

THE CHURCH AWAKENING AN URGENT CALL FOR RENEWAL STUDY FIVE

Worship: A Commitment . . . Not a War, Part Two

Romans 11:33–12:2

Worship focuses on how worthy our God is. It is a declaration of His supreme majesty. It is losing ourselves in “wonder and love and praise.”

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IN the previous *Searching the Scriptures* study, we learned that “God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Worship is a *spiritual* response to God’s glory. As we contemplate God’s beauty, majesty, wisdom, and power, reverential awe should naturally flood our souls. Pastor Chuck Swindoll describes this internal experience as the *essence* of worship.

Worship is inward. It has to do with the mind, the heart. Worship is the personal contemplation and adoration of God. It is the natural response of those who recognize who God is and what He has done on our behalf. The *essence* of worship has to do with our internalizing our adoration.¹

Expressions of worship, on the other hand, are outward. True worship can’t be contained! When our hearts fill with wonder before God’s glory, we “burst out in songs of thanksgiving” (Psalm 28:7).

Expressions of worship encompass many forms—music, singing, poetry, speaking, serving, praying. Worship styles can vary with the types of people worshipping. Some worshipers are outgoing and energetic while others are reserved and quiet.

Regardless of the external form or style of expression, the essence of worship is always inward, representing certain characteristics that the Lord seeks in all those who worship Him. We’ll examine these characteristics in this *Searching the Scriptures* study.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Worship is a matter of the heart. Prepare your heart for studying God’s Word by inviting the Lord to reveal His heavenly wisdom to you. Let the apostle Paul’s praise guide your prayer.

Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! . . . For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:33, 36 NASB)



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The theme of worship weaves through the Scriptures like a golden thread, and whenever it emerges, people’s lives are changed. True worship transforms hearts. And yet, not all expressions of worship are heartfelt. People can put on worship like actors put on masks and perform for an audience. When people go through the motions of worship, we may not be able to tell true from false—but God knows the difference.

Inauthentic expressions of worship are the most spiritually destructive forms of hypocrisy. Let’s see how the prophets denounced it and Jesus exposed it.



Observation: Characteristics of True Worship

The first step of *Searching the Scriptures* is observing passages, noting figures of speech, contrasts, comparisons, descriptions, commands, and tone. When Jesus confronted the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, His tone was firm, reflecting one of the harshest rebukes in Scripture.

Hypocritical Lip-Service—Matthew 15:1–11

Read [Matthew 15:1–6](#). What accusation did the Pharisees raise against Jesus and His disciples (15:1–2)? In response, what charges did Jesus level against the Pharisees (15:3–6)? What contrasts do you observe?



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According to *Matthew 15:7–11*, what core sin did the Pharisees commit? What destructive impact did this sin have on their worship?

The Pharisees sounded one way but they acted another. God doesn't want our lips; He wants all of us. In vain, the Pharisees worshiped. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Worship from the Heart—Romans 11:33–12:2

Paul, the Pharisee-turned-apostle, once wore a religious mask, honoring God with his lips while harboring pride. But then, in a blinding flash of glory, Jesus revealed Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus and transformed the hypocrite's heart (*Acts 9:1–20; 1 Timothy 1:12–17*).

What heartfelt expressions of worship do you observe in Paul's words in *Romans 11:33–36*?

Paul's humble expression of worship stands in stark contrast to the human-focused, finger-pointing pride of the Pharisees. What a difference! The eyes of true worshipers focus on God and God alone, not themselves and their spiritual achievements.



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According to *Romans 12:1–2*, what characterizes those who worship from the heart? How do those who have trusted in Christ as their Savior respond to His glory and sacrificial love?

True worshipers are marked by a whole-life consecration to God, which leads to transformation in our mind and actions as we commit to do God’s will in every aspect of life.

It’s a spiritual service of worship. I crawl on that sacrificial altar. I say to God, “I give You each member of my family, my future, my past. I give You my worries and concerns. I give it all to You. I’m on the altar, and everything I am is Yours. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Presenting Our Bodies to God as a Sacrifice

In the interpretation section, we’ll dig deeper into Paul’s meaning when he commanded, “I plead with you to give your bodies to God” (*Romans 12:1*). *Romans 12* represents a hinge in Paul’s letter. Up to this point, Paul focused on the foundational doctrines of our faith—what we believe about the gospel. In *Romans 12*, he shifted from beliefs to behavior.

In light of what God has done for us through Christ, Paul urged us to do something for God: offer our bodies to God as “a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable” (*12:1*). What did Paul mean?



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Romans 11:33–12:2

How does *Romans 6:13* help you understand the meaning of Paul's command?

Write a principle about worship based on your interpretation of *Romans 12:1–2*.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul gave more specifics about how we embody worship as consecrated instruments of righteousness. Let's take a closer look.



Correlation: Doing All in the Name of Jesus

Through our faith in Christ, God has given us a new nature which bears the life of Christ. In Christ, all our differences disappear. What is most important in our churches, according to *Colossians 3:16–17*?



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Romans 11:33–12:2

What guiding principle from these verses can you draw regarding how we express our worship at church and throughout our lives?

Our philosophy of worship has to do with the magnification of our great God. We bow before Him who is supreme. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: First Place in Everything

Through our worship, we acknowledge that Jesus Christ has first place in everything. Our internal commitment to Him forms the essence of our worship and motivates all our outward expressions, as Pastor Chuck explains,

The *essence* of worship drives our *expression* of worship. Whether it's a chorus written two weeks ago, or a hymn written two centuries ago, a statement of genuine, biblical worship set to music is always appropriate in the body of Christ.²

When we worship God with our whole lives—affections and actions—and not just our lips, we avoid falling in the tradition trap of the Pharisees, demanding certain forms and styles based on our preferences. Pastor Chuck offers these wise words: “Praise is a *sacrifice* to God; it's something we give *Him* . . . it's not done for ourselves.”³

How can your expressions of worship flow from your heart when you worship at church on Sundays?



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Romans 11:33–12:2

How can your expressions of worship flow from your actions today?

Worship is an expression of our commitment. It's the fruit of our consecration to God and our desire to glorify Him not just on Sundays but every day of the week. Our whole being is a living, breathing sanctuary of worship for God!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, help me to set aside my preferences when I join the body of Christ to worship. Cultivate in me a private life of worship that expresses itself in my selfless service toward others, acceptance of my brothers and sisters in Christ who are different from me, and a genuine joy of being in Your presence every day. In Christ's name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *The Church Awakening: An Urgent Call for Renewal* (New York: Faith Words, 2010), 117.
2. Swindoll, *The Church Awakening*, 124.
3. Swindoll, *The Church Awakening*, 137.

