

THE COMMANDS OF JESUS - WEEK 6
Worship Through Perseverance: Matt. 4:10

What is worship? For someone who is involved on a worship team, it is a time of praising and exalting God through song. For another who attends church, it is a service that involves Christian music, greeting one another, a teaching/sermon, possibly the Lord's Supper and closing prayer. Worship includes all of these, and is born out of our love for God. Worship is a tool and a weapon that we can use to help us press on, endure and stand strong in challenging times.

In Acts 16:25 it says that Paul and Silas, who had been beaten and thrown into prison for disrupting the city, were praying and singing to God at midnight...the darkest point of our 24-hour day, which is a seemingly odd thing to do when arrested, but it was their way to persevere and exercise their faith. God heard them and responded! Suddenly there was an earthquake, the foundations of the prison were shaken, all the doors were opened, everyone's bonds were unfastened, and the jailer received salvation and was baptized!

What do we do when we are suffering, oppressed, in bondage, or afraid and don't know how to fix something that is terribly wrong? Where do we turn for relief? When babies are hungry, need a diaper change, or are hurting, they cry out very loudly until someone shows up to help and solve the problem.

In the body of Christ, we are at different levels of maturity and stability. It is clear to see that Paul the apostle was mature and knew what to do in jail. This wasn't his first persecution rodeo. And Silas followed his example. Their response seems a bit odd or foreign...unless you know God.

How can worship possibly help us in challenging situations? Let's look at the way the Bible defines worship. In the Hebrew language, it means to bow down in submission to God, to stoop, humbly beseech, show reverence. In the Greek language it means to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand, to revere, adore, crouch, prostrate oneself, worship. When we bow down in love and need before God, it is a form of worship, and he responds to us—he stoops down to lift us up and make us great (Ps 18:35). This is how we are able to persevere.

Our response to and the action we take toward hard situations can determine the outcome. Many times we are trying to be strong, just putting one foot in front of the other, and it just seems like nothing is changing. Worshipping during these times helps us to remain steadfast, exercise self control, and it stabilizes us in God's word, gives us peace, strengthens our weakness, increases our faith, and ignites joy in our souls which bolsters and invigorates us. It reminds us that God is in control, which gives us hope. Perseverance is not for wimps. Paul and Silas could have yelled and screamed at the guards, beat on the door, laid on the floor and cried, but they chose to worship and pray.

Questions:

1. What does it mean to persevere?
2. What does it mean to worship?
3. How is worshipping through perseverance similar to running the Christian race?
4. Please share an experience you have had that required perseverance on your part? How did you get through it?
5. In closing, read together Acts 16:25-40.