



WORSHIP: Passionate Lovers of God

Message Notes, January 10, 2016

As we head into a new year, we begin by renewing our vision for the basics of who God has called us to be as a church. Over these next few weeks, we will be re-visiting the five expressions of God's "River of Life" in our midst and the "points on the River" from which these expressions flow. Yes, God has given us mission and ministry to *do*, but the deeper calling (from which these "doings" arise) is who He is calling us to *be*:

- Passionate Lovers of God (*Worship*)
- Ever-Maturing Followers of Jesus (*Grow*)
- Deeply Devoted Deeply Devoted Brothers and Sisters (*Connect*)
- Generous Stewards of God's Gifts (*Serve*)
- Empowered Witnesses in our World (*Live*)

Today, we focus on "Passionate Lovers of God" (Worship)

Revelation 2:2-3 – How does this verse speak to the call to be *Passionate Lovers of God*? May all we do as individuals and as a Body be fueled by this "first love" for our Savior God.

Mark 12:28-30 – Jesus captures the essence of what it means to love God as he quoted the Hebrew "Shema" from Deuteronomy 6:4 – "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.*"

Worship is the fullest expression of this love, as captured in its two dimensions:

- Corporate (congregational) worship
- Individual, daily life

These two dimensions of worship fuel each other. Let's look at each.

1. Corporate Worship (Corporate means "body," not "business")

John 4:21-24 – This encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well reveals profound truths about worship:

- Worship is no longer about a place like Mount Sinai or the temple. True worship flows from and is shaped by "spirit and truth."

a. "spirit" – worship is not form, but an *experience* birthed within a person (their spirit)

b. "truth" – it is not going through motions, it must be authentic, and personal, but it cannot simply be a subjective experience, it must be rooted in/fueled by God's Truth, i.e., His Word.

Mark 12:29-31 – Back to this idea of *all my heart, soul, mind and strength*: Worship is a *whole* body experience – emotions, thinking, voice, hands, feet, movement (kneeling, dancing, bowing, etc). The scriptures are replete with these postures of worship.



Worship is:

- **Active, not passive.** We are not the audience. We are the participants! He is the audience. We have come to praise Him.
- **God-centered, not person-centered.** We are not here to extol a man or a band.
- **Sacrificial not consumeristic.** We do not come for the purpose of receiving. We come to give to Him,

However, when we engage in active, God-centered, sacrificial worship, we are invigorated, fed and blessed!

2 Corinthians 3:17 reveals that “freedom” is central to worship. Freedom in worship does not look like a specific style that caters to specific temperaments. (This is the case with many churches because it is honestly easier to lock into one particular expression of worship where everyone is on the same page.)

True freedom allows for a diversity of styles and expressions, freeing people to worship God out of their own unique personalities and experiences.

While far from perfect, we try to foster such freedom and regularly explore how we can bring different styles and encourage different expressions of worship.

Freedom in worship emerges as we get the focus off ourselves: “I bet this will impress others” or “I feel awkward; what will others think of me?”

A key for us is that we will be open and not easily offended by different expressions.

One last matter regarding corporate worship: Come prepared!

- Do I come with a heart set to praise Him, a mind clear from distractions?
- Do I come in rushed or late?
- Am I willing to come in at the beginning and join in, even if I don’t connect with the music style?

In all of these, it’s not all on us (it’s not a performance thing). We need to ask Holy Spirit to help us. *“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* (Matthew 26:41)

2. A Daily Life of Worship

Romans 12:1-2 – How does this verse connect daily life with worship? God wants more than my songs. He wants my whole life!

Read Isaiah 58:3-11 and consider:

- Why is God displeased with the fasting of the people?
- What does a desirable (worshipful) fast look like to God?
- What action words in this passage capture worshipful *living*?
- What fruit will we experience in our lives when we live such actively worshipful lives? (vv. 8-11)



Reflection Questions

1. Which of these two “dimensions” of worship (corporate or daily life) do you struggle with the most?
2. Which of the “All’s” in Mark 12:28-30 (heart, mind, soul, strength) is the easiest worship outlet for you? Which is the most challenging?
3. What different expressions of corporate worship are bothersome for you? (Pray for grace to not be “easily offended” by these.)
4. What distractions/hindrances make “coming prepared” difficult for you on Sunday mornings? What efforts might help minimize these for you?