

COURSE: Spiritual Exercises

LESSON #6: WORSHIP

Part 3: The Audience of ONE

Scripture: Psalm 96.7-9 & Revelation 4-5

This is Part 3 of this multi-part current lesson we are studying together on the spiritual exercise of WORSHIP.

If you haven't watched Parts 1 and 2, I would encourage you to do that. You can find both the Lesson Notes and the links to the YouTube video on the links I have provided for you here:

[Part 1 on The Call To Worship](#)

<https://daveparksblog.com/2021/03/20/worship-part-1-the-call-to-worship/>

[Part 2 on Flourishing Through Worship](#)

<https://daveparksblog.com/2021/03/31/flourishing-through-worship-psalm-92/>

So now we come to Part 3. I'm calling this lesson The Audience of ONE – and, of course, the ONE is God Himself.

I would encourage to go ahead and get your Bible and begin by turning to a couple Scriptures: the first is Psalm 96 and the other one is Revelation, chapters 4-5. Just get a couple bookmarks and tag those two Scriptures. [By the way, there are at least a hundred other Scriptures we could refer to – and we will mention others just by referring to them, but these are very pointed and explicit expressions of how God Himself must be our Audience of ONE when we worship...]

A probing question...

Before I even get into our Scriptures, let me start off with a probing question you can ask yourself when you go to worship, and especially our public, corporate worship. The same question can be asked two different ways:

“Who are you worshipping?” And, of course, our answer will be, “I’m worshipping GOD!” That’s what worship is. We are GOD-worshippers. We worship GOD.

“Who are you worshipping FOR?” Now this question is the same question as “Who are you worshipping?”, but it probes a little deeper into our motivations for why we worship the ways we do. “What audience do you have in mind when you worship?” ... because it is very easy to tell ourselves and believe that we are worshipping God as our Audience of ONE when in fact we may be worshipping FOR the audience of others.

- When you sing, who are you singing FOR? Are you singing TO God as your Audience of ONE, or are you singing FOR and TO the audience of others, to be applauded and complimented by them?
- When you pray, who are you praying FOR? Are you praying TO God as your Audience of ONE, or are you praying FOR the ears of others, to be complimented for your fine praying?
- When you give, who are you giving FOR? Are you giving TO God as your Audience of ONE, or are you giving FOR to be seen by others, to be recognized for your generosity?
- I would ask those of us who preach and teach, who are you preaching and teaching FOR? Are you preaching and teaching TO God as your Audience of ONE, or are you preaching and teaching FOR the approval and compliments of others? This one hits close to home for all of us who preach and teach. And if we would be honest with you, we would have to confess that this is a constant struggle and a point of constant examination and frequent conviction. Every one of us who

preaches and teaches has to closely watch and examine our hearts and our motives and keep a guard and a check on our hearts. We all want to be liked and even respected. But we mustn't allow the desire to be liked, appreciated, and respected be the controlling motivation for what we preach and how we preach it.

Let Jesus set the rule

Let Jesus set the rule here. We are all familiar with Jesus' words in Matthew 6.1-6.

Jesus begins with this summary warning: "*Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.*" Now you tell me: who's the audience here in the minds and motives of these hypocritical worshipers? They would profess that they are worshiping FOR the glory of God, but really, they are worshiping FOR the audience of others. It is the other people who are seeing them conducting their exercises of worship! "*Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them...*" They have the Name of God in their mouths, but their attention is on the audience of the others who are watching them.

Jesus goes on in verse 2: "*Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others.*" And again in verse 5: "*And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.*" They have received their reward from their intended audience. They are doing their good deeds, they are serving, they are giving, they are praying not TO God and FOR God, but rather FOR the compliments and praises of the audience of others that they are performing FOR.

How about those of us who preach and teach? When we preach and teach and conduct all our ministry activities, who are we doing it TO and FOR? I know that people are always our immediate and physical audience. That's how it's done. And it is for the profit and welfare of other people's souls and lives that we do everything we do. But who is our commanding audience? Who are we looking at to please when we minister? Who are we ultimately ministering TO and giving our services FOR? It must be FOR the pleasure, approval, and glory of GOD.

God Himself is always our Audience of ONE.

Here's what Paul said about the motivation of his ministry.

Galatians 1.10: "For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ."

Paul was facing fierce storms of criticism and even rejection by some of the saints in the churches in Galatia because he insisted on preaching the pure, simple, saving Gospel of the grace of Christ. Some of the members of the churches were critiquing him by the standards of their own approval and what they liked and what they wanted to hear. They had designated and established themselves as the "audience," and Paul's responsibility was to appease and please them. They would listen to Paul and judge whether he was acceptable and approved or not.

But Paul soundly rejects that way of thinking and judging his ministry. Paul stakes his claim and makes his stand that he preached only for the Audience of ONE – and that ONE is God, the approval of God! All of his service was being rendered TO and FOR the Audience of ONE – and that ONE is to please Christ and serve Christ!

Who is your intended "audience" when you worship?

OK – I think we know where we’re going with this Audience of ONE theme. I want you to be examining your own heart and spirit especially as you engage and participate in worship exercises. It applies to all of our daily services for the Lord, but I want us to closely examine our hearts to ask ourselves: Who am I really worshiping when I worship the ways I do? Who is my intended audience? Who do I most want to see, know, and recognize my worship expressions? Who am I really giving my worship exercises TO? When I worship the ways I do, who am I really worshiping FOR?

“The Audience of ONE” in Psalm 96

Now let’s go back to Psalm 96. As I have said, I could read and teach from a hundred or more other Scriptures, but this one says it very pointedly and succinctly. I encourage you to read the whole Psalm with this theme in mind. But for now, let’s just focus our attention on verses 7-9:

- ⁷ Ascribe **to the LORD**, O families of the peoples,
ascribe **to the LORD** glory and strength!
- ⁸ Ascribe **to the LORD** the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and **come into his courts!**
- ⁹ **Worship the LORD** in the splendor of holiness;
tremble **before Him**, all the earth!

So – I’m going to ask you three simple questions as you read these worship expressions:

1. Who is our worship given TO?
2. Who is our worship given FOR?
3. Who is the audience of our worship?

1. Who is our worship given TO?

Well, of course, all our worship is given TO the LORD. “Ascribe TO the LORD...” We read this call to worship three times. Ascribe TO the LORD glory, strength – the glory due His Name. When you ‘ascribe’ something, you give credit and recognition. When

you ascribe TO the LORD glory, strength, and the glory due His Name, you are directing it all away from yourself and TO the ONE to whom it all belongs.

And, you will note also that verse 7 begins by calling on “O families of the peoples” to ascribe all this worship TO the LORD. “O families of the peoples” includes every single human being of whatever ethnicity, nationality, culture, tribe, language, whatever – every single one of us is to universally and unanimously ascribe all worship TO God! No one from “O families of the peoples” is to be ascribing or directing their worship and praises TO anyone else but the Audience of One. Keep this thought in mind as we later wrap up this lesson in Revelation chapters 4 and 5.

2. Who is our worship given FOR?

By ‘FOR,’ I mean, FOR whose attention? FOR whose approval? FOR whose pleasure? FOR whose compliments? All our worship is to be given FOR God! Verse 8: “Ascribe TO the LORD the glory DUE HIS NAME!” No other person or creature is worthy of our expressions of worship. No other person’s or creature’s approval, or compliments, or pleasure is worthy of our giving our worship FOR them. Only God is worthy of our giving our worship FOR His praise, glory, and pleasure.

Let’s read verses 1-6:

- Oh sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth!
- ² Sing to the LORD, bless His Name;
tell of His salvation from day to day.
- ³ Declare His glory among the nations,
His marvelous works among all the peoples!
- ⁴ For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
He is to be feared above all gods.
- ⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.
- ⁶ Splendor and majesty are before Him;
strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

3. Who is the audience of our worship?

There is no doubting or mistaking that we worship the LORD, He Himself is our Audience of ONE. I know that we worship in the physical presence of one another. I know that we worship together to teach one another, and encourage one another, and exhort one another. I know that we have leaders and ministers who speak to us and prompt us in our exercises of worship. That is God's prescribed order. But in all of our exercises of worship, THEY [that is, our worship leaders] are not the audience of our worship, and WE are not the audience of our worship. There is only ONE Audience. And that is God Himself. God Himself is our Audience of ONE.

Listen to verses 8-9 again:

“Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His Name;
bring an offering, and come into His courts!”

The picture is one of a subject coming into the audience of royalty. And so the custom always has been that when you come and appear before royalty, you come with an offering of some sort to express your worship of the Majesty and His worthiness to receive your worship. The Majesty is your Audience, and you are coming into His courts. And the offerings that we bring are our worship: our singing, our praying, our confessing of our sins, our hearing and receiving the preached and taught Word of God, our commitments and resolutions to obey and follow what the Majesty commands.

Verse 6 again: “Splendor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.” When we come to worship, we are coming into God's very Presence! The splendor and majesty that are ‘before Him’ are the splendor and majesty of His Presence. God Himself is the Audience into whose holy and august Presence we are coming. We mustn't forget that or be distracted from Him!

Just think about all the times we remember the psalmists use these phrases to describe our worship being in God's audience: "come into His Presence," "before Him," "unto the LORD." In Psalm 42, the psalmist describes coming to worship as 'appearing before God.'

"As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"

And then verse 9 of Psalm 96:

"Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before Him, all the earth!"

When the psalmist calls us to "tremble *before* Him," we understand that He is the Audience of ONE! And when we are commanded to "tremble *before* Him, *all the earth!*" we understand that there is no other audience in 'all the earth' but God: The Audience of ONE for 'all the earth.' In all the earth, among all the peoples and creatures that inhabit the world, there is no other audience for 'all the earth' but God: The Audience of ONE!

It's not that we are not aware of the others who are around us when we worship. It's not that we don't recognize their presence. It's not that we don't greet them, and respect them, and appreciating them being there with us to worship God together. It's not that give them no attention or pay them no mind.

It's just that we are not worshipping FOR them. No one of them is our audience. All of us together are worshipping together 'before the LORD' and He, and He only is our Audience of ONE!

Kierkegaard's metaphor – actors and audience...

Let me illustrate the difference from something I read years ago. It made a deep impression on my thinking back then when I first read it, and it has stuck with me ever since. I think about it all the time.

Back in the mid-1800s, there was a Danish philosopher by the name of Soren Kierkegaard. Along with being a philosopher, he was also a theologian, and he called himself a religion critic. I'm not condoning his teachings or advocating for him because we wouldn't agree with almost all of what he believed and wrote. But as a "religion critic," he wrote extensively about what he observed to be the hypocrisy and emptiness of what was called Protestant Christianity in Denmark in his day. And especially in their established and traditional Protestant worship.

In fact, his criticism was that what should have been the worship of God had degenerated into what was no better than a Greek theater. He compared their traditional worship service to a Greek drama. There were actors [the preachers and leaders in singing], and then there was the audience. He calls them the 'listeners,' or in his metaphor 'theatergoers' – his words: "and the listeners as theatergoers who are to pass judgment upon the artist." In this metaphor, the listeners [the congregation/audience] in a worship service watch and listen to the preacher and the leaders in singing, and as Kierkegaard perceived it back in his day, the listeners serve not only as the 'audience' for what was no more noble than a religious performance and production – and they also served as self-appointed 'judges' of how good it was!

You know and I know that this sort of critiquing, evaluating, and judging goes on all the time among us. We, the church-going congregants, attend worship services with the attitude that ~~we~~ we are the audience that the performers and the actors [that would be the leaders of our singing/music worship and the preacher] are there to please us, the audience. And we will judge for ourselves how well they do. We wouldn't dare to say

that out loud or to verbalize it to anyone, but how often does that attitude govern the ways we think, and watch, and listen?

How many of us – and how often – attend worship services like judges at the Winter Olympic indoor events – like, for example, gymnastics or figure skating? We sit before those who are leading us in our exercises of worship as if we were watching ‘performances’ of those who are ‘performing.’ We have our judge’s score cards in our mental ‘hands,’ ready to throw up our numbers on how well we thought they did. Was it a ‘10’? Maybe ... rarely. How about a ‘7,’ or a ‘5,’ – or if we are especially ticked off, maybe only a ‘2,’ or a ‘3.’ Why, I’ve even had comments made to me by congregants leaving the service – or more often, get a note or email or phone call later that day or the next day – letting me know that I scored so low in the negatives that they didn’t have enough room on their judge’s score card to write all the negative numbers! [They used other words, but that was the distinct message of their negative critiques.]

This is what Kierkegaard was criticizing when he compared a lot of traditional church-going to a Greek theater performance with actors and audience – with the church-goers being the audience and judges. We, the church-goers, the worshipers, are NOT the audience. All true worship has an Audience of ONE – and that ONE is God Himself!

Sadly, many leaders do it also...

Sadly, also, so many who are in the leadership of our worship services practice and have cultivated the same perversion of true worship. There is too much of a culture of this kind of celebrity leadership pandering to the audiences they want to please. They have been all too willing to see themselves as “performers” and have embraced the task of pleasing those who come to see them or hear them. Musicians and preachers alike have used the services of the sacred worship of God to promote themselves and gain followers for themselves.

We, in our church, should bless God that our pastors and the leaders of our worship services preach, teach, sing, and lead us in our worship exercises to give all of our worship together to our Audience of ONE. Our pastors, preachers, teachers, and leaders in singing worship may serve as prompters – but in all the exercises of our worship, they ultimately join us as we give our offerings of praise and worship together and in unison to our Audience of ONE!

The “Audience of ONE” in Heavenly worship!

I’m going to bring this lesson to a close by inviting you to come along with me as we attend worship as it is expressed in Heaven. In fact, this is precisely what the angel said to the apostle John when he showed him these visions of how worship is given and expressed in Heaven.

And, whatever goes on in Heaven is shown to us to serve as a model and pattern for how we must conduct the same exercises here on earth – now in our own experiences...

John describes the angel’s invitation this way:

¹After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” ~Revelation 4:1 ESV

Now, what John will describe from here on through the remainder of Revelation, chapters 4-5, is how, in Heaven, all of the expressions of praise and worship are given to the Audience of ONE! Listen to him describe what he saw in this vision of Heavenly worship: ***all attention and all worship is centered on, directed to, and given to The Audience of ONE!*** There are going to be many worshipers – I want you to listen for all the worshipers to be distinguished, named, and identified – but every worshiper has this

one thing in common: ***every single worshiper, all together, all in unison, give all their attention, praise, and worship to The Audience of ONE!***

Revelation 4:2-11 ESV

²At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with One seated on the throne. ³And He who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

⁴Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

⁵From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ⁶and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!”

⁹And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who is seated on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

¹¹“Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created.”

John continues – reading on into Revelation, chapter 5 ... keep your attention fixed on
The Audience of ONE!

Revelation 5:1-14 ESV

¹Then I saw in the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” ³And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵And one of the elders said to me,

“Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that He can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

⁶And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷And He went and took the scroll from the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne. ⁸And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹And they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
¹⁰and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.”

¹¹Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,

to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might
and honor and glory and blessing!”

¹³And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

¹⁴And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

And every single one of them: the twenty-four elders, the four living angelic creatures, the many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, and every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them – ALL of them together, in unison, with one voice are all worshipping THE AUDIENCE OF ONE!

I repeat: whatever activity we are privileged to witness in Heaven is revealed to us to serve as a model and pattern for how we conduct our lives here on earth.

So, I ask you again as I did at the beginning of this lesson:

- When you attend worship, who is your audience? Is it others, or is it God, The Audience of ONE?
- When you sing, who do you sing FOR? Who is your audience? Is it others, or is it God, The Audience of ONE?
- When you pray, who do you pray FOR? Who is your audience? Is it others, or is it God, The Audience of ONE?
- Those of us who preach and teach, who are we really preaching and teaching FOR? Is it for the recognition, compliments, and praise of others? Or is it FOR God, The Audience of ONE?

And on and on – examine and question every activity and expression of our worship. Yes – continue to worship and serve for the encouragement, instruction, and building up of others. But in everything we do, let’s do it “before the LORD, in the Presence of God,”

The Audience of ONE!

Now may the God of peace who brought up again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

~Hebrews 13.20-21

HERE IS THE LINK TO THE YOUTUBE VIDEO FOR THIS LESSON:

<https://youtu.be/7LCa2VgLKfk>

HERE IS THE LINK TO THE BLOG POST AND LESSON NOTES:

<https://daveparksblog.com/2021/05/08/worship-part-3-the-audience-of-one/>