why singing praise is wonderful, but worship is more: a life of loving obedience that gives God His worth

You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.

MATTHEW 4:10

AT A GLANCE

BIG IDEA	We often call the singing part of a service "worship." Singing praise is good and biblical, and it can lead us to worship. But in Scripture, worship is more than words: it is bowing before God and serving Him in loving obedience. God wants both: praise with our lips and worship with our lives.
SCRIPTURE	Matthew 4:10 · Deuteronomy 6:13; 12:4-8 · John 4:21-24 · 2 Chronicles 29:27-30 · Psalm 95:1-7 · Hebrews 13:15-16 · Galatians 5:6 · 1 John 3:23
LENGTH	About 30 minutes as a study
BEST FOR	High school students, worship teams, and leaders
YOU WILL NEED	Bibles and a whiteboard with two columns: <i>Praise (talk)</i> and <i>Worship (walk)</i>

Start here: "Now let's worship"

In many churches, the band comes up and someone says, "Let's worship." Then after a few songs, "Thanks for worshipping with us." Without meaning to, we can start to think worship is something that happens during the music and stops when the music does.

Singing praise to God is good, right, and commanded in Scripture. It can prompt us to worship, as it should. But the Bible treats praise and worship as two different, related things. We are called to **praise and worship** God, not to think **praise = worship**.

A NOTE ON TERMS

Many faithful Christians and worship leaders use "worship" to include singing, and the Bible often puts praise and worship side by side (Psalm 95:1-6). The goal of this study isn't to criticize sung worship or worship teams. It's to make sure students understand that worship is a whole life offered to God, not just a part of a service.

1 What the Bible's words for worship mean

The main Hebrew word for worship (*shachah*) means to bow down. The main Greek word (*proskuneō*) pictures bowing low before someone. Another Greek word (*latreuō*) means to serve. Worship is about posture and action: bowing our lives before God and serving Him.

When Satan tempted Jesus to bow to him, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:13: "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve" (Matthew 4:10). Jesus put worship and serving side by side.

2 Worship is loving obedience

Worship ascribes worth to God. We show how much He is worth by how we respond to Him: obeying and doing what He commands. But this isn't obedience out of fear of punishment, guilt, or timidity. It is a loving response: offering our lives to Him out of reverent awe, serving Him, and making His name known.

In short, worship is serving God because we love Him. It is "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). "And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another" (1 John 3:23).

3 God decides how He is worshiped

Before Israel entered the Promised Land, God warned them not to worship Him the way the nations worshiped their idols: "You shall not worship the LORD your God with such things" (Deuteronomy 12:4). They were not to do "every man... whatever is right in his own eyes" (12:8). Notice what God's worship included: offerings, tithes, freewill gifts, and families rejoicing together before Him (12:5-7).

Under the new covenant, worship is no longer tied to one location. Jesus said, "The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him" (John 4:23). But the principle remains: God desires the worship He has described, not worship invented "our own way."

4 Praise and worship together

Look at 2 Chronicles 29:27-30. When Hezekiah restored the temple, the burnt offering began, and "the song of the LORD also began." When the offering was finished, "the king and all who were present with him bowed and worshiped." Then the Levites "sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped."

Notice the word "and." They sang praises *and* worshiped. Both were happening, side by side. Hebrews shows the same pair: "Let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips... But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:15-16). Praise in word; worship in deed.

PRAISE: WHAT WE SAY (TALK)	WORSHIP: WHAT WE DO (WALK)
Praise and thanksgiving	Serve Him; obey His commands
Singing praises	Fear (revere) the LORD
Prayer	Offer sacrifices: our gifts and our lives
Telling of His praises	Bow down; come before Him humbly
The "sacrifice of praise"	Proclaim His name; bring Him glory and honor

And worship is done "in spirit and truth," by the Spirit of God, with gladness, often with joyful songs and the reading of Scripture.

What this means for us

Keep singing! But don't stop there. A great picture is singing while we give the offering: praise on our lips and worship in our hands. Then carry it into Monday, as you obey God at school, serve your family, and help people in need. That's worship too.

TALK IT OVER

1. How do most people use the word "worship"? How does this study expand that?
2. What do the Bible's words for worship (bow down, serve) teach you?
3. Why does it matter that worship comes from love, not guilt or fear?
4. What do you notice about the word "and" in 2 Chronicles 29 and Hebrews 13:15-16?
5. What is one way you could worship God by your actions this week?

TAKE IT HOME

Next time you sing at church, let it lead you to worship: ask God what He wants you to *do* in response. This week, pick one act of loving obedience, such as serving at home, helping someone in need, or giving, and offer it to God as worship.

Praise Him with your lips. Worship Him with your life.

From fifty years of youth ministry by **Ron Whittam**. Share freely with your students and leaders. · The Youth Ministry Living Room · qrprogramming.com/livingroom

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