

INTRODUCTION

Whether you admit it or not every one of us worships something or someone. Many people worship money, thinking that money can buy anything they want. Some other people worship celebrities. They may be the rich and famous, sports stars, actors and actresses, singing artists, and so on. Whether it is something or someone that we worship we consider that object superior to us. But the Bible tells us that we should only worship God. Idolatry is to use another object to replace the position God should have in our lives. The Bible describes God as a jealous God. Your girlfriend would never allow you to date another lady. By the same token, God would never share His glory with anyone or anything else. Today as we study Psalm 100 on the topic of worship we should keep that in mind. Psalm 95 to 100 is a series of psalms on worship. The theme of worship comes to a crescendo in Psalm 100. This last psalm is essentially a summary of the previous five psalms. The psalmist told us why we worship God and how to worship Him. You may come to our Sunday meeting week after week. Many of you grow up in a church and go to worship with your family. Have you considered what motivates you to keep coming every week? How to maintain freshness in our worship so that we would not feel bored? The psalmist told us that everything goes back to the basic. It is because God alone deserves to be worshipped with our whole being.

EXPLANATION

1. Worship God for His Attributes 因上帝的屬性敬拜祂

First of all, the psalmist reminded us that we worship God because of His attributes. God's attributes are His characters. God deserves our worship because of the kind of God He is. The psalmist told us in **verse 3** that: Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. The first line may not make sense to us. We think: "Duh! Of course we know that the Lord is God." Do you remember Pastor Paul Lin's message in August when he introduced a few names of God? If we plug in the Hebrew names for those titles the line would read "Know that Jehovah is Elohim." Elohim is the name for God when it first appears in Genesis chapter 1. The whole Bible begins with "In the beginning God (or Elohim) created the heavens and the earth." The name Elohim focuses on God's creation of all things. The psalmist urged us to worship God because He is a powerful Creator. Then God has another name Jehovah. Since Jews would dare not to call God by His name they would replace Jehovah with Adonai, meaning Lord. Jehovah or Adonai points out that He is a covenant God. God took initiative to make a covenant with Israel. God made the Jews His own people, and He became their God. When Jesus came He used His blood to make a new covenant with whoever believes in Him. So for us Christians we too are in God's covenant. God did not just make us, established a covenant with us and then left us alone. He continues to watch over us. The psalmist illustrated that we are "the sheep of his pasture." Just like a shepherd takes care of his sheep God protects us and provides for our needs. We worship God because of all those attributes. The psalmist continued in **verse 5**: For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. We worship our God because He is good. How long-lasting is

His goodness? The psalmist told us that God's love and His faithfulness are never-ending. The word "love" here is the Hebrew word "hesed." The equivalent word in Greek that some of you may know is agape. "Hesed" is a kind of love that extends from God's covenant. Because God is bound by the covenant He made He will always be faithful to us. In the Bible the Israelites disobeyed God over and over again. They betrayed God and worshipped idols. God disciplined them, then they repented and God forgave them. But before long, they repeated the same cycle again. We may wonder: how can people be so stubborn and dumb? Well, next time you look into a mirror you can say it out loud "me too!" We are just like that! When my older son was still little I once scolded him for making a recurring mistake. I said: "I have told you a thousand times but how come you still did it wrong?" You know what? Even before I could complete that sentence there was a voice inside me whispering: "You are just like that." Someone said that our God is a God of second chance. He is always there as long as we are willing to turn back in our sins. Brothers and sisters: aren't you grateful that God never forsakes us? When we think of that our hearts should be filled with praise and thanks to Him. No matter what life circumstance we are in God is still good to us. Difficulties may cast doubts in us. But when we remember God's attributes our faith will be rekindled. Sometimes a simple song like "God is So Good" can remind us how great our God is. You see, a good worship song should not only express our emotion to God. The lyrics should also explain why we worship Him. It should mention God's attributes like His gentleness, patience, kindness, faithfulness, etc. As a result when people hear or sing the song their reaction is not simply "this is a nice song" but also "this is a great God."

2. Worship God with Proper Attitudes 以合宜的心態敬拜神

We worship God because of His attributes. A better understanding of God will help us worship Him with proper attitudes. What attitudes should we have when we worship God? The psalmist said in **verse 2**: Worship the Lord with gladness... We should come before the Lord with joy. **Psalm 122:1** also reads - I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." Was that how you felt when you got up this morning? Did you open your eyes with excitement? "Alright, it's Sunday. Let's go to the church to worship God." Or did you grumble in your heart: "Oh man. How come the alarm goes off so soon?" You don't need to answer me. The Lord knows your heart. I know you are happy to come see your friends. Come with gladness to meet our Lord too! When your attitude is right it will definitely show up on your face. A few days ago I went for my citizenship interview. You know how most government employees look on their faces. I was sitting in the waiting room. One by one the interviewers opened the door and called the next person to go inside. When I looked at them I could not help but wonder if they actually enjoy their work. When I was there I thought about the sermon for today. I wondered if brothers and sisters come to worship with joy in their hearts. Do you remember what King David did in the book of 2 Samuel when people brought back the Ark of the Covenant? He danced! A king danced? We can imagine President Trump doing some ballroom dancing with the first lady. How did David dance? **2 Samuel 6:14** says: David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might. The passage tells us that Michal, one of David's wives despised him. But David did not mind how others might think because he was worshipping God with his dance. We may not dance like David in our worship. But we can show our joy when we sing. Or we can respond with "amen" during prayer or preaching to concur that "Yes, Lord, you are such a wonderful God. Yes, I thank You for Your promises." The psalmist went on to say in **verse 4**: Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and

praise his name. Do you enter our church doors with thanksgiving and praise? You know, joy can be contagious. For those who serve as greeters and ushers you need to show some enthusiasm as people come in. Put on a big smile and give people a warm handshake. A common way for the Jews in the Old Testament to show their thankfulness to God was to bring an animal for offering. I can imagine that they had to spend some time to pick the right animal before they left home. If you plan to present your money offering to God you should also prepare ahead of time. Don't scramble to find out your wallet or check-book when you see the offering plates being passed around. We should also prepare ourselves in some other ways beforehand. Someone said it well that we have to get ready for worship on Saturday night. If you go to bed well past midnight then how would you expect to come on time and full of energy? Whether it is TV, computer games or late night party, just drop it and go to bed earlier. Before you do so have your Sunday clothes ready. Also, pack your Bible, Sunday school material and other belongings. For families with little kids I can guarantee that you will feel less stressful the next morning. The parents can thank me later for that. I can tell you from my experience that little things happened on Sunday morning could easily ruin my attitude for worship. Perhaps my kids refused to get up, they could not find their Bibles, or my wife decided to change for another dress at the last minute. We can avoid those and many other distractions. One final suggestion to get our attitude right for worship – pray as a family over breakfast or pray before you start your car.

3. Worship God with Proper Actions 以合宜的行動敬拜神

When we come to worship God we have to equip ourselves about God's attributes. We also have to get our hearts ready with proper attitudes. Then we can talk about worshipping God with proper actions. What sort of actions did the psalmist suggest for us? Look at **verse 1**: Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. In nowadays terms we name that "call to worship." It is a means to draw people's attention to begin worship. A usual way for us to shout for joy to the Lord is to sing. Look at **verse 2**: Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Music is an important part in worship. Singing is one element where everyone can actively participate. I know a brother who loves to sing. He also sings with a loud voice. But the problem is, he cannot carry a tune. Later, he even joined the choir. That gave the director and other choir members some minor headache. But nothing can stop him from expressing his joy to the Lord. His attitude directs his action. Finally, that brother quit the choir when he was convinced that God gave him a different gift to serve in the church. When we sing in the church it is not only for personal entertainment. It is also for the whole congregation to worship God using melodies. Therefore, we have to pick songs with rhythm and musical range that most people can follow along easily. Since we have a combined worship we also have to be mindful of the different languages we speak to make sure that everyone can join together in singing. There is another aspect I want to point out from this verse. The word "worship" here has a broader connotation than the activity of worship. The general meaning of the word is to serve. That is exactly why we call worship a service. Through what we do we serve the Lord together. We have the greeters and ushers standing on the outside. We assign people to collect offering. We also have brothers and sisters on the podium to lead music, Scripture reading and prayer. Together, we worship God with different actions. Years ago I had a training workshop for song-leaders. I showed them this chart on the slide. I asked them who the director, performers and audiences are in a worship. Some people may think that God is our ultimate director because He equips us to serve Him. The performers are the people on the podium because they lead songs, prayer and Scripture reading.

Then the audiences are the congregation sitting in the pews. Actually, the conductors are the worship leaders on the podium. They guide the true performers, who are the congregation, in worship. And God is the sole audience in worship. He is sitting on the throne to receive our worship. You see, there is a major difference between attending a worship versus participating in a worship. That brings up an important point: are we giving our best to the Lord? There was a sister who graduated from a famous music school in Europe. She served as a church pianist. She had the best training and she had good skills too. But when I partnered with her to lead songs I could easily tell that she only relied on her own talents. When I gave her the music scores she skimmed through them and responded: "That's easy. I can handle it." Sometimes I doubted if she even practiced the songs at home. On other occasions I saw people scanning their bulletin on the podium wondering which song to lead and which Bible passage to read. Don't get me wrong. I am not asking for perfection. Most people get nervous when standing on the podium. I do too! It is okay to make mistakes. But you will notice if a person is well-prepared to serve or not. I remember one sister who led Scripture reading. I know that Chinese is not her first language. But she simply read from her Bible without using any cheat sheet to help her pronunciation. Some presiders also read out their prayer that was written out beforehand. That is fine with me. It shows that they prepared ahead. Our God is a God of perfection. He deserves our very best worship.

CONCLUSION

God alone deserves to be worshipped with our whole being. We worship God for His attributes. That covers our minds. We worship God with proper attitudes. That addresses our hearts. We also worship God with proper actions. That deals with our body. We don't call our Sunday meeting a singing gathering or a preaching conference. We call it a worship. God is the object of our worship. Sometimes when we leave the church we feel that we didn't get much from the meeting. You know what? God feels the same too if we do not worship Him the way He asks for! Let me conclude with a song written in 2001. The composer, Michael W. Smith, reflected on what God actually requires of us in our worship. Part of the lyrics are as below.

The Heart of Worship 敬拜的焦點 (Michael W. Smith)

When the music fades	隨著音符漸漸消失
All is stripped away	一切外在的因素都被挪去
And I simply come	我獨自來到主面前
Longing just to bring	唯願獻上什麼有價值的
Something that's of worth	表達對祢的崇敬
That will bless your heart	
I'll bring you more than a song	我獻予祢的不只是一首歌曲
For a song in itself	因祢所要的不是音樂
Is not what you have required	祢不看重表面
You search much deeper within	藉著我所做的一切
Through the way things appear	祢監察我的內心
You're looking into my heart	

I'm coming back to the heart of worship
And it's all about you,
It's all about you, Jesus
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it
When it's all about you,
It's all about you, Jesus.

我回到敬拜的焦點
完全是為了祢
完全是為了祢，耶穌
為著我錯誤的定位，求主饒恕
一切本應該都是為了祢
完全是為了祢，耶穌