

Freedom Week 9

Worship

(Isaiah 38:18-1) For the dead cannot praise You; they cannot raise their voices in praise. Those who go down to the grave can no longer hope in Your faithfulness. **Only the living can praise You** as I do today. Each generation tells of Your **faithfulness** to the next.

By this time, hopefully you know one thing for certain: **God's love for you is real and vast**. When we truly **embrace** the love God has for us, we begin to **trust** Him, and as our **relationship** with Him grows, we **develop** a great love for Him as well. Love for God allows our *"religious requirements"* to become **relational** joys. What we once saw as duty has now become **devotion**. It is our **delight** to know Him and follow His commands.

An **overflow** of your relationship with God is worship. **Worship is more than singing songs**; it is a **lifestyle**. Worship can be expressed through acts of service, words of praise, and giving, as well as singing, dancing and even shouting. Living this way **honors** our Savior and produces purity, confidence, and strength in us. Then, something amazing happens: We become warriors in God's Kingdom.

Ask yourself: Am I living the life of a worshipper?

Love and War

Worship is actually an act of **warfare** against satan and demonic forces! Our worship puts the devil on the run and increases our ability to **fight** against powers of darkness in the heavenly realms. Psalm 149:6 says, "Let the praises of God be in their mouths, and a sharp sword in their hands." When we give God all of our **attention**, we strip the enemy of any power he has over our souls or our bodies as we enter the safety of God's presence. In His **Presence**, we are protected from every scheme of the enemy. We become like Jesus, who said that the ruler of this world "has nothing in Me" (John 14:30 NASB).

We are able to come boldly into the presence of God because of the blood of Jesus. Hebrews 9:22 says, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness." And without forgiveness for our sins, we cannot enter the presence of God. The blood of Jesus has removed every spot and stain from our lives and made a way for us to "approach God's throne of grace with confidence" (Hebrews 4:16 NIV).

Nothing but The Blood

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God said, "You will surely die." Obviously, He was referring to spiritual death, because they went on to live very long lives after they were banished from the garden. **Remember: Sin has consequences.** But even though God departed from man's spirit when man sinned, **He did not abandon His creation.**

In response to Adam and Eve's loss of innocence and awareness of their nakedness, He covered them with garments made from animal skins. This was the first blood sacrifice.

Truth Unveiled

(Acts 2:2-4) Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. **All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.**

This incredible experience with the **Presence of God** described in Acts 2 was made possible by the acceptable sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. Thank God for this new and better way for us to experience Him! "With His own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—[Jesus] entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever" (Hebrews 9:12). This redemption includes **eternal life** with God, **healing** for our souls and our bodies, and **deliverance** from all the power of the enemy.

The blood of Jesus has overcome satan. **As believers, we are fighting from victory—not for victory!** The veil has already been torn; the victory has already been won; satan is a defeated foe. **There is nothing separating us from God's Presence!** Now, we can be in an **intimate relationship** with Him. He has declared and expressed His love for us; we need only to **receive that love** and **learn** how to love Him in return.

First Love

God desperately longs to connect with our hearts. In Matthew 15:7–9, Jesus says there are people who honor Him with their words, "but their hearts are far from [Him]. Their worship is a farce." Genuine worship comes from a **heart consistently connected with God**, and that connection happens in two ways: corporately (at church gatherings with fellow believers) and personally (anytime, anywhere).

Corporate worship is important because our **faith increases** when we join together with other like-minded believers. Even if we come to church or Small Group distracted and burdened by anxiety, our attitudes can quickly change in a worshipful environment. Personal worship occurs when we take **initiative**, intentionally adjust our attitudes, and cultivate an atmosphere of praise. Wherever we are, any time of day, we can have the attitude of a worshipper and enjoy the presence of God.

"Worship is our response, both personal and corporate, to God for who He is, and what He has done; expressed in and by the things we say and the way we live." - Louie Giglio

Ask Yourself: Is my worship coming from a genuine place in my heart? What am I doing to create an atmosphere of praise in my daily life?

Four Levels of Worship

The river below symbolizes the presence of God. As we venture forward in our relationship with God, we have a tendency to want to keep our toes on the ground, ensuring our head stays above water and we are in control of our lives. **But God is inviting us to trust Him, to go deeper, to experience the fullness of His presence.**

Ankle-Deep:

We can enjoy refreshing in God's presence, **but we are in full command.** We can splash and play, then choose to walk out of the river with no lasting effects on our lives.

Knee-Deep:

The current of God (His Presence) can be felt, **but we maintain control.** In knee-deep water, we have a good view of those who've ventured out into deeper waters, and we see that in His Presence there is "fullness of joy" (Psalm 16:11 NASB), but we still find **security** on the riverbank.

Waist-Deep:

Here, the stream of His presence is strong. We've walked into deeper water, but we **fight the current** and struggle to keep contact with the bottom. Often the **fear of what others think** or the fear of losing control will tempt us to go back to the riverbank. It is at this place that we make a crucial decision: Who will be in control? God or us?

The Middle of the River:

This is where we can experience the fullness of God's presence. We stop fighting for control, and instead, we pick our feet up and float, **allowing His current to carry us.** We go where He goes, and it is good.

Most people want to experience God in ankle-deep, knee-deep, or even waist-deep water, **but they want to stay in control.** In other words, many want to "do the God thing," but reserve just enough control that God doesn't take them out of their comfort zone. Those who live this way have believed a lie that if they abandoned themselves to His control, He would make them do things they don't want to do. They think He would embarrass them or send them to some faraway place they don't want to be. But the truth is, **God has only good things for His kids.** You will never come to a place of true worship until you are honestly able to say, **"God, have Your way."**

Ways of a True Worshipper

1. Give God your affection.

(2 Chronicles 16:9) The eyes of the Lord **search** the whole earth in order to **strengthen** those whose **hearts** are **fully committed** to Him.

God wants to be in a **covenant** (devoted, unbreakable) **relationship** with you that involves much more than singing songs. **He wants you to desire and enjoy His presence.** Worship Him out of the **overflow** of your heart because He is worthy of the best you can offer Him. Psalm 84:1–2 is a song of craving to worship God: “How lovely is Your dwelling place, O Lord of Heaven’s Armies. I long, yes, I faint with longing to enter the courts of the Lord.”

2. Commit to unconditional worship. (Worship is a daily choice; his worth doesn’t change)

True worship means praising God even when we don’t feel like it. We must be **committed** to worshipping Him. The truth is, God is worthy of our worship in good times and bad, when we tangibly feel His presence and when we don’t, when we see our prayers answered and when we don’t. **The quality of our circumstances does not dictate God’s worthiness of worship.** We must make a commitment that whatever comes in our lives, we will continue to posture ourselves to worship God.

“Happy moments, PRAISE GOD Difficult moments, SEEK GOD Quiet moments, WORSHIP GOD Painful moments, TRUST GOD Every moment, THANK GOD” - Rick Warren

3. Include God in your daily life. (ask him daily, how can I partner with you?)

(John 15:5) “I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who **remain** in me, and I in them, will produce **much fruit**. For apart from me you can do nothing.”

Many of us struggle in our **relationship** with God because our Monday do not look like our Sundays. When our everyday world looks different than our “church world,” we **compartmentalize** our lives and limit God’s access to our hearts. Our secular and sacred worlds should look the same, equally reflecting the commitment we have made to worship Jesus.

4. Be obedient.

The first place where worship is mentioned in the Bible is a story that reveals a heart of unconditional love for God: the story of Abraham laying Isaac on the altar in Genesis 22. Abraham trusted God with his greatest treasure—his son. And God called this worship.

(Hebrews 13:15) Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to His name.

The greatest sacrifice we can give to God is a heart of humility willing to serve Him with unconditional obedience. This kind of worship moves the heart of God toward us. Read this incredible promise from Jesus out loud:

(John 14:21 AMP) “The person who has My commands and keeps them is the one who [really] loves Me; and whoever [really] loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself

5. Show reverence.

(Psalm 111:10) The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts have good understanding. To Him belongs eternal praise.

In this verse, “fear” means respect. Our God is like no other—almighty, awesome, and beyond comprehension. It is only appropriate that we approach Him with awe and reverence. **True worship requires that we fear the Lord.**

(John 4:23) “But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship Him that way.”

The Greek word for “worship” in this verse is *proskuneo*, which literally means “to kiss the master’s hand in reverence.” **It indicates both love and respect.** This is a powerful combination. When we both fear God and love Him, we feel safe in the shelter of His immense greatness. This reverent approach to worship allows us to enjoy resting in His presence, and if He tells us to jump, we say, “How high, Lord?”

“You become like what you worship. When you gaze in awe, admiration, and wonder at something or someone, you begin to take on something of the character of the object of your worship.” - N. T. Wright

In Spirit and Truth

(Ecclesiastes 12:13-14) Here now is my final conclusion: **Fear God and obey His commands**, for this is everyone’s duty. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.

Each day, we have the opportunity to love God and live for Him by **aligning** our lives with the truth of His Word. We cannot separate our love for God from our submission to Him. God says He wants us to worship Him not only in spirit, with enthusiasm, gratitude, and affection, but also in truth. **Worshipping in “truth” requires us to examine our lives and rid ourselves of anything that does not line up with His Word.**

We need to ask God to purify us. **True worship comes from a place of purity.** We can’t expect God to be pleased by our jumping and clapping and singing if we do not allow Him to deal with our **secret sin** and areas where we have **fallen short**. Hear the heart of humility in this prayer: Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends You, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

(Psalm 139:23-24) **Search me**, O God, and **know** my heart; test me and **know** my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that **offends You**, and **lead me** along the path of everlasting life.

When we are **totally focused** on God—His goodness, provision, healing, deliverance, holiness—we are actually in a **posture** of warfare against the enemy. **Worship has the power to tear down strongholds and change our environments.**

Praying for Purity

God desires to purify you. If there is an area of sin in your life that you know you need to deal with, ask Him to forgive you. Use the prayer below as a guide.

Father, I’m sorry for offending You and going my own way. I make no excuses for it. I confess my sin right now. (Identify out loud any sin you need to release to God.) I want this sin out of my life, and I choose to turn away from it. Please forgive me, and make me clean. I receive Your forgiveness now. I know You delight to show me mercy. Thank You, Lord, for letting me off the hook. I make the decision to love You and worship You with all my heart. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.