

# Spirit-Filled Congregational Worship

Ephesians 5:18-20

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September 25, 2011

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## *The Vertical Element of Worship*

Why do we need to be reminded that worship begins and ends with God, is about God, and is for God? Isn't it obvious?

Apparently not. Most of the time when we think about worship, we start with what *we* do. Our intentions are noble; we come with our songs, our prayers, our offerings, and our lives to tell God how great he is. But we assume that acceptable worship ultimately depends on our efforts, sincerity, or gifts.

It doesn't. It never will.

In human relationships, when someone is sincerely and accurately praised, their "value" is increased in the eyes of others. That's why ads for movies report how many Academy Award nominations they received. And why, if a politician's approval rating drops, his staff starts plotting how to boost the numbers. Public opinion matters to us.

God has never had that problem. It's true that the honor given to God is magnified when more people gather to proclaim his greatness, but this adds nothing to his intrinsic glory. He doesn't command us to worship him because of any deficiency in him but because of a deficiency in us. We *need* to worship God.

God also commands us to worship him because his moral perfection requires it. It's idolatrous to worship anything other than what is superior to everything else. And only God is in that category.

Apart from this perspective... worship can become self-motivated and self-exalting... We subtly take pride in our worship, our singing, our playing, our planning, our performance, our leadership. Ultimately we separate ourselves from the God who drew us to worship him in the first place.

That's why biblical worship is God-focused (God is clearly seen), God-centered (God is clearly the priority), and God-exalting (God is clearly honored).

Gathering to praise God can't be a means to some "greater" end, such as church growth, evangelism, or personal ministry. God isn't a genie we summon by rubbing the bottle called "worship." He doesn't exist to help us get where we *really* want to go. God *is* where we want to go.

So God's glory is the end of our worship, and not simply a means to something else. In the midst of a culture that glorifies our pitiful accomplishments in countless ways, we gather each week to proclaim God's wondrous deeds and to glory in his supreme value. He is holy, holy, holy. There is no one, and nothing, like the Lord.

Background and Context \_\_\_\_\_  
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I. The Main Command \_\_\_\_\_  
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II. Congregational Singing

A. Addressing One Another \_\_\_\_\_  
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B. Addressing God \_\_\_\_\_  
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C. What Do We Sing? \_\_\_\_\_  
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D. How Do We Sing? \_\_\_\_\_  
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III. Application \_\_\_\_\_  
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