

Worship's More Than Something You Do Once Each Week

What good is worship? What is good worship?

Funny how the order changes the meaning. But the idea is the same: What is "good" and what is "worship" are connected. Or at least they should be.

The words "worship service" emblazon church signs all across America, along with the times and a few other bits of information.

We pass them every day as we travel through the city or the country, sometimes multiple churches just on the way to the grocery store.

But has it ever struck you how those two words belong together? Somehow, through the ages, worship became what you do at the end of the week to get right with God after all that you've done wrong during the week.

Nothing wrong with that. But isn't there more?

Maybe that way of looking at things gets it backward. Maybe a worship service is a call to worship service, to a life aimed at God and making this world more like God's kingdom.

If you look at it this way, worship is not just a Sunday morning ritual to make you feel better. Worship is a way of life.

Allow me to get a bit nerdy here, drawing on insights shared by Ruth C. Duck in her book, "Worship for the Whole People of God: Vital Worship for the 21st Century."

The word "worship" comes from the Old English for "worth ship," meaning that you are conveying "worth," or value, to something - in this case, to God.

In Spanish, there's a connection to "adoration." But how does one go about adoring and "worthing" something? I think there's a connection to how we live, and it helps to look at some other languages.

We get our word "liturgy" from the Greek for "work" and "people," an act performed to benefit the community.

The German word for worship puts together "God" and "service" - again defined as something done for others, not just a meeting with songs and a sermon.

Other words for worship in Spanish, French and Italian are connected to the cultivation of the earth, and by extension, the nurturing or faith, community and relationship with God.

We turn up our noses at Old Testament notions of sacrifice as "offerings," but that was their act of worship. But even there, you see a connection to service.

Isaiah 1:11-17 calls the people out, as if God is saying, "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? ... I have had enough of burnt offerings. ... I do not delight in the blood. ... cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow."

What would the world look like if we saw our “offering” to God as this list of actions?

So, what is good worship? It’s offering service. It’s something that calls you to praise God through serving other human beings.

What good is worship? It’s transformation. It’s something that calls you to change the way you see God, yourself and your neighbor.

We are called to be God’s people. Not just on Sundays, but always.

Editor’s note: A [version](#) of this article first appeared on Heritage Canton’s [pastor’s blog](#). It is used with permission.