

May 17, 2026

“How We Worship”

Romans 12:1-2

Intro:

Last Sunday I began a series of sermons that draw upon some of the lessons in the classes we walk through with those considering baptism. As we will be celebrating 6 people coming to baptism next Sunday, it seemed a good idea to remind all of us of what being a Christian, and part of God’s family, means as we walk the journey from our own experience of baptism. We begin here with the Church. This is the fourth lesson in our course, but how we understand the church and our relationship to one another is a great starting point in this new life of being a Christian.

If you were with us last week, you will recall that we wrestled with two questions. The first was, “What is the purpose of the church?” While there are arguably many valid and noble purposes of the church, the main one we start from is that the purpose of the church – which is the community of believers – is to worship God. Our worship of God then extends into the drive for living as a Christian. So we then explored the question, “Why do we worship?”

Now that we have given thought to why, this morning I want to open up for us the question of “*How* do we worship?”

Much like last week, there are far more possible answers to this question than we would even have time to list, let alone expand upon. It could very well be argued that there are as many answers to how we worship as there are worshippers. We are only going to touch on a few possible answers, in the hope that they will give you a good place to explore and deepen your own offering of worship.

So, let’s begin.

With the Whole Self:

There is no particular order here. These ideas all build on one another, joining with all that is not mentioned as part of the wonderful experience that is worship. The first thing to say about worship is that it is wholistic, meaning that worship involves our whole being. We don't just worship with our hands or our eyes or our voices. We worship with our whole selves. All of who we are – physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually should go into how we worship. Romans 12:1 (NLT) says,

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.”

This is a whole-self offering, not just in the moment of Sunday-morning gathering, but in the everyday of living. I like the way the Amplified Bible has fleshed this verse out a bit more. Let me read that here:

“Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies [dedicating all of yourselves, set apart] as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God, *which is* your rational (logical, intelligent) act of worship.”

We should approach worship with nothing less than our whole attention, focus, and participation, which speaks to an effort to prepare ourselves ahead of coming to a worship service. This looks different for everyone, but for everyone it involves intentionality. Maybe it means getting up earlier to make sure you have had some quiet moments of prayer or even just stillness before the rush of getting everyone ready to go to church. Or maybe it means getting up earlier to ensure arriving on time for worship so you aren't running in rushed and with a feeling of still trying to juggle all the things you have on the go. It might mean pausing briefly at the door to leave there the things would otherwise act as a distraction, such as worrying about what is for lunch, or if you remembered to set the PVR for the Riders game. On the note of leaving things at the door, it is good to differentiate between the things that need to be brought and those that don't. What we should bring in with us are the cares that we have for others, the joy and sadness that has been part of our week. We bring in with us the knowledge that

we are still not perfect and we have things that need to be confessed, and with that also the deep need to be forgiven and to feel that from God. Bringing those are part of bringing our whole self to worship.

Bringing our whole self to worship invites expression in worship. For some of you this will mean raising hands, clapping, and dare I even say it in a Baptist church – dancing during the singing of worship songs. For others it may be a deeper expression of delight in feeling the song settle deep in your soul. For some, worship is best expressed in the closing of eyes (not sleeping!), seeking to “see” with the mind’s eye. Whatever our posture, if it is genuine, we should never be made to feel as though we are doing it improperly, nor should we allow fear of the unknown to keep us from trying something new in our worship expression. For example, if you have never raised your hands in worship, maybe give that a try. It might open up a whole new joy of expression, or it might just confirm that that is not how you express worship.

Worship Through Music:

Singing songs is a significant part of worship, as music is the easiest way to bring expression to our worship. Worship is the whole package; singing is just part of it. And yet, it is often a part where people think they cannot participate because they are not good enough. God does not care about your skill; He cares about your offering. The musical side of worship is not limited to the professional musician, even if many of the songs are written in keys that only professionally trained musicians can sing or play. We can all bring music and a joyful noise before the Lord. Psalm 150 describes praise is a chaotic noise that everyone participates in, some with instruments, and everyone with their voice. Honestly, I have trouble imagining just what the worship service described in Psalm 150 would sound like, but I can picture everyone bringing all they have to the experience. So, if you have an instrument – play it! Yes, even the tambourine. But pay close attention to the last verse – “Let everything that breathes (this is all of us) sing praises to the Lord!” There is no excuse not to let God hear your voice of praise raised up as part of the choir that is the church joined in song together.

Worship Through Teaching and Offering:

As I said earlier, worship isn't just about singing – there is usually also the reading of Scripture, praying together, teaching, and giving of offerings. Colossians 3:16 encourages most of this list:

“Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he (Jesus) gives. Sing Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.”

Worship involves discussion with one another. So, talk with each other about what has been read and heard. Digest it. Discuss it. Share your own thoughts. Use it as a jumping off point for asking questions, and doing so bring yourself back to the Scriptures and seeking what God would say through them.

We worship through the giving of tithes and offerings. For some, this is a touchy subject. For others this is natural habit, and for some this is a concept that is either unknown or very new. The giving of offerings to God is one way of tangibly offering worship. Yes we can sing, and yes we can listen, but giving takes something that we have acquired (worked hard for), and entrusts it back into God's provision. In the Old Testament, God had set in place the idea of a tithe, which means a tenth, that people were to set aside to bring to the temple. This was the best of what they had earned – usually in the form of crops or livestock. And this tithe was primarily so that the physical needs of the Levites and priests would be looked after, so that they could focus all their energy on leading the people in the worship of God. We get legalistic about an exact 10%, but it really more about the attitude of offering, with 10% being an amount that gives people something to work with. Deuteronomy 16: 17 says

“All must give as they are able, according to the blessings given to them by the Lord your God.”

Meaning, 10% might be a pittance to some, so they should give more, while it might be a significant burden to others, and so they should be free to give less. The point is giving back to God in response to the blessing that He has given. And, as Paul points out in 2 Corinthians 9:7, it should all be done with joy:

“You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. 'For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.'”

Conclusion:

We have barely scratched the surface here, and we could easily spend several messages just unpacking this further, but I hope it gives us a good reminder of how we are to engage in worship together. And in case anyone missed that, **together** is what worship in the church is supposed to be. As individual Christians we are called to worship God daily in our own way, but as the Church gathered we worship together. We share in song together. We meet with God together. We pray and we bring our offering together. And this is the point I will close with. In worshipping together, we must also be careful to make sure that our personal worship does not overshadow or distract from someone else's. Worship is not selfish. I was visiting a church one time, and was sitting near the front row and there were a few people who were waving large flags on long poles as part of their worship expression. I will admit that flag waving is not part of my expression, but if that is what someone else wants to do, go for it. My issue in this particular situation was that they were oblivious to anyone else in the service – I had to duck on several occasions to avoid being beamed by a banner. That is, in my opinion, selfish worship. I was in another church sometime later where flag waving was encouraged, but they had set up a space in the back where people could express worship in this way without the risk of someone getting hit in the head. That was a community of worship together.

Let me close with a quote from Carmen Joy Imes that shows the communal and family connection of worship:

“When our congregation gathers for worship week after week, we are participating in something truly radical. To sing and pray together, hear Scripture read and preached, to witness baptisms, to give of our resources, and to share in the ritual of Communion, remembering what Christ has done to reconcile us to God and to each other – these are the powerful means by which we are collectively transformed. This is how we become God’s family.”¹

Let’s pray.

¹ Carmen Joy Imes, *Becoming God’s Family: Why the Church Still Matters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2025), 88.