



By Neil Smith at King of Kings on 26 August 2018
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INTRODUCTION – HOW TO WORSHIP A KING

Good morning everyone!

Today we are starting a new worship series called “How to worship a King.” I am so excited about this series! I believe it’s going to be challenging, encouraging, and practical to help you grow in your worship.

So I want to begin by showing you the big picture of where we are going over the course of the whole series. Because it’s important that you don’t judge the series on one message or one part.

OVERVIEW OF SERIES

Part 1: How to worship a King

Part 2: Praise fit for a King

Part 3: To kiss a King

Part 4: The way we worship the King

In part one today, we will look at a biblical overview of worship. In part two, next week we will talk about “Praise fit for a King,” where we will explore praise and expression in worship. In part three, we are going to push you beyond your comfort zone, and look at the subject – “To kiss a king” where we will talk about intimacy with God in worship. Lastly, “The way WE (as King of Kings) worship the King” in terms of building healthy worship culture here at King of Kings, our values, and the corporate element of worship in our gatherings.

Let's get into today's message though, and I thought I would share a bit about my personal journey in worship...

MY WORSHIP JOURNEY

As a child growing up in a Christian home - I was introduced to this word "*worship*." And my first experience of what I considered worship to be was what I would call...

The days of "Songs of Praise"

Who of you remember this little book?? (Hold up "Songs of Praise" booklet)

I remember as a child standing next to my mom and dad singing songs from this little book called "*Songs of Praise*" by Scripture in Song. It came out in the 70's. I used to remember us singing some of these songs together, and it all seemed pretty special at the time, but I just thought of it as a time of singing for the adults.

Looking back over that time though, in the 2 or 3 small churches that I attended with my parents, without realizing it, God was teaching me about how a community of believers worship's together in unity and in spirit.

A few years later, when I reached high school, I was sent to boarding school at Grey High so that I could have a more stable education. I went to eight different schools in primary school alone! So I became a boarder at Grey High, and all the Christians in the boarding school were given special permission on Sundays to walk from the boarding house to any church that we wanted to go to on a Sunday.

My parents told me I should go to the Baptist church which was about a 25min walk from the school – so that's where I went. And so I used to arrive there every Sunday morning at 9am in full school uniform, blazer, tie, and my compulsory Grey Boy Straw Basher, with a perfect side path compliments of la pebras! That sidepath had to not have a hair of place, if it was wrong, you got a "fang," three fangs, and you were off to the housemasters office for cuts. How times have changed! In boarding school, I'm not exaggerating, I think I got cuts nearly every week for the first two years of boarding school. It's one of the reason I have such a hard bottom today ☺

But I digress! I would arrive at Trinity Baptist church every single Sunday, to be greeted by a host of adults who were inquisitive about this young Grey High Boy arriving at their service. At the entrance as you walked in there was a plaque which read; "*As you enter this place, remember to keep silent and be in awe!*" In terms of my worship journey... I call these...

The days of "The Red Hymn Book!"

Who of you remember the Baptist hymnal! It was called "The Redemption Hymnal." And I know for many of you, those were the glory days!

Trinity Baptist Church was one of the oldest Baptist churches in Port Elizabeth and had one of the biggest traditional pipe organs in town, and that's how my education in worship continued...

I went in to find a traditional auditorium filled with wooden pews... and the service got underway, and a number was called out "338" and I realized that there was this hardcover book that everyone was picking up, and each song was numbered, and you found the number, and stood up, and joined in the singing!

It was different to what I was used to... from small gatherings of people in little halls or rooms where it felt more community like, to this booming pipe organ, and a band of instruments with a piano, trumpets and a lot of pomp!

You would hear scriptures like Psalm 96 from the King James Version;

Psalm 96:9 "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth" (KJV)

I started to learn that the book of Psalms was filled with hundreds of poetic anthems used in the religious celebrations of the children of Israel... that clearly instructed them (and us) in how to worship God.

Yet, even though I heard the word "*worship*" in conversation, testimonies, songs, and scripture, I still didn't completely understand what it meant.

Well, I attended that church for my entire high school career. From Standard 6 all the way through to Matric. At Grey I was only allowed to go home for 1 weekend a term, and so on a few occasions in the early years I remember that my mom would come to that church to sneakily see me! We had undercover visits in the pews! She would sit next to me and hold my hand and cry during the worship. Not because of the worship! But because she missed me! Because I'm a very 'missable' guy you know!

And so I also came to appreciate the hymns and that style of worship. But for me personally, I still never really understood what worship was all about. It still seemed to be about the music, even if the musical style was different. Then in my final years of High School, I started attending a Youth Group called Club 68... so in keeping with the journey, I call these my "Club 68" days...

The days of "Club 68"

Club 68 was a youth group that got started in '68 and it was there that I for the first time began to truly understand what worship was really all about. I'm not saying it was because of the style of music, or because it was more relevant to me as a young guy, because there was no big band, no big sound system, no loud noise, no lights, just a person with a guitar and a room full of young people in love with Jesus.

It was there that I got taught about what worship truly was. For the first time in my life, people explained it to me. People disciplined me, and the Holy Spirit began to show me how real God was, and realized it was not just a time of singing, but it was about a life lived for God, and that he was alive and wanted a relationship with me.

For the first time I realized that worship was about focusing on him, and giving Him praise and honour, and meeting with Him. I remember so many Saturday nights, us all packed into a big basement at Club 68, around 80 of us, all worshipping God.

One of the reasons I am in ministry today was because of how I encountered God in those final years of high school at Club 68. Worship suddenly became the most exciting thing in my life!

I realized that worship was not something that just happened on a Sunday morning service, it was meant to happen 24/7. The service is just a small part of it, and not the main event like it is for most people.

The days of “the overhead projector”

And so my worship journey progressed, through things like the days of the overhead projectors – who of you remember that! There were professional overhead projector specialists who used to move those acetates up at just the right speed – it was quite an art!

And then I ended up here at King of Kings! And one of the things I have loved so much about this church is it’s wholistic understanding of what worship is. Worship here is expressed in a heart for God and a heart for people. The way that people worship God outside the church building even more than they worship Him inside of it!

That’s what I loved about Club 68. The production was poor. But somehow, everything about the worship *felt* right.

I realize that some of you have had similar journeys. Or maybe there are parts of it that relate! Regardless, we all have a unique story in terms of how we came to know the Lord, and how worship fits into that. We all have different personalities, some of us are more musical than others, some of us are more expressive than others, we are all unique, but the one thing we have in common as Christians, is the fact that we are a worshipping people, and we worship the God of the bible, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Here at King of Kings, worship is important to us too! And even though we all have different tastes, we are all one in the Spirit! So no matter where you are on your worship journey, we want you to grow in your understanding of worship! Perhaps you’re still a beginner! You may have seen this light-hearted explanation of worship... you get...

THE BEGINNER

You know how beginners worship? They do the “elbow flap” (Hands in pocket, flap elbows), or they do the “carry the TV” Slowly they move to “big screen.” Then you get...

THE PROFESSIONAL

You know you have reached professional worship status... when you do the move in worship “my fish was this big...” or... “Hold my baby.” To going full on lion King Mufasa! Then if you are really good, you can reach expert worship status...

THE EXPERT

The expert worshipper has moves like “Changing lightbulbs” or “Goal Posts!” and “Heart burn” to the simple but very classic “Pointer!”

I’m kidding of course! Whether you are a beginner, a pro, or an expert, all that is important is that you are worshipping Jesus in your own way!

But let’s stop messing about and get into this... here is my first main point today;

YOU WERE CREATED TO WORSHIP A KING

The prophet Isaiah says;

Isaiah 43:5-7 Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. ⁶ I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth— ⁷ everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

Do you realise my friends that you and I were created for God’s glory! That is what God’s word says. You might not realize it, but the main purpose of life, the main reason you and I were created, was to worship. We are wired to worship. We are made to worship. Now the big question of course is,

Who or what will you decide to worship with your life?

We live in a self-obsessed society – our sin natures have made us the centre of our worlds. Our desires, our concerns, our wants. Yet, you were created for more! You were made to worship more than just yourself and your desires. You were made to worship a King... and not just any king... you were made to worship God... the King of Kings!

So today as we start this new series on worship, I want explore with you what the bible has to say about worship – what it is, how to do it, and who to worship! You see, we are all worshipping something or someone, whether you intend to or not. Either your life is orientated around God, or your life is orientated around yourself or an idol (like money or success, or sex). Worship is not about which songs you sing or don’t sing, it is about who your life is glorifying, and who is the King of your life?

The psalmist says;

Psalm 100:1-5 *Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. ² Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. ³ Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his ; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. ⁵ For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

You and I were created to worship the King – God Almighty, our creator. So...

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

There are numerous definitions of the word *worship*. Yet, one in particular helps me:

“Worship is to honour with extravagant love and extreme submission.”
(Webster's Dictionary, 1828).

Worship is not the slow song that the team sings and leads us in. Worship is not the amount you place in the offering basket. Worship is not volunteering in children's ministry. Yes, these may be acts or expressions of worship, but they do not define what true worship really is.

True worship, is about who you really honour above all else. True worship is a matter of the heart, and true worship is expressed through a lifestyle of holiness. So, if your lifestyle, does not express honour with extravagant love for God, and you do not live in extreme submission to God, then I would say worshipping God is not a big priority in your life... and you have probably started worshipping other things.

The reason that Christ followers choose to worship God though... is because he is God. Period. Our extravagant love and extreme submission to the Holy One flows out of the reality that God loved us *first*. Another explanation that helps me to understand worship is through the origins of the English word...

“We get our English word ‘worship’ from an old English term - ‘worthship’. It literally means to give something worth. To value something.” (Zach Neese)

The first mention of worship in the bible is when Abraham is told to take Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice to God.

Genesis 22.5 *He (Abraham) said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”*

This is the first time the word worship is mentioned in scripture. In Hebrew this word worship is “*shachah*” which means “to bow down.” Everyone say “shachah!” You see worship is not just a little section of our Sunday services where we sing. It is not even always done with music! Worship is what we do, when we recognise the value and worth of God, our King, and bow down to Him.

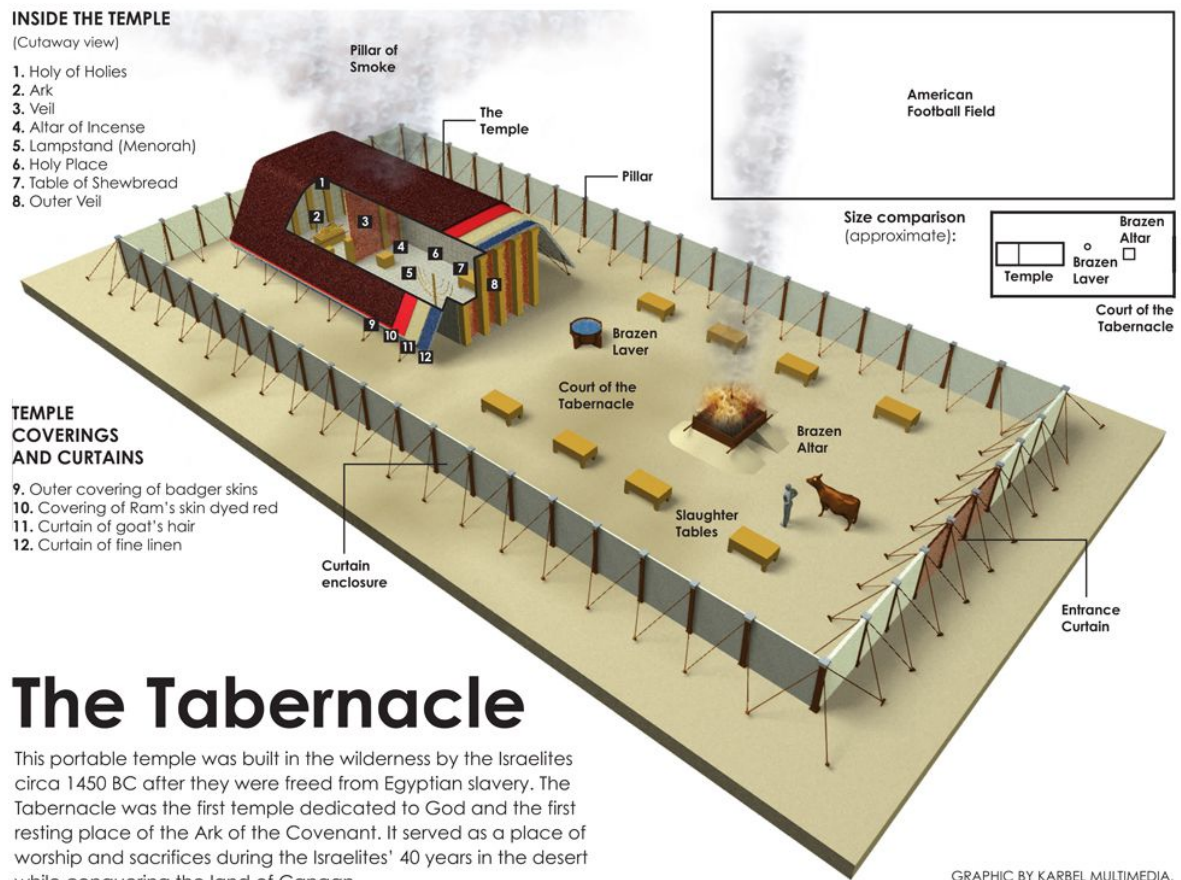
Zach Neese says: “We have made worship about us – our preference, our tastes, our comforts, our opinions. We have made it about ministering to our needs and coddling our self-centered natures. When we make worship about us, what we communicate to God is that worship is for us. When worship is for us, we become the object of worship, little gods in our own hearts. We come idolaters”.

You see friends, worship is not about us, it is about God. We don't come here on Sundays to sing songs that coddle to our needs – we come here on Sundays to worship God! Worship is meant to be all about God! Not us!

So what does real worship look like? At different times in the Bible worship has looked different;

HOW THEY WORSHIPPED IN OT TIMES

In the Old Testament, worship often happened at a high place, marking momentous events, and often involved a sacrifice. But after God's people, the nation of Israel, were freed from slavery in Egypt, God instituted a different way of worship for the nation, using priests and the tabernacle – a kind of travelling temple. In this way the people were reminded wherever they went, to worship God and to keep their focus on God. Here is a picture of the Tabernacle...



The Tabernacle

This portable temple was built in the wilderness by the Israelites circa 1450 BC after they were freed from Egyptian slavery. The Tabernacle was the first temple dedicated to God and the first resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. It served as a place of worship and sacrifices during the Israelites' 40 years in the desert while conquering the land of Canaan.

It was the first temple dedicated to God, and served as a place of worship. If you have time, go through and read Exodus 35 onwards, it will give you the very detailed instructions about the Tabernacle. So detailed and intricate, all built from the offering of God's people. But look what happens when it was set up and used...

Exodus 40:33-38 *Then Moses set up the courtyard around the tabernacle and altar and put up the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. And so Moses finished the work. ³⁴ Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.*

³⁵ Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁶ In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; ³⁷ but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out—until the day it lifted.

³⁸ So the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the Israelites during all their travels.

Can you picture that! How amazing, the tabernacle was the place to meet with God! Every element was designed by God carefully to direct people towards God in worship. Right to the Holy of Holies. Everything about the design was to help people process towards God. But the tabernacle was just for a season.

Later in the Old Testament, when Israel finally reaches Jerusalem, and settles, they set about building a Temple. You can read details of the Temple King Solomon built from 1 Kings 5 onwards. And just by the way, a little promo here... Liz Kampers does some really great classes involving the Tabernacle & the Temple in Bible School! Now the scale of this task was huge – it took 7 years to build the Temple! And when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to the Temple this happened:

1 Kings 8:6-11 *The priests then brought the ark of the LORD's covenant to its place in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the Most Holy Place, and put it beneath the wings of the cherubim. ⁷ The cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark and overshadowed the ark and its carrying poles.*

⁸ These poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the Holy Place in front of the inner sanctuary, but not from outside the Holy Place; and they are still there today. ⁹ There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.

¹⁰ When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. ¹¹ And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple.

The Temple became the focal point of Israel's worship – the place to go to meet with God, to seek his Will, to seek His forgiveness, to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise. The focus was not to be on the actual temple, but on the One who filled it. Let me say that again... the focus... was not meant to be on the actual temple, but on the One who filled it.

As you know however, the Temple did not last – it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar II after the Siege of Jerusalem of 587 BCE. It was rebuilt again in the 6th Century BC; but this temple was destroyed as well – in about 70AD under Roman rule.

So what happens then... Does worship stop because the temple is gone? Well, once again, the temple was never meant to be the focus of worship, God is the only focus, the Temple was a tool to help people. But in the New Testament there was a radical shift in - the How of worship – but there was never a shift on - the Who of worship.

HOW WORSHIP CHANGED IN THE NT TIME

In his conversation with the Women at the Well Jesus said this:

John 4:21-24 *“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.*

²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

In the New Testament Jesus taught us to worship in spirit and in truth. You see, worship is not reserved to music and singing. There is no set place of worship, there is no set style of worship. But what is important, is that it is done in spirit and truth. That is set by the word of God.

Again, the word for worship is so interesting here – the Greek word is *“proskuneo”*- (meaning to kiss); to crouch (literally or figuratively) to prostrate yourself in homage (to do reverence to, to adore): to worship.

Throughout the Old Testament and in the Gospels of the New Testament, the most common word used for worship is *“proskuneo”* in Greek, or *“hishtahvah”* in Hebrew. Both words refer to bowing down before God in reverence, an act done in the temple.

An interesting shift happens with this word when we get to the epistles in the New Testament, where Paul and the others are instructing the Church. Instead of using *proskuneo*, these writers begin to use the Greek word *“latreia,”* which means indirect worship in the form of the spiritual service given to fellow humans and to God.

According to John Piper, “This is the form of worship commanded in the New Testament: to act in a way that reflects the value of the glory of God. In the New Testament, there is a stunning indifference to the outward forms and places of worship. And there is, at the same time, a radical intensification of worship as an ... experience that has no bounds and pervades all of life.”

Again and again in the epistles, we are instructed to live a life of worship more than we are instructed to gather for our weekly service:

Passages like Colossians 3:17 – whatever you do, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus!”

Passages like Romans 12 – present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy, and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.

These verses tell us that worship is active. More active than I want it to be, if I’m honest.

Worship in the New Testament takes the focus away from the location... and on to the motive and direction of the worshipper. God is not, and never was limited to a geographical location.

One of the most powerful times of worship I have ever had was in my car in the underground parking lot of Longbeach Mall. Does that mean we now all need to start a pilgrimage to the Longbeach Mall underground parking? No! Because Jesus changed everything! God does not just dwell in that underground parking! God dwells in our hearts through the Holy Spirit and we are each the Temple of the Holy Spirit –

John 14:23 *Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”*

My friends, listen carefully... The same God, who filled the Tabernacle and the Temple, dwells in you if you follow Jesus – you don’t need to go anywhere special to worship Him – He is with you. Now, don’t take me to say that there is no point to us gathering and worshipping together... that is hugely important and something we will touch on later in the series, but I want you to understand that He is accessible. These words describe the significance of what took place at the cross...

Matthew 27:50-51 *And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. ⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.*

When Jesus died on the cross, the heavy curtain that sectioned off the Holy of Holies, that only a priest could enter into, with much fear and trepidation, that curtain was torn in two, showing us that we have free access, to come into God’s presence, with boldness through what Jesus has done. So lastly today...

HOW DO YOU WORSHIP THE KING?

So, we have looked at what worship looks like through the bible... From a pile of rocks – with Abraham, to a tent in a wilderness – with Moses, to a temple in Jerusalem – with Solomon, to a cool spot under the trees next to a well – with Jesus, to our own history, of stained glass windows... to a dusty basements... and beyond!

Friends, I realize that we have all had different backgrounds, and have come to know the Lord, and fallen in love with Him through different styles of worship. Those styles naturally become very special to us. But I would encourage you to do a check on your heart today. Have you allowed worship, to become for you: an experience that makes you feel good?

In my journey, I had to stop and ask myself, *since when was worship about making me feel good?* I won't lie, I like churches with amazing worship bands—they make me feel good. I like church to be entertaining and the sermon to be engaging—this makes me feel good. But I have to stop and ask myself, *since when was worship about making me feel good?*

Could it be that, sometimes, the thing we are drawn to worship apart from God, is worship itself? The act of it as it takes place in our church services? Either the style, the music, the lighting, the instruments playing behind the prayer, is this what I crave more than God?

I do not believe the elements of a worship service are wrong or bad, but I do believe we can begin to worship our worship experience over the almighty God, and this is not true worship.

Jesus wants us to worship him in spirit and truth.

It is all good and well us looking at the people of God in the OT, and the how things changed in the NT. But what about you? What about us? How do you worship the King? We will keep coming back to this in this series – but how then do you worship the King today? Let me suggest just a few things from today...

- **Know who you are worshipping** – get your heart right. It has always been about worshipping our Creator and our Saviour, not about what we get out of worship. We need to be worshippers, not consumers. Worship is about knowing God. *God did not create you so he could use you. He created you so that He could know you (Zach Neese)*
- **Worship is about glorifying God**, about His Worth and focusing on that.
- **Worship is about your posture**- are you coming to God to kneel before Him or to kiss Him – a submissive posture?
- **Worship is not an activity confined to a Sunday** – your whole life is worship – but who are you worshipping? Who is glorified, who is enthroned in your life?

I want to end with this verse...

Revelation 22:8 *I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. 9 But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!"*

I want you to hear the simple command – **Worship God!** In other words, don't worship anything else. Don't angels, don't worship people, don't worship success, don't worship sex, don't worship money, don't worship people, don't worship anything but God! Worship God! This is the last chapter of the Bible, and this is the last duty of man: Worship God!

Let's pray and respond to God...