

# What is the difference between praise and worship?

Understanding the difference between [praise](#) and [worship](#) can bring a new depth to the way we honor the Lord. Throughout the Bible, the commands to "praise the Lord" are too numerous to mention. Angels and the heavenly hosts are commanded to praise the Lord ([Psalm 89:5](#); [103:20](#); [148:2](#)). All inhabitants of the earth are instructed to praise the Lord ([Psalm 138:4](#); [Romans 15:11](#)). We can praise Him with singing ([Isaiah 12:5](#); [Psalm 9:11](#)), with shouting ([Psalm 33:1](#); [98:4](#)), with the dance ([Psalm 150:4](#)), and with musical instruments ([1 Chronicles 13:8](#); [Psalm 108:2](#); [150:3-5](#)).

Praise is the joyful recounting of all God has done for us. It is closely intertwined with thanksgiving as we offer back to God appreciation for His mighty works on our behalf. Praise is universal and can be applied to other relationships as well. We can praise our family, friends, boss, or paperboy. Praise does not require anything of us. It is merely the truthful acknowledgment of the righteous acts of another. Since God has done many wonderful deeds, He is worthy of praise ([Psalm 18:3](#)).

Worship, however, comes from a different place within our spirits. Worship should be reserved for God alone ([Luke 4:8](#)). Worship is the art of losing self in the adoration of another. Praise can be a part of worship, but worship goes beyond praise. Praise is easy; worship is not. Worship gets to the heart of who we are. To truly worship God, we must let go of our self-worship. We must be willing to humble ourselves before God, surrender every part of our lives to His control, and adore Him for who He is, not just what He has done. Worship is a lifestyle, not just an occasional activity. Jesus said the Father is seeking those who will worship Him "in spirit and in truth" ([John 4:23](#)).

In Scripture, praise is usually presented as boisterous, joyful, and uninhibited. God invites praise of all kinds from His creation. Jesus said that if people don't praise God, even the "[stones will cry out](#)" ([Luke 19:40](#)). When the Bible mentions worship, however, the tone changes. We read verses like, "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" ([Psalm 96:9](#)). And, "Come let us worship and bow down" ([Psalm 95:6](#)). Often, worship is coupled with the act of bowing or kneeling, which shows humility and contrition ([2 Chronicles 29:28](#); [Hebrews 11:21](#); [Revelation 19:10](#)). It is through true worship that we invite the Holy Spirit to speak to us, convict us, and comfort us. Through worship, we realign our priorities with God's and acknowledge Him once more as the rightful Lord of our lives.

Just as praise is intertwined with thanksgiving, worship is intertwined with surrender. It is impossible to worship God and anything else at the same time ([Luke 4:8](#)). The physical acts often associated with worship—bowing, kneeling, lifting hands—help to create the necessary attitude of humility required for real worship. Wise worship leaders know how to structure a worship service to allow participants to both praise and worship the Lord. Often, services begin with joyous praise songs and transition to a quieter, more introspective opportunity for worship.

Worship is an attitude of the heart. A person can go through the outward motions and not be worshiping ([Psalm 51:16-17](#); [Matthew 6:5-6](#)). God sees the heart, and He desires and deserves sincere, heartfelt praise *and* worship.