

**Witness Team**  
**Worship Articles**

**What is Worship?**  
**by Dr. Quincy D. Brown**

Worship is the heartbeat of the soul. It is giving due honor and respect for something or to someone. The word “worship” can be a noun and a verb and so it can be the activity or the action. Worship comes from two Anglo-Saxon root words: *woerth*, which means “worth,” and *scipe*, which generally means “the state of being and doing” and is used in such words as statesmanship or craftsmanship. So *worship* is the state of being or doing something that is ultimately worth it.

For all of us, worship has to be meaningful to daily lives. Whether it is the use of traditional hymns, contemporary praise and worship choruses, liturgical dancers, or a full-blown gospel or choral choir, worship has to help a person to become aware of God’s presence in their daily lives.

Scripture can be of assistance to us in connecting life and worship. Consider that most if not all Bible stories are located in the daily lives of the people involved—in the fields, the marketplace, on the journey, outside the gates to the city, on the hillside, near the lakeshore, in the home, on the road, at dinner, in places of work, in large and small group gatherings.

In Hebrew there is one word for worship and work. The Hebrews saw the two as one. God’s activity in creation is focused on and in the world, in the life of the people. This is why I suggest that any spirituality must incorporate the “everydayness” of life—including the mundane.

So that we are on the same page, my definition of spirituality refers to our sense of identity in relation to other people, the world, and to God. It points to our interiors, our subjective life, as contrasted to the objective domain of material events and objects.

Our spirituality is reflected in the values and ideals we hold most dear, our sense of who we are, where we come from, our beliefs about why we are here—the meaning and purpose we see in our lives—and our connectedness to each other and the world around us. Spirituality, as I am using it, also captures those aspects of our experience that are not easy to define or talk about, such as inspiration, creativity, the mysterious, love, the sacred, and the mystical. Within this very broad perspective, spirituality is a universal impulse and reality.

Jesus’ parables, healings and teachings were set in common, everyday life situations—illness, death, decision-making, sweeping, seasoning food, buying more than is needed, trimming the lamps, boating, fishing, eating, marrying, sowing seeds, investing talents, standing with the oppressed, misplacing loyalties, and relating to family members—despite how difficult of a task this may be at times. Jesus used the articles of everyday

life to illustrate his message of God's in breaking Presence. Worshipping God was in the everyday places of people's lives.

As I understand it, worship is a public or semi-public action honoring God and celebrating our search for and discovery of meaning in the mystery of life. It is the way in which we give expression to our deeply held assumptions, values and beliefs. In essence, the purpose of worship is to create a "safe space," a "sanctuary" or a "holding environment." The purpose for this "holding environment" is to enter into "sacred space" where we are ushered into the Presence of God, through the images and characters of scripture, prayers, hymns and choruses.

This presence is the threshold between our everyday sort of awareness and the spiritual world. My fundamental assumption when we are engaged in worship if we can bring a degree of alertness and openness to the threshold of God and the spiritual world, God will reach out to meet us.