

The Journey of Worship

Disclaimer: I know the word 'worship is a big word. In terms of this message I'm referring to the journey in corporate worship. The journey that we take on a Sunday morning.

This is so true in the context of worship. As we come and pour out our praise and surrender ourselves to Him.

MY STORY

I remember the time when I first encountered the tangible presence of God. I had just hit high school, I was insecure and searching an my identity. I had been visiting a youth group, mainly because one of friends went there.

I'll never forget the backdrop of the night: We were worshipping in a low lit room, with a guy leading on an acoustic guitar. There was nothing amazing about the worship or the venue, but there was such an expectation in the room...

As we were worshipping, the presence of God fell upon the room. He ravished his love upon me, and I was so overcome. I realized that God desired intimacy with me. For about 20 minutes I was overcome by his love for me. It was a night that changed my perspective of who God was.

This started my journey towards intimacy with the father.

If there's a place that I love to be, it's being lost in worship. And as the journey of worship goes through praise and then onto worship, I love the deep quiet place, because that's the place where I first encountered God. Are there other moments or places where I encounter God? Yes absolutely! But there is something about corporate worship, seeing our praises go up and seeing how God so graciously responds to us!

- **This morning, I would like to pose a question: When last did you encounter God in a deep way? When last did you become so aware of Him, that everything else grew strangely dim.**

Perhaps I need to take a step back and ask: Do you know the intimate, deep place in worship? The place where self fades away, and God is magnified in our hearts

When last did you find yourself face to face with God?

- Do we love the presence of God?
- Do we hunger after it? As we hunger after the word? As we aim to love others like Christ?

Exodus 33:15 Moses says: If your presence does not go with us, then don't send us from here. I like how the NLT puts it: If you don't go personally with us, then don't make us leave this place.

(Lord if you don't go with me when I leave this building, then I'm not going)

- **And so this morning I would like to take a look at the journey in worship in the context of our corporate times of worship, the journey towards intimacy with the father, and how we express our love towards God.**

BODY

The Greek word most often translated as ‘Worship’ is the word **Proskuneo**. It’s a multi-faceted word.

- 1) **Prostrating oneself before God**, lying flat on ones face before the Lord
- 2) Literally it means: **‘To adore’**
- 3) **“To kiss hands towards”**

This is an uncomfortable concept for many men in particular. Intimacy is not a societal norm. But yet we serve a God who has very openly displayed his affection for us. And is very comfortable with intimacy.

We see this prostrating before God a couple of times in the Bible...mostly when people are overcome by God

Gen 17:1-3

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty^[a]; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. ² Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”

³ *Abram fell facedown,*

Numbers 20:6

Then Moses and Aaron came in from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to them;

Rev 7:11

And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

- There was this sense of complete surrender and submission to God as other and to their human limitations. This sense of expressing their surrender as humbly as they could

The other meaning of Proskuneo is to ‘To Kiss hands towards’, we see an example in Luke 7 where Jesus was anointed by a sinful woman. The woman comes weeping at Jesus feet (she knows she’s sinful, she knows she’s inadequate), she then anoints Jesus feet with expensive perfume, and kisses them.

The Pharisees are shaken by this and they start accusing her of wastage of inappropriate behaviour. But Jesus says to the Pharisees

‘You gave Me no kiss, but from the moment I came in, she has not ceased to kiss My feet.’

This is such a good reminder to come as you are! In our sin, in your shame.

- **Sometimes we can act like the pharisees** when it comes to expression in worship. I'm not advocating for an 'anything goes' approach, but I am saying that worship must include adoration and that needs to be physically expressed at times.
- **Many times, our outward expression of worship, bears witness as to what God is doing in our hearts. Not always, but generally.**
- Perhaps you might say, we'll I'm just not a very expressive person, and that's fine, **but when you have a true revelation of what God has done for you, you become increasingly expressive and responsive. Because God is that good! Amen!**
- The greater the intimacy of the relationship, the more passionate our worship will be.
- ❖ **Story: I used to be fairly serious and not very expressive when I worshipped. And there used to be this guy in our previous church who encapsulated expression to the highest degree. He would dance and jump, in his seat! He would shout and worship in such a beautiful way. Now he used to sit behind us at church, and sometimes in a worship time, he would notice my lack of response and lift my hands for me in a joking way. His passion was so contagious, and I learnt something there!**

So with this word Proskuneo in mind. How do we position ourselves to journey with God? To encounter him corporately in a deep way?

1) PREPARE YOUR HEART

We often come to church so rushed, with 10 'different things on our minds. And I would like to give credit to our parents with young ones. I'm under no illusion of the struggle to get the kids ready and come to church, and still be in a place to receive.

- But do we come prepared? Often we come to church with the mindset that it will all be done for us,
- the worship team will leads us,
- the announcements will be read to us
- the pastor will preach to us and we just receive.

But we miss our role in everything. That we are active worshippers, participating in a service. Journeying together. No not literally, but spiritually,

- When we don't come prepared to worship, it takes us longer to enter in, and quite often we can drift through a set preoccupied.

For the worship leader, the first song is quite often the most challenging, because we are often finding our place, rubbing the sleep out of our eyes and trying to focus on the front. What if we prepared our hearts better. What if we left 5 minutes earlier for church.

- Take 5 minutes at home to sit and be still.
- Take 2 minutes in the car as you're driving here
- Or as you arrive, take 2 minutes to sit in a chair and quieten yourself
- Pop into our prayer meeting from 8:30

Before we go into an important meeting: We prepare right?

Before having guests around: We clean up

Before meeting together as worshippers, we should have prepared our hearts.

- **What can you do differently in your Sunday routine to prepare your heart for worship?**

2) EMBRACE THE JOURNEY

The journey of worship is beautiful. It's one where we stir up thankfulness in our hearts. It's one where we God praise God with exuberance

- ❖ **I would like to liken the journey to the flight of an Aeroplane.** This is just an illustration. Corporate worship isn't always restricted to this model, but its helpful.

In order for an aeroplane to get off the ground, what does it need? Thrust, this raw power pushing through its engines and propelling it off the ground.

Let's liken this Thrust to our Thankfulness. If we worship without being thankful, we've missed part of the journey.

Psalm 107:1 *Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.*

Then the lift off symbolizes our praise. Its our thankfulness that fuels our praise. In our praise we express, we dance, we sing, we shout, we clap, we're thankful people.

I want to encourage you to grow your expression to in praise

Psalm 63:4 *So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.*

Our entire being is fashioned as an instrument of praise.... When we use body language to express praise, that which is internal becomes visible! Don McMinn

Then once the aeroplane hits cruising altitude, it just cruises towards its destination. At this point we worship, its not the high praise, but we're declaring, we're worshipping. We're adoring. Its often about this time that we can hit some turbulence, and get distracted. But its important that we keep our gaze on Christ. That we focus our minds.

Then finally the aeroplane will start its descent and come in for a landing.

- Story about flaps malfunctioning

The is the place, where the worship team almost disappears into the background, and God has taken center stage, , and as we land, its the place we Gods people are 'lost' in his presence. The place where we find ourselves face to face to Jesus. Where everything else fades away.

When last were you in this place?

- ❖ Understand the journey
- ❖ Embrace the journey
- ❖ Get lost in the journey

3) BOW TO THE KING

Following on from the illustration, as we come in for a landing, this is the place where we bow before God, perhaps not always literally, but to allow our hearts to surrender to his Lordship over us.

Psalm 95:6 'Come let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker'

The most used Hebrew word for worship is the word: 'Shachah' which simply means: 'to bow'

But remember the New Testament word: **Proskuneo**, To lie prostrate.

- This in essence means to even go further than Shachah, than bowing.
- It means to lie completely surrendered and vulnerable before God.

This is the foundation: To bow our hearts before God. Ultimately worship involves the bowing down, because worship is a total submission of your entire being to God.

Why would we bow, sometimes we battle with this, well because we consider God that worthy, worthy of being worshipped and bowed before.

Philippians 2:9-11

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,*

¹⁰*that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

¹¹*and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

The name of Jesus is so worthy that every knee should bow before him.

But its beyond this...

Mark 5:2-7

² When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ³ This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. ⁴ For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

⁶ When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him.⁷

Even the evil spirits bow before him in submission.

- **Worship is a posture of our hearts that informs every action of our lives.** Worship is an attitude of love and submission that demands action.

It's as we bow and surrender our hearts to God, that we become aware of his presence and his unconditional love.

- **It's in the deep place that we need to learn to be loved by God**

It's impossible for you to love God unless He has loved you first.

1 John 4:19 puts it so clearly: *"We love, because He first loved us."* (1 John 4:19)

Greame Cooke says it like this: *What God wants from you, He plans to give you first; every command of God is preceded by a gift, a kind intention.*

- Just as a husband has a deep love for his wife, and expresses his love towards her, So too, we are the bride of Christ, He is passionate about his bride, he desires to express his love towards her. We will never know the full extend of Gods love, until we learn to be loved by God.

Sometimes we need to 'waste' time on God.

- When we come to the place of complete surrender, we walk out of here with complete peace. When last did you surrender your heart completely to God?
- Worship always begins with a motivation from the heart, but it never stops there.
- The truth is that Unexpressed love is no love at all

CLOSE

It's in the quiet place that we learn to hear God's whisper. It's the place where we linger and wait on him. Where we encounter his peace, his joy, and his voice. Where he whispers promises. Where he affirms our identity. Where we have creative ideas. I'm often inspired with ideas in worship. They just pop into my brain.

It's the place where He touches hearts and bodies, where we see the hand of God moving over us. It's the place where we all acknowledge this and say: God is here, now what do we do? Actually, God what do you want to do.

*** Story at lighthouse when we just worshipped after the end..**

It's the place that we can't afford not to be in

May we be a church to loves to express our worship, may we put down our guard and be willing to love God passionately.

I think of King David, who danced in an ephod when the tabernacle was returned to Jerusalem. To the point where his own wife was embarrassed. His was worshipping to the audience of one!

May we worship to the audience of one

Where do you find yourself this morning?

- **Prepare your heart**
- **Embrace the journey**
- **Bow to the King**

Final quote

"As a writer of worship songs, I have a hunger to write deep songs of passionate reverence to God. Yet I'm aware I cannot sing before I have seen. All worship is a response to a revelation--it's only as we breathe in more of the wonders of God that we can breathe out a fuller response to Him....the key to a life of passionate and powerful worship comes from seeing God." - Matt Redman

Response 2 songs of worship