



I wish I could transport you back in time to the early church so you could attend 45 minutes or so of a worship service, because I think the experience would change you forever. We know that the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, to prayer, and to praising God in Acts 2:42–47, I think you would say, "Wow, listen to how they speak to God! He seems so real to them! They seem to have such intimacy, such freedom, and such power!" In those few minutes, you would witness worship in the early church, and you would see how the Holy Spirit manifested the intimacy and awesomeness of God's presence to the believers as they praised and worshipped Him. Then, I think you would say, "I wish I could experience that too!" I believe you can. But before you can experience the benefits of worship, you have to understand what worship is, why worship is important, and what happens when you worship.

So what is worship? Last week David Anderson and I had the opportunity to attend an amazing conference on worship in Nashville Tn with 4500 other believers from all over the world. It was unreal, worshipping with so many believers and it certainly filled our souls to overflowing. One of the many things we learnt was that by definition, worship is giving worth to something or someone. But true worship is also a matter of the heart. It must be felt. It can't be ritualistic. It can't be just an external going through the motions. True

worship is a heartfelt expression of love, adoration, admiration, fascination, wonder, and celebration. It's something that happens in your heart and soul when you begin to praise God for who He is and thank Him for what He has done.

Why is worshipping God so important?

There is nothing difficult about worship. Christian or non-Christian, pagan or holy, every human being was designed to worship, and does worship—something. Consider a group of sports fans watching and talking about a game. They worship. Consider a group of teenagers at a concert. They worship. We readily worship food, sports, arts, and music. We worship comfort, control, power, achievement, work, money, and relationships, but God calls us to worship Him.

He commands it, He desires it, He pursues it, He deserves it, and He will reward it. For God bestows His provision, grace, sovereignty, and power on those who worship Him in spirit and in truth. But if you choose not to worship God, you need to understand that you are worshipping something else. Whether you worship a job, achievement, money, or a person, you are doing so to your detriment. At some point, the object of your worship will fail to come through for you.



What happens when we worship? First, worship brings an upward look, a glance at God on His throne in all His glory. It refocuses our view of God. It pulls our affections off our idols and puts them onto God. It causes us to remember how good He is, how big, kind, powerful, and loving He is, and how holy He is. Second, worship brings an inward look. When you see God for who He really is, as Isaiah did, you start to see yourself for who you really are. You start seeing things in your heart and in your life that really didn't bother you before. But notice that after Isaiah saw and confessed his sinfulness, he also experienced the mercy, grace, and forgiveness of God. That's what happens when you really worship. But worship doesn't end there because an inward look is followed by an outward look. Genuine worship always leads to an outward look, a personal response or action, a desire to be obedient to whatever God calls you to do. Genuine worship isn't just singing songs and getting a good feeling in your heart. Genuine worship is seeing God for who He really is—His power, His greatness, His holiness, His sovereignty, His love, and His compassion and then giving Him what He's worth—the best of your time, your talents, your thoughts, your words, and your deeds. True worship is seeing afresh the tremendous worth of God and, in response, giving Him the best of everything you have.