

LEADERS NOTES
LIVING BEYOND THIS LIFE - WORSHIP PART VIII
“WORSHIP IS GIVING THANKS”
JULY 5-6, 2008

Read Exodus 16:11-20. What was the Israelites’ response to God meeting their needs in the wilderness? Why did they fail to demonstrate thanksgiving to God in response to His miraculous meeting of their needs? What hinders us from being grateful or giving thanks to God? How can you be more mindful in the future to give thanks to God?

Even though God had already miraculously met every need of the Israelites up to this point (freeing them from slavery in Egypt, parting the Red Sea, etc.), the Israelites continued to complain and grumble. Exodus 16 says that they grumbled about the lack of food. God heard their request and supplied their need by miraculously supplying quails and manna each day. Rather than giving thanks to God for His provision, the Israelites ignored God’s instructions for gathering the food and greedily tried to gather more than they were supposed to (with poor results). The Israelites had become so focused on their circumstance that they lost sight of all that God had already done for them and all that He was doing for them to meet their needs. They saw everything through a negative perspective and experienced their circumstances through that negative lens. As a result, they failed to thank God or worship Him in the midst of their blessing.

We can find ourselves in a similar situation when we allow our circumstances to become our focus rather than God. Once we get in a negative mindset, we tend to see everything else that happens through a negative slant. As Joyce Meyer remarks in *Battlefield of the Mind*, “negative thoughts are always full of fear and doubt.” Fear, doubt, and negative thinking override our ability to see the truth of what is actually happening in our lives. As a result, we often miss the miracles, blessings, and provisions that God gives us.

In order to be more thankful, we need to recognize negativity and grumbling in our lives. Joyce Meyer recommends asking the Holy Spirit to convict you each time you enter into negativity. When you realize you are becoming negative, immediately ask God to reveal His heart for the situation and focus on God’s character and promises rather than the circumstance. When we focus on the fact that God is faithful, He loves us, and He has a hope and a future to prosper us and not to harm us, then we can trust in Him and regain hope in our circumstances (Jeremiah 29:11). If we lose hope, it becomes nearly impossible to be positive. Joyce Meyer relates how, “Hebrews 6:19 tells us that hope is the anchor of the soul. Hope is the force that keeps us steady in time of trial. Don’t ever stop hoping. If you do, you’re going to have a miserable life.” Hope, thinking right about God and ourselves, and keeping our negative emotions and words in check are all essential steps to becoming more thankful. Sometimes we just need to take the time to focus on all the blessings God has given us, even the smallest ones. Worship is one of the best ways for us to focus on God and remember what He has done for us. The next time you are struggling, try to sing a praise song or read a Psalm and see if a spirit of thankfulness and hope doesn’t emerge!

In what ways has God met you in a time of need recently? What are some different ways you can give thanks to God for His faithfulness in meeting your needs?

How do you show thankfulness to your friends, family, or coworkers? In what ways do you enjoy receiving thanks from others? Just as we enjoy giving and receiving thanks in different ways, we can show God our thankfulness in many different ways. We can give thanks with our mouths (song, prayer, shouts of joy, sharing with others), bodies (serving God or others, dancing, raising our hands, clapping, etc.), our creativity and gifts

(painting for God, writing God a poem, song, or letter), or our minds (studying God's Word, fixing our minds on God's truths and character, etc.).

How are thankfulness and worship intertwined? What role does sacrifice have in worship? How does your worship reflect a grateful heart?

Throughout Scripture, we see worship, thankfulness, and sacrifice intertwined. Psalm 92:1 says that it is good to give praise and thanksgiving to God. It is good for us to give worship and thanks (it brings us wholeness and joy) as well as the fact that it is pleasing to God to receive it. Hebrews 13:15 exhorts us to "continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name," In this verse, praise and thanksgiving are basically equated. We are told that we should offer God a sacrifice – Romans 12:1-2 says that one of the sacrifices we are to give is that of ourselves (Believer's Bible Commentary) – this includes the way we live (Psalm 4:5).

In Hebrews 13:15, we are exhorted to give a sacrifice of praise or thanksgiving – the act of praising and thanking God is seen as a sacrifice. In order to thank God, we have to humble ourselves (bow low) and acknowledge God's goodness (lift Him high). Psalm 116:16-17 shows us the act of offering a sacrifice of thanksgiving through praise and worship. In verse 17, the psalmist shows that he is willing to sacrifice himself by serving God and others as an act of thanksgiving for all God has done for him.

As we continue to read in Hebrews 13:16, we see that another type of sacrifice is that of offering God our possessions (Believer's Bible Commentary). When we surrender our materials goods and money, we put God first and honor Him. This brings Him glory and allows Him to fulfill His will in our lives and in others' lives. We also see that our sacrifices please God (vs. 16). However, not all sacrifices please God – God is most pleased with sacrifices that come out of a humble and grateful heart (Psalm 51:17).

Worship and thankfulness are so intertwined that one inevitably leads to the other. When we take the time to worship God and sing praises to Him, we are reminded of who God is and what He has done for us. Alternately, when we give thanks to God, we can't help but give God our worship (in one form or another) (Psalm 30:4).

Ultimately, we were created to worship God and give Him glory and thanks. We bring God glory through genuine sacrifice, thanksgiving, surrendering our heart to His will, loving God and others, worshiping Him, sharing His heart with others, etc. In everything we do, we should do it with a heart of thanksgiving to give God glory (Colossians 3:17).