

The Purpose-*Given* Church

Are Our Expectations the Same as God's?

1. Worship

Observations of the New Testament text:

- The term “worship service” is not found and is therefore never used to describe what was done at a New Testament assembly
- As Tom Wadsworth explains in his work, the meaning of the English word “worship” has become disconnected from the original Greek meaning and has [morphed into an anachronism](#) for many assemblies today (i.e., we project a contemporary understanding of the word’s usage onto what we read in scripture)
 - Original Greek behind “worship” (majority of occurrences):
 - ***proskuneo*** – “to kiss toward”; to make obeisance to; (prostration) out of homage, reverence, respect, submission; movement like bending the knee or bowing that demonstrates absolute fealty to another’s superiority
 - ***latreuo*** – “to serve”; to act in service and devotion out of duty-bound spiritual obedience



Jesus asserts “worship” (real movement and service honoring God) is not an activity that is relegated to a specific day, a specific time, or a specific place (John 4:19-24). It is a way of living life. It is a daylong, weeklong, lifelong acknowledgement, reverence, adoration and awe of God, in Spirit and in truth, saturating every area of our existence.

The concept of “worship” conveyed in Scripture is not an activity that is choreographed and arranged in a program bulletin. Real “worship”—movement and service out of a heart completely submitted to our Lord— is how you talk to others; how you respond to others in easy or difficult situations; your attitude; how you act in moments of fear, worry or anxiety; your integrity; how you demonstrate trust in God by managing your money; your honesty; how you do your job; your willingness to help someone in genuine need; how you trust God in difficult circumstances; how you show kindness in good times as well as tough times; how you follow God’s instructions when it would be so much easier to do it your own way.

The Scriptural concept represented by the English word “worship” is a 24/7/365 endeavor. While it goes far beyond the contemporary idea of an activity that is part of a New Testament Christian assembly, it certainly includes everything we do in such gatherings out of a desire to follow His instructions to us.

Is this starting to make sense?

If there's no specific day linked with the idea behind "worship," how should we understand the concept of "sabbath?" Every day is holy under the New Covenant because Christ Himself is our sabbath rest:

- **Heb. 4:1-2** → We enter His rest by uniting His word with faith
- **Heb. 4:3** → Those who have believed enter His rest; it is by grace we are saved through faith (Eph. 2:8)
- **Heb. 4:6** → Those who do not obey by uniting His word with faith fail to enter His rest.
- **Heb. 4:11** → Let us be diligent to enter that rest by uniting His word with faith—believing what He has said; He has made the first covenant obsolete, and whatever is obsolete is ready to disappear (Heb. 8:13).
 - Jesus said He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17), not as an example of how we can do the same, but as the only one who could as the spotless Lamb of God—BECAUSE no part of what God intended to make obsolete (i.e., the first covenant—Jer. 31:31-34) would ever pass away until it was all accomplished and fulfilled (Matt. 5:18). Until it was accomplished and fulfilled by Christ on the cross ("It is finished!"-John 19:30), He implored His listeners to continue abiding by what was written in the Law and Prophets so they could surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees by ensuring they honored the spirit of the Law rather than merely the letter of it (Matt. 5:19-20)
- **Col. 2:16-17** → Under God's new covenant, no one is to act as your judge regarding a Sabbath day (Rom. 14:4-5); the Sabbath was a mere shadow of the reality and true substance of the rest that was to come in Christ.
- **Gal. 4:7-11** → We are not to be legalistically bound to observe days, months, seasons and years

If not "worship services," what does the New Testament prescribe?

- **Romans 12:1** → Our "spiritual **service** of worship" is presenting our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice (movement and service demonstrating absolute fealty, submission and obedience)—living life as God desires.
- **Heb. 12:28-29** → In gratitude to God, we offer Him an acceptable **service**, moving our bodies (i.e., living life) with reverence and awe for who He is and what He has done for us.
- **1 Peter 2:5** → We are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood **to offer up spiritual sacrifices** (movement and service) acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

What "services" (sacrifices and offerings of obedience) does God desire?

- **1 Sam. 15:19-22** → Obeying the voice of the Lord is better than innovating a self-styled sacrifice (movement and service) we use by our own reason to rationalize or justify imagining that He should find it acceptable

- **Psalm 51:16-17** → The sacrifices God delights in are a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart (movement and service that is humbled, yielded, repentant)
- **John 15:1-5** → When we abide in Christ and He in us, we bear much fruit for the Father—the abundant offering the Vinedresser deserves
- **2 Cor. 2:14-16** → Abiding in Christ produces a fragrant aroma to God.
- **Gal. 5:22-25** → Living and walking by the Spirit produce the fruit of the Spirit—the abundant offering our Lord is worthy of daily.
- **Heb. 13:15-16** → Through Christ, we continually offer up a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name (**our words**) and doing good and sharing (**our actions**). The things we SAY and DO, the way we TALK and LIVE, are sacrifices and offerings of prostration and praise in reverent awe of God.

Our “worship” of God (movement and service out of love and fealty to Him) is our vertical relationship, and it is inseparably linked to our horizontal relationship with others—the one variable in life that is most objectively evident to all:

- **Matthew 5:21-26** → If our offering to God is living a life of “worship” (movement in service to Him through obedience in all areas of life), we must make every effort to be reconciled with others prior to presuming He will accept any service from us.
- **1 Corinthians 11:29** → If we fail to discern the value of those among the body of Christ correctly, engaging in the Lord’s Supper will only result in us eating and drinking judgment on ourselves.
- **1 Timothy 2:8** → Prayer to God must be in the absence of wrath and dissension with others.
- **1 Peter 3:7** → Our prayers are hindered when our relationships aren’t right.
- **1 John 4:20-21** → God directly challenges the sincerity of anyone who claims to love Him while not loving someone else.

This is why Christian assemblies in the New Testament are directed to focus on, not a modern manufactured conception of “worship,” but on edification—strengthening one another, building one another up, encouraging one another, instructing one another, comforting one another, and many other “one-anothering” directives (1 Cor. 14:26). The inescapable interdependence of healthy, vibrant horizontal relationships with others and our vertical relationship with the Lord is clear throughout Scripture.

A life yielded in submission to Him, motivated purely by a love for who He is and thankfulness for the immeasurable love He has lavished on us—this is real “worship” (movement and service) our Lord requires.

The things widely considered as "acts of worship" are detestable to God when our lives are not congruent with His will (Amos 5:21-24). Assemblies, material offerings and corporate praise are just a few elements in the grand scope of yielding our lives to our Lord. They should occur as the product of worshipful living rather than in lieu of it, and they certainly shouldn't be the entire content of one's worship. If they are, such shallowness must become acquainted with the depth of God's pervasive notion of genuine, biblical "worship"—a life spiritually prostrated by living in complete reverent respect, honor, awe, adoration and fealty to the sovereign King of the universe who loves us and gave Himself for us.

2. Fellowship

The New Testament uses this word to communicate "communion; sharing in common; participation with; partnership." More than a mere activity, it's a state of being.

Believers that are following Christ as Lord are in fellowship with God and with one another. They share in common their labors, their sufferings, and their celebrations. They commune together in life and faith. This fellowship is exclusive between these parties.

Such believers are not in spiritual fellowship with anyone or anything that is contrary to the Lordship of Christ, simply because they do not spiritually share anything in common with them. Such a partnership cannot exist because there is no spiritual communion between these parties (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

This doesn't mean that we cannot or do not engage in general life activities with others who do not share our faith. Jesus ate with and visited with anyone. It was during these activities that people began to realize they were not in a state of fellowship with Him, even though He was present at their table. His presence with them created a desire within them to commune with Him, and our presence should encourage them to seek His communion as well.

Believers are in fellowship with God...

1 John 1:5-6

...through the Father,...

1 John 1:3

...the Son,...

1 John 1:3

1 Corinthians 1:9

Philippians 3:10

...and the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 13:14

Philippians 2:1

We are also in fellowship with other believers.

Acts 2:42

1 John 1:3, 7

Having been welcomed by them...

Galatians 2:9

...we share in common the sign of the New Covenant,...

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

...resources to help those in need,...

Romans 15:26

2 Corinthians 8:4

Philippians 4:15

Hebrews 13:16

...afflictions,...

Philippians 4:14

...and the mystery of unity in Christ.

Ephesians 3:1-9

All the references above include the noun or verb form of the Greek word for “fellowship”---“koinonia.”

3. Discipleship

The account of the “Great Commission” (Matt. 28:16-20) indicates Jesus intended for His Apostles to be His disciple-makers because they had been with Him throughout His earthly ministry. He wanted His Apostles to teach the disciples they would make throughout the world “to observe all that He commanded them” (verse 20). Even the Apostle Paul spent 3 years in preparation for his service as a disciple-maker (Galatians 1:15-18).

His Apostles were, still are, and will always be Christ’s disciple-makers. Their spoken words, written words, and actions stand as the standard Christ commands us to follow for all time, and are the testimony to their ongoing faithful fulfillment of Christ’s commission:

Acts 1:1-2; 10:33, 39-42; 26:14-18

Romans 1:5; 15:15-19

1 Corinthians 11:1-2

Ephesians 3:1-5

Philippians 3:15-17; 4:9

Colossians 1:24-29; 2:5-7; 4:16

1 Thessalonians 1:6-7; 2:3-13; 4:1-2

2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:4, 7-9

1 Timothy 3:14-15; 4:6

2 Timothy 2:2; 3:14

Titus 1:9

Hebrews 2:1-4; 13:7

2 Peter 1:12-21; 3:1-2

1 John 1:1-5; 2:1

2 John 4-6

Jude 17

Revelation 1:1-2; 3:3

Being a disciple of Christ begins and ends with heeding the words of instruction from His Apostles, per Christ’s own declaration. This is biblical discipleship.

This may be a surprise to you, but the Great Commission is not ours to fulfill. The historical-grammatical context of Matthew 28 makes it clear that the Great Commission was issued to the Apostles alone, and they do not pass it on like a baton anywhere in Scripture to the disciples they were instructed to make.

Christ's Apostles accepted the Great Commission as their own and they took it seriously. It is their work and writings that demonstrate they were faithful to the mission of fulfilling it, and they are still fulfilling it today as their Christ-commanded, Spirit-directed effort to teach us by their example and written instruction.

If Christ's Apostles are the only true disciple-makers, how do we understand the role and responsibility believers have today?

4. Christ's Assembly

"...I will build my church (assembly)..." ~Matt. 16:18

- Jesus is the builder.
- He will build it.
- It is His, and no one else's.

The Lord Jesus Christ is both the Master Builder and the foundational corner stone of the assembly He said He'd build (Eph. 2:20). His Apostles are the sub-contractors whom He personally trained, to whom He provided the blueprints, and to whom He delegated construction responsibilities. No one else—no matter how well-intentioned they may be—shares their construction responsibilities.

Our task is simply to be the assembly He said He'd build by following the instructions He told His Apostles to give us.

By doing so, we get to live together as the body of Christ in the unity of His Spirit and the bonds of genuine peace, fellowship and discipleship—moving our bodies and serving through it all in a manner that demonstrates complete submission to His Lordship.

Another great privilege in being His assembly—being His people, His way—is that, by the testimony of our lives in all we do as members of His assembly, we get to introduce the rest of the world to our loving, soul-redeeming, life-changing Savior and the Scripture His disciple-makers provided in their fulfillment of their commission to help us all grow strong and mature (John 13:34-35).

This is Jesus building His assembly, just as He said He would.

It's His plan for global evangelization.