

Worship > Singing (or Worship in Real Life)

1. Ever since I was a boy, I was obsessed with legos. Space legos. Just space legos. And I would pour over instructions to make sure the sweet new space ship turned out exactly right!
2. Me math
 - a. HS, college, Calc3 DifEq
 - b. Love when a formula works
 - c. When you can get a clear, repeatable answer following a specific set of steps
 - i. How much paint should I buy? – each wall is Length x Height
 - ii. $A_c = \pi R^2$ – now I can paint my merrygoround
 - iii. How do I fry an egg? – low + slow
 - iv. How do I bake a cake – you don't they're garbage
3. It's pretty human to look for a formula for things. The steps. The directions. What are the expectations here? What do I need to do?
4. We do it with Deeper things
 - a. Formula for being liked= only show your good parts online, strong Instagram filter, see how many likes you get
 - b. How do I get a romantic relationship?
 - i. There's lots of suggestions for this one
 - ii. From tinder and bumble to wait for God to provide someone at church
 - c. Formula for success = work work work, climb the ladder, sacrifice to get on top THEN you'll be good?
 - d. Happiness? == comfort + amusement + leisure + money + whatever I want + nothing going wrong?
 - e. I know a great many of us are using these formulas right now! -> hoping it works.
5. What's the formula for a good church?
 - a. Charismatic engaging teachings
 - b. + kind open and healthy people
 - c. + a great kids program
 - d. + I feel "fed" meets my felt needs
 - e. + not much required of me
 - f. + great worship music
 - i. One of the number one things people look for when choosing a church is their worship music offerings.
6. So what about that one? What's the formula for good worship?
 - a. I've been a worship leader since high school youth group. Only a few short _____ decades ago.
 - i. And at that time, I thought the worship set was going good was when the youth got on their chairs and did the motions to Waves of Mercy!

- b. What about now?
 - c. The popular Contemporary church approach includes strong strands of answering this formula with high production \$\$\$, lights, driving guitars and bass, and the newest catchy hooks from Hillsong or Crowder, Elevation or Maverick City.
 - i. All designed to make you feel something. To create in you emotions that make you FEEL like you're enjoying it, or enraptured in the experience.
 - d. OR swing the other way – true worship is about mental ascent to truth statements. And look down their noses at those who display emotions as being unthinking hysterics.
 - e. Some say only the old hymns are good. Others say only the newest hits are good.
 - f. Some say worship songs should focus on deep theological content. Others that the aim is to engage our emotions.
 - g. Should we have the lights up so we can see one another and worship together as the body? Or should we dim the lights low so everyone can have individual experiences of worship with God in private?
7. Let's not even GET into what should a worship leader wear?
- a. There's an entire SOCMED phenomenon around this one!
8. **What about you? What is your formula for good worship?**
9. **The purpose of Tallgrass at The Well is to create community together by inviting everyone into the Way of Jesus.**
10. Mark Series on The Way of Jesus – spiritual rhythms of Jesus that WE can practice.
11. Today we're talking about the spiritual rhythm – practice – of WORSHIP
12. Start by defining our terms
- a. As we've already said, for many ppl these days, WORSHIP = singing and music
 - i. Hence the WORSHIP TEAM LED BY THE WORSHIP LEADER
 - 1. No one would say, do you mean the preacher? Except here, where Ben Deaver wears many hats 😊
 - 2. Nor, would ppl expect children's volunteers to stand when the WORSHIP TEAM is called
 - b. And that's certainly correct – at least in part. Singing praise to God IS a type of worship.
 - c. But biblically, worship is MUCH broader
 - i. Encompassing a range of activities, emotions, and choices
 - ii. From singing praises to hearing God's word to caring for the poor
 - d. **WORSHIP in the Bible – is intentionally praising, honoring, or obeying God**
 - i. That's the definition we'll be running with this morning
 - ii. **OK, so now we understand what worship is – kinda**

- iii. But HOW are we supposed to do you do it? – What exactly are we supposed to do? What's expected of me? What's the right formula?
- iv. And what does JESUS want us to do?

13. In Mark 12 we find Jesus answering 20 questions from the crowds, including not a few of his opponents trying to trick him into an unflattering sound bite.

- a. Jesus kept answering each tough and trapping question with such brilliance and wisdom that another religious leader seemed intrigued.
- b. He seemed to shift slightly and ask Jesus a question that he was genuinely though cautiously optimistic that Jesus might actually know the answer to. And it's a DOOZIE
- c. Mark 12:28-34

14.28 One of the scribes approached. When he heard them debating and saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, "Which command is the most important of all?"

15.29 Jesus answered, "The most important is 'Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other command greater than these."³² "

³² Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, teacher. You have correctly said that he is one, and there is no one else except him. ³³ And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, is far more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices." ³⁴ When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And no one dared to question him any longer.

16. What is the formula for life? The proto-life hack. The most important thing:

- a. Really Love the God of Israel with your whole being – heart (emotions), soul (body), your mind, and your strength.
 - i. WORSHIP GOD truly with everything you are and have
- b. And out of that, love others as yourself.
 - i. THIS is more pleasing to God – more WORSHIPFUL – than all the offerings and sacrifices and rituals you could make.

17. MIKE DROP – NO MORE QUESTIONS

- a. Band can come up as we close.

18. Love God a lot. OK Got it. But HOW?

19. **In John 4 - Jesus was talking to a non-Jewish woman** as he was passing through. She was a Samaritan and generations before, they'd been Jews who had intermarried and intermixed with local pagan cultures and syncretized (mixed) their faith together.
20. Once she realized she was talking to a prophet of God, the FIRST question she asked him was this VERY QUESTION – HOW exactly does God want us to worship him?
- 21.¹⁹ **“Sir,” the woman replied, “I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.”**
- 22.²¹ **Jesus told her, “Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. [E] Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth.”**
- 23.²⁵ **The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”**
- 24.²⁶ **Jesus told her, “I, the one speaking to you, am he.”**
25. BOOM MIC DROP
- a. I'm the messiah – and I do hold the answer to your question – it's no longer about which temple is the correct one. Which spot or form is the best.
26. **God Almighty wants everyone to worship him in Spirit and Truth**
- a. Has to be based in objective reality – what God says is true about him and life
 - i. And based on subjective reality – Our true inner selves intentionally choosing to worship
 - b. God through Jesus is setting up a NEW TEMPLE SYSTEM
 - i. One not bound to one place or the other.
 - ii. But His SPIRIT setting up temples in the very hearts of those who Follow him
 - iii. Who trust him in their spirit – based on truth
 - c. There's some scholarly debate on the exact reference of the word SPIRIT
 - i. Some render it spirit (like soul, heart, the inner and eternal part of us)
 - ii. Others as the CSB renders it here, think Jesus is referring to the Spirit of GOD – the Holy spirit, who invites everyone to worship God THROUGH HIM
 - d. Either way, the answer is clear: Jesus says YOU ARE THE NEW RIGHT PLACE TO WORSHIP GOD
27. **This is what the apostle and early church father Paul is talking about in Romans 12** addressing this ongoing question: HOW ARE WE TO WORSHIP GOD – AS CHRISTFOLLOWERS?

28. Right after he gets done reminding them about the Goodness of God through Christ, the Gospel of their salvation, and singing them a SONG OF WORSHIP in praise to God, he tells the church:

29. **THEREFORE** – in light of THIS incredible reality, the truth that God loves you. And sent his only son to seek and save you at the cost of his own life. The truth that THROUGH TRUST IN CHRIST, you are adopted in God's own family, not only pardoned from your sins, but indwelt by God's Very Spirit within you,

30. **THEREFORE -- , brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.^[a] ² Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind**

31. Are we getting a theme here?

- a. How does God want you to worship him?
- b. With your entire being. The sum total of all and who you are. Submitted in gratitude to him who loves you.
 - i. The real you and the real Him
- c. Set apart – holy – and pleasing to God.
- d. Love and follow him with your whole life.

32. I love how Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this passage in The Message reads:

- a. **So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out.**

33. **Jesus' formula for worship is narrow in focus, but broad in practice**

- a. Narrow b/c its intentionally choosing to worship only the Creator God through Jesus Christ.
 - i. Because, as humans have long known, you can worship other gods too
 1. Other spiritual beings. Both imagined and real
 2. Other people and animals
 3. Even ourselves – this one is particularly in vogue these days
 - a. Oh we don't use that word, but we practice honoring, praising, and obeying our own desires as primary pretty well.
 - b. At the end of the day, I don't serve anyone but me, my desires, my good, my truth.
- b. But its crazy broad in practice!
 - i. Rightly understood, worship the Christian life:
 1. **Being with Jesus**
 2. **Being like Jesus**

3. Doing what Jesus does

ii. Worship isn't simply a PART of our Christian life, it's the whole thing!

34. **IT'S NOT JUST SINGING SONGS AT CHURCH** – though it's certainly that. It's MUCH MORE than that.

- a. Worship happens from the inside out wherever you are. Whatever you're doing.
- b. When you consciously open up the doorway of your reality to God and tell him that he's good. That you trust him. That you love him. And that you'll choose him and his way over the various temptations you're experiencing.

35. Yes this can happen through song.

- a. Singing songs of worship has existed in nearly every culture throughout human history.
- b. There's something special about music, and the way it connects our hearts and lifts us up

36. But I can also happen when you're reading your bible.

- a. Or spending time in prayer.
- b. Or journaling
- c. Or hearing God's word

37. You can also worship God

- a. as you wake up, and in the quiet grogginess of your heart, you breathe in and thank God for another day of life.
- b. When you're in the shower, and in your nakedness you thank God for seeing and loving you just as you are.
- c. When you're changing a diaper, loading the dishwasher, or folding the laundry AGAIN
 - i. And you're tempted to feel missed, unappreciated, and resentful
 - ii. And you stop long enough to choose to thank Him for this opportunity to serve, and that you know he serves you far more.
- d. When you're at work – and you're tempted to try to get away with slacking off in some way because the Boss won't find out. Instead you recite Colossians 3:23 - Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters

38. **Maturing worshipers Get creative! – not necessarily more grandiose**

- a. Two moments I'm frequently drawn to worship that some of y'all might laugh at: but I'm convinced God's totally great with:
 - i. When I eat delicious food.
 - 1. Now, to be fair, you can totally eat delicious food with simply carnal enjoyment – and that in itself isn't bad either.
 - 2. But it can become worship.

3. For me, worship happens when I awkwardly moan slightly at that first bite of something tasty – yes if you’ve been around me when I’m eating, this happens frequently, whether with a plateful of sliced garden tomatoes, Mississippi pot roast (thank you Judy Lemoine!), or ben and jeris fish food ice cream -- and I thank Jesus for this amazing food.
 - a. I thank him for creating the tastebuds that allow me to experience this goodness.
 - b. For, as his word tells me, all GOOD THINGS, come from Him.
 - c. And he even invites me to taste and see that HE IS GOOD – even better than this beef bulgogi add broccoli, or homemade Chinese jiaozi dumplings (thank you John and Jenny!)
 - d. Worship – in everyday life
- ii. Another for me is when I consider the vastness of space
 1. Whether I’m starwatching on a warm summer night as far away from city lights as I can get.
 2. Or watching sci-fi – GOOD sci-fi mind you.
 - a. Not like transformers – sorry all you poor Michael bay fans
 - b. But good sci-fi like interstellar – with the subwoofer up dangerously high.
 3. When I’m drawn upward to consider the vastness and the incredible beauty of God’s creation. And I remember the words of Psalm 8 wondering at the place of humans in such a vast creation. Or Psalm 19
 - a. The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
²Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.
 4. Oh God – it’s all so amazing. The tell me that you’re great and glorious and beautiful beyond measure. Show me more!
 5. WORSHIP – in real life.
- iii. Josh shared with me this week he loves worshipping God with his mind. When he reads something and a lightbulb comes on, he pauses to say Thank you God, I love that. Show me more!”
- iv. Others intentionally worship God when they exercise, connecting their physical exertion to the strengthening process of sanctification – God’s Spirit helping mature us to become more like Jesus.

39. What are some moments in your days and weeks where you worship God?

- a. Or where you COULD worship God like this?

40. The more you understand how many things can become opportunities to Worship, the more realistic the words of Paul sound when he says our whole LIFE can be worship.

- a. The Way of Jesus leads us out of our darkened, compartmentalized views of our life.
 - i. This is my work life.
 - ii. This is my family life.
 - iii. This is my church life.
 - iv. This is my secret life.
- b. The Way of Jesus leads us into the wide spaces where EVERYTHING CAN BE HOLY
- c. And we can choose to worship him anywhere, anytime, no matter what we're experiencing

41. Brings us to an important subquestion

- a. How can I worship God when I don't feel like it.
- b. When life is hard.
- c. When I'm hurt, angry, or afraid?
- d. If you take the view that worship is merely singing a song with deep joyous emotional rapture, this is practically impossible.

42. But if worship is firstly a choice to honor God with your true self, to confess your trust in him and his Goodness, then you can worship him even when you're sad or mad, or bleeding on the floor

43. King David did this constantly as recorded in his songs and poems – many of the PSALMS in your bible.

- a. Psalm 13 and Whole sections of other psalms are dedicated to lament and complaint against God. Expressions of deep and difficult emotions. And yet he also weaves in – nearly every time – expressions of worship too. Even if it's just a half sentence at the end about God being the one who can rescue him.
- b. The lord of his life that he chooses to hold to even then.

44. Worship in real life sometimes are cries of NEVERTHELESS

- a. Even though things are so bad, NEVERTHELESS, I'll still trust you, God. You are still good.
- b. WORSHIP

45. The prophet Habakkuk, writing about 600 years before Christ during a time of significant disaster:

- a. **I heard, and I trembled within;
my lips quivered at the sound.
Rottenness entered my bones;
I trembled where I stood.**
 - i. Have you ever experienced things like that?
 - ii. Disasters in your life that left you reeling
 - 1. Maybe from a divorce
 - 2. Or the death of a loved one
 - 3. Or the betrayal of a friend or even someone at church

4. Maybe from a devastating diagnosis
5. Or the depths of clinical depression or crippling anxiety.
6. Have you ever come to church, and the music played, and you stood in the awkward middle space of your heart
7. Angry with God
8. Hurt and afraid.
9. And singing a happy song feel like a slap in the face?
10. Maybe that was just a few minutes ago.
11. You're not alone. And it's ok.

b. Habakkuk continues – and remember he's writing in an agrarian society, one without walmarts, Amazons, or savings accounts:

**c. Though the fig tree does not bud
and there is no fruit on the vines,
though the olive crop fails
and the fields produce no food,
though the flocks disappear from the pen
and there are no herds in the stalls,
¹⁸ yet I will celebrate in the LORD;
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!
¹⁹ The LORD my Lord is my strength;
he makes my feet like those of a deer
and enables me to walk on mountain heights!**

46. We can worship God in real life, even in the midst of pain and suffering. Because worship, like love, is first and foremost a choice.

a. The heart and the emotions follow, especially in these times.

47. We can worship God with our whole hearts, minds, and strength – because Jesus has already walked that path for us.

a. He submitted his whole self, his very life, to the Father as a sacrifice on the cross. In hope and trust

b. Even though he was nailed to a cross, and surrounded by his enemies – He gave himself fully even unto death.

c. So that you and I can worship in Spirit and truth. Right here. Right there. Right where you are.

48. To close, let's look at practice steps to consider taking in light of this teaching:

a. Beginning – **Sing and pray during church**

b. Structure helps as we begin. Like a young tree or a rising tower, Scaffolds us to grow and build so we can be unfettered once we're stronger

- i. Choose to sing the worship songs with your mind and heart engaged at church. Try to put away distractions. Don't wait on your emotions, but also don't hinder them.
 - ii. Take the step to more intentionally engage during these times.
 - iii. See what God does.
 - 1. Maybe you need to take a step with your body's posture to help scaffold the heart posture you're desiring
 - 2. Raise your hands in an act of praise and honor
 - 3. Close your eyes to remember you're worshipping God, not performing for others
 - 4. Open your eyes to remember that you're a part of the body of Christ, worshipping not individually, but together!
 - 5. Risk singing a little louder – even if your voice isn't amazing (with God, it's the heartset, not the quality of the harmonies, that he considers)
 - iv. Its so easy to come to a church gathering, and remain a spectator.
 - v. OR feel like you have to put on a show for others
 - 1. Both keep you from engaging in genuine worship
 - vi. Let's start where we're at. And begin practicing bringing the real you to the real God on Sundays when we sing and pray.
- c. **Baseline –Worship God throughout the week through song, prayer, and meditating on His Word.**
- i. Show up on Sunday morning ready to worship in song, prayer, and hearing of God's Word – having already worshiped all week
 - ii. Song – listen to worship music you enjoy during the week. Looking for a place to start? Check out our church's Spotify and YouTube playlists – on our website: TG@TW.church.
 - iii. Intentionally set aside some time (can even start with 5 minutes) to pray. Use that time to bring the real you to the real Him. Pray to God whatever's on your heart and also listening for him to speak. If it goes well, you can always increase the length and frequency.
 - iv. Same with hearing and reading his word. Whether listening on your Bible App or reading a trusty paper copy, begin reading God's word regularly. Looking for a place to start. Pick one of the reading plans in the excellent and free Bible App from YouVersion. If you're new to the scriptures, pick a translation that's easier to read, like the New Living Translation.
- d. Stretch – **Intentionally cultivate a worshipful lifestyle with non-churchy every-day moments.** Train yourself to respond in simple (or elaborate!) expressions of Worship to God in tasks, moments, pleasures, and pains you'd never considered before. Get creative.

i. Then share your experiences with someone.

49. Finally, as the band comes up, if you're hearing my voice right now, and you've never decided to put your trust in Jesus, let me invite you to take that first step of worship right now.

- a. It's completely possible to go your entire life without worshiping God – even in church!
 - i. You can do all the churchy things, sing at the top of your lungs, and still be far from God. Not be following the Way of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. Jesus warned the religious leaders of his day: **”8 “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 9 They worship me in vain.”**
- b. Without faith in Jesus, it is impossible to please God – to worship him in spirit and truth
- c. The Book of Romans teaches us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
- d. All of us were created to worship, and if we don't give it to God, we give it to others, and ultimately ourselves.
 - i. And since we're all worship machines, we've exchanged the glory of the immortal God and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator.
- e. But even while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- f. So that we could know and be known by our Creator, and worship him again.

50. This morning I invite you to worship God in Spirit and Truth by telling Jesus in a quiet prayer that you're done trying to control your own life, and you choose to trust and worship Him from now on.

51. If you prayed that prayer God promises you through his word that his Spirit has just come to take up residence with you. And that you've moved from death to life.

52. We invite you to worship him now. And to come talk to us after the service (or the person who brought you) so we can help you get connected and grow.

53. **PRAY**

- a. The scriptures have many different words we translate WORSHIP in English
 - i. Many involve nuanced versions of praising or expressing gratitude someone for their worth or beauty or goodness
 - ii. The very first time WORSHIP is used is in Genesis 22 when Abraham and his son Isaac say they're going to WORSHIP God by offering a sacrifice (which ended up being Isaac!, before God intervened)
 - iii. Others mean to bow down in reverence
 - iv. One means to raise our hand in surrender
 - v. One means to loudly exclaim our approval
 - vi. One means to kneel and BLESS
 - vii. One means to SERVE humbly
 - viii. To Submit to
- b. In the Old Testament, God instructed the Israelites to worship him through
 - i. Song
 - ii. Keeping holy days and festivals
 - iii. Prayer
 - iv. Hearing his Word spoken
 - v. Fasting
 - vi. Serving him in the temple
 - vii. Offering sacrifices
 - viii. Offering praise to him with loud exclamations
 - ix. Resting on the 7th day of the week
 - x. Not planting crops every 7 years
 - xi. Doing justice to your neighbor
 - xii. Forgiving debts and releasing prisoners every 50 years
 - xiii. Caring for the poor, widows, and the foreigners