

The Heart of Worship

Kelly McDonald, Jr.

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Introduction

The concept of worship has been around for thousands of years. Worship simply means to revere something or someone. It involves giving your attention, devotion, and time to honor that object or thing. When you worship, you place yourself in a position of submission to whatever or whoever you are worshipping.

In ancient times, people expressed reverence to a ruler or king by bowing down to him or her. It was an act of submission. It was an acknowledgement that the ruler had authority over the person bowing.

Jesus is called the King of Kings (Revelation 19:16). Think about all He has done for you. Jesus paid the price for your sin debt. He laid down His life so you could have a New Life. This means your devotion, attention, and time are committed to Him. He is the ultimate focus of your affection, love, and worship.

Just as people have shown honor to earthly kings, we should show even more reverence to Jesus, the King of Kings. Our submission begins inwardly because we have His Spirit living in us.

Jesus said, “God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Worshiping God in truth is following the Bible. In this booklet, you will learn the basics of learning to worship God, especially worshipping Him in Spirit.

Chapter 1

What is Worship?

When you repented of your sins, you received the Spirit of God. This is Jesus Christ living inside of you. “And because you are children, God sent out the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, ‘Abba, Father!’ ” (Galatians 4:6).

Because you are God’s child, His attention is intimately turned toward you. Worship begins when you direct your attention towards Him. There are different ways that you can express this worship such as how you live your life and serving God at church. The goal of this booklet is to explain how we worship God in Spirit.

You can worship in Spirit by yourself, with a few people, or with a large group. You can worship at home or in a large group. It begins as you turn your attention away from other things in life that distract you such as entertainment. Then you turn to God, giving Him your total focus.

As you do this, you can pour out your adoration and love. You can do this by speaking, thinking, with feelings, or with actions. How can God, who is Spirit, have this kind of interaction with you?

It is all done through the Spirit of God, which lives within you. This means that we have an intimate connection with Christ. This intimacy makes us closer to Him than anyone else. Through His Spirit, we have oneness with God. He knows our thoughts. As we worship God in Spirit, we will better connect with His thoughts.

One could easily say that worshipping in Spirit is our expression of adoration towards God. That is a good general definition. Remember that we are ONE with Him. This means we can also receive love, strength, power, comfort, and fulfillment from Him. **This means that worshipping in Spirit is the mutual sharing of love between you and God through His Spirit within you.** You

are expressing your love towards Him, but He is also expressing His love towards you.

As you turn your attention towards Him, it is also important that you lower your guard to Him. This enables you to receive more of His amazing love into your Spirit.

With our modern society, it can be hard for us to receive love. We have become so hardened to God's gentle love because of the vulgar entertainment and music in our secular society. Additionally, we have been wounded by people and have inward distrust towards others.

One key to lowering our guard to God is to surrender our hurts, past experiences, pride and everything else into His hands. He is gentle and meek. "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29).

We have to have faith and trust in Him—He created us. He did not do it in vain. He created you to receive His love—and to honor Him for His goodness. Allow God to come into your Spirit so that your love and adoration can connect with His love.

When you worship, you will feel acceptance, belonging, comfort, peace, wholeness, joy, and love. You will experience True Love. His love is gentle, compassionate, and fulfilling. It is more fulfilling than any human relationship we could ever have. These feelings will grow in greater measure over time.

Your spirit cries out for worship. It cries out "Abba, Father!" Satisfy that longing with heart-felt worship for Him.

Chapter 2

Your Worship Environment

When you worship God at home alone, with some friends, or in a public gathering at church, there are special ways in which you can prepare yourself to honor Him. One way you do this is to worship in an environment that allows you to be sensitive to God's Spirit.

The first step is to cut down on distractions. If the phone is on, then anyone can call or text to interrupt your worship. If the TV is on, then your mind can be drawn away. These are just two of the common distractions that can hinder worship.

Why do we remove distractions? Think about what God has done for you. He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for your sins. He suffered worse than any other person who has ever lived. He has given you eternal life and a better life right now.

We remove these distractions so we can truly honor Him for His precious gifts to us. Even after we have removed these distractions, we can still have bothersome thoughts. One way we overcome this is through music.

Music is one of the most powerful tools to focus human thought and attention. When you listen to music in a restaurant, grocery store, or in public, it can lift your spirit. You will recall memories about that song and possibly start tapping your foot.

Worship music assists us in worship of God. It helps our heart, mind, and spirit to focus on Him. The words in the song help us to focus on God and His greatness. It assists you in your adoration of God through the Spirit—the mutual sharing of love between you and God.

As we have discussed, God is Spirit. He dwells in the third Heaven. "...but I tell you, don't swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God;" (Matthew 5:34). Our Savior Jesus sits

at God's right hand. "looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising its shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

The book of Revelation reveals to us the worship that goes on in Heaven around them. In it, we find music being used to glorify God and His son Jesus.

"2 I heard a sound from heaven, like the sound of many waters, and like the sound of a great thunder. The sound which I heard was like that of harpists playing on their harps. 3 They sing a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the one hundred forty-four thousand those who had been redeemed out of the earth" (Rev. 14:2-3).

"2 I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who overcame the beast, his image, his mark, and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. 3 They sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God, the Almighty! Righteous and true are your ways, you King of the nations" (Rev 15:2-3).

If God and Christ hear melodious songs of praise with instruments, then it shows us that they are acceptable ways to worship God. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray "Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven". When we use music in a worship service, we are connecting Heaven and earth.

There are other examples of instruments being used in worship. David was known for playing the harp so well that evil spirits were driven away from Saul. It also refreshed him.

"And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul

was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him” (I Sam. 16:23).

The prophet Elisha called for a musician to play a song. This allowed him to focus enough to receive and deliver a message from God. Other prophets used instruments to help them focus on hearing the voice of God (1 Sam. 10:5).

“15 But now bring me a musician.” When the musician played, The LORD’s hand came on him. 16 He said, “The LORD says, ‘Make this valley full of trenches....’ ” (2 Kings 3:15-16)

In ancient Israel, the worship of God was centered around a magnificent building called the Temple. It was the most beautiful building ever constructed. Outside of this Temple, there were specific individuals set apart to play music. We find that at least 288 of them were chosen:

“6 All these were under the hands of their father for song in The LORD’s house, with cymbals, stringed instruments, and harps, for the service of God’s house: Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman being under the order of the king. 7 The number of them, with their brothers who were instructed in singing to The LORD, even all who were skillful, was two hundred eighty-eight” (I Chron. 25:6-7).

Different churches play different kinds of music. Some churches sing out of books called hymnals—which are usually songs written 50 or more years ago. These songs have powerful messages. They usually discuss how Jesus touched or changed someone’s life.

At the same time, let us not forget that Jesus has not stopped changing people’s lives. He is a powerful Savior. He is still redeeming men and women! As time has gone on God has given other musicians powerful songs to express their story. This is found in the Bible. We are told that there is a time to sing NEW songs!

“Sing to him a new song. Play skillfully with a shout of joy!” (Psalm 33:3)

David wrote about singing new songs. Why is it important to sing to God a new song? Why do we need NEW songs? First of all, God hasn't stopped saving people. When God saves people from a life of sin and from the very brink of death, they have a testimony to share. Many songs are written about God's saving grace. In fact, the popular song “Amazing Grace” was written by a former slave trader who was saved by God.

“2 He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay. He set my feet on a rock, and gave me a firm place to stand. 3 He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God. Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in The LORD” (Psalm 40:2-3).

Even for people who are already believers, God does wonderful things. People go through trials and come out on the other side thanking God for His provision. We can go through trials over many things – whether it is heartbreak at the loss of a loved one, financial problems, or being hurt by someone else. When God brings us out, we have something NEW to thank Him for!

“1 Sing to The LORD a new song! Sing to The LORD, all the earth. 2 Sing to The LORD! Bless his name! Proclaim his salvation from day to day! 3 Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples. 4 For The LORD is great, and greatly to be praised! He is to be feared above all gods” (Psalm 96:1-4).

“Sing to The LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him” (Psalm 98:1).

New songs can come through new victories. Perhaps you have been praying for a family member to be saved or to come to a

deeper walk with God and it comes to pass! That is a victory! Perhaps you were healed by God or saved from a car accident that should have taken your life! Maybe you received that new job or a promotion you have been earnestly seeking. These are all NEW things to sing about! They even sing new songs in Heaven!

“They sang a new song, saying, “You are worthy to take the book and to open its seals: for you were killed, and bought us for God with your blood out of every tribe, language, people, and nation” (Revelation 5:9).

“3 They sing a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the one hundred forty-four thousand, those who had been redeemed out of the earth” (Revelation 14:3).

Earlier we recalled the Lord’s prayer. If they are singing new songs in Heaven, then we need to sing new songs on earth. We sing new songs because God has not stopped doing GREAT things for you! He has not stopped acting on your behalf. He does things for us every day. A new song expresses a new revelation of Him. We can even write a song just based upon how GREAT He is! He is a King and deserves all our adoration!

Keep in mind that we live in our own unique time period in human history. It is NEW in that we have never experienced a time with such technology as we have now. This is yet another reason that new songs are needed in this time and generation. God wants to reveal new things through His Spirit.

“Behold, I will do a new thing. It springs out now. Don’t you know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert” (Isaiah 43:19).

When things seem dry and dead, the new things revealed through God’s Spirit will bring refreshing.

There is a lot of fighting in churches today about what types of

instruments to use. Some use none while others use only a piano. Some use a piano and an organ. A final group allows all types of instruments. The final Psalm in the Bible addresses this:

“1 Praise GOD! Praise God in his sanctuary! Praise him in his heavens for his acts of power! 2 Praise him for his mighty acts! Praise him according to his excellent greatness! 3 Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet! Praise him with harp and lyre! 4 Praise him with tambourine and dancing! Praise him with stringed instruments and flute! 5 Praise him with loud cymbals! Praise him with resounding cymbals! 6 Let everything that has breath praise GOD! Praise GOD! (Psalm Chapter 150)

In this final Psalm, we see nearly every instrument mentioned; the psalmist gives us a sample list. There have been instruments invented since then, such as a keyboard. The point of this Psalm is to praise God with everything you can praise Him with! As we mentioned earlier, there are instruments even in Heaven!

There are people who have a tremendous ability from God to play instruments. They are going to use their gift one way or the other. Let's allow people to use their gifts for God. As Paul wrote, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (I Corinthians 9:31). Let's open up our hearts and minds to receive the fullness of worship.

Let's have an environment that prepares us to worship our Savior. Let's have an environment that encourages our faith to believe in the God that still works salvation and miracles so we can thank Him for these things in our own lives.

Chapter 3

Your Approach to Worship

Another important aspect of worship is your approach. God is a great King and we want to approach Him with reverence. We want to have the right attitude. Our hearts and minds must be in a place to receive from God. Here are some Bible verses to guide us in our approach towards Him.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

“Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh” (Luke 6:21).

“The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves those who have a crushed spirit” (Psalm 34:18).

First of all, we should approach God with a pure heart. This means we are sincere and honest with God. We should never approach worship with selfish motives. We should not worship just for show. We should not worship Him “because everyone else is doing it”. Ask yourself: “Did I come to worship or just to criticize?”

We have to come clean with God. Are we really being honest about ourselves? Do we really want Him? In worship, we must get to the place where we just want **HIM!**

Secondly, hunger is a necessary attitude for worship. This is also called being broken in spirit. In your heart and mind, how much do you really desire God? Do you think you have it all figured out? Are you hurting? Are you wounded? Are you confused? Are you ready to admit that you need Him to help you?

Brokenness is a place of being empty before God. It is where we realize we cannot live without Him. We cannot do anything without Him. He brought us this far and only He can get us through

the present and future. When our attitude reaches this point, then the Lord is close to us. The touch from God is upon us! When we are empty, we can be filled! In your brokenness, you will receive your breakthrough.

“The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves those who have a crushed spirit” (Psalm 34:18).

We cannot come to God with the idea or thought of how great we are. We are not great. Again—without Him we are nothing. As Jesus said, “I am the vine. You are the branches. He who remains in me and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). As Paul wrote: “...that, as it is written, “He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord” (I Corinthians 1:31).

Worship cannot be about us or other people. It must be focused totally on Him. There cannot be any hidden agendas. “He knows even our hearts. for The LORD searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you” (I Chron. 28:9). “....no flesh should boast before God” (I Cor. 1:29).

The heart of all praise and worship songs are to thank God for things He has done in our lives—past, present, and with the firm anticipation of future faithfulness. How many times has He been faithful to you? How many times has He intervened on your behalf when it seemed there was no other way?

When we approach Him, these are important things to have in mind. Our motives must be pure. Ask Him to purify your heart and renew your spirit.

“10 Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me. 11 Don’t throw me from your presence, and don’t take your Holy Spirit from me” (Psalm 51:10-11).

Chapter 4

Opening Up Your Heart to God

As you worship God, you want to open up your heart to Him. You want to be in full submission to Him. When the Spirit of God is present in a worship environment, there should be freedom to open up toward Him.

“In him we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him” (Ephesians 3:12).

“Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service.” (Romans 12:1).

“Through him, then, let’s offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which proclaim allegiance to his name” (Hebrews 13:15).

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. O God, you will not despise a broken and contrite heart” (Psalm 51:17).

When our hearts are open to God, there are different ways we can express worship to the Great King. Jesus said, “...For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34b).

When the Spirit of God fills our heart in worship, it will produce words. There is a time to be jubilant or shout during the worship (usually the faster songs). “11 But let all those who take refuge in you rejoice. Let them always shout for joy, because you defend them. Let them also who love your name be joyful in you” (Psalm 5:11). The word “Hallelujah” in Hebrew means to **shout to the Lord**.

We want to offer thanksgiving to God on the front part of worship. “4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, and bless his name” (Psalm 100:4). We want the Lord to know how grateful we are to Him!

There are other times in worship (usually the slower songs) to softly thank God for His goodness in your life. During worship you may reach a place of being silent. “My soul, wait in silence for God alone, for my expectation is from him” (Psalm 62:5). This kind of silent worship usually occurs when the music is at its slowest point. The presence of God will feel heavier during this time.

When you receive the Holy Spirit, it produces in you a changed life. You begin to act and speak differently. When we worship God in Spirit, it will produce action. Many people lift their hands during worship. When you worship this way, you are reaching out for Him; you are opening yourself up to Him.

In Psalm 141:2, David wrote, “Let my prayer be set before you like incense; the lifting up of my hands like the evening sacrifice.” David is longing for his praise and worship to be honored like the worship in the Temple. He desires for His worship to be accepted before God! As we open our mouths and lift our hands, our praise is released.

As we discussed earlier, the word worship means to get on one’s knees or lay on the ground in reverence. When we are worshipping God at church, then we are in the presence of the True King. Another way to worship is to lay prostrate before Him. Many of the great God encounters of the Bible occurred when people worshipped on their face.

This is found with Solomon, Daniel, and even the Apostle John (2 Chron. 7:1-6, Dan. 10:1-10, Rev. 1:12-17). Abraham got on His face before the Lord to worship Him (Gen. 17:1-8). Laying prostrate with your face towards the ground is a humble position because you are putting your vessel at the feet of your Messiah. If you have a *tallit* (also called a prayer shawl), this is the perfect time to wrap yourself up in it.

Dancing is also a great way praise God. During the faster songs,

our feet are often tapping, but our bodies are still. David danced before the Lord with all of his might. He even threw off his outer garment in the process! (see 2 Samuel 6:14-22) God had delivered David out of many trials in His life. David danced before God in joy from the many victories God gave to him.

Miriam also led the people of Israel in dance when the Egyptian army drowned in the Red Sea (Exodus 15:1-21). As the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, the praise of Miriam caused the water to spring up in the desert. When she died, the water stopped coming up (Numbers 20:1-5). When the community sang again, it came back up (Numbers 21:16-18a). We want the spring of living water, the Holy Spirit of God, to well up from within us and quench our spiritual thirst for Him.

When we praise and worship, it stirs the wells of salvation within us; it causes that well to bubble up and overflow. This will also affect others in our environment! This is especially true when we go through trials in life!

Chapter 5

The Great Reward of Worship

“Without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to him, for he who comes to God must believe that he exists, and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Every time you go to a worship service, there is a special reward waiting just for you. It is like a present or a gift wrapped up and reserved only for you. God is so gracious; He knows exactly what you need. But, you must earnestly seek Him and believe that He is able to meet your needs. You can do nothing without Him (John 15:5). This requires that you have confidence. If you do not believe God is able to help, guide, or touch you, then you cannot receive anything from Him. You must believe, which means to have confidence or trust.

As we come before God to worship, we will find greater and greater reward. Your spirit will be refreshed. You will have a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment than ever before. You will experience joy, true satisfaction and love than no human could ever provide.

The goal of worship is a transformed life. When we are hungry for God, we are hungry for a supernatural experience that will quench our spiritual thirst. This will change the way you live forever. In Genesis 32:22-32, Jacob had a face-to-face encounter with God. He never walked the same. In Exodus 33:12-23, 34:29-32, Moses had an encounter with God. His face literally glowed after this! In I Samuel 9:1-11, Saul was approached by a band of prophets playing instruments. He was touched by God and became a new man. His heart was changed.

When God touches you, you will never be the same. You will have precious memories and experiences. You will have a new level of clarity about your purpose. You will be empowered to take on the trials of life.

Chapter 6

Beyond Church

While we want to worship alone at home, worship with a gathering of believers is essential. We cannot function as the Body of Christ without it. “...not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25). We are a Body; we need the time together to connect with our Lord and Savior.

As mentioned in the last chapter, worship has rewards. Another reward of worship is the empowerment to go forward in your divine destiny—which is why you were actually born in this time period. How will this empowerment express itself? A changed life is one example, which includes keeping the Commandments of God. This is the first demonstration of a true worship connection with God. Staying away from environments like clubs and bars that could spiritually defile you is another example. It is honoring His sacrifice by keeping yourself pure spiritually, mentally, physically, and sexually.

Another manifestation of this empowerment is through your service to the Kingdom of God. There are different ways in which we can contribute to the work of God. Setting up tables and chairs for the church service is an act of worship. Praying is an act of service. Fellowship is another act of service. Moreover, you have a unique calling in the Body of Christ. That means there is something for you to do that is designed just for you.

“Even so, let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). As you connect with God, your life will change. This enables your worship of God to be seen by others so that they can see Jesus living through you.

Conclusion

Why is Praise and Worship so important? David was a man after God's own heart because he did what the Lord told him to do (Acts 13:22). When David heard God's voice, he obeyed. He put up an open air tent to bring all the people of Israel together to worship the true and living God (I Chron. Chapters 15 and 16).

One of the prophecies for the New Testament church is that God is raising David's fallen tent again (Acts 15:15-18). He is trying to bring together people from all races, languages, and nations who have a hunger to worship God and experience Him in increasingly greater levels. God is trying to restore that open air Tabernacle in the last days.

Worship moves God's heart and will lead us into a greater, more personal walk with Him. Worship moves His heart, and worship should move us for Him. When you lift your hands, lay prostrate, or dance in worship, it is a greater thing to God than animal sacrifices. Why? It is the sacrifice of yourself in submission to Him. These forms of worship are all part of us losing our dignity to grab His deity. He has done everything for us; we just give Him the adoration He so richly deserves.

Meet the Author

Kelly McDonald Jr. is an ordained Evangelist at Hungry Hearts Ministries in Jackson, TN. For 21 years, Kelly attended Trinity Baptist Church in Bemis, TN, where he was saved in 1992. While at Trinity, a small independent Baptist church, Kelly learned boldness for the Kingdom of God and that being a Christian is an all or nothing experience. In June 2006, Kelly was called to his first ministry, going door to door in the Bemis community and inviting people to church. In September 2006, Kelly was called to begin a Christian men's group at his then college, Lambuth University. In February 2007, Kelly was called to preach. Less than a month later, he became introduced to Hungry Hearts Ministries.

Since becoming a member of Hungry Hearts, Kelly has taken on many roles to further the ministry's work, from going door-to-door to pass out booklets, preaching, administering the prison ministry, teaching Bible Studies, and starting churches. Due to his service in the ministry, he was ordained a Deacon during the Feast of Pentecost on May 31st, 2009. His spiritual growth and desire to serve God led to his ordination as an Evangelist during the Feast of Pentecost on May 25th, 2012.

Kelly has written for a local Christian magazine, *The Christian to Christian Connection*, the international Sabbatarian magazine, *The Sabbath Sentinel*, and the regional magazine, *The Good News*. He currently writes for and serves as the Editor for the Ministry's magazine, *Pursuit*. Kelly has written over 40 books and booklets on various Bible topics. Kelly graduated *summa cum laude* from Lambuth University in Jackson, TN in 2009. He earned a Bachelor of Science with a double major in Political Science and Sociology with a minor in Legal Studies. Kelly has been preaching since 2007 and is available to speak at your church upon request.

Worship is a condition of the heart that results in action, specifically a changed life. There is a certain approach to worship that we must take if we want to receive the full benefits of honoring God in this special way. In this booklet, you will learn the basics of worship.



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