

How we are weakening the meaning of the word “worship”

Introduction:

Worship is such an important aspect of a Christian’s life, and of the life of the church. It therefore must be understood and applied with care, guided by teaching from the Bible, the unchanging Word of God. Unless we are careful in our study of the Bible, we can be easily persuaded by nice-sounding theories. Fashions and music styles in worship have changed, and will continue to do so. But the biblical truths of worship must remain the same, otherwise we put ourselves in danger of deception and weirdness.

I can see a subtle danger to our understanding of worship, because the very word *worship* itself is being subject to redefinition. Well-meaning teachers, who have good things to say, are not seeing the dangers and the implications of how they use the word *worship*. Misusing a word will eventually cause misunderstanding as its meaning is lost in the fog of ambiguity.

The truths of worship have become **collateral damage** in the righteous war against two errors that Christians are identifying, hypocrisy in worship and the sacred-secular dichotomy.

Firstly, let’s consider hypocrisy. A number are saying that we can’t just profess our love for Jesus in church, then go out on Monday and live just like the heathen. Of course this is true! But to add to the emphasis, pastors, teachers, and even worship leaders, often say that we can’t just worship on Sunday, all our lives must be lived in this “attitude” of worship. This sounds quite reasonable, but then they take it further by saying all our life is worship. In preaching the truth of being genuine in our worship, and of living holy lives, they have not realized that they are redefining worship to mean just the attitude of a loving heart towards God. In other words, worship has been reduced to merely an attitude of heart, or, the way we do things.

Secondly, many who are involved in occupations outside of the church are encouraged as they are taught that their work is worship. This is an attempt to heal the wound caused by the sacred secular dichotomy, but unfortunately it becomes merely a bandaid covering. This Greek idea of sacred and secular, often reinforced by pastors or missionaries, says that somehow life is divided up into sacred activities (that God prescribes) and secular activities (where God has no part). Many are struggling with the feeling that their daily employment is somehow less valuable to God than being in “full-time” Christian service and these people are comforted by considering that their work is actually worship.

Because the desire to express these truths is so strong, or perhaps we’re just careless, many attempts to teach these concepts have taken some liberties in biblical interpretation and have used arguments with questionable logic. In doing so, the implications to our understanding of worship have largely been ignored.

Worship must become a “way of life” just like evangelism is a way of life - but just as not everything we do is evangelism (there are some things we do that aren’t evangelism), there are some things we do that aren’t worship. There is a big difference between making worship a way of life and saying everything we do is worship!! We must be able to tell the difference.

I’ve compiled some of the questionable teachings on worship that are common in the body of Christ.

Quoting Romans 12:1 . . .

Romans 12:1 has become the favorite verse to say that all of life is worship. As long as people quote a Bible verse along with their own ideas, it sounds like teaching from the Bible.

Most modern translations say “spiritual (act of) worship” for the Greek words λογικος λατρευια (logikos latreia) - KJV, NKJV & NET render this as “reasonable service”. The newer ESV version at least puts the alternate rendering “rational service” in its footnotes. This verse does not use the usual word that is translated as worship in the New Testament (*proskuneo*) and, as such, does not provide a reliable guide to what the Bible means by worship. Just one verse is not a good foundation for any Bible teaching, but quoting Romans 12:1 seems to satisfy many people that all of life is worship. Even if you accept “spiritual worship” as the translation, it’s doubtful whether that verse

is trying to say that all of life is worship; it doesn't say it very clearly. It looks to me like an example of bringing your assumption to the Word and interpreting the verse to say what you want it to say.

The use of the word worship in this passage muddies the distinction between worship and service. Service is a universal term, used for many different acts done in allegiance to God. Worship is a term used throughout the Bible in a specific, distinct manner. But because of these modern translations using the word worship for *latreia*, many teachers and worship leaders have used Romans 12:1 as their case for saying everything we do is worship.

All worship is service, but not all service is worship.

Here's a few samples of how some quote Romans 12:1 to "prove" all of life is worship

In a worship gathering, we create a place where we can express love, devotion, adoration and praise to God. This should shape our planning and design. But worship is not something we do only once a week on Sunday morning or evening. Worship is a lifestyle of being in love with God and in awe of him all week long (Romans 12:1-2). It is offering our love, our adoration, and our praise to him through all of our lives.

We are to adore the Lord all week, not just at "worship gatherings". Our minds, our hearts, our bodies, our marriages, our families, our jobs - everything should be offered to him in worship. This includes what we think about, what we do, what we say, what we eat, and what we spend time doing - they are all acts of worship.

Dan Kimball - "Emerging Worship"

This passage in Romans is at the very heart of worship, and it is the heart that God searches to see whether we are dying daily to our own selfish ways, and are therefore, alive with the life and power of Jesus. If this is true of us then every thought, action and emotion can become an act of true worship.

..... A gathering for worship is no more an act of worship than being a loving mother and housewife, or practicing hospitality; or doing your' job well (provided these are being done to the glory of God); it is simply a special time when we lay aside the necessary but mundane activities of life and give our whole energy and attention to expressing what has become fundamental to our lives.

Graham Kendrick - "Worship"

A true worshipper lives a life of worship in all that he or she says and does.

Ultimately, our Sunday morning experience of worship should be the culmination of six days of worship lived in our lives.

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23).

When we begin to understand these and similar passages in the Bible, we realize that all that we do should be worship unto God.

Romans 12: 1 says that we are to offer our bodies "as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship." ***Giving ourselves, wholly and completely unto the Lord is worship.*** I like to think of doing that on a daily basis. Would it make a difference in your life if you thought like that? Suppose that for the next week, each day when you get out of bed you say, "Lord, today I am Yours. Wherever I go, whatever I do, I want my life to bring praise and honor unto You. Wherever I am, whether at home, on my job, in school, in the marketplace, I dedicate all that I do to Your glory. ***Lord, let my life be worship unto You.***"

Tom Krauter - "Worship is What?"

More than Just Music

As is correctly observed, worship is more than just singing songs. But without a thorough study of what worship is from the Bible, some are left with making unverified statements about worship. It's true that worship is more than music, it's right to be looking deeper than just singing a bunch of songs. But what, then, are we going to say?

Because the first statement is correct, we all seem to agree on that, it tends to imply that what is said following is also correct. The first correct statement leads us to have the confidence to believe what comes next. Unfortunately, once again, no justification is given for moving from "more than songs" to "everything we do". But often it is just stated and without questioning it, we often end up believing it.

Here are a few quotes from people who make this leap from truth into unverified speculation.

there is a problem when we equate singing with worship - when we believe that singing is worship and that to 'worship' is to 'sing' - because the act of worship demands much more from us than mere singing. The worship that God requires of us is not limited to one single activity. Every part of our lives is to be lived as an act of worship.

Diane Bengé - Reality Magazine - Aug-Sep 2003

*At the **Passion event**, Johnson also learned **worship is more than music; it is a lifestyle** that glorifies God through a daily walk with Christ. That idea has become the central theme of his message as a worship leader.*

*"The most important thing when talking of worship and music is to understand that **worship is not just music** ... although music can speak directly to people when nothing else can," he said. "Music is a powerful form of communication, and it is often a way for people to remember words and messages. It is a way for us to be ushered into God's throne room and to allow us to respond to what God is doing in our lives." - Jeff Johnson*

From article by Leann Callaway

<http://www.bpnews.net/printerfriendly.asp?id=20082>

*Depending on your religious background, you may need to expand your understanding of "worship." You may think of church services with singing, praying, and listening to a sermon. Or you may think of ceremonies, candles, and communion. Or you may think of healing, miracles, and ecstatic experiences. **Worship can include these elements, but worship is far more than these expressions. Worship is a lifestyle.***

***Worship is far more than music.** For many people, worship is just a synonym for music. They say, "At our church we have the worship first, and then the teaching." This is a big misunderstanding. Every part of a church service is an act of worship: praying, Scripture reading, singing, confession, silence, being still, listening to a sermon, taking notes, giving an offering, baptism, communion, signing a commitment card, and even greeting other worshipers.*

***Worship is not a part of your life; it is your life.** Worship is not just for church services. We are told to "worship him continually"⁶ and to "praise him from sunrise to sunset."⁷*

*Every activity can be **transformed into an act of worship** when you do it for the praise, glory, and pleasure of God. The Bible says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do) do it all for the glory of God."¹⁰ Martin Luther said, "A dairymaid can milk cows to the glory of God."*

How is it possible to do everything to the glory of God? By doing everything as if you were doing it for Jesus and by carrying on a continual conversation with him while you do it. The Bible says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart) as working for the Lord, not for men."¹¹

*This is the secret to a lifestyle of worship - doing everything as if you were doing it for Jesus. The Message paraphrase says, "Take your everyday, ordinary life - your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life - and place it before God as an offering."¹² **Work becomes worship when you dedicate it to God** and perform it with an awareness of his presence.*

***Rick Warren** - "Purpose Driven Life"*

Worship has little to do with the way we sing, dance, or play musical instruments. It is not merely a 20-minute warm-up, tilling the soil of our hearts for the planting of the seed by the preacher. What then constitutes worship? Is it the same as praise, making the two synonymous for each other?

Praise is a separate topic. It is based on our knowledge of God. We won't elaborate on praise here, except to differentiate it from worship.

*Worship is our response to God, meaning our obedience. **We don't worship Him by what we sing, but rather by how we live – our lifestyle.** Worship is what results from the continual process of change, growing more and more like Jesus as we spend time in God's Word, pray, and fellowship with our lord. Worship is always the result of personal activity or contact with God. It doesn't happen automatically because we call ourselves "Christian." It comes through being Christ-minded and Christ-lifestyle oriented.*

- Tom Inglis Why We Need a Lifestyle of Worship

<http://www.floridafitness.com/Faith/Worship.html> - (no longer live)

So how would you answer the sentence "Worship is....." ?

Most people think worship is music, but it's more than that. it's not just singing or saying the right words; it means there's something in your life, your posture, and your actions that seeks to honor God. I think worship is a life lived before God. It's much more than music and singing. There are a lot of people who can't sing at all, but they live a lifestyle of worship! - Israel Houghton

<http://worship.net/2010/01/a-dialogue-by-israel-houghton/#comments>

Just State it - without any justification!

If we listen to any teachings without questioning and investigation, we open ourselves to deception. Worship leaders and leaders in the body of Christ keep saying "everything we do is worship" and not many are questioning it. It is being swallowed as truth. But it's going to cause indigestion someday! Here's a few examples of some well known people making blanket statements without any validation.

You, my friend. ..are a worshiper! There, I said it. Everyday, all day long, in every place, you worship. It's what you do. It's who you are.

EVERYWHERE-WORSHIP

Worship is the activity of the human soul. So not only do all people worship, but they worship all the time. Worship isn't just a Sunday thing. It's an all-the-time thing.

*from The Air I Breathe: Worship As a Way of Life
by Louie Giglio*

What is the church's part in continuing the movement of the Holy Spirit in worship?

*M: **I think worship is a lifestyle, first of all.** I think music is just a small part of it. Although, it's something we can do corporately, which I think is powerful. Just look at the Old Testament. They didn't go out with the army first. They sent the musicians out. And many, many wars were won because the music confused the enemy, although we were outnumbered. So I think that's critical. We've got to remember music is a big part of it.*

*But I think as churches — and I'll go off the deep end here — and say we've got to reach out to our communities. We've got to get involved in **taking care of the poor.** I think if the church did what they were supposed to do we wouldn't have anyone sleeping on the streets. It's hard work. It's hard to figure all that out. **But I think that's an act of worship.** We've got to get involved and reach out to the communities, be more evangelical, and bring people into the kingdom. That's what it's all about . . .*

How do you see worship in other areas of your life?

M: Do it unto the Lord in everything you do — your job, your friends, the guy at the Quick Stop, the guy at the little market you go to, whatever and wherever. It's the way you treat people. **All of that is worship to me.** Experiencing God's creation.

Michael W. Smith: *Worshipping Beyond the Sanctuary*
Interview by Michael Herman

<http://www.buildingchurchleaders.com/articles/2001/music-interviews-mwsmith-1201.html>

"There are way too many walls in Christian music. A lot of my friends are saying we're walled into worship, but if you ask me, we're all worship bands. Worship is a totally different thing, really. And **everything we do is worship**, so it seems like a lot of these walls should come down. I think the closer you get to Jesus, the more you start seeing that everybody has a ministry that they need to do. You just gotta be careful when you're out there not to look at the others as though they're not in ministry because they're not in your ministry."

Mark Hall of "Casting Crowns"
article by Tony Cummings

http://www.crossrhythms.co.uk/articles/music/A_Song_For_Life/16459/p1/

Integrity Music: What has been the most profound lesson you've learned about worship over the past few years?

Baloche: That worship is a journey and God is always the goal. **That real worship is** our relationship with God and **how we live our lives in the context of a 24/7 relationship** with the person of Jesus. Singing, dancing, making music, etc., are simply "expressions" of our love affair with our Creator and Savior.

10 Questions with **Paul Baloche**
by Melissa Riddle

<http://www.leadworship.com/resources/TenQuestions.html>

Worship is simply a response to God, and in songwriting, you're responding to who God is. **All of life is worship;** it's responding in that way, and it comes out in songs."

WORSHIP WITNESS:
Texas songwriter **Chris Tomlin**
- By Leann Callaway

<http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=25039>

everything you think,
everything you say,
and everything you do,
revealing that which you
treasure and value most in life.

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MORE THAN MUSIC. A WAY OF LIFE.

Worship.com - Passion - home page

The songs found on Reflection of Something speak of worship and salvation, and will strike a familiar chord with listener's. The impressive "Isaiah 6" represents the glory of a heavenly encounter with God and was written while Todd was studying to prepare for a teaching series on worship. "Mercy In Me" teaches the importance of **worship as a lifestyle instead of an action** and "Something Beautiful" speaks of our inability to earn God's love, since it is given as a gift. - **Todd Agnew**

<http://christianmusic.about.com/od/upcomingreleases/a/aaagnew2ndrel.htm>

Interpretation of John 4 - “God is looking for worshipers, not worship”

The arguments put forward are “God is looking for worshipers not worship” and “Jesus removed all connection with the external, making worship purely internal (spiritual)”.

Firstly, John 4 doesn't say that God is looking for worshipers, it says God is looking for a **special kind** of worshiper. He's got plenty of worshipers, he's looking for the **true** worshipers. He's looking for the special quality in the worshiper that he calls “true”. This word means genuine, real or authentic. He's looking for the people who mean what they say in worship.

Secondly, Jesus said that it didn't matter where you worshiped, but he *didn't* redefine worship as purely internal, or just the attitude. Jesus was saying what kind of worship God accepts. He was commenting on the motivation or heart of worship, he wasn't defining worship. The woman's question (in the form of a statement) wasn't “what is worship”, it was “what kind, what place, hence, what *method* of worship does God accept”. Jesus was answering the *how* of worship, not the *what*.

His answer to the woman at the well was an explanation of the *kind* of worship the Father required. He said that the acceptability of worship does not depend on where it's done, which was the Samaritan's argument against the worship in Jerusalem. It depended on the heart attitude of the worshiper. The heart attitude is not the *what* of worship, it is the *how*. The word *true* in the phrase “true worshipers” refers to the *how* of worship. Fake worship is still worship, it's just not acceptable to God, which is what Jesus says in Matt 15:8-9 . . .

*“These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.
They **worship** me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.”*

Worship is still worship whether it is done from a good heart or is hypocritical. But God only accepts worship from an honest heart. The definition of worship doesn't depend on the heart attitude of the worshiper, but the acceptability of their worship sure does!

Worship is giving glory to God, therefore, anything that gives glory to God is worship:

This is an example of assuming a meaning and extrapolating based on the assumption. If my work gives glory to God, then my work is worship. It assumes *all* giving glory to God is worship. The idea doesn't come from a study of the Bible, it is an assumption. Yes, worship gives glory to God, but not all giving glory to God is worship.

Worship comes from the Old English “worth-shippe”:

Here, the argument is that because the English word *worship* comes from the Old English “worth-shippe”, it follows that worship is expressing the worth of God. So, therefore, anything that gives worth to God is worship. Once again, worship does express the worth of God, but not everything that expresses God's worth is worship. The mistake here is that the truth does not come from the derivation of the English word, it comes from the meanings of the Hebrew and Greek words.

The Hebrew & Greek Words are translated *worship* and *service*

One of the most convincing arguments for worship as everything we do, is the translation of the Hebrew and Greek “service” words as “worship”. The logic then goes something like this: because *abad* is translated as *worship* **and** *service*, then service is worship!

Often we'll hear people talk about the Hebrew and Greek words *for* worship. This illustrates a possible ethnocentric methodology of Bible interpretation. The Hebrew and Greek words are the source of meaning for our English words found in the Bible. Every English word is the best guess of the translators to describe the meaning of the biblical words. Worship is a word **for** *proskuneo*, not the other way around.

We err if we start our study of worship by defining the English word, our task is to describe the concept behind the original biblical words, and then find the best English word to describe the concept. Because the English word has changed it's meaning, mostly because of loose usage, it gets used to translate different Hebrew words than before (see analysis of this below). In other words, if we begin to believe that worship encompasses all of life and every-

shachah - translated not as worship 68 times in KJV - usually to men or angels, where it's translated usually as bow down or do obeisance (17 in Genesis alone) - translated as worship 98 times in KJV

proskuneo is always translated as worship - 54 times

abad 05647 -(263x) is never translated *worship* in OT - except for one example - in 2Kg 10 - worshippers of Baal - NIV started to translate *abad* as worship, first example is Ex 3:12, NIV, NAS and NRSV change it to *worship*, ESV, NET, RSV keep *serve*. (NKJV always follows KJV). Same pattern follows in Ex 7:16, ("let my people go that they may *abad* me"), again in Ex 20:5

latreia/latreuo 2999,3000 - of 26x used, 4 are translated **worship** in KJV

Ac 7:42 Then God turned, and gave them up to **worship** the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?*

Ac 24:14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so **worship** I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:*

Php 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which **worship** God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

Heb 10:2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the **worshippers** once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.*

In Luke 2:37 - Anna fasting and praying, now the ESV and NET follow the NIV, NRSV, RSV by using *worship*, KJV, NAS and NKJV keep *serve*. But Jn 16:2, NIV follows ESV, NET, RSV, NAS use *serve* while NRSV change to *worship*. Same in Acts 26:7, but ESV, RSV changes to *worship*.

Latreuo is often used in the NT for the service in the temple - hence the similarity to activity in the church service - so using the word *worship* is understandable if we associate the word with the gathering of the body on Sunday for "worship", because the modern usage of the English word has changed. But saying service outside of the church meeting is worship pushes it too far. It is a mistake to say that because it is sometimes translated *worship* and sometimes *service*, that all *service* is *worship*. The service that is translated *worship* is usually service in the temple - not sweeping the floor type of service.

Attempts to solve the sacred-secular divide:

Although many find it helpful to call their work, worship, unfortunately, it does not solve the problem of the sacred-secular dichotomy. It only convinces people to *feel* better about their work, but in the process, it also undermines the meaning of worship.

The problem of sacred and secular remains if we think calling work, worship, makes it valuable. To attach the word worship to our work makes people feel better, but to achieve that you must have the attitude that somehow worship is more valuable to God than work and if we put this really spiritual word next to our work then our work will magically become more spiritual.

The value of our daily work does not come from calling it worship, it comes from the truth that God has ordained work as the duty of man. We work because God has asked us to work. He commanded work before the fall, work isn't a result of the fall and therefore, doesn't need redemption (but our attitudes towards our work sometimes do!). God asked Adam to name the animals, which I would imagine was quite time consuming! The fall resulted in sweat and hardship in our work. If we feel our work needs redeeming, then we need to change our view of work, viewing it as from God.

Love is the universal, motivating force behind all our actions, worship is specific.

Because worship is, for many people, THE time when they connect with God, it is confused with loving relationship. All of life must spring from, and express, our loving relationship with God, but not all expressions of love need to be called worship - the Bible uses the word *worship* mostly in the context of special encounters with God, not all of life. All of life must be lived in this love relationship, but not all of life is worship, just as not all of life is prayer or evangelism - these are activities - but they're all out of a lifestyle of love and passion for God.

History and possible sources of “Work is Worship” . . .

In Eastern Religions

Where did these ideas of worship come from? I've found “work is worship” in some unusual places. It was a surprise to find it used extensively in Eastern religions, including Islam, Hinduism, Bahaii etc. It is a strong emphasis in Freemasonry, which is not surprising seeing it's work that brings the members together and, as they don't adhere to any particular religion, their work becomes their god!

These Eastern religion examples show remarkable similarity to what many Christians are saying about worship. Just because they say it, doesn't make it necessarily wrong or even proof that the idea has it's source in the East, but it sure makes you wonder!! It just might be.

Hinduism

*A man attains perfection when his **work is worship of God**, from whom all things come and who is in all. Greater is thine own work, even if this be humble, than the work of another, even if this be great. When a man does the work God gives him, no sin can touch this man.*

*Bhagavad Gita 18.45-47.
from Hinduism Today - June 1994*

***One attains the highest perfection by devotion to one's natural work.** Listen to Me how one attains perfection while engaged in natural work. (18.45)*

*He from whom all beings originate, and by whom all this universe is pervaded; **worshipping Him by performing one's natural duty for Him** one attains perfection. (See also 9.27, 12.10) (18.46)*

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Gandhi believed that helping the poor is an especially good way to worship God:

*I cannot imagine anything nobler than that for, say, one hour a day, we should all do the labour that the poor must do, and thus identify ourselves with them and through them with all mankind. **I cannot imagine better worship of God than that in His name I should labour for the poor** even as they do.*

*The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi. Ed. R. K. Prabhu and U. R. Rao
(Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1967), p202.*

Islam

*In Islam work is given special importance to the extent that it is considered as an **act of worship** in itself. Although some people believe that they are not obliged to work because they dedicate themselves to worshiping God, this is actually a wrong perception of the concept of worship*

*The Concept of Work in Islam - By Kamal Badr
from <http://www.islamonline.net/english/introducingislam/Individual/article09.shtml> - (no longer live)*

*In Islam, the term 'ibadah (service, worship) does not merely signify the ritualistic activities such as Salah (ritual Prayer), fasting, Zakah (obligatory alms) or Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah). It includes all the activities of a believer that are in accordance with the laws of Allah (God). When a Muslim performs all the activities of his life for the pleasure of Allah, then **all his deeds become 'ibadah or worship**. Naturally this includes his ritualistic worship, such as prayer, as well.*

from <http://www.islamonline.net/english/introducingislam/topic02.shtml> - (no longer live)

*In Islam, every act done in day-to-day life is considered as worship if done in accordance to the ways prescribed by God (Allah). **Eating**, an act done to fulfill physical needs, is considered as a **form of worship** when done in the way prescribed by Allah and Prophet Muhammad with the proper intention.*

Eating: An Act of Worship - By Amatullah Abdullah

<http://www.islamonline.net/english/introducingislam/Individual/article10.SHTML> - (no longer live)

*The concept of worship in Islam differs from that found in other religions, and is therefore subject to misunderstanding. In general, worship is understood to mean the observance of certain rituals: praying, fasting, giving charity, and other "good" works. In Islam, however, **worship is much more-it is one's entire life**. As many Muslim scholars have said: "**Worship is an all-inclusive term for those internal and external sayings and actions of a person that are pleasing to Allah.**" In other words, worship is that which is done in obedience to Allah's will, which obviously includes rituals but goes far beyond to the realms of one's beliefs, social activities, and personal contributions to one's society and fellow human beings.*

The Concept of Worship in Islam - WAMY Series on Islam No. 8

http://www.sultan.org/books/the_concept_of_worship_in_Islam.pdf

Freemasonry

*Each candidate for the degrees receives this philosophy of life in a most impressive manner. Suffice it to say here that this Way of Life contains all the lessons or rules adopted by all good men. It covers the Golden Rule. It teaches us that we are our Brother's keeper. It teaches that **we can best worship God by rendering service to our fellowmen**. We are taught tolerance in all things. We are taught that honesty is the only policy.*

(From the Short talk Bulletin Vol. XLIII August, 1965, published by the Masonic Service Association of the United States, Washington. D.C.)

There was a saying of the monks of old which is well worth meditation. They taught that "laborare est orare"--labor is worship. . . .

*Now, this doctrine, that **labor is worship**, is the very doctrine that has been advanced and maintained, from time immemorial, as **a leading dogma of the Order of Freemasonry**. There is no other human institution under the sun which has set forth this great principle in such bold relief. We hear constantly of Freemasonry as an institution that inculcates morality, that fosters the social feeling, that teaches brotherly love; and all this is well, because it is true; but we must never forget that from its foundation-stone to its pinnacle, all over its vast temple, is inscribed, in symbols of living light, **the great truth that labor is worship**.*

The Symbolism of Freemasonry - by Albert G. Mackey [1882]

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/mas/sof/sof31.htm>

Sources Through Christian History

In Christian circles, quoting ancient monastic orders has become popular. This is problematic because of the difficulty in gaining accurate references. St. Benedict is often given as the source of the Latin motto "laborare est orare", when he didn't actually say it! Many just quote and give no reference. Later Martin Luther is often quoted without giving the primary source.

Brother Lawrence is a favorite example of showing that work is worship. He wanted to practice the presence of Jesus in all that he did, a worthy task. But these monks had separate times of work, focused prayer and reading the scriptures. We can learn lessons from Brother Lawrence about communing with God throughout life, we can sing songs while we drive, while we vacuum the house etc and this keeps our relationship with God fresh.

But worship in the Bible was always a special event in someone's life, nothing else was going on, it was a focused, exclusive time with God when nothing else was happening. It's like a husband and wife spending special time together, completely focused, face to face, with no one else around and not participating in any other activity but being lost in each other's presence!!

Wrongly Attributing "Work is Prayer" to Benedict' -

Somehow the Latin saying "ora et labora" i.e. "work and prayer" morphed into "labora est ora" - "work is prayer" and then became "laborare est orare" - "to work is to pray", and then it's a short step to "work is worship".

. *this problem goes back at least as far as St. Benedict, who once said "Work is prayer."*

Now, let me say at once that I agree with both Gini and Unsworth that overwork is a terrible problem right now in our society. And I can understand how someone could get the idea that St. Benedict said such a thing. But the fact is that he certainly did not say anything of the sort. Repeat: BENEDICT DID NOT SAY THAT WORK IS PRAYER!

To return to "Work is Prayer," it is also not hard to imagine where that came from. After all, the motto of the Benedictines is "Prayer and Work," isn't it? Now Ora et Labora is very close to Ora est Labora. Unless you know some Latin and are very careful with words, a qualification which eliminates most people, it is easy enough to arrive at Labora est Ora and blame it on St. Benedict.

*Unfortunately, it is necessary to point out that, like the two stout bouncers, **Ora et Labora is found nowhere in the Rule of St. Benedict.** Moreover, it appears nowhere in Benedictine history before the 19th century. As M.D. Meeuws points out in a fascinating article ("Ora et Labor: devise benedictine?" *Collectanea Cisterciensia*, 54 [1992] 193-214), the motto actually originates in a popular book on Benedictine life written by the German abbot, Maurus Wolter. So, it is hardly accurate to even call it the motto of the Benedictines.*

Work Is Prayer: Not!
by Terrence Kardong
<http://www.osb.org/gen/topics/work/kard1.html>

Martin Luther quotes

Some say the reformers called work *worship* - but this is not exactly what they said. They definitely restored a truth that all of life was to be lived to the glory of God but both Luther and Calvin taught about worship almost exclusively in the context of church services.

So many quotes are pulled out of context and used to say things about worship they didn't necessarily say. Some don't even give a reference . . .

*The quotation is all over the net, **so it must be true.** Martin Luther, we are told, said this about vocation:*

"The maid who sweeps her kitchen is doing the will of God just as much as the monk who prays—not because she may sing a Christian hymn as she sweeps but because God loves clean floors. The Christian shoemaker does his Christian duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes, because God is interested in good craftsmanship."

*It seemed such a tempting nugget for authors writing on vocation, as most of the writers in this issue do. At least one wanted to use it. Indeed, the editor of Lutheran Partners, William Decker, did use it to introduce a recent issue of that journal dedicated to the theme of "Vocation and Identity," but, to his credit, he reported his **inability to trace it to Luther himself.***

Gaiser, Frederick J
<http://wordandworld.luthersem.edu> Fall 2005 issue

The First Modern Theologians:

Who started this idea that worship is a lifestyle, it's everything we do?

As I observed how many worship leaders, pastors and teachers were promoting all of life as worship, the question arose: "who started this?" So many were repeating what others were saying without questioning or critical thinking. But who started it?

I was reading some of A W Tozer's excellent writings when I suddenly saw a possible source. That's what all these teachers are saying, it's right here in Tozer's writings!

Now Tozer was an amazing man and wrote so much that has blessed Christians since his works were published. His writing on worship have inspired many.

Tozer has enthusiastically attacked the sacred secular dichotomy, and rightly so, but in the process makes the mistake of saying that all of life has to be worship to make it valuable. See Chapter 10 of "The Pursuit of God".

"it may be difficult for the average Christian to get hold of the idea that his daily labors can be performed as acts of worship acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

If Tozer had just used the word "service" instead of worship, he would have avoided this confusion.

The Bible uses the word service to refer to all of life lived for God's glory, it never uses "worship" in this context.

In "The Purpose of Man" Tozer makes an effort to make sure we live our lives for God and don't just honor him on Sunday. We would all agree with this sentiment.

I personally enjoy starting a service that way occasionally. But it does not stop there. Come 9:00am Monday morning, if you do not walk into your office and say, "The Lord is in my office and all the world is silent before Him," then you were not worshipping the Lord on Sunday. If you cannot worship Him on Monday, then you did not worship Him on Sunday. If you do not worship Him on Saturday, your worship on Sunday is not authentic. Some people put God in a box we call the church building. God is not present in church any more than He is present in your home. God is not here any more than He is in your factory or office.

from "The Purpose of Man" A W Tozer

But Tozer himself makes a division between his work and his worship by saying that he could worship *while* he worked!! He's making a distinction between work and worship, in other words, they are two different things. . .

*As a young Christian, I worked for the SF Goodrich Company in Akron, Ohio, helping to make rubber tires. I worshiped God at my assembly line station until I had tears in my eyes. Nobody ever saw the tears or asked me about them, but I would not have hesitated to tell them why. As I went along and worked a while at something, it became automatically converted to thinking about something else. Some daydream; I worshiped. I got to where **I could do my work with passing skill and worship God at the same time.** God was at my work just as much as He was at my church. As far as I was concerned, there was no difference. If God is not in your factory, if God is not in your store, if God is not in your office, then God is not in your church when you go there. When we worship our God, the breath of songs on Earth starts the organs playing in heaven above.*

from "The Purpose of Man" A W Tozer

Tozer insists that worship is a lifestyle, not an event ...

Throughout this series, I have maintained that worship is not an event but a lifestyle. The more we treat worship as an event, the more it becomes a caricature of God's intention, and is unacceptable to Him. To maintain a lifestyle of worship, we must attend to it on a daily basis. If you regulate worship to a once- a-week event, you really do not understand it, and it will take a low priority in your life.

But then he gives a list of activities for worship like, times of quiet, prayer, singing etc which are events!

*For worship to be a vital **part** of everyday life, it must be systematically and carefully nurtured.*

*Let me offer a few suggestions to help along the way. At this point, it is important to stay clear of all those sterile, mechanical regimens that think one size fits all. All of us are different, and although we are walking along the same path, we have different personalities. A few essentials need to be a **part of our daily walk** to maintain a vibrant life of worship. These are a few things that have helped me in my journey along the way with God.*

In this passage he correctly states worship as being part of life not all of life!

Articles by others that also contradict “everything we do is worship”

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