

# The Cost of Worship

In our day and age the idea of “worship” is closely associated with music and a group of people singing together, and “worshipping”. Worship is usually seen and understood more as a corporate activity than something personal and individual. We are “led” in worship by a “worship leader” and the concept of worshipping alone and even worshipping in silence is not a familiar concept to most people.

While these ideas of corporate worship are not incorrect they certainly do not capture the breadth and depth of what biblical worship entails. For most of us, worship is something we engage in once a week and not a daily activity. In essence, it costs us little or nothing to worship since most of the work of preparation and implementation has been done by others. We simply show up at an agreed location and are part of a group of people who “worship together”. But seen through the lens of scripture, worship is so much more and involves more individual preparation and corporate participation by everyone. It is also a very costly endeavor.

We are going to look at three instances from scripture of how worship was actually a costly act that required advance preparation, paying a considerable price and presenting the whole offering of worship in the hope it would be acceptable.

The first passage is found in **Leviticus 2:1** *“When anyone brings a grain offering to the Lord, their offering is to be of the finest flour. They are to pour olive oil on it, put incense on it”*. Now here is the question: the Israelites were in the middle of the desert where as we know there is lots of sand, but not too many grain fields, olive groves or the base resources to make incense. So how did they get those three items? The grain mentioned could only have come from two sources: grain brought from Egypt or wild grain that they foraged along the way. The olive oil had to have been brought with them. As for the incense, who knows? Each was something precious because of its limited quantity. Not only was the supply limited but then the effort to turn the grain into “fine flour” must be considered. All in all this was a costly offering in terms of time and resources expended.

The second passage is found in **1 Chronicles 21:24-26** *But King David replied to Araunah, “No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.”*

*So David paid Araunah six hundred shekels of gold for the site. David built an altar to the Lord there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the Lord, and the Lord answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering.*

David had sinned when he decided to take a census of the people and God had punished his sin - “So the LORD sent a plague on Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell dead.” As the angel of God was ready to destroy Jerusalem, God relented and “the angel was standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” God then told David to “go up and build on altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” David purchased the site for 600 shekels of gold or about 6.9 kg of gold in modern terms. What is that worth? If it was pure gold (and it probably was) then the current price per troy ounce is 2,151.25 CAD. So the total cost in CAD would be \$476,800. David recognized that true worship involved sacrifice. The sacrifice must necessarily cost him something otherwise it would not be a sacrifice.

The third and final passage comes from the New Testament [John 12:2-5](#) *“A dinner was given in Jesus’ honor. . . . Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. . . . It was worth a year’s wages.”* What is a year’s wages to you? A quick Google search on the question “average Canadian wage 2019” turns up this answer “1,011.62 per week – which works out to just over \$52,600 per year”. So Mary spent somewhere around \$50,000 CAD to pour perfume on not on Jesus head, not on his body but on his feet! We sing Psalms 84:10 *“Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.”* But do we really mean that? Especially if it costs us a year’s wages?

Worship is costly. In fact, Scripture indicates that worship that does not cost us is not really worship. In these days where we are not able to meet together to worship what are we doing? How are we filling our time? Do we devote any of it to the worship of our God? And if we do, what is it costing us?

Holy Lord God, you did not even spare your own son Jesus in order to achieve our salvation. There is no way to place a value on his life. He was the sinless, spotless, priceless Lamb of God who was offered for the sin of the world. His death paid for sin – everyone’s, for all time. His death paid for my sin. His death gave me the gift of eternal life. Merciful God, help me to worship you as you deserve.

### **I will Offer Up My Life**

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Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring  
To so faithful a Friend, to so loving a King?  
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung  
As a praise of Your name for the things You have done?  
Oh, my words could not tell, not even in part  
Of the debt of love that is owed by this thankful heart