

4. Worship and Giving

Training objective:

To understand the ethos of New Testament worship and to be released into freedom in this area. To understand biblical giving and to be a wise steward of all that God gives us.

Study:

Why link giving in with worship?

- Giving is a part of our expression of worship to God. Worship involves giving God what rightfully belongs to Him.
- We are merely stewards of our bodies, time, finances, possessions. We worship God when we surrender all to Him.

Words for worship

Old Testament

- 'Shacah'-to fall down in worship. 'Sus'- to turn about. 'Giyl'- to spin around with emotion. 'Zamar'-to pluck strings (word 'psalm' comes from this). 'Rua'- to split the ears, a shout, war cry. 'Samach'- to brighten up through a word of praise. 'Shabach'- to quieten, soothe by praise or commendation, 'hallel'- to shine, or make known someones' goodness-i.e. to praise (tehillah comes from this = a song of praise), 'barak'- to bless, 'yadah'- to raise/throw out a hand ('todah' comes from this and means 'thanks'), 'abad'- work or service/ministry, 'sharat'- to minister/attend to God, 'yare'- revere/fear, 'darash'-worship/seek/enquire/heart after God/desire/affection.

New Testament

- 'Proskuneo'-kiss toward/adoration of a ruler/intimacy/face to the ground/homage, 'sebomai'-worship in reverence adoration and awe, 'latreuo'-worship by lifestyle esp. sacrifice and serving, 'chairo'-rejoice/be glad/celebrate, 'agaillo'-to jump for joy/rejoice/exult

As we can see in the Bible, worship involves our bodies, emotions, will, mind, strength, our very lives. It is so much more than singing songs- it is a lifestyle and a surrender of our lives to God- Rom 12:1; Lk 10:27-28; Matt 22:36-38

Reasons for worship

For who God is:

- **His attributes:**
Unchanging (Mal 3:6; Jam 1:17; Heb 13:8), eternal (Ps 90:2),

omnipresent-'everywhere present' (Ps 139:7-12), omniscient- 'all knowing' (Ps 139:1-12), omnipotent-'all powerful' (Gen 17:1, 18:4), all-sufficient (Ex 3:13-15, holy (Lev 11:44, 19:2), merciful (Eph 2:4; Tit 3:5), love (1John 4:8), justice (Deut 32:4; Rev 15:3), faithfulness (2Tim 2:13), glory (Ex 24:17, 19:16-22; Ez 1; Rev 1:14-16; 2Cor 4:6; Jn 1:14) etc.

His names: Ex 3:15; Gen 22:14; Ex 17:15; Judg 6:24; Ez 48:35; Mal 1:14; Ps 23:1; Ex 31:13; Jer 23:6; Ex 15:26; Gen 17:1; Ex 6:3; Gen 14:18-24; Gen 21:33; Gen 16:13; Deut 4:31; Ps 99:8; Neh 9:31; Ex 20:5.

For what He has done:

- **Creation.** God is our creator so it is right to praise Him- Ps 95:6; Rev 4:11, 15:4;
- **Salvation** (Is 43:11, 45:21; Mt 1:21; Jn 3:16-17; Rev 5:9).
- **Other manifestations of His love and power,** His provision, revelation, (e.g. His word) protection, miracles, healings, answered prayer etc.

Worship in the Old Testament

Read: Heb. 8:3-5; 9:1, 23

- Old Testament worship was performed according to the law of Moses.
- Priests were chosen to perform the duties of worship on behalf of the people.
- There was an allocated place of worship, the tabernacle (tent), which was a physical representation of heaven.
- Worship was characterised by ritual and offerings, which were symbolic of spiritual realities.

Worship in the New Testament

Read: John 4:23-24

- New Testament worship is led by the Holy Spirit
- We are now all priests and can offer our own worship to God directly- 1 Peter 2:4-5 ,9; Heb 13:10; Heb 13:15
- We can worship God anywhere and everywhere. We each have access to the very throne room of God- Matt 27:51; Heb 4:16, 10:19-23; Eph 3:12; Rom 5:1-2
- The worship we offer God is spiritual rather than ritualistic symbolism-John 4:24; Romans 12:1; Phil 3:3

New Testament worship involves participation of all members of the body of Christ in assembled worship

- When the church comes together, everyone has a part to give-1 Cor 14:26; Eph 5:18-20; Rom 12:3-8

- God is a God of great variety. The Bible pictures His throne to be like a carnelian, a multi coloured, or multi faceted stone- Rev 4:3. The word 'manifold' describing the wisdom of God in Eph 2:10 actually means 'multi-coloured'.

Attitudes to characterise our worship

- Awe- Heb 12:28
- Reverence-Ps 5:7
- Freedom- 2 Cor 3:17
- Variety & Creativity- Ps 33:3; Ps 150
- Humility- Jam 4:10
- Joy- Ps 132:9; Ps 126
- Gladness- Ps 100:2
- Sacrifice- 2 Sam 24:24
- Extravagance- John 12:3
- Intimacy- 1Pet 1:8
- Spirit-led- John 4:23-24. We must be careful not to 'organise out' the Holy Spirit, but to allow Him space to direct the worship

Ways to express our worship

- Song- Psalm 9:11
- Praise- 1 Cor 14:16
- Music- Ps 33:2
- Clapping- Psalm 47:1
- Dance- 2 Sam 6:14
- Shouting- Ps 95:1
- Bowing Down- Ps 95:6
- Silence- Hab 2:20
- Testimony-telling of the Lord's goodness- Ps 9:1-2,11,14; Ps 22:30-31; Ps 26:7; Jn 4:39; Lk 8:39, 17:16-18

Progression in worship

Our worship does not depend on how we feel. As we choose to worship God our emotions often follow. A good principle is to begin with:

- Praise, declaration, acknowledgment of God's goodness and what He has done. An act of the will which in turn lifts our own mood and results in joy.

This will often lead us to more intimate worship:

- Adoration, intimacy, awe. Our emotions caught up as we realise afresh just how incredible God is

When the Holy Spirit leads us we will flow from praise to adoration and back again. There will be loud and quiet times as God leads us. We need to be sensitive to this and not cut across it.

Money and Giving

Attitudes towards money

- People often say that 'money is the root of all evil'- this is a misquote from the Bible which says that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil-1 Timothy 6:10. Money is not evil in itself- it is our attitude to money, and what we do with it that matters.
- Jesus often warned people to guard their attitude to money and possessions, and to put God first and not to love money- Mt 6:19-34 (note 'good eye' is the Hebrew way of saying 'generous' -see Prov 22:9 and 'bad eye' means stingy- see Prov 23:6, Prov 28:22, Deut 15:9 all which use the same phrases in Hebrew)
- Jesus said that wealth is deceitful- it promises so much but delivers little and can choke the seed of God's word in our lives, making us unfruitful- Matt 13:22.
- Where your treasure is there also is your heart-Matthew 6:24
- We should be above reproach, which includes not only keeping away from the love of money, but also managing our money wisely- Romans 13:8

Stewards

- The Bible speaks of us being 'stewards', rather than 'owners', of the material blessings that God chooses to give to us-Luke 19:13; Luke 12:20; Romans 14:12; 1 Timothy 6:17-19
- This world is temporary and passing away. We cannot take anything with us. We are preparing for the world to come. We are merely stewards of our bodies, time, finances, possessions.

Motivation for Giving

- Giving is in response to God giving up His Son for us- John 3:16. We are called to be like Him. Therefore we are to use all that He gives us, including, money, to bless others.
- Jesus became poor that we could become spiritually rich-2Cor 8:9. He left the riches of heaven, was born in feeding trough, raised by poor parents (Lk 2:22-24 quoting Lev 12:8 says that they could only offer God the poor person's purification gift when Jesus was born), lived with no fixed abode and was crucified stripped naked. Even His garment was taken from Him and He was buried in a borrowed tomb.

Giving in the Old Testament

1. Tithing regulations under the Law of Moses

In the Old Testament the Mosaic Law specified that each Israelite had to tithe (that is, give to God 10% of the produce of their land and animals). There were 3 tithes that had to be performed:

- **Tithe to the Levites.** A tithe of 10% was to be given to the tribe of Levi. This was because, out of the 12 tribes of Israel, the tribe of Levi owned no land. They lived in cities that were on the land belonging to the other tribes and were to serve God full-time in the tabernacle (later the temple) and in teaching the law. This tithe was their income- Num 18:21-24; Deut 14:27.
- **The Festivals tithe.** A further 10% tithe was to be set aside to be taken to Jerusalem for the 3 festivals each year (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles). This tithe was to be eaten in Jerusalem by the person bringing it, but they still had to be generous in allowing the Levites to also have a part of it. If the person lived a long way from Jerusalem they could bring the equivalent money instead and buy food in Jerusalem to celebrate the feasts- Deut 12:5-7,10-19; Deut 14:22-26.
- **Tithe to the poor.** Every 3 years a further tithe of 10% was also to be given to the Levites, the strangers in the land, the fatherless and the widows- Deut 14:28-29.

Therefore, for a Jew under the law of Moses, tithing meant 23.33% of their income being given away. The apocryphal book of Tobit (1:6-8) provides an example of all three classes of tithes being practiced by Tobit before he was taken into exile:

'Often I was quite alone in making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, fulfilling the law that binds all Israel perpetually. I would hurry to Jerusalem with the first yield of fruits and beasts, the tithe of cattle and the sheep's first shearings. I would give these to the priests, the sons of Aaron, for the altar. To the Levites ministering at Jerusalem I would give my tithe of wine and corn, olives, pomegranates and other fruits. Six years in succession I took the second tithe in money and went and paid it at Jerusalem. I gave the third to orphans and widows and to the strangers who live among the Israelites; I brought it them as a gift every three years'

- For the Jew, to keep the Mosaic law meant blessings (Deut 28:1-14), but to not keep any part of the law meant a curse (Deut 27:11-26, especially verse 26; Deut 28:15-68). In the book of Malachi this is spelled out when the people are rebuked for not tithing properly (Mal 3:8-12).
- Jesus lived under the rules of the Jewish law and rebuked the Pharisees, not because they tithed (he encouraged them to do this) but because they neglected more important matters (Matt 23:23; Lk 11:42; 18:9-12)

2. Tithing outside and before the Law of Moses

- **Abraham.**- Gen 14:20. Abraham gave a tithe of the spoils of war to Melchizedek. This may have been a common custom anyway (see below 'Tithing in Mesopotamia'). We are not told that this was the regular practise of Abraham or that he tithed all of his income (he had many other possessions) so it is a little difficult to base a theology of tithing on this scripture as binding for a New Testament believer.
- **Hebrews-** Heb 7:1-10 refers back to Abraham's tithe to Melchizedek and makes the point that the Levitical priesthood is lower than the priesthood of Jesus (which is the order of Melchizedek -i.e. unique and by promise and grace rather than by being a son of Aaron and through law) in that Aaron was in Abraham's loins when the tithe was paid. The point being made isn't that New Testament believers must pay a mandatory tithe, but that the New Covenant is better and more important than the Old Covenant.
- **Jacob-** Gen 28:22. Jacob promised God that he would give God a tenth of his income and make Bethel the house of God if God would show him favour. This appears to be a spontaneous act of gratitude on the part of Jacob in response to God's goodness rather than a mandatory requirement that he had to perform. For this reason it is also difficult to build a doctrine of mandatory tithing from this passage for a New Testament believer.
- **Tithing in Mesopotamia.** In Mesopotamia even amongst Pagans tithing was a common practise and was known as the 'esretu', meaning 'one-tenth' (in the Akkadian language). As Abraham came from Babylonia he would have been familiar with this custom and term. It was a tax levied by local rulers. Here are some examples (taken from The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Vol. 4 "E"):

[Referring to a ten per cent tax levied on garments by the local ruler:] "the palace has taken eight garments as your tithe (on 85 garments)", "...eleven garments as tithe (on 112 garments)", "...the sun-god) Shamash demands the tithe...", "four minas of silver, the tithe of [the gods] Bel, Nabu, and Nergal...", "...he has paid, in addition to the tithe for Ninurta, the tax of the gardiner", "...the tithe of the chief accountant, he has delivered it to [the sun-god] Shamash", "...why do you not pay the tithe to the Lady-of-Uruk?", "...a man) owes barley and dates as balance of the tithe of the **years three and four", "...the tithe of the king on barley of the town...", "...with regard to the elders of the city whom (the king) has **summoned to (pay) tithe...", "...the collector of the tithe of the country Sumundar...", "...the official Ebabbar in Sippar) who is in charge of the tithe..."

Should a Christian tithe?

- The New Testament does not set any guidelines as to a percentage that a Christian must give.
- We are no longer under the law- it is finished in Christ (Rom 6:14; 10:4; Heb 7:18; 2Cr 3:7,11; Eph 2:15). This is proved by the issues of circumcision and food laws which also ceased in the New Covenant. Tithing could be, and was sometimes practised spontaneously before the law came in. However, when the law came in tithing was made mandatory for all Jews. Now that the law is gone tithing is no longer mandatory- we have freedom to practise it, or freedom not to, just as those such as Abraham and Jacob had the choice before the law came in. This means that giving is grace-motivated rather than law-bound.
- The Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:6-29) had the key opportunity to insist on tithing as a requirement for a Gentile believer, but instead suggested keeping away from some areas which might offend Jewish consciences and cause disharmony- meat offered to idols, meat with blood in it , meat of strangled animals and also to keep from sexual immorality which, in Jewish perception, was a characteristic of many Gentiles at the time.
- A Christian is not under a curse if they don't tithe. The passage in Malachi 3:8-12 is addressing Jews under the law, which they had vowed to keep and be blessed (Deut 28:1-14) or disobey and be cursed ((Deut 27:11-26, especially verse 26; Deut 28:15-68)
- Grace-giving means that we can give more than a tithe if we so wish. The Holy Spirit led believers to give extravagantly in the early Church (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37).

New Testament principles of giving

Read 2Cor 9:6-14

- v6- We reap in proportion to how much we sow
- v7a- 'as purposed in own heart'- i.e. We should not give out of necessity or grudgingly
- v7b- 'God loves a cheerful giver'- Greek='hilarious'- we should give happily
- v8-11- God will supply the needs of a person willing to give (Phil 4:19). The context is a person who is a giver. We still however have a responsibility to manage our finances well.
- V12- giving is a form of worship to God. It means the giver is worshipping God, and also the receiver gives thanks to God for the gift, so God is praised.
- V13- Giving is proof of our love for God

Read -1 Cor. 16:1-2. We should give:

- Systematically- 'first day of the week'- God should not get the left overs. Giving should be regular and planned, even though it is by grace and led by the Spirit.
- Individually-'let each one'- All are to be involved- even the widow's mite is important
- Privately- 'lay by him in store' the Greek='lay to himself in store' – Jesus spoke about giving secretly rather than calling attention to our giving-Matt 6:1-4
- Proportionately-'as he may prosper'- The proportion depends on how God leads us and how God has prospered us.

Recipients of our giving

- A believer's family. This is a priority before anything else. When we go through unavoidable periods of unemployment we should be diligent to seek work and also use our time constructively- 1Tim 5:8
- Supporting the church ministry-
Elders who teach are said to be 'worthy of double honour' 1 Tim 5:17-18. Paul here, in the Greek uses a financial term for honour meaning financial honouring. In verse 18 Paul teaches that those who dedicate themselves full-time to the work of ministry are to be supported financially from those who benefit from the ministry. He quotes 2 scripture passages to illustrate this- Deut 25:4 (see also 1Cor 9:9) 'do not muzzle the ox while it treads out the grain' and 'the worker deserves his wages' (quoting from Lev 19:3, Deut 24:15, Matt 10:, Lk 10:7). Though Paul reserved the right not to receive an income from a congregation (1Cor 9:15-23; 1Thess 2:9) he taught that it was the normally a responsibility of congregations to support their workers (Gal 6:6; 1Cor 9:7-14).
- The poor, and needs within the body of Christ. The objective is to form some kind of equality, as opposed to a great differentiation in the standards of living within the church- 2 Cor 8:13. The gospel should be good news to the poor. We show that we love God by meeting the needs in the lives of our brethren- Acts 4:34, 11:29; Lk 12:33-34; Jam 1:27; Gal 2:10

Implications:

- God has given us so much through sending His Son to die for each one of us. It is only right that we surrender our lives in worship to Him. True worship of God will also touch our pockets.

Practical Application:

- How would you describe your attitude towards money - careful, generous, not bothered, greedy, possessive, careless, tight, other?
- Do you view it as your own, or as entrusted to you by God to use for Him ?

- Do you place your security in having money, rather than in God alone?

On a scale of 1- 10, rate yourself concerning your giving in regard to the following areas:

- In faith
- Purposefully
- Humbly
- Cheerfully

Is debt a problem to you now, or has it been in the past? Are you prone to excessive spending, or easily tempted by spending sprees? Make a list of the ways in which you feel that your attitudes/actions concerning money need to change, and set yourself a timescale for these changes. Consider sharing with a friend/partner, who would be willing to hold you accountable.

How do you view worship? Do you worship at home? Do you prepare yourself before you come to worship God?

In what ways have you contributed in worship during church meetings in the last month?

What new expressions of worship have you brought in the last 6 months?

In what ways could you change the way you express your worship to God?

Has God given you anything in the last few months that you have neglected to share?

Determine that you will give God your best in worship from now on.