



# LET US EXALT HIS NAME TOGETHER

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‘Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together’ (Psa. 34:3).

While preaching and teaching will become redundant in heaven, exaltation and worship will be our prime preoccupation. That is enough reason to learn to do well now what we will enjoy in eternity. The COVID restrictions on physical church gatherings have compelled many to re-think the meaning of worship, which Tozer called ‘the missing jewel of the evangelical church’.

If the assembly’s main activity attended by all is the weekly worship meeting on Sunday mornings, we need to understand better why we meet, so as not to degenerate into a Sunday ritual of going through the motions. Similarly, personal worship is no less important. Because

without a robust devotional life, the corporate worship experience will be vapid.

## **The Heart of Worship – Motivation**

Worship is man’s rational response as the crown of God’s creation to God the Creator. We were created by God for fellowship and worship. The heart of spiritual worship is best described in Romans chapter 12 verse 1, ‘I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service’.

It highlights two important ingredients of worship: sacrifice and service. This is compared to Old Testament (OT) sacrifices offered by the priests in their service as part of Temple worship. The requirement for clean animals

without blemish for sacrifices speaks of the necessity for personal holiness and consecration of believers as New Testament (NT) priests, to present themselves as 'living sacrifices' instead of the carcasses of dead animals. Before we offer the sacrifice of praise and thanks (Heb. 13:15), we must first offer ourselves as living sacrifices.

From a human standpoint, sacrifices are a complete waste. Why kill and burn the best of the flocks when they could be better used for breeding or feeding? It was this same human reasoning and murmuring during Jesus' anointing at Bethany which led the disciples to ask, 'Why this waste?' (Mt. 26:8). There is a waste in worship that is a mystery to the carnal mind. But there is no worth in worship that costs us nothing (2 Sam. 24:24). Likewise, the collection of offerings in the worship service is the practical expression of giving to God in worship. It is not an incidental but an integral part of congregational worship.

The second element of worship is service. The word can be translated equally as worship or service, which is true in the context of Temple worship where priests stood to serve in their various duties. In other words, worship is an active and not passive exercise. We serve Him best when we exalt Him most. The call to worship is also a call to service.

### **The How of Worship – Modality**

Modality refers to the particular way of doing or experiencing something. The modality of worship describes how we 'do church'. While some broad principles and patterns are laid out in the NT, there are no precise prescriptions of how the early church met for the contemporary church to follow.



John chapter 4 verse 24 says: 'God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.' The primary principle is to worship in spirit and truth. This is worship infused with the heat of God's love and informed by the light of God's word. It is worship that engages both the head and heart. The tradition of worship in any church is shaped by their theology of worship. Our reach in the spirit cannot exceed our grasp of the truth.

Spiritual engagement with God is the key to meaningful worship. It is not about how good we feel but how God is glorified. The measure of a meeting is less about our experience and more about His exaltation. While good participation may be indicative of a good meeting, it is not imperative. Silence can be sacred and not awkward, if we are 'in the Spirit on the Lord's Day' (Rev. 1:10).



'Worship God' is the repeated reminder to John (Rev. 19:10, 22:9) and to us. The only thing worse than being a worship spectator is to be a worship critic. We quench the Spirit when we suppress His prompting instead of abiding in His presence, and we despise the word shared when we sit in judgement instead of sitting at the feet of the Lord (1 Thes. 5:19-20).

Congregational worship implies the necessity of physically coming together under the headship of Christ according to the promise of Matthew chapter 18 verse 20. The worship meeting defines our identity as an assembly as we practise in the presence of God together as a faith community. Corporate worship cannot be experienced just by 'watching worship'. The emergence of online meetings has underscored the difference between 'spectator services' where congregants are led in worship from the front, and 'open meetings' that are led from the

floor as members are exercised by the Spirit to participate. Virtual meetings cannot replicate the spiritual dynamics of physical meetings for which there is no satisfactory substitute. You have to be there to experience it fully.

In the nature of congregational worship, there will be a 'silent but salient majority' who should be no less engaged in worship as the few who participate vocally. There should be an unforced freedom to speak up or be silent. Spontaneity is a very sensitive and delicate thing. When truly present, worship will flow and participation will proceed without prompting. May the Lord guide us by His Spirit and guard us from the flesh whenever we gather to exalt His Name.