

## ***Worship: Responding to God***

### ***– as a living sacrifice –***

Psalm 95:1-7 - NCBC, September 24, 2017

Main Point: **Worship is a whole-person response to the revelation of God.**

- Responding to seeing God. (1, 3-5, 7)
  - Lord
  - Rock
  - Great God
  - Great King
  - Creator
  - Shepherd
- Responding *through* the sacrifice of Christ. (Heb. 10:19-22)
  - Via the blood and body of Jesus (19-20)
  - Via the priesthood of Jesus (21)
  - In the full assurance of faith (22)
- Responding *with* the sacrifice of my lips. (1-2)
  - Joyful Speaking
  - Joyful Singing
- Responding *with* the sacrifice of my life. (6)
  - Broken Surrender
  - Humble Submission

Application: **Respond in reverent awe to God's revelation.**  
(Heb. 12:28-29)

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### **Opening Announcements:**

Fall Festival Leadership Opportunity – Casting Vision

<<Give Us Clean Hands>>



Thank you for that prayer – that God who brought Himself glory through the clay feet of Jacob – could also purify our hearts and lives as well.

Today we begin a new 4-week sermon series on Biblical Worship – focused primarily on the mindset and manners of our worship together as an assembled congregation on Sunday mornings.

This morning we will be reading from **Psalm 95**.



So, if you don't have a Bible with you, please raise your hand as our men are coming to give you a Bible. You are welcome to take this Bible home as our gift to you, or just simply return it after our service by placing it on the table in the back of the room.

But while you're preparing for our Scripture reading from **Psalm 95**, I've asked Tom Felix to join me for a few moments to help introduce this series for us.



Over the last 2 years some of our elders and deacons have been meeting together with Tom to pray, study God's Word, and consider how we might be able to strengthen our church's worship together yet more for the glory of Christ.

And we've come to the united belief that it would be helpful and strategic for us to hire a worship pastor sometime next year as God would provide.

So Tom as you've faithfully served as our interim worship leader these last 4 or 5 years, what do you see as the biggest differences between a worship leader philosophy and a worship pastor philosophy?

*TOM: Well for me, the biggest difference is not so much what you see on Sunday mornings, but what you see during the week. Now we will have a full-time pastor on staff, as opposed to part-time worship leader who does most of their work at home, and who is not in the church day to day. This will give us a full-time pastor who is preaching, teaching, counseling, and shepherding the flock.*

That's right. This a worship pastor's ministry would not be limited to just our music ministries – but would add another vocational elder to our church family, and thereby really strengthen all the ministries of our church.

*TOM: Like you said, we've been studying and talking about this for the better part of 2 years– trying to determine God's direction, and how He wants us to pursue this. This is a big walk of faith – but we are doing all of this with God's glory in mind.*

Any change that could affect the church's music seems especially sensitive these days. How will this change from a worship leader to a worship pastor affect our philosophy of music at New Castle?

*TOM: I don't see any change to our philosophy of music in any way. Our style and the songs that we sing won't be any different. What will be different is that a different leader brings a different personality to the songs that we sing, but that's something that can be fun and joyful as we are led by a new personality together.*

Tom – one of the things that you've been a part of these last 2 years is writing out our philosophy of music, and so when we get ready to hire this new pastor – we will be hiring to this philosophy, not asking them to bring a new philosophy of music to our church.

*TOM: We're really close to finalizing this document, and then we're excited to share this as we believe it will be helpful to all of our understanding about why we do what we do in our worship together.*

Yes. And that's part of the motivation for this sermon series right now as well. Since our elders have targeted sometime in 2018 to start a pastoral search committee for this new hire, we want to make sure we're helping all of us catch the vision for where we are going, and why, in the meantime.

Tom, could you just share a bit with us about how you and Jennifer are thinking through this new vision personally? Obviously 5-years is a long time to be

serving as an interim, and you've been more than faithful with all that you've been asked to do. But when we started talking about this together, you shared that God wasn't calling you to become a worship pastor, and the new position wasn't going to be a good fit for your gifts. So can you just share a bit of your heart with us in regards to your future in this ministry?

*TOM: Well, first off, it's been an enormous blessing. I have loved being able to lead worship at New Castle, and I will continue to do that. I'm so blessed that God has given me the opportunity and ability to do that. It's been very unexpected – I said I would step in as an interim worship leader as long as was necessary – but who knew it would be five years, or however long it's going to be!*

*But I anticipate it being a joyful thing to have another partner to come alongside, someone that I can work alongside, to strengthen their ministry, in my desire to bring God's glory in His church.*

Well without a doubt you will be a tremendous help to our new worship pastor when he arrives – and to all of us as we continue to walk by faith down this path of transition over the next year together.

Any final words of exhortation to our church family as we enter into this season of expectation together?

*TOM: First of all, and most importantly – pray. Pray for us, pray for God's direction in this whole process. We are moving forward by faith, and we don't know exactly how long it's going to take, or how we are going to fund the whole thing... but we need prayer desperately.*

*Also, if you are confused or don't know what's happening – please ask questions. Ask any of us – Pastor Kevin, me, any of the elders – and we'll do our best to explain what's going on and answer your questions in the best of our ability.*

*And third. Be faithful. Be a faithful servant of Christ. Come to church. Be faithful to give. Worship with us and grow. And enjoy this current series – I'm excited about what God is going to teach us all through this study of our corporate worship together.*

Thank you Tom. I so appreciate you, and your partnership. You are dearly loved, and it's an exciting time to be part of New Castle Bible Church together.

<<TOM exists>>

We'll be sharing more details as the months progress, but now it's time we turn to God's Word and renew our minds with the glory of our great God.

Please stand with me in honor of God's Word as I read the first section of **Psalm 95**, from the **English Standard Translation**:

- <sup>1</sup> Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;  
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our  
salvation!
- <sup>2</sup> Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;  
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of  
praise!
- <sup>3</sup> For the LORD is a great God,

and a great King above all gods.

- <sup>4</sup> In his hand are the depths of the earth;  
the heights of the mountains are his also.
- <sup>5</sup> The sea is his, for he made it,  
and his hands formed the dry land.
- <sup>6</sup> Oh come, let us worship and bow down;  
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!
- <sup>7</sup> For he is our God,  
and we are the people of his pasture,  
and the sheep of his hand.

**This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.**

**Let's Pray.**

6 days before his death, we find Jesus reclining at a table alongside his dear friend Lazarus. Martha was serving the meal when suddenly her sister Mary emptied an entire bottle of expensive<sup>1</sup> perfume on the feet of her Master—and wiped off the excess with her hair.<sup>2</sup> As the fragrance of Mary's worship filled the room – nearly everyone judged her sacrifice. It was too costly. It was too showy. It was too emotional. It was too intimate.

Loved ones – no matter what other people say – what does your worship smell like to God?

By the mercies of God – according to **Romans 12:1**, are you presenting your entire life as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship?

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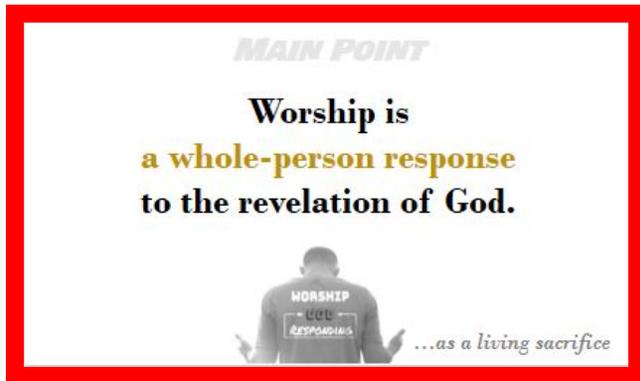
<sup>1</sup> 300 denarii equaled 10 months wages for a common laborer.

<sup>2</sup> John 12:1-8; c.f. Luke 10:38-42

During these 4 weeks, we will learn that true worship responds to God as a living sacrifice, by meeting together, with a joyful noise, under faithful leadership.

While this series is going to focus primarily on the corporate worship of the church together – today we first renew our minds with the definition of worship.

Worship is not just a Sunday morning event. Worship is not just what the church does with music. Worship is not a role.

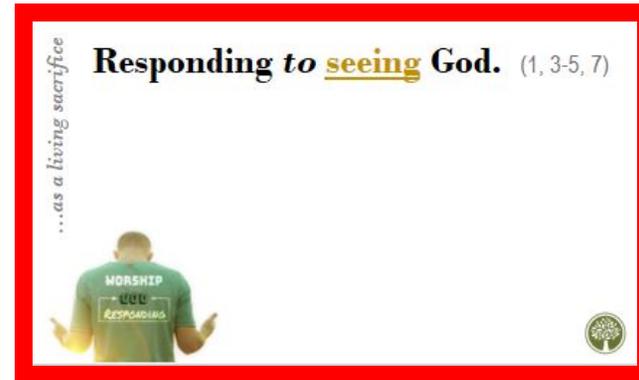


Worship is a whole-person response to the revelation of God.

True worship is the reaction someone has whenever they have a personal encounter with the true and living God.

True worship can't be manufactured or forced. It is a whole-person, sacrificial response to beholding the glory of God.

So, **Psalm 95** not only tells us how to worship God as a living sacrifice, but calls us to worship Him...



Responding in our worship *to seeing* God. (1, 3-5, 7)

Notice all the ways the psalmist helps us to see God in these first 7 verses:



First – three different times the psalmist calls God by His name, *Yahweh*. Translated **LORD** in all caps in our English Bibles.

This Name of God declares that our God exists forever throughout eternity, as the great covenant-keeping God. At the end of **verse 1**, God is pictured as *the Rock of our salvation*. Our Deliverer who alone can bring waters of refreshment to our souls in the midst of our dry wildernesses.<sup>3</sup>

In **verse 3** the psalm renews our vision of our **Great God** – who is a **Great King** above all other gods. **Verses 4-5** describe the creative works of our God – calling Him our Maker at the end of **verse 6**. Gaze at your **Creator**, and in **verse 7** – see your good **Shepherd** – for all who trust in Him are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.

So let's get this straight right out of the gate. True worship is not about me, my consumer-mindedness, or my spiritual self-improvement. God-centered worship is always a response to who God is – and how He has revealed Himself to us through His Word.

Worship is all of me sacrificially responding to all that God is and all that He has done.

So whether I'm seeking to worship God in the privacy of my prayer closet, or in the public assembly of the redeemed – my desire is to see God more clearly, encounter Him more personally, and revere Him more passionately.

The compass directing all my worship is the Word of God – for how could I better know God than through His written self-revelation?

The compulsion for my worship is the Spirit of Truth – who guides me deeper into knowing God through the revelation of Jesus Christ in Holy Scripture.

Very practically speaking then, since all true worship responds to the revelation of God – this is why we seek to minimize the abundance of announcements or “business” issues in our church services together. We understand the primary reason we gather together is to worship God – and while we don't entirely exclude all horizontal aspects of our life together in our worship, we prioritize this vertical orientation, and aim as much as possible to infuse our worship with Biblical content. Because no one can truly see God in all His glory and not respond in real worship.

But here we must insert an idea that **Psalm 95** doesn't explicitly deal with.

Because our God is an all-consuming fire of radiant holiness and pure perfection. And every one of our hearts is corrupted with sin. Sin that justly requires penalty and judgment from such a holy Maker as our great God.

And that's why there is no real worship that honors God today unless it is responding to seeing God,

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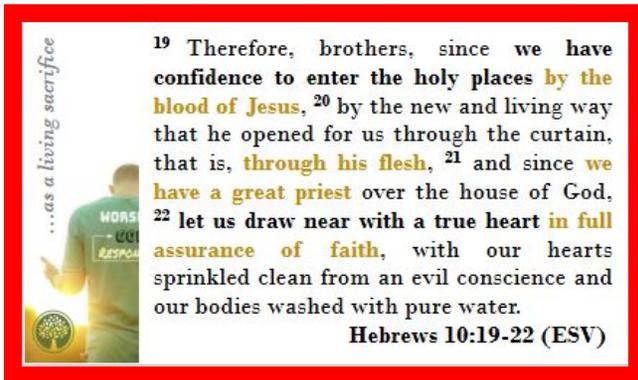
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through the sacrifice of Christ. (Heb. 10:19-22)

Without faith it is impossible to please God,<sup>4</sup> and so the only way we can draw near to God in real worship is by beholding the glory of God *through* the face of Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup>

We see this clearly taught in **Hebrews chapter 10, verses 19-22:**



*19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

We can only draw near to God with a true heart of worship,



Via the blood and body of Jesus (19-20)

Jesus opened the way for us to know God intimately and personally by shedding His blood and breaking His body – to pay the penalty that our sins deserved. You don't have to be in a particular location anymore to be able to worship God. Your audience with the King is now located miraculously in your faith union with Jesus Christ.

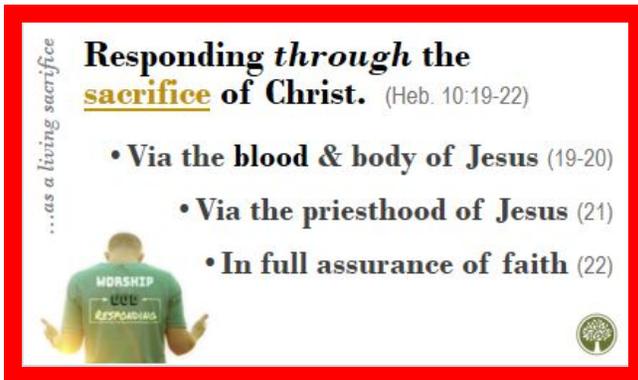
<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 11:6

<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:4-6



You respond to God's goodness through the sacrifice of Christ, **Via His priesthood (21)**. The church leader is not your priest. Only Jesus can lead us into the throne room of God.

Through the sacrifice of Christ, a sinner like me and you can worship,



**In the full assurance of faith (22)**, confident that God accepts us and cleanses us from all uncleanness.

Now think about the practical implications of this every time you come to worship God – either publicly or privately.

Only those who are saved can offer acceptable worship to God. No one can come to the Father, except through Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup> God will not be worshipped with the “strange fire” of self-reliance.<sup>7</sup>

So then, ever since the first church started meeting on the Lord's Day,<sup>8</sup> their Sunday mornings were not primarily about evangelism – but worship. Unbelievers are always invited, and can certainly benefit from observing our worship of Jesus Christ,<sup>9</sup> but we haven't designed the meeting for them. And apart from faith in Christ, they can't worship in a manner that is pleasing to God.

No matter how skilled an unbelieving musician or vocalist may be, they are unable to lead the congregation in true worship. These biblical truths helpfully guard our good-intentions from some the pragmatism of the seeker-church models.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> John 14:6

<sup>7</sup> Leviticus 10:1ff

<sup>8</sup> Remember the Jews meet in their synagogues on the Sabbath – Saturdays. So we observe the early church doing evangelism on Saturdays (Acts 14:1; 17:2; 18:4ff, 26-28; 19:8-10), and worshipping together on Sundays (Acts 2:1, 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1; Revelation 1:9), along with other days of the week as well (Acts 2:46).

<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:24-25

<sup>10</sup> <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/justintaylor/2007/10/18/willow-creek-repents/>; <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2007/october-online-only/willow-creek-repents.html>

So true worship only responds to the revelation of God. And it responds *through* the sacrifice of Christ. Now back in **Psalm 95**, we learn that a lifestyle of worship,



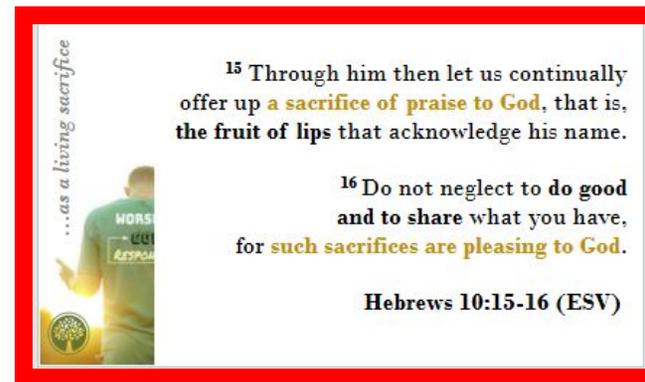
Responds *with* the sacrifice of my lips. (1-2)

Our third sermon in this series will focus entirely on this aspect of worship, but for now just observe that **verse 1** commands us to *Sing to the Lord*, and *make a joyful noise*. **Verse 2** repeats this couplet in a chiasmic reversal – *make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise*.



So lips are necessarily animated whenever the heart sees the glory of God through the face of Jesus Christ. **Joyful Speaking and Joyful Singing** are the fruit of lips that acknowledge who God is.

In fact, that is the phrase used in **Hebrews 10:15** to describe the sacrificial lifestyle of worship of the New Testament believer:



*Through Jesus then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.*

**Psalm 95:2** places the vocal emphasis of worship upon thanksgiving. Truly, giving thanks is quite synonymous with the biblical understanding of worship.

For to give thanks is to sacrifice one's proud self-reliance, and give credit to another. Worship thankfully responds to the supremacy and sufficiency of God. And how can

your eyes take in such glory without desiring 1,000 tongues to proclaim His praise?<sup>11</sup>

This truth is why the church's worship includes everyone – not just those with the most talented voices. Because everyone who has been saved, has been given a testimony to tell, and a song to sing.

One more practical implication here – note that **Psalm 95** makes it clear that true worship should be accompanied by authentic emotion in all its inward and outward expressions. Stoic worship of God is a biblical impossibility. Our worship must always respond in an emotionally consistent manner to the revelation of God we are seeing.

But the heart of true worship not only responds with the sacrifice of lips, but a conscious sacrifice of the entire,



life. (6)

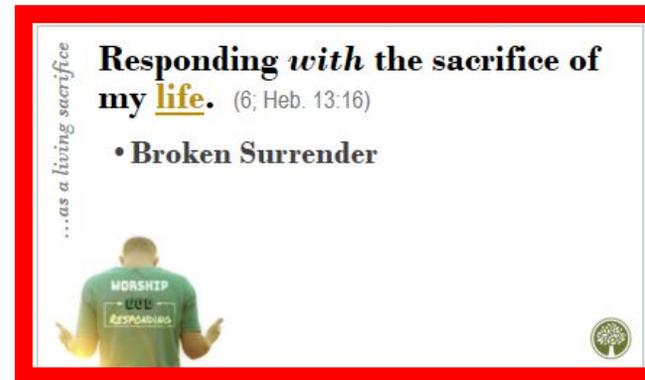
Look back at **verse 6 of Psalm 95**:

<sup>11</sup> C.f. the classic hymn titled, *O For a Thousand Tongues*

*Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker.*

Those three commands helpfully summarize the response God desires from His children whenever they come into His presence: worship, bow down, kneel.

These are all postures of,



Broken Surrender

In the Hebrew, the word “worship” literally means to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to lift up one’s hands and then hit the deck in complete surrender and



### Humble Submission.

Throughout Scripture, whenever someone gained a vision of the glory of God – they always fell flat on their face. Take heed dear sinner. There will be no arguing or defense that you will be able to give on that day when you awake from death’s slumber and find yourself in the very presence of your supreme Maker!

In other words, all your self-will and self-reliance must be sacrificed on the altar of true worship. In Christ – you no longer need to bring a lamb to gain an audience with your God. But there’s still an altar called the cross, and there’s still a sacrifice called worship.

True worship never postures for a human audience – but humbly cries out, “God, be merciful to me the sinner!”<sup>12</sup> And then, because of the sufficient provisions of Christ’s sacrifice, true worship combusts in a progressive pursuit of holiness,<sup>13</sup> obedience,<sup>14</sup> repentance,<sup>15</sup> and love.<sup>16</sup>

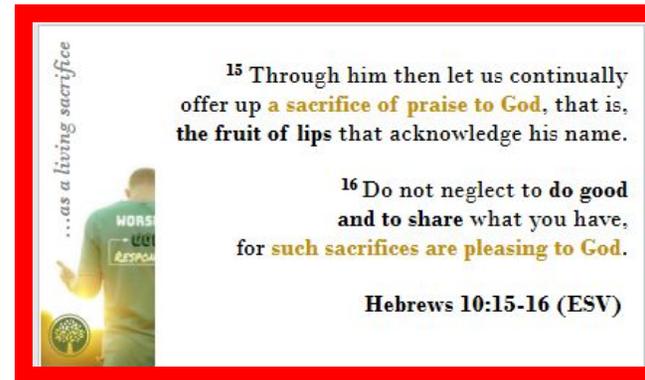
<sup>12</sup> Luke 18:13

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 15

<sup>14</sup> Romans 12:2

Because don’t miss this – true worship always changes you – for when you see more of God’s glory, you become more and more like Him – transformed through the renewing of your mind from one level of glory to another.<sup>17</sup>

No wonder **Hebrews 10** goes on to say,



*Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*

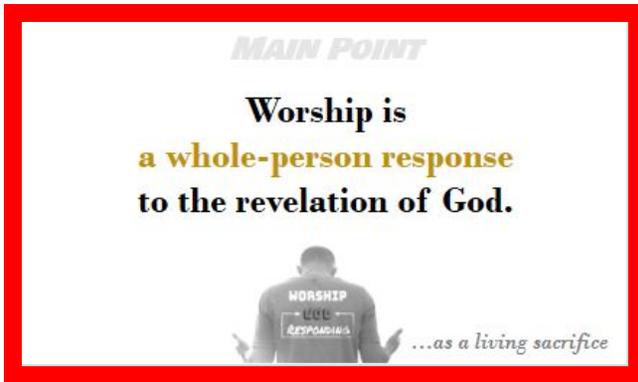
Worship is a lifestyle, not an event. Worship is repentance, not perfection. Worship is responding to the goodness of God – not requiring others to serve my own preferences.

In short,

<sup>15</sup> Psalm 24:3-6

<sup>16</sup> Hebrews 2:11-13

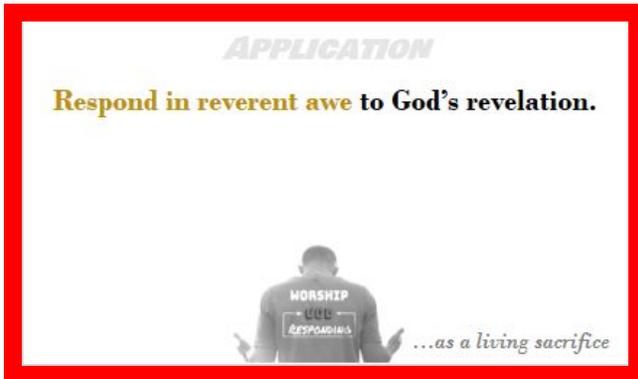
<sup>17</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:18



Worship is a whole-person response to the revelation of God.

So then, what does this mean for us today in this local assembly of believers?

Well first, I join the Psalmist in calling you to,

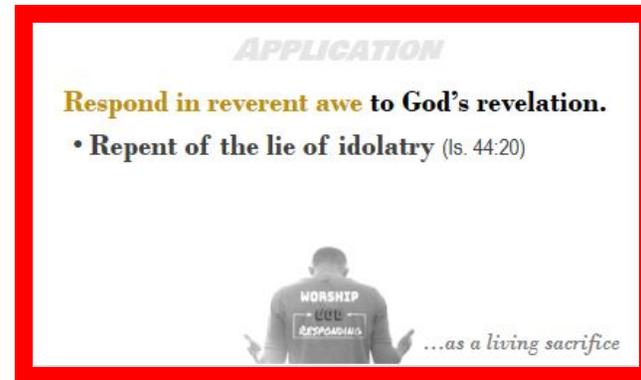


Respond in reverent awe to God's revelation. (Heb. 12:28-29)

**Hebrews 12:28** says with thanksgiving, *let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.*

Loved ones – the greatest problem with our worship as a church family is not how long the sermon goes, or how slow the song is sung, or whether we have a choir or not. The greatest problem with our worship is idolatry.

We turn our eyes to worthless things – and then respond believing that the lie will somehow satisfy us.

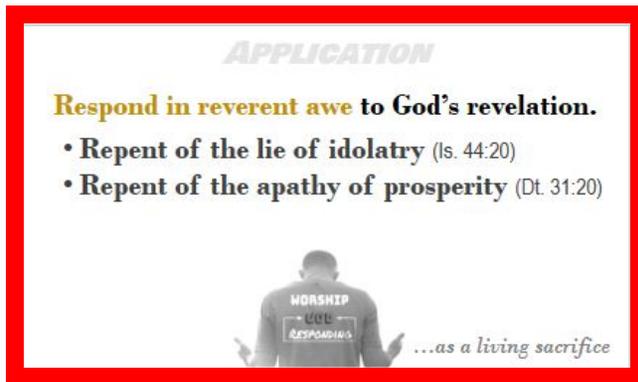


Loved ones, **Repent of the lie of idolatry (Is 44:20).**

If you harden your heart, you will have the deluded heart of **Isaiah 44:20** – and you will not be able to discern that you are trusting your life to a lie.

Jesus taught in **John 4** that we must worship in spirit and in truth. Don't believe that any of this world's glitter is able to satisfy your heart's desire. You were made to worship God – so worship in truth, and sacrifice your idols on the altar of broken submission to God's Word.

And then,



Repent of the apathy of prosperity (Dt. 31:20)

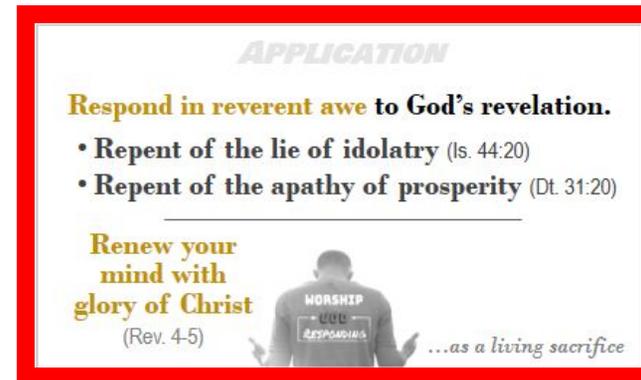
We are such an apathetic (and pathetically immature) people who desire to be entertained in our riches. We despise costly worship – we only give out of our abundance. In all our educated sophistication - we've made God into our own image, and treated Him more like a therapist than our LORD.

God told Moses in **Deuteronomy 31:20** – that the human heart has this idolatrous tendency to worship the gifts, more than the giver. When riches increase, and our hearts grow fat, we turn to other gods and serve them.

You must worship in spirit and in truth. With all of you – no reserves.

What are you holding something back in your worship of God? Is God asking you to give Him something? Are you holding onto your Isaac and refusing to worship with

Abraham on Mt. Moriah?<sup>18</sup> Repent dear child of God. Our God is better than those lies that you've been listening to!



Renew your mind with the glory of Christ (Rev 4-5).

Saturate your thinking with the throne room glory of **Revelation 4-5**. There is no finer picture of true worship in all the Scripture! See Christ lifted up, exalted on His throne. Join the 24 elders – representing all the church, and the 4 beasts – representing all creation – and cast all your crowns before the feet of the One who alone is worthy of glory and honor and power and might and blessing!

And then from **verse 7 in Psalm 95** – I exhort you as children of God to,

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<sup>18</sup> Genesis 22

**APPLICATION**

**Respond in reverent awe to God's revelation.**

- Repent of the lie of idolatry (Is. 44:20)
- Repent of the apathy of prosperity (Dt. 31:20)

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**Renew your mind with glory of Christ**  
(Rev. 4-5)



**Rest in your gospel identity**  
(Ps. 95:7)  
*...as a living sacrifice*

**Rest in your gospel identity (Ps 95:7)**

For our worship testifies that we are not God. God never is the grammatical subject of worship in the Scripture. He's always the object.

*For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.*

So rest in your gospel identity – as a living sacrifice of life and lips, through Jesus Christ in response to all that God is and all that He's done.

**Worship**  
*RESPONDING TO GOD*

*...as a living sacrifice*

*...by meeting together*

*...with a joyful noise*

*...under faithful leadership*

**Psalm 95:1-7**



**Let's pray.**

<Crown Him with Many Crowns>

Let's pray our Benediction now as we are dismissed,

**Benediction**

**BENEDICTION**

*...as a living sacrifice*



**12** ...“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

**13** ... “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

**Revelation 5:12-13 (ESV)**

*12* ...“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” <sup>13</sup> ... “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” **Revelation 5:12-13**

**Recommended Resources on Worship – as a living sacrifice:**

- Deuteronomy 31:20
- 1 Samuel 16:9
- 2 Chronicles 16:9
- Psalm 15; 24:3-6; 27:4; 29:2; 84:10; 122:1
- Ecclesiastes 5:1-2
- Isaiah 44:9-20

- Ezekiel 33:30-33
- Matthew 5:23-24; 15:7-8
- Luke 10:38-42
- John 4:24; 12:2-7
- Romans 12:1-2
- Ephesians 5:19
- Philippians 3:3
- Hebrews 7:25; 10:19-25; 12:28-29; 13:15-16
- Revelation 4:9-11; 5:7-14; 7:11



- Bob Kauflin: “The Heart and Mind of Worship” - <https://vimeo.com/218645993>
- <http://www.desiringgod.org/topics/life-of-worship/labs>
- [https://drbarrick.org/files/studynotes/Psalms/Ps\\_095.pdf](https://drbarrick.org/files/studynotes/Psalms/Ps_095.pdf)
- *True Worshipers*, Bob Kauflin
- *Worship Matters*, Bob Kauflin
- *Worship – The Ultimate Priority*, John MacArthur
- *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, Allen Ross

5. Read 1 John 5:21. What is the greatest specific threat to your personal worship of God? How can you change and grow in the grace of Christ towards a more whole-person response to the revelation of God?

### **Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions**

1. Read Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 and Ezekiel 33:30-33. What mindsets are appropriate to bring to your worship of God? How can we guard against routine in our worship?
2. Read Psalm 24:3-6, and then Hebrews 10:19-25. What qualifies you to be in the presence of God, and not be consumed by His blazing holiness?
3. Read Hebrews 13:15-16 and Romans 12:1-2. What sacrifices are required in our worship of God? How does this sacrificial work prevent boredom in worship? Is your worship cheap?
4. Read Deuteronomy 31:20 and Matthew 19:23. Are there any ways that your prosperity is hindering your worship of God? What lies does prosperity whisper to lead your heart into idolatry?