

## WORSHIP: DEFINING THE TERM

Probably everybody has at least some idea of what worship is. No one, however, is beyond taking for granted what measures up to the Bible's definition of the term and God's expectation in our fulfillment of it. So, let's devote a little space to thinking about it.

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary points out that the term is a compound word consisting of "worth" (value) and "ship" (indicating a relationship). Thus, worship is a relationship in which one shows forth the worthiness of the object he worships. As Webster's goes on to say, worship is, "Courtesy or reverence paid to worth; hence honor respect."

William E. Vine's EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORDS states that "The worship of God is nowhere defined in Scripture. A consideration of the above verbs (several are listed by Vine, J.F.B.) shows that it is not confined to praise; broadly it may be regarded as the direct acknowledgment to God, of His nature, attributes, ways and claims, WHETHER BY THE OUTGOING OF THE HEART IN PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING OR BY DEED DONE IN SUCH ACKNOWLEDGMENT" (Emphasis added).

Vine's definition of the various Greek verbs translated worship is very different from the compartmentalized idea so many people hold. Too often worship is thought of as something that only issues from the mouth (hymns, prayers, etc.), is validated by occurring in a building or other place designated for this purpose, and that has little, if any, application to our actions in the "real world" beyond that location.

This is the way many people think, contrary to Vine's definition. Vine, however, apparently drew his definition from the teaching of the Bible, not from popularized conceptions.

For example, Jesus rebuffed Satan's effort to tempt him by referencing Deuteronomy 6:13. As Jesus phrased it, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve" (Matthew 4:10). There are two Greek terms in Jesus' declaration: *proskeneo* translated "worship" and *lartreuo*, translated "serve." So, does worship toward God involve the praise of our lips offered from the heart? Certainly. But according to Jesus' interchangeable use of the terms worship and serve, it also consists of our actions in service to God—including "real world" activity not confined to any specific place (a church building) or time (only on Sunday morning). —

Jerry F. Bassett