

A Life of Worship

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What is worship? Expressing my love for God for who He is, what He is doing and what He is going to do.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. ⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. (Gen 4-NIV)

Happy New Year. For those of us in Kansas, we are slipping, sliding and shivering as we start the new year. But, in spite of the weather, you are starting right by putting God, in first place in your life.

One of the keys to doing anything in life is to **get started right**. Take a first right step. Make a first right choice.

If a golfer doesn't make a good first shot off the tee-box, they spend the rest of the hole trying to make up for lost yardage, looking for their ball in the woods or losing a stroke because of out-of-bounds play.

If your first tee shot, your first drive of the golf ball flies into the center of the fairway with good distance, **you are well on your way to finishing the hole strong**.

Those who want to play a good round of golf or experience a good year of life, understand this truth, "it is essential to start right!"

That's why I have chosen for Bethel Life Center, the first theme of the new year: A **Life of Worship**. Start each day off right with the worship of God, and you are well on your way to finishing strong.

Let's take a first right step by defining what is worship? What is worship? Expressing my love for God for who He is, what He is doing and what He is going to do.

Please look and listen closely to the first 3 words. **Expressing my love**...Worship is an expression of love.

Worship is more than singing; it is a lifestyle.

All that you do can be classified and designed as worship to God. This idea is found in -

1 Cor 10:31, ³¹ So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

I often use this verse, as a life verse. A life verse is sturdy and inspirational. It calls the best out of you. It is challenging, comforting, and convicting.

*This life verse serves as a life preserver when I am drowning.

*This life verse will bring clarity and healing when I am wounded and confused.

*Sometimes I can't even walk, and this verse has carried me when I could not walk.

*This life-verse has kept me **alive** when I wanted to leave everything in my rear-view mirror. But this life verse would not let me.

*This life verse will rescue you from a lifestyle of self-indulgence.

At seasons of my life, I use this verse as a life verse. To anchor me when I drift. To center me when I am confused. So, this verse teaches me...worship is not just music; it is a lifestyle.

Worship is not just music; it is a lifestyle. The reason I know this is because you were created by God for his pleasure.

Look at Rev 4:11, You God created all things, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created. (NLT)

Everything was created for the pleasure of God, including and most of all YOU!

And since you were created by God for his pleasure, the way you bring him pleasure is to **love God back**.

And one way to do this is to worship. Loving God is called worship. Again, let's go back to our definition- Expressing my love for God for who He is, what He is doing and what He is going to do.

Now, the challenge of worship for the church and for Christians is that our definition of worship is often misunderstood. When I say the word worship, what do you think of?

You probably think of singing, choirs, hymns, dim lights, loud rock worship. Let me suggest that **worship** is your **first purpose** in life.

It is that first tee shot in a golf match.

It is the first step up a trail to a mountain.

It should be the first activity of the Christ follower when they start each day.

Now, listen carefully, you were created by God to worship. And you will worship something or someone. Go to any nation or any culture in the world, and you will see people worshipping.

You were wired by God for worship.

This is spelled out in *Romans 12:1, Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

Let me highlight two truths from this verse: First, worship is my response to God's love for me.

Look at what it says, because of God's great mercy. God always makes the 1st move. The first sacrifice. The first act of love comes from God.

God creates us. Saves us. Blesses us. Protects us. Forgives us. Dwells in us. Because of these expressions of his love toward us, we respond by worshipping God.

Second, the verse tells us that worship is offering ourselves back to God. Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.

So, the question becomes what am I supposed to offer? And this series will help to answer that question. In the weeks ahead you will learn, while worship can be singing, it is some much more.

You might say true worship is offering yourself as a living sacrifice to God. That's why trying to appeal to everyone's preference in worship is a waste of time. Why? It is the wrong purpose of worship. It is not about preference; it is about a person-Jesus!

No church can appeal to everyone's worship preference.

So, to understand our purpose in worship, we should go to the first act of worship in the bible offered to God. And this is found in Gen 4,

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. ⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. (Gen 4-NIV)

Here meet two brothers, Cain and Abel who go to church, to use NT language and offer their worship to God. They come to worship. In the Old Testament worship offered to God came in the form of a sacrifice.

We saw that illustration earlier in *Romans 12:1*, ***this is your true and proper worship.***

Moses, the writer of Genesis gives us a glimpse and report on their offering. Their worship. We see what the boys offered to God. Here we see what they brought to God as taught by their parents.

It says, vs 3, Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord.

It says, vs 4, And for Abel ... *And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.*

Now, you say, how sweet, Adam's boys worship God. Each boy is learning how to have a relationship with God. They each make a sacrifice to God in worship.

Then suddenly, we get from the text, a scathing report from Moses about God's opinion of Cain and Abel's worship.

The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.

So, the question is simple, it applies to our text, and it is applying to teaching on A Life of Worship. Here it is.

Why did God accept Abel's offering and reject Cain's?

It is clear that something was wrong with the worship. And at the start of the year, I want to make sure your worship of God is pleasing to him and not rejected by him. What? Is that possible?

Yes, when you approach God there is a right way and a wrong way. If you are going to heaven, plan to serve God and want to please God in worship, you have to do it God's way. Not your way!

What was wrong with the worship? Perhaps, if we look closer at what each boy brought, we can get an answer.

Cain brought an offering of worship from the field. ³*In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord.*

Abel brought an offering of worship from the flock. ⁴*And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.*

Ok, do you see that, it is pretty clear. Abel's worship was an offering of fruit; Cain's worship was an offering of the flock. (first, I might add)

Cain brought some fruit. Wheat fields, vineyards and olive groves are still a salient feature of the Israeli landscape today. Figs, pomegranates, dates, strawberries, prickly pears and persimmons are all common cuisine of Israel.

Cain brought his fruit and put it on the alter and said, here it is God. I have come to church to worship you.

Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.

Here it is God, I have come to worship you. I have come to church. God then consumed Abel's offering. Whenever God would accept an offering, he would consume it.

One of the most famous examples of God accepting an offering is found on Mt Carmel in the book of 1 Kings 18. It is quite a display of worship and acceptance by God.

38 Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. 39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!"

Cain's offering was sitting on the altar, and God did nothing. Abel's offering like Elijah's was consumed by God himself.

God really said, to Cain, I cannot accept that offering. And it just sat there. Unconsumed by God. And it is so easy to say with Cain...

...what's up God, I have been working all week, tilling the ground, this offering took some sweat and hurt my back. It dirtied my hands.

I brought you my fruit and I can get more if that is what you want. How many of us think, in our relationship to God it is about works. Effort. Performance. God rejects that kind of worship.

You see, God had told Adam and Eve and therefore through Cain and Abel; in order to come into my presence, you must bring blood.

Sacrifices that God accepts include the shedding of blood.

Why, blood? Because when you come into my presence you have to deal with sin. Worship that God accepts must deal with sin.

The only way to deal with sin is through sacrifice. God tells Cain and Abel; I slew an animal to deal with the sin of your mom and father and I want the same from you.

The Lord made garments from skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. (Gen 3:21-NET)

Did you forget that part of the story guys? Abel brought a sacrifice to deal with sin, but Cain you are bringing me fruit.

What is the point God is making? You cannot worship God without dealing with sin. You cannot come into the presence of God without dealing with sin.

(1)Have you truly worshipped God, if when you leave church or any kind of worship for that matter, and failed and neglected to deal with your sin? Rebellion? Disobedience?

If you have not dealt with your rebellion, disobedience or what keeps God displeased with you, failure to worship properly leaves you holding an offering in your hand unconsumed.

Imagine that? Leaving the temple with your offering in tow. Leaving worship with the same hardness in your heart. The same hate in your heart. The same hurt in your heart.

You might have sung beautifully, but did you really worship if you have not dealt with sin?

You might have played in the band on key or led worship on key, but did you worship if you have not dealt with sin?

Here is what so many do in their lives and at church...show up at church, worship by skipping sin and want me to be happy! Let me remind you of the point I want to make regarding this first step in our series.

The worship of God, neglecting sin, does not make God happy!

Ouch, that hurts pastor. It will hurt more if you don't learn how to worship the correct way.

God tells us he cannot accept our worship or offering if we do not deal with that which God is displeased with in our lives. Brothers and sisters, the reason Jesus died was because of our sin. And our need for forgiveness and atonement. (John 3:16)

You worship without including Jesus and Jesus act of redemption and atonement and you will go home feeling good but not forgiven.

This is why the worship of Bethel is centered on Jesus Christ. This is why we select songs that talk about the blood, sing about his death and celebrate with hands raised his resurrection.

And we will do more during this series. Abel worshipped God in a way that showed his recognition of his sin. Cain did not get there. In fact, he became angry because God called him out.

So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. (Gen 4-NIV)

When you worship in private and in public in 2025, at some point include the blood of Jesus as your theme and theology,

...repent of sins as your testimony and theology.

And then shout out loud because your offering has been accepted by God.

Father,

I give my life of worship to you, as a living sacrifice. I express my love to you God for who you are, for what are doing and for what you are going to do in life.

Father, I express to you in worship the awareness that I can approach you, worship you and love you because of Jesus Christ atoning death. Holy Spirit help me to see my sinfulness, so I can offer the kind of worship that deals with my sin.

And with the voices of many angels and elders in Rev 5:9, I sing and worship Jesus, worthy is the lamb who was killed to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and praise.

In Jesus Name, Amen.