

# Discipleship Dimensions

Worship is a broad subject, and our own worship, as pointed out in last month's article, is not to be a mere activity but instead a part of the fabric of living out the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ. This article focuses on the notion that worship includes the singing of spiritual songs.

First, what is worship? A good, starting or basic definition of worship is "the attributing of worth to God" In other words, worship, however it is done, *focuses on God*. And worship derives from a recognition, which should be ever growing to be sure, of *who* God is in terms of His character and attributes, and *what* God has done in terms of the working out of His will and purposes on earth, most notably in salvation

But what does worship involve? Worship involves speaking to God, being quiet before God, and giving offerings to God. Further, worship involves being reminded of what we already know about God, and then attributing worth to Him for those very things. In doing the foregoing things, worship surely involves one's mind and intellect; but it also involves one's feelings and emotions. And I daresay that worship involves a physical component as well. For example, think of *bowing* before God; of *approaching* God with an offering; of *raising one's hands* in exaltation; of *moving* or even *dancing* unto the Lord (consider

King David who danced before the Lord with all his might. II Sam. 6:14).

Finally, worship includes uniting together in any and all of the activities just mentioned, in celebration, praise to and adoration of our God. That is what believers do when they sing as a group - they come together to lift their worship to God in a corporate way (even while at the same time each believer lifts that same worship to God individually).

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The next question is how are believers to approach God in worship? At times, believers do not worship very thoughtfully; they do not sufficiently engage their minds. Further, at other times believers do not come before God with appropriate humility, and in a state of offering. In other words, there are those times when the believer's attitude of worship is not fully focused on God, and may even be self-centered. At those times, whatever the believer is doing, it is something less than true worship.

So what is the right way to worship? By "right way", I mean one's attitude, not one's method. So, for example, raising one's hands is neither right nor wrong, it is the attitude with which one either does one or the other that is right or wrong. The right attitude of worship is approaching God with a mind-set of humility. Believers need to

realize that they do not even deserve an audience before God given the natural state of rebellion against Him. But believers also need to realize that they *can* come before God because of what Jesus Christ has done and accomplished by His death on the cross, by the believer having been washed clean of sin, and therefore having been made acceptable to God and enabled to come before Him in worship.

When believers come before God with the mind-set just described, they come in worship because the focus is then rightly on Him. And in that mind-set of humility, believers can even come before God boldly. And in the end, believers then come in thanks to God that they can come in worship, in thanks for what He has done for us in Christ, and offering oneself to Him for His use. That is the "right way" to worship - with a full focus on God and God alone.

In his letter to the believers living in Colossae, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you *sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs* with gratitude in your hearts to God." Col. 3:16 (Emphasis mine). Paul is essentially teaching about worship in this verse. Without using all the words, he was teaching that believers need to attribute worth to God, to do that activity together and in the right way, and to use spiritual songs as a means to that end. He knew that believers singing spiritual songs together both constituted and enabled worship, and that such corporate worship was a necessary part of the life of the body.

But what are spiritual songs? I suggest that spiritual songs are any songs, including hymns, that speak of God's love, faithfulness, mercy and other characteristics, that focus our minds on God and what He has done, that lift Him up and exalt Him, that strip away selfish pretensions and submit self to Him, that proclaim, praise and pray to Him, that draw one's mind and heart to His very throne, and that bow down before Him in full surrender to Him and His unfailing love.

May all who name the name of Jesus as Savior and Lord worship God in all that He is, the great three-in-one, and fully employ our emotions, our minds, our hearts and our entire selves in that worship; may we all come in humility and in focus on Him; and may we worship by the singing of spiritual songs, individually and together, raising our voices to sing His praises. And when we sing in worship, whether it be with worship songs or hymns, may we all sing unto Him, our songs, voices and selves an offering of praise.