

The Versus Series - Part 2

Thanksgiving vs. Praise vs. Worship

Just as the hand, elbow and shoulder define the arm, thanksgiving, praise and worship define love—love expressed. Put differently, the essence of the word “love” is not a noun, but rather a verb—true love is love expressed. Love is the motivator and power behind our thanksgiving, praise and worship.

Giving thanks is me-centered—not to be confused with self-centered. When I thank someone, I’m expressing love in the form of gratitude and appreciation for something good done for me or to me. One of our greatest human needs is to feel affirmed, and we naturally respond with heartfelt thankfulness to a person who affirms us through their actions. Thanksgiving is a gracious response for having received.

We express our love to God when we thank Him for saving us, redeeming us and reconciling us to Himself.

Praise is a mirror image of thanksgiving—catch this—we praise someone for something they have accomplished for themselves or for others, holistically. Praise is giving. We don’t thank our child for hitting a home run; we praise him or her for a job well done. Giving praise is a natural heartfelt response to affirm another person. Praise is an altruistic, giving response for goodness delivered.

We express our love to God when we praise Him for what He has done, is doing and is going to do.

Worship is something altogether different. Where thanksgiving and praise are from the realm of the soul, worship is of the spirit. God put the need and desire to worship in our spiritual DNA. This means that we feel compelled to worship something or somebody even if it is a perversion of God’s expressed desire for us. Romans 1:19-20 tells this truth—we *will worship something*, meaning that our compulsion to worship can even drive us to worship God’s creation instead of Him as the Creator. When we turn instead to worship God’s creation, God calls this idolatry—a direct violation of the First Greatest Commandment.

Thanksgiving, praise and worship is the preeminent theme throughout all of Scripture, and “*whom will we worship?*” is the preeminent question we all must answer. Worship is lowering oneself to express adoration and extol worth to someone of something we assess as greater than ourselves—as believers, we abandon ourselves to praise and worship Creator God. The deepest calling of our soul and spirit is to know God, and place Him in the highest place. So how does a person “step into” this high calling? The answer is biblical praise and worship. The Bible teaches us that our worship connects us to God in a very unique way. *God inhabits the praises of His people.*

When, the Bible says that God inhabits our praises—God visits us. Our worship brings us into that place where we can know Him intimately and make a Spirit-to-spirit connection. Psalms 91:1 calls this a place of communing and abiding in the secret place. Communing with God, in the Most Holy Place is the most essential pursuit that we can involve ourselves this side of heaven—*it is our highest calling.*

The Tabernacle of Moses Our Biblical Pattern for Thanksgiving, Praise and Worship

Knowing that praise and worship is our highest calling and a primary response to God’s love for us, let’s look closely at the Tabernacle of Moses. It will help us fully grasp the full impact and significance of how we meet with God through thanksgiving, praise and worship.

God gave Moses detailed instructions for building the Tabernacle, the place where He would meet with Moses. God’s instructions were quite precise and lengthy, but simply described as two connected tent-like rooms encompassed by a curtain-like wall. The curtain-wall had a gate that opened into a courtyard outside the two rooms. The two rooms are known as the “Holy Place” and “The Most Holy Place,” also known as “The Holiest of Holies.”

Since the Tabernacle of Moses is a type and shadow of how and where we commune with God, let's put this together. The Tabernacle of Moses is where God dwelled in Moses' day, but today, because of Jesus, God dwells in the tabernacle of our hearts. Through thanksgiving, praise and worship, we commune with God in our hearts. Our innermost being is the tabernacle and dwelling place of God in the Christian's life.



"Shout with joy to the LORD, O earth! Worship the LORD with gladness. Come before Him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the LORD is God! He made us, and we are His. We are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving; go into His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and bless His name. For the LORD is good. His unfailing love continues forever; and His faithfulness continues to each generation." Psalms 100:1-5

King David was referring to the Tabernacle of Moses when he penned the words, *"Enter His gates with thanksgiving; go into His courts with praise."* King David was telling us prophetically how we are to enter into God's presence and commune with Him.

Referring to my earlier definitions, I enter God's tabernacle through *"His gates with thanksgiving,"* which is "expressing gratitude and appreciation for something God has done for me." Entering the tabernacle through the gates of thanksgiving brings me into the courtyard, where I step into the outer court of intimacy with God—*"go into His courts with praise."* Through my heartfelt adoration, I praise God for what He has done, is doing and is going to do.

This is where it gets interesting. To continue, and enter the Holiest Place where God manifests His presence, there are prerequisites. In the Old Testament Tabernacle setting there must be the shedding of blood for the priest to continue to enter the Holy Place—the priest could only enter God's presence with a blood sacrifice to cover sin. Today, Jesus is our sacrifice, so a genuine believer can righteously enter-in to commune with God because of Jesus' shed blood. Stated differently, when you receive Jesus as your blood sacrifice, you can boldly enter God's presence. However, without the remission of sin through Jesus, a person cannot enter into God's presence—God will not commune with an unrepentant heart.

Lastly, when we abandon ourselves to an ongoing attitude of thanksgiving, praise and worship to God, our focus will shift to Him, His will, His priorities, His Kingdom, and off of ourselves, allowing us to walk in the Spirit. Praise and worship gives us the opportunity to empty ourselves, allowing God to fill us with His goodness. Otherwise, we will continue to be full of ourselves, leaving no room for God. Each time we choose to abandon ourselves to worship at His feet, we are emptying ourselves to be filled with Him. This enables God to slowly transform us to be more like Him. —Ω

 Information and Revelation
 Transformation

Heavenly Father, thank You for loving me when I was yet a sinner. Thank You for drawing me with Your love and rescuing me from a hopeless and desolate future of spending an eternity without You. My heart is moved to praise You for all that You have done, and for all You are going to do—redeeming people and setting sinners free to be all that You designed us to be. LORD, I so much want to worship You in spirit and truth, knowing that You designed me with the need, desire and ability to put You first in my life—I want to fulfil the First Greatest Commandment well! I want to answer the most important question ever asked, "It is You LORD God, Creator of heaven and earth; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that I will worship with all my heart soul and strength."

LORD, help me step-into the highest calling given to man—to bow low before You in worship and to commune with You between the wings of the cherubim within the Most Holy Place, the tabernacle of my heart. Help me learn how to abandon myself to know You; change me and transform me as I bask in Your presence. I bow low in thanksgiving, praise and worship to glorify and magnify Your holy Name. In Jesus' precious name I ask these petitions. Amen.

By David E McFadden
"Let's Make Disciples Together!"