

We are beginning here a new lesson in our current course on Spiritual Exercises. This lesson will focus on the spiritual exercise of WORSHIP. Along with all the other spiritual exercises we have been exploring, **the spiritual exercise of worship is one of the most essential and prominent spiritual exercises that we practice in our relationship and walk with God.**

Again ... what is a ‘Spiritual Exercise’?

As we have done with previous spiritual exercises, let’s just rehearse and remind ourselves of what a spiritual exercise is:

- A spiritual exercise is any one of those activities or exercises that we practice and perform as a lifestyle to follow Jesus Christ, obey Jesus Christ, serve Jesus Christ, and become more like Jesus Christ – which is always our ultimate purpose and aim.
- A spiritual exercise is any one of those activities that we practice that express and live out the lifestyle of truly being a Christian, a born-again child of God, and a transformed believer in Christ.
- Spiritual exercises are those same activities and exercises that are sometimes also called ‘spiritual disciplines,’ ‘holy habits,’ or ‘habits of grace.’

And so, let’s be clear here again: we’re not just talking about rote rituals, legalistic rules you make for yourself or to impose on someone else, nor are they merely traditions of our faith community. We are talking about those activities that express our living, loving, lasting relationship and fellowship with God through our saving faith in Jesus Christ. They are the life, the breath, and the spirit of our eternal-life relationship with God.

That brings us to the spiritual exercise of WORSHIP...

So, then – that brings us to the spiritual exercise of WORSHIP. We hardly know where to begin to even start talking about worship and how we should practice it. The spiritual exercise of worship is literally woven all throughout the warp and woof of Scripture revelation and the experiences of God’s people as they exercise their relationship with Him.

The beginnings of worship revealed in Scripture

We could even say that Adam and Eve worshiped God just through their daily interactions with God as they served Him in the Garden of Eden before their fall into sin. Worship was certainly what they were doing when they offered to God the first animal sacrifice that God prescribed and provided for their atonement after their fall into sin.

It very well may be that when we read in Genesis 4.26:

“To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. *At that time people began to call upon the Name of the LORD*”

...it may be describing the first gatherings and congregating of fellow-worshipers to worship God together – to confess, celebrate, and exercise their common faith in God.

Jesus on worship

You will also recall that our Lord Jesus Christ summarized the whole duty of man and the experience of God’s people in His response to Satan’s temptations in the wilderness in Matthew 4.10. In this temptation, Satan had taken Jesus to the pinnacle of a very high mountain

“and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.”’”

Jesus here is paraphrasing one of the supreme commandments of God in Deuteronomy 6.13-14:

“It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by His Name you shall swear. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the people who are around you...”

We must note here: not only is this summary commandment to worship God and Him only given to us by Jesus’ own Divine Authority, but in this commandment, Jesus reiterates and re-affirms that the worship of God is our supreme duty, and that the worship of God includes in some way every expression of our lives. The worship of God is how we exercise and live out the most supreme commandment of all:

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” [Deuteronomy 6.5].

In Jesus' response to Satan in Matthew 4.10, and by quoting from Deuteronomy 6, He is equating loving the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and might with worshiping God and serving Him only! Loving the LORD your God with all your heart and worshiping and serving Him only is the same exercise!

Worship in the Book of Revelation

Then certainly the spiritual exercise of worship is highlighted all throughout the Book of The Revelation. The worship of God is the lifestyle and unceasing exercise that is prominently and repeatedly highlighted and referenced all throughout the Book of Revelation.

- You'll read and sing their songs of worship in Revelation 4 and 5.
- You'll read in Revelation 7.15: "Therefore they are before the Throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple..." [By the way, one of the lessons we will learn as we go along is that 'worship' is not the only specific word that describes the spiritual exercise of worship; worship is also expressed in words like 'praise,' 'sing,' 'bless,' 'hallelujah,' 'glory in,' 'give thanks,' 'fear,' and 'serve' as here in Revelation 7.15 ... and there are others also that we will point out as we go along.]
- The Book of Revelation, and indeed the whole revelation of Scripture ends in chapter 22.8-9 as John fell down to worship the angel who showed him the visions of Jesus' glory that he wrote down for us:

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. When I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had shown them to me. ⁹But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow slave with you, your brothers the prophets, and those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." HCSB

And so, that exhortation to "Worship God" can sum up the whole activity of all our spiritual exercises. We are created to worship God. We are redeemed to worship God. We live to worship God. Every activity and exercise of our lives should be to worship God.

The more focused expressions of our worship

But what we will focus on in this lesson is the more focused expressions of worship that we exercise, specifically:

- Whom we worship
- how we worship [the exercises and expressions of our worship]

- why we worship.

Let's begin in the Book of the Psalms

So, since we need to begin somewhere, let's begin in the Book of the Psalms. We all know that the Psalms were inspired by the Holy Spirit and given to the authors of the Psalms to give us guidance and directions for how we exercise and express our worship of God. When they were first written and delivered to the first recipients, it was for them to use in their services of worship.

For example, we read in 1 Chronicles 16.7, that when King David first wrote the words to the psalm we know as Psalm 105, he delivered it into the hands of Asaph. Asaph led the worship of God in the special tent that David had erected for their worship services:

On that day David first delivered *this psalm* into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to thank the LORD: [NKJV]

Let's begin in Psalm 95

So, let's begin our study of worship from the Book of the Psalms in Psalm 95. Please have your Bible open to Psalm 95 as we go through this lesson. We want to learn some of how we should worship from the words of this psalm. As we read this Psalm, it will impress you with the importance and relevance of worship...

Let's read Psalm 95 together:

1 Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;
 let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation!
2 Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving;
 let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!
3 For the LORD is a great God,
 and a great King above all gods.
4 In His hand are the depths of the earth;
 the heights of the mountains are His also.
5 The sea is His, for He made it,
 and His hands formed the dry land.
6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
 let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!
7 For He is our God,
 and we are the people of His pasture,

and the sheep of His hand.

Today, if you hear His voice,

⁸ do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah [or ‘rebellion’],
as on the day at Massah [or ‘testing’] in the wilderness,
[see Exodus 17.1-7; Numbers 20.1-13]

⁹ when your fathers put me to the test

and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.

¹⁰ For forty years I loathed that generation

and said, “They are a people who go astray in their heart,
and they have not known my ways.”

¹¹ Therefore I swore in my wrath,

“They shall not enter my rest.”

In this part of our lesson, we’re not going to get into the historical backgrounds of the second movement of this Psalm – how they rebelled against and tested God in the wilderness. Rather, we will focus on the first part of the Psalm, verses 1-7.

The Call To Worship

The focus of this Part 1 of this lesson on the spiritual exercise of WORSHIP is just to emphasize **The Call to Worship**. This psalm begins with **the call to worship**:

- verses 1 and 2: Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation! ² Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!
- and again in verse 6: Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

What do we learn about The Call To Worship from the words of this Psalm?

I want us all to note, first of all:

[1] The call to worship comes from God Himself! I know that the psalmist is speaking to us in his own voice “Oh come!”, but we have to know that the psalmist is only echoing the voice of the LORD Himself! In fact, as the second part of the Psalm begins, the psalmist calls on us to hear the voice of God Himself: “Today, if you hear His voice...”! We just need to make sure we don’t respond to God’s voice like they did in the historical context that the psalmist warns us against!

God calls us to worship Him! This call to worship is God's own personal invitation [and command] to come into His very Presence bringing our personal expressions of worship to give to Him! "Let us come into His Presence with thanksgiving!"

When I was pastoring and leading worship services, I would always open the service with these first words: "Welcome to the Presence of God and the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ." I wanted us all to know that God had called us together to worship Him, and that we were in the very Presence of God. Yes, we were in each other's presence, but more than that, we were in the Presence of God. We had scheduled and called the worship service, but we had done so in response to the call of God Himself.

Invariably and repeatedly, when we read in the Scriptures about our gatherings for worship, it is always "before the LORD." "Before the LORD" means "in the Presence of the LORD." When we come and gather together with other worshipers "before the LORD," God Himself is there! When you answer the call to come to worship, your first awareness and impression must be "GOD IS HERE, AND HE IS CALLING ME TO WORSHIP HIM!"

There is an awesomeness of the real and personal Presence of God that must capture and command our spirits when we come together for worship. We'll talk more about that in another part of this lesson, but the Presence of God must be the commanding ambience and environment of all our worship exercises.

Next, we need to note that:

[2] The call to worship comes from each other ... and to each other. We call, and invite, and welcome one another to worship.

- Oh come, **let us** sing to the LORD
- **let us** make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation!
- ²**Let us** come into His presence with thanksgiving;
- **let us** make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!
- ⁶Oh come, **let us** worship and bow down;
- **let us** kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

When we gather for worship, we are encouraged and blessed to see one another, but we all recognize that we don't worship God together for others to see or hear us. We are only

God's fellow-invites and fellow-callers to worship Him! As we worship together, we are pointing in unison to Him.

We are all familiar with Psalm 122.1. We often quote it. But listen to David's emphasis on Who we are mutually inviting each other to worship!

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" You hear it and see it, don't you?! "Oh come, come along with me, let us together go to 'the house of the LORD'!" We are calling each other, inviting one another, encouraging one another – but we are together going to be in God's house, in His Presence to worship Him!

Here's another observation we make about our worship just from the words of Psalm 95:
[3] We respond to God's call to worship with our expressions. How many expressions of our worship can you find in Psalm 95.1-7?

What do these words mean and how do we do them ... as expressions of our worship?

"Oh come!" Does it every impress you that our very coming to worship is worship? When we come to worship, we are doing so intentionally and deliberately. When we come to worship, we are declaring our intention and purpose – to recognize the greatness and worthiness of God of our worship. We are calling attention to God's supreme worthiness by our worship. When we come to worship, we are announcing our identity – we are worshippers of God! God has called us to worship Him and given us a Divinely-designated place to express our worship of Him! We are coming in response to His call to worship!

For years now, I have quit saying "I am going to church." What I say is "I am going to worship!" because that is what I am going to do where I am going. Merely "going to church" can be just a habit-thing or a tradition-thing. But "going to worship" is an intentional purpose for my going there. Worship is the activity I will engage in when I go to a church service. And, as we drive from home to our place of worship, there is a sense of awe and joy that comes over me as we come in sight of our church building, and as we pull into the parking lot, and especially as we enter the sanctuary. I know it's just a building, and the sanctuary is just a room – but it is where God has promised to meet with us as we worship Him! I am coming to worship God!

Also, when I'm talking to someone, especially to a fellow believer, if we're getting acquainted with one another and finding out more about one another, I won't ask him [or her] "where do you attend church?" or even "what church are you a member of?" Instead, I will ask "where do you worship and serve?" Because that is what we are called to do in the church we attend or are members of.

"Let us sing to the LORD!" Singing is one of the Divinely-prescribed exercises of our worship. It is certainly not the only exercise of our worship, but it is an essential exercise. Our worship in song has these characteristics:

- it is personal: that is, each of us offers our own personal song and singing from our own hearts and spirits
- it is corporate: by that, I mean that our singing is offered in worship as a body of believers and worshippers
- it is in unison: we worship God in our singing together, in unity, and at the same time and in the same exercise
- it is spiritual: meaning that our singing is not just our exercise of talent or ritual, but our singing is our response to God and interaction with God Himself in the Holy Spirit. Listen to how Paul instructs us how we are to sing: "...but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart..." [Ephesians 5.18-19]
- it is physical: meaning that we sing using our physical voices
- it is vocal: we are not just thinking and meditating in our minds; we are actually voicing our worship and praises about God – and to God!

"Let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation!" This is another expression of our physical and vocal worship of God with sounds! Except that our 'joyful noises [or sounds]' are being sung to God as the Rock of our salvation and in His very Presence! Worship is a celebration! It is not just a dutiful obligation, but a joyful celebration to our God for being "the Rock of our salvation" – for being so loving and strong to save us!

"Let us come into His Presence with thanksgiving!" We are reminded again that our singing and worship is in His very Presence! Our 'thanksgiving' is our expression that we are recognizing that God is the God we are worshiping and we owe all of our praises to Him!

“Let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!” Again, all of our vocal songs and praises are ‘to Him’ and we are worshiping and praising Him! And our hearts and voices are full of joy as we recognize His Holiness, His mercies, and His grace. Just a few psalms ahead of where we are now is Psalm 100:

“Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! Serve the LORD with gladness!
Come into His Presence with singing!”

The worship of the LORD should be our ‘happy place’!

“Let us worship and bow down!” Our bowing down may be physical on occasions, but always our spirits are in the prostrate position before God in humility and gratitude.

“Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker!” Again – our kneeling and bowing down – whether in body or spirit – are expressions of our awe, adoration, and deference to God!

These expressions must be our constant attitudes in the Presence of God and must characterize all our exercises of worship!

And finally – for now...

[4] God’s Call To Worship recognizes and responds to our dual relationship to God.
Again, I’m going to ask you to pay attention to the psalmist’s words and how he expresses our relationships with God in our worship.

Let me point out two movements in verses 1-7. Both of these movements start out with The Call To Worship: “Oh come...!” And then both of these movements will give us a reason why we should come and worship God. You’ll find these two reasons in the word “for” [or “because”] in verses 3 and 7. Look for the relationship God has given us to inspire our worship of Him...

God calls us to worship Him because He is our Creator, verses 1-5

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation!

²Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!

³For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.

⁴In His hand are the depths of the earth;

the heights of the mountains are His also.
⁵The sea is His, for He made it,
and His hands formed the dry land.

Do you see that? We worship God “for” or “because” the LORD is great God, and a great King above all gods. And He is this great God and a great King above all gods “for” or because He created all the things that are! He not only created all things, but He owns, controls, and governs all things. The phrase that the psalmist uses is “His hands.” “**In His hand are** the depths of the earth, the heights of the mountains **are His also**. The sea **is His, for He made it, and His hands formed** the dry land.” Every molecule and every atom of every element that is in the physical creation was created by His hands and remains in His hands.

We, too, are the creations of His hands. He made us. He is God, the Creator, of all the elements that are in the world in which we live. When we worship Him, we are recognizing that, and confessing Him as Creator of all things, and giving Him His due praise and glory! God created every element and every creature of His universe for this express purpose: to worship Him!

This theme is expressed all throughout Scripture and especially here in the Psalms.

But, more than that even – **God calls us to worship Him because He is our Redeemer and Savior, verses 6-7.** Read and listen to this “for” or another reason why we worship Him!

⁶Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

⁷**For** He is our God,
and we are the people of His pasture,
and the sheep of His hand.

He is not only “a great God, and a great King above all gods” as in verse 3, but here in verse 7, it is personalized to us – He gives Himself to us to be our God.

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

Notice the more personal and intimate relationship between God and us. Not only is He our Maker in the sense that He created us, but “for He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand”!

This reminds us of the covenant promise that Yahweh has made with us: “I will be your God and you shall be my people!”

In Exodus 6.7, when God first brought Israel out of Egypt, He covenanted, promised, and committed to them:

“I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I AM the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”

When God promises to establish His New Covenant with us through the Gospel of the blood of Jesus Christ, He reiterates and re-affirms “And you shall be my people, and I will be your God” as in Jeremiah 30.22.

This means that when we respond to God’s call to worship Him, we are confessing and celebrating “for He is our God!” in every sense of that word! God takes us to be His loved and treasured possession, and at the same time, He gives Himself to us as our loved and treasured possession! God says to us, “I have redeemed you to be my loved people and sheep – and I am giving Myself to you to be your God! WORSHIP ME!!!”

Also, God draws our attention again to His ‘hand’ that not only saves and secures us, but also provides everything needful for our lives!

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

Just like His hand holds the seas and the heights of the mountains – just like His hands made the sea and formed the dry land, so also His hand is stretched out to us as His people and sheep to save us, to redeem us, to protect us, to secure us, to love on us, and to give us every single provision we will ever need! “All I have needed, Thy hand hath provided – great is Thy faithfulness, O Lord, to me!”

Isaiah 43.1-3

But now thus says the LORD,
He who created you, O Jacob,

He who formed you, O Israel:
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
3 For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”

So, “O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker!
For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand!”

This is **God’s Call To Worship.**

“O come! Let us worship!”

HERE IS THE YOUTUBE VIDEO FOR THIS LESSON:

https://youtu.be/P9I_zcNMgDI