

## **LIVE STRONG: Become a Worshipper**

by Jermaine D. Manor

“Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?” (Jeremiah 8:22). This verse in the Bible book named for the prophet Jeremiah is well-known to readers of the Bible. It has been popularized in scores of titles of books, sermons, and in a well-known African American spiritual hymn, “There Is a Balm in Gilead”:

There is a balm in Gilead  
To make the wounded whole;  
There is a balm in Gilead  
To heal the sin sick soul.

Several decades ago, A. W. Tozer said, “Worship is the missing jewel in the Christian Church.” In some ways, things have changed since Tozer wrote those words. Over the past 25 years, the Holy Spirit has been renewing the Church in a remarkable way, and bringing Christians everywhere to a new understanding of the meaning and importance of worship. It is here that we can find our healing.

Our primary task in life is to worship God. I believe that deep within everyone there is an urge to worship. It was placed there by God. If we do not worship the Most High God, then we will worship ourselves, or some extension of ourselves, for we **MUST** worship.

Our greatest challenge to truly worshipping God is that we intellectualize God. We allow the Creator access to our minds, but we steadfastly resist any approach by God to our emotions—the pathway to our souls.

Why do we find it difficult to give ourselves totally to God, even expressing ourselves with our emotions and bodies in worship? When sin came into the world through Adam and Eve, so did embarrassment, self-consciousness, the notion of shame, and more. When Jesus died on the cross, he died for the shame which put us in bondage to our cognitive side and to the sense of God as a theory, instead of one with whom we can have an intimate relationship. Only by opening our entire being—mind, body, and soul—to God, can we experience total freedom in our emotions and bodies.

The great Anglican theologian William Temple said, “Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by his holiness; the nourishment of mind with his truth; the purifying of imagination by his beauty; the opening of the heart to his love; the surrender of will to his purpose.” I would add, and the surrender of our bodies to the total freedom to worship our Creator, that the Creator provides.

We are the ones who prevent God from working in wholeness in us. True worship can only take place when we agree to God sitting not only on the Divine throne in the center of the universe, but also on the throne that stands in the center of our hearts.

The work of Christ in redemption has one great end—to save humanity and restore to us the joy of knowing true worship of our Creator. Adam and Eve enjoyed true worship when they walked with God in the cool of the Garden, before the Fall. Our sinful self-centeredness causes us to insist that our will reign at the center of our lives, the place that God actually reserves for himself. When God no longer occupies the center of our lives, then we become the center; we become god! And this god (little g) is named “I.”

Unless the core of our being is entered by God, and maintained by him, there is no proper object on which to focus our worship. Many of us are waging a fight within ourselves, because

we do not understand and accept that to become the person God wants us to be, we must totally surrender to God and the will of God. Then Our Sustainer can come in, take up his rightful place in the center of our lives, and rule and reign as our Lord. Unless we surrender totally to God, the inevitable result will be inner conflict and disharmony. Our human ego functions best when it functions in harmony with God; left to its own devices, it becomes a dangerous and damaging force.

What does God require? The answer is quite simple, and yet deeply difficult for us: self-surrender. This is the joyful exchange of an egocentric, sinful self for a God-centered self, made whole. It is in fact a swap; our life for his and his life for ours.

Romans 12:1 says, “Therefore, I urge you ... in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.” This is your spiritual act of worship. When we offer our bodies as living sacrifices, we are exercising our will in deciding to accept the freedom Jesus offers. When we do so, he never makes us feel foolish. Satan’s insidious voice speaks to our fallen nature, the part of us that feels foolish or too proud to freely submit to and worship God. We need to resist the tempter and claim our victory in Christ.

Then, when we learn to express ourselves to God, with our mind, body, emotions, will, and spirit, we will enjoy a continually freeing experience. We will no longer stifle our emotions, or keep them bottled up inside. Next, we will begin to gain more confidence. Our self-image benefits and we become more aware of others. Jesus helps us take the focus off of ourselves, and we reach out to others, to communicate with them and be more sensitive to them. After this, our healing begins as we spend more and more personal time with the Lord. After spending time alone with him, we become freer with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Both are essential for

complete healing. Worship then becomes a life style, involving all of our being and all that we do.

Paul summarizes this well in 1 Thessalonians 5:23: “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”