

The 5 Traits Of Highly Effective Christians
Worship From The Heart

Effective communication is one of the toughest things on the planet. My wife Sandy and I know each other pretty well. We've been married for 36 years now. But I can't tell you how many times we'll be having a conversation about something and in the middle of it one of us will say something like, "Oh, now I get it. I thought you were talking about..." and what we thought is usually not even close to what the other person meant.

Communication, in our own language, with people we know can be difficult. Now what do you suppose happens when try to communicate with words that may be a bit foreign to us?

Here's some examples of signs that people in various countries posted for English speaking tourists.

Cocktail lounge, Norway:

Ladies are requested not to have children in the bar.

Doctors office, Rome:

Specialist in women and other diseases.

Information booklet about using a hotel air conditioner, Japan:

Cooler and heater: if you want condition of warm air in your room, please control yourself.

Car rental brochure, Tokyo:

When passenger of foot heave in sight, tootle the horn. trumpet him melodiously at first, but if he still obstacles your passage then tootle him with vigour.

In a cemetery

Persons are prohibited from picking flowers from any but their own graves.

Hotel lobby, Bucharest:

The lift is being fixed for the next day. during that time we regret that you will be unbearable.

Hotel, Paris:

Please leave your values at the front desk.

Hotel, Yugoslavia:

The flattening of underwear with pleasure is the job of the chambermaid.

In the lobby of a Moscow hotel across from a Russian Orthodox monastery:

You are welcome to visit the cemetery where famous russian and soviet composers, artists, and writers are buried daily except thursday.

An advertisement by a Hong Kong dentist:

Teeth extracted by the latest methodists.

Airline ticket office, Copenhagen:

We take your bags and send them in all directions.

Communication is all the harder when we're dealing with an unfamiliar language. We need to be so careful to get it straight.

One of those places where we need to be especially careful is when we're trying to understand the Bible. Sometimes we think we know what words mean but many times we can give them definitions of our own instead of really understanding what they mean.

The other day I was having lunch with a Jewish man and we were talking about John the Baptist. John was a forerunner of Jesus and He baptized people who said they repented of their sins and wanted to get ready for the kingdom of God.

Everything about John the Baptist and what he was doing was Jewish.

But what was confusing was the word "baptism." You don't use the word "baptism" in Judaism, only in Christianity.

When we were able to use the word "mikvah," which is a ritual purification which he had gone through with his 2 adopted children to bring them into Judaism, he got in the pool and immersed them, he understood immediately what John was doing. The hold up was the word "baptism."

I believe the same things true for us and a word like "worship."

We're in week 2 of a series we're calling *The 5 Traits Of Highly Effective Christians*.

In these 5 weeks we're looking at those traits, or characteristics, of Christians who are really successful at living out their Christianity. These are qualities that you'll find in people who take their faith seriously and have a consistent lifestyle that reflects God and His principles.

Today we want to look into *Worship from the Heart*.

Worship to one person is singing songs in church before the message. To some one else it's bowing or kneeling. To another person it might be reciting a liturgy.

What is real worship? If worship is a trait of a highly effective Christian, and we want to be one, then it's critically important that we understand what worship is.

As we begin this morning let me give you a definition of worship that we've used in the past. This one's from Louie Giglio. It is excellent.

Worship is our response, both personal and corporate, to God for who He is and what He has done, expressed in and by the things we say and the way we live.

Our English word "worship" has its origin in old English. The original was "weorthscipe." In other words you're ascribing the worthiness of an individual to receive special honor in accordance with that worth.

The New Testament uses the word "worship" 73 times. The most common word translated "worship" is *proskuneo*. *Pros* means "toward" and *kuneo* is the verb "to kiss."

So *proskuneo* literally means "to kiss toward," or to show honor and reverence.

According to the Bible God is our Creator, our Master, and our Savior. If any one deserves to be honored and revered, if any one is worthy, it's Him. If you think about it, worship is really just giving God His due. It's honoring God as God.

Now you can see if you define worship that way it's a whole lot more than singing songs. Songs are good. Music and singing are expressions of our heart. But if we limit worship to singing we're only getting part of the picture.

So let's use Louie Giglio's definition of worship, *worship is our response, both personal and corporate, to God for who He is and what He has done, expressed in and by the things we say and the way we live*. Let's dissect that.

I. Worship Is Both Personal And Corporate

Here's what we mean. **Turn to Romans 12 page 1008**

Romans 11 is all about God's faithfulness to His promises. It concludes with this great

doxology: *For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

Now look at 12:1 **Read vs 1a**

"I beseech you therefore..." "I challenge you therefore," in other words "my urging is on the basis of what just been said." God is amazing. His mercy and faithfulness can't be quantified, He deserves all glory and worship, therefore do this."

Read 1b The word "service" is a translation of a word that means "divine worship" or "spiritual service."

Now notice, our reasonable worship of the God who is above all is so personal here that we present *our bodies* as a sacrifice of worship to Him. Here's an side of worship that only we can do.

It doesn't necessarily have anything to do with singing, ceremony, candles, bowing, lifting hands, or any of the things people tend to associate with worship. This is about totally and radically and unashamedly pouring out your life for God.

So here worship is intensely personal. It's saying to the God who gave Himself for us in Jesus Christ's death on the cross, "I give myself back to you in worship and service."

"It's the only reasonable thing I can do in light of the sacrifice you made for me, God."

Evan May writes: Worship is a response that is driven by a changed heart which has beheld the glorious attributes of God and their application in redemptive history. The worshiper is not merely an observer of redemptive history, but he has been included in this story on the basis of God's grace, and has been personally impacted by the Trinity's salvific and now-sanctifying work.

So in this sense worship is extraordinarily personal.

But then there's another side to worship, too. **Turn to Hebrews 10 page 1068**

Read vs 24-25

I know this verse has been beat into the ground by pastors trying to shame their people into showing up for church. Of course, the only people who hear the sermon are the people who are already there, right?

But still, this is a formidable command from God. He says, "You should be worshipping Me with your whole life.

You should be worshipping Me at school, you should be worshipping me on the job, you should be worshipping me in your relationships, you should be worshipping me on the golf course." Yes, you can worship God on the golf course. In fact, His name gets mentioned quite often on the golf course!

You can, should, and must worship God everywhere, but not to the exclusion of coming together for corporate worship.

Just start reading through the Book of Acts in the New Testament and see what the early believers did. This is what it says, *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.* Acts 2:42, 46-47

They didn't have a central building but they made sure they got together.

Then you move out of Acts into the epistles, Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. There are all letters written to church congregations that were formed by believers in Jesus all over the Roman Empire.

They came together for preaching, teaching, communion, fellowship, singing, and encouragement.

All of those are slices of this thing we call corporate worship.

And the clincher is this. Read through the final book in the New Testament, the Book of the Revelation. The word "throne" is used 53 times in the New Testament. Forty seven of those times is in the Book of Revelation.

Look at some of these:

Turn to page 1090
Read Revelation 4:9-11
Revelation 5:11-13
Revelation 7:9-11
Revelation 19:5-6

For all eternity we're going to be so caught up with this God who has redeemed us and blessed us with salvation that we're going to be totally immersed, and absorbed, and preoccupied with worshipping Him.

With that in mind, what do you suppose is supposed to happen when we meet together now?

This is to be a foretaste of eternity. We come in here to meet God in a fresh way. All week we're out side these walls bumping up against life. We do it with a spirit of worship as we present ourselves to God but this is a time to recharge and refresh.

It's also a time to do some other things. Hebrews says we're to exhort, or encourage, each other.

Romans says be kindly affectionate to one another, give preference to one another, love one another, receive one another, greet one another and even admonish one another.

Other passages tell us to be kind to one another, bear one another's burdens, speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

So part of corporate worship is supposed to minister to us personally but a whole lot of it isn't for us at all. It's to honor God by serving one another.

And here's the great danger. We live in a flagrantly self serving, consumer oriented society. It's how we were programmed from little on up.

We're constantly flooded with choices. Do you like this? Do you want that? You can't just go to the grocery store and buy a can of beans. You have to choose from 20 different kinds of beans.

Well, see how easily that spills over into this thing we call corporate worship. It's supposed to be all about God and others but it's hard not to make it about us.

And so we come in here on a Sunday morning and what do we do? We're programmed by the media to watch the show. So that's exactly what we do.

And a lot of times our "worship experience" is dictated by how the music hits us or how articulate the pastor is, or whatever. And somehow if we're not careful it becomes a whole lot more about us and a whole lot less about God.

It becomes about style or ability rather than the Lamb who was slain who's worthy to

receive glory and honor.

Remember, worship is supposed to be our response, both personal and corporate, to God for who He is and what He has done, expressed in and by the things we say and the way we live.

I. Worship Is Both Personal And Corporate

II. God's Requirements For Worship Are Simple And Straightforward

Turn to John chapter 4 page 941

As you read through the Gospels you see that Jesus engaged people in ways that they didn't expect.

In John 4 Jesus and the disciples are traveling through Samaria. Jesus' disciples go off to town to pick up supplies and Jesus purposely hangs out by a well.

The Samaritans are Jewish people who had intermarried with Assyrians in the 6th century BC. Because of that, They were considered half breeds by the other Jews in Jesus' day. In fact, most Jews wouldn't walk through Samaritan territory but if they had to they'd stop just before crossing back onto Jewish soil to shake the dust off their feet so it wouldn't pollute their land.

A Samaritan woman comes to draw water and Jesus gets her into a conversation. He immediately gets her attention by talking to her because normally a Jewish man would never talk to a Samaritan, especially a Samaritan woman.

As it turns out, this woman led a pretty sordid life and so Jesus offers her the living water of God's forgiveness. She's at the well so He says "I'll give you living water. Drink it and you'll never thirst again."

In other words, "Believe that God forgives sin and you'll have the joy of a forgiven life now and an eternity with God."

And the woman brings up a worship question. She said "You Jews worship in Jerusalem and we worship at Mt. Gerizim. Which is it?"

Here's Jesus' answer. **Read vs 23-24**

Jesus said, "It's not a matter of location. God doesn't have a body. He's not localized. He's omnipresent. He calls us to worship in spirit and in truth."

What does it mean to worship God in spirit and truth? Obviously God wants us to worship Him from the heart ("in spirit") and as He directs in the Bible ("and truth"). Most commentators say that's what Jesus means here.

But God's always required that of His people. Jesus is saying there's a change that's taking place. It's not going to be about Jerusalem or Samaria, or Jews or non-Jews. It's not going to be about temples and ceremonies.

Here's what He means.

To worship God in spirit means spiritual worship as opposed to physical worship.

"...men must offer a worship corresponding with the nature and attributes of God." - J. W. McGarvey

"A pure, a holy, a spiritual worship, therefore, is such as he seeks the offering of the soul...the homage of the heart..." - Albert Barnes

To worship God in spirit means that I can be in a beautiful building, or on the MARC train commuting to work. I can be looking at a gorgeous sunset, or staring at the bare walls of a hospital room. I can be in the middle of a church service where I'm caught up with the music or I can be deaf.

My worship is spiritual because God is spirit. It's supposed to be 24/7/365. It may be impacted by where I am and what's going on in my life but it's not to be determined by where I am and what's going on.

Do you see the difference? If my worship is spiritual, things will effect me. But they won't determine whether I worship or not.

That's worshipping in spirit. How about worshipping in truth? What does that mean? It can't just mean worship according to the truth of the Bible. God had always had that standard for His people. Remember, Jesus says there's a change.

Here's the change. The distinction isn't between "true worship" and "false worship." It's between that which is true (real) and that which had been a shadow.

God had given great things to the Jewish people. They had the temple, the priesthood, Passover, the feasts and special days. But all those things weren't an end in themselves.

The Bible says:

Colossians 2:16-17 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Hebrews 8:1-5 We have a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. If He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things.

Hebrews 10:1 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

All the celebrated and esteemed and revered things that God gave to Israel that dictated and defined their worship were the shadows of the true.

Jesus is the true. The cross and the empty tomb is the true. Forgiveness because of Christ is the true.

The New Testament explains that our bodies are the temple, believers are priests, our prayers are the incense, our praise and service are spiritual sacrifices. We are the worshippers of almighty God.

I. Worship Is Both Personal And Corporate

II. God's Requirements For Worship Are Simple And Straightforward

III. Worship Is About Moving God's Heart, Not Ours

Inevitably, discussions of worship come down to music and service styles. Worship is so much more, but at the same time we call what we do musically in a service "worship." We call it that because that's what it's supposed to be. It's an important element of the lifestyle of worship that we're all supposed to be living.

The problem is, we're all individuals with feelings and emotions, likes and dislikes, memories and past experiences that make us who we are.

Now we all step into this same room on Sunday morning. Our common bond is Jesus Christ. We want to be worshippers of Jesus Christ. But at the same time we all have this diversity of life experience.

Not only that but we're all a little bit selfish at heart. In fact, if the truth be known, some of

us are a whole lot more than a little bit selfish.

Gary Molander is a worship leader in a church. He wrote an editorial for *Collide Magazine* titled *The Gift of Worship*.

Recently, a very nice woman approached me after a service. She is not evil and she's not immature. She is someone I respect greatly. She enjoys current worship music. She has an iPhone. She tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Great worship Gary."

I Stop. I Think. I hate that comment. I can't carry the weight of it's full meaning.

I Smile. I Respond. I said "Thanks." Then in a rare moment of wisdom, I asked her what she meant by "great worship." Here are some of the phrases she answered with:

"The songs you chose touched me today. I love it when we sing hymns. It takes me back to when I was a child. That last song you did really gave me a sense of peace."

I smiled and nodded.

Can you see it? If worship is all about giving God honor, giving God glory, and giving God praise, then her responses don't really fall into the "giving" category. "touched me today...takes me back...gave me peace."

My fear is that this wonderful woman is representative of the majority of our congregations. In our day, "great worship" has become something that moves my heart, not something that moves God's heart.

What is worship supposed to be? It's about going through our week acknowledging the worthiness of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. What's this time in a service supposed to be? Is it something different? Do we shift gears here and suddenly that tables are turned and we start acknowledging our own worthiness?

Obviously not. Worship is about giving our selves and our lives and our praise and our adoration to God and God alone. Giving is at the heart of worship. We give ourselves to God because we trust His goodness and embrace His greatness. We give ourselves to God because there's no one else worthy of our worship.

Now listen, you come into a focused time of corporate worship like here on Sunday morning with the attitude that it's all about God and not about you and worship will probably feel more like a wrestling match than an all-you-can-eat buffet.

I don't know how it works for you, but I'd bet most of you are a whole lot like me. Giving myself and my priorities and my agendas over to God isn't easy.

Worship is about giving it all over to God. I'm still working on the "all" part. How about you? Worship is about being a living sacrifice. I keep wanting to crawl down off the altar. Worship is about loving God with all my heart, mind, and soul instead of loving myself. But I keep finding *me* in the way.

Surrendering my life again to God isn't something I enjoy because I have to die to my precious self every time I do it. That's what worship really is.

How about the flip side? How about, what worship is not? Worship is not about the wonderful feelings we get when we sing. Worship is not about childhood memories. Worship is not about good guitar solos or elevating piano concertos.

All of those things can be influential and important to us but in the end feelings, emotions, personal taste don't make worship "great."

Worship isn't about what's happening on the stage. Right before I get up to preach I have a standard prayer I pray. I pray "Oh God, let me knock thir socks off today with my great speaking." Just kidding.

I pray this, usually on my knees, "Oh God, don't let me, with all my faults, inadequacies, imperfections, and self focus get in Your way today. These people came here to meet You. And God, I pray that's exactly what happens."

We've been blessed with a lot of people who get up here and do music. I can't speak for all of them but I can speak for a bunch. I hear their prayers. And their prayers are, "God don't let it be about us. Let us be lead worshippers, not people who lead in worship."

Until we're around the throne we're never going to ever solve the questions of likes and dislikes and music styles and all of that.

But wherever we are, we can be true worshippers.

And I pray that those of us in an older generation who are mature in our faith would be open to proclaiming God's truth to younger generations in a language and incarnation that makes sense to them even if it means giving up a context that has meaning to us.

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Are you a true worshipper today? Are you lifting your eyes to the Savior and Lord of the universe and then responding to His holy gaze?