

### 1 What does worshipping God mean for you and me?

When we think of worship, our thoughts typically turn to the ways we show religious devotion both privately and in Church services. As I have considered the matter of worshipping our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, our Savior, four concepts have come to mind: *first*, the actions that constitute our worship; *second*, the attitudes and feelings that figure into our worship; *third*, the exclusivity of our worship; and *fourth*, the need to emulate the Holy Beings that we worship.

2 One of the most common and important forms of worship is to gather in a consecrated space to perform acts of devotion. The Lord says, “And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day.”

3 We worship by joining in prayer; we worship by singing hymns (not just listening to but singing the hymns); we worship by instructing and learning from one another. Jesus says, “Remember that on this, the Lord’s day, thou shalt offer thine oblations [meaning thine ‘offerings ... of time, talents, or means, in service of God and fellowman’] and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord.” We come together not to entertain or be entertained—as by a band, for instance—but to remember Him and be “instructed more perfectly” in His gospel.

4 At the most recent general conference, Elder Patrick Kearon reminded us that “we do not gather on the Sabbath simply to attend sacrament meeting and check it off the list. We come together to worship. There is a significant difference between the two. To *attend* means to be present at. But to *worship* is to intentionally praise and adore our God in a way that transforms us!”

5 At Devoting our Sabbaths to the Lord and His purposes is itself an act of worship. Some years ago, then-Elder Russell M. Nelson observed: “How do we *hallow* the Sabbath day? In my much younger years, I studied the work of others who had compiled lists of things to do and things *not* to do on the Sabbath. It wasn’t until later that I learned from the scriptures that my conduct and my attitude on the Sabbath constituted a *sign* between me and my Heavenly Father [see Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12, 20]. With that understanding, I no longer needed lists of dos and don’ts. When I had to make a decision whether or not an activity was appropriate for the Sabbath, I simply asked myself, ‘What *sign* do I want to give to God?’”

6 Worshipping together as “the body of Christ” has unique power and benefits as we teach, serve, and sustain one another. Interestingly, one recent study found that those who view their spiritual lives as *entirely private* are less likely to prioritize spiritual growth, or to say their faith is very important, or to have regular devotional time with God. As a community of Saints, we strengthen each other in worship and in faith.

7 Even so, we cannot forget the daily acts of worship that we engage in individually and at home. The Savior reminds us, “Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times.” One sister wisely observed, “I cannot think of a more profound way to worship God than to welcome His little ones into our lives and care for them and teach them His plan for them.”

### A The Wrong Kind of Worship

[A1] The Lord has blessed us as a people with a prosperity unequalled in times past. The resources that have been placed in our power are good, and necessary to our work here on the earth. But I am afraid that many of us have been surfeited with flocks and herds and acres and barns and wealth and have begun to worship them as false gods, and they have power over us. Do we have more of these good things than our faith can stand?

[A2] Many people spend most of their time working in the service of a self-image that includes sufficient money, stocks, bonds, investment portfolios, property, credit cards, furnishings, automobiles, and the like to *guarantee* carnal security throughout, it is hoped, a long and happy life.

[A3] Forgotten is the fact that our assignment is to use these many resources in our families and quorums to build up the kingdom of God—to further the missionary effort and the genealogical and temple work; to raise our children up as fruitful servants unto the Lord; to bless others in every way, that they may also be fruitful. Instead, we expend these blessings on our own desires, and as Moroni said, “Ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not.” (Morm. 8:39.)

[A4] As the Lord himself said in our day, “They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own God, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and *whose substance is that of an idol*, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall.” (D&C 1:16; italics added.)

Spencer W. Kimball *The False Gods We Worship*

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1976/06/the-false-gods-we-worship>

### B Temple Worship

[B1] ... the temple both arrests our senses and matters so much in part because it is heavily liturgical.<sup>7</sup> As Latter-day Saints, we are accustomed to a weekly worship experience that largely changes based on the time of year, the needs of the congregation, and the personalities and spiritual insights of the participants. Anyone who has grown up a member of the Church understands this intuitively—we adjust our expectations for a meeting depending on who is speaking. We understand that some orators will address us more eloquently than others ...

[B2] The temple stubbornly refuses to conform to this set of expectations. Where we are accustomed to accessibility, the temple furnishes us with sermons spoken almost entirely in a rarefied, symbolic, and almost mystical tongue. Where we weekly nestle comfortably into a world of seasonal sermons and rotating hymns, the temple remains constant time after time and year after year (we will address the occasional changes to temple liturgy below).

[B3] Where our chapels offer their teachings freely, the temple guards its truths more closely; when worshipping in the temple, genuine and sustained effort is often required to access the meaning behind the layers of symbols.

**8** Alma and Amulek taught the Zoramites who had been banned from their synagogues to worship God not merely once a week but always and “in whatsoever place ye may be in.” They spoke about prayer as worship:

“Ye must pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness.

“Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually.”

They also spoke of searching the scriptures, bearing testimony of Christ, performing charitable acts and service, receiving the Holy Ghost, and living in thanksgiving daily. Consider that thought: “living in thanksgiving daily.”

**9** Feeling and expressing gratitude to God are, in fact, what infuses worship with a sense of joyful renewal as opposed to seeing it as just one more duty.

True worship means loving God and yielding our will to Him—the most precious gift we can offer. When asked which was the great commandment in all the law, Jesus replied, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

**10** Whatever takes precedence over worship of the Father and the Son becomes an idol. Those who reject God as the source of truth, or disavow any accountability to Him, in effect substitute *themselves* as their god. One who places loyalty to a party or cause ahead of divine direction worships a false god. Even those who purport to worship God but do not keep His commandments are walking in their own way: “They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” The object of our worship is exclusively “the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom [He] hast sent.”

**11** Ultimately, how we live may be the best, most genuine form of worship. Showing our devotion means emulating the Father and the Son—cultivating Their attributes and character in ourselves. If, as the saying goes, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then we might say with respect to Deity, emulation is the sincerest form of veneration. This suggests an active, sustained effort on our part to seek holiness.

**12** This is the beauty of the covenant path—the path of worship, love, and loyalty to God. We enter that path by baptism, pledging to take upon us the name of Christ and to keep His commandments. We receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, the messenger of the Savior’s grace that redeems and cleanses us from sin as we repent. We could even say that in repenting we are worshipping Him.

There follow additional priesthood ordinances and covenants made in the house of the Lord that further sanctify us. The ceremonies and ordinances of the temple constitute an elevated form of worship.

**13** President Russell M. Nelson has emphasized that “every man and every woman who participates in priesthood ordinances and who makes and keeps covenants with God has direct access to the power of God.” This is not only a power we draw upon to serve and to bless. It is also the divine power that works in us to refine and purify us. As we walk the covenant path, the sanctifying “power of godliness is manifest” in us.

<https://8ward.eu>

**[B4]** When we enter the temple, we must radically revise our expectations for worship. We must prepare ourselves to be challenged. We must acknowledge that the meaning of what we experience will not necessarily flow easily into our hearts the first, second, or even tenth time. We must know that liturgical worship matters just as much, even though it differs significantly from our usual weekly worship. The temple will demand that we return to it, again and again, throughout our lives, prepared to accept rays of truth as they come. Over time, we can learn that sometimes the process of revelation may be as slow as a tree that grows imperceptibly.

**[B5]** In the temple, we relearn to speak our worshipful language; we soften and humble ourselves to prepare for the reality and truth that will seep into us over years. We must not imagine we will leave after our first trip understanding in any large part the meaning of the ritual. The meaning of the temple awaits our seeking, but that quest may take many years; indeed, we will likely never exhaustively plumb its depths. This stubborn insistence on learning “line by line” over a lifetime will increasingly seem countercultural in the era of fast food, Google, two-day Amazon delivery, and ChatGPT. But this steady unfolding does not make what we learn less true or less important—indeed, this gradual distillation reminds us that many of life’s most important truths can be learned in only this way.

Tyler Johnson *Embracing Our Highest Worship*

<https://byustudies.byu.edu/article/embracing-our-highest-worship>

## C Worship through Reverence

**[C1]** The core words most often found in scriptures associated with reverence are *respect*, *love*, and *honor*. Using these standards, we can see that reverence reflects activity of the heart, not just inactivity of the mouth.

**[C2]** Reverence is an integral part of worship. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has instructed:

“Worship often includes actions, but true worship always involves a particular attitude of mind.

“The attitude of worship evokes the deepest feelings of allegiance, adoration, and awe. Worship combines love and reverence in a state of devotion that draws our spirits closer to God.” ...

**[C3]** As we develop reverence for Jesus Christ, we are better able to pattern our lives after His perfect example. There are many facets to such reverence: faith that He lives, trust in His promised blessings, and obedience to gospel standards. But one of the most important facets is the feeling of our heart—the respect, love, and honor we feel toward Deity. We who respect, love, and honor the Lord will never take His name in vain and will be uncomfortable with demeaning or trivializing jokes about Him. Rather, we praise and revere our Heavenly Father and Him whom we worship as our Lord and our Savior.

**[C4]** The Lord gives clear direction regarding His expectation for reverence in Leviticus 19:30, where He states, “Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.” The respect we show for His temples and chapels is a reflection of the reverence for Him we feel in our hearts. Our degree of respect, love, and honor for the Lord is directly reflected in our reverence, as shown by our attitudes as well as by our decorum.

Robert C. Oaks *Worship through Reverence*

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2009/12/worship-through-reverence>