

Worship Part 1- Service

By

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Avad is usually translated into our English version in three ways; service, worship and work. And it also overlaps in meaning so it is difficult to separate the three meanings into nice succinct parts.

First, it is often translated as “service,” where one submits him- or herself to the allegiance of another, such as a slave to a master (Exodus 21:6), a son to his father (Malachi 3:17) or a subject to a king (2 Samuel 16:19).

That makes it very interesting on what God means when he uses the word *avad*. We talked about the numerous times this word is used throughout the Old Testament and how important it is as a word group. Let’s explore the first aspect of *avad*: service. When we think of service/worship our minds naturally go to the cognitive aspect of this or “attitude”. Now this isn’t a bad thing in fact we have been conditioned over many hundreds of years to think this way because we were instructed in a worldview that is predominantly Greek in its thinking. In fact the Greek word for worship is *Proskyneō* (pros-kü-ne'-ō).

According to Strong’s Definitions:

to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence

among the Orientals, esp. the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence

in the NT by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication

Used of homage shown to men and beings of superior rank

1. to the Jewish high priests
2. to God
3. to Christ
4. to heavenly beings
5. to demons

As we can see from this definition which is one we take easily because it fits into our Greek worldview we see this word “*Proskyneō*” is primarily attitude reflected in ritual actions. Now ritual actions are things we easily do on Sunday mornings. But “*avad*” is very different “*avad*” is action. Skip Moen in one of his daily word studies said it this way:

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“To serve” means to do something that the god favors, to demonstrate obedience, to practice specifically required rituals, to demonstrate behavior in line with the god’s instructions. The command to worship found in Exodus and Deuteronomy is *serving*, not maintaining a particular attitude.”

Wow, so if not my attitude than what? I think we can sum up serving to mean doing what God requires. In fact the real word we need here to define serving is obedience. But obedience to what?

Well first off it means obedience to the laws that God established with Israel. Remember we were grafted in. Ouch, I am not good with all of those, well I do follow the 10 commandments so I guess I can check that off. I am afraid not. How about honor the Sabbath and keep it holy, it doesn’t say honor the first day of the week and keep it holy it says very plainly that we are to honor the 7th day of the week and keep it holy. Okay I removed that check so I am not obedient to the laws God clearly established. I am not saying that you can’t serve/worship on Sunday what I am saying it is not what we were commanded to do.

So obedience is part of service and serving is part of service obviously. So immediately my Greek mind says okay what I do in the church that is service. Now that’s not wrong thinking it’s just too exclusive thinking. Our Church’s today all are bound up in what we do for each other. I am reminded of the way Jesus served. It was not to the synagogues he attended rather it was to all those that were outside that congregation, the poor the destitute those in financial need those that were hungry.

Adam in the garden was commanded to *avad* the garden, serve the garden. God is not asking us to turn everything into a productive vegetable garden, but is asking us to serve the needs of our earth, and to recognize its goodness and worth. An editor for “Sustainable Traditions” wrote this as a prelude to a discussion of *avad* by Lydia Reese:

“Too often today many Christians are living a life divorced from GOD’s Creation. We are afraid of making an idol of Creation yet we make idols of ourselves – only tending to our own affluent lusts and inflamed desires while we wait for eternity- meanwhile ignoring GOD’s sovereign command and purpose for humankind to guard and serve Creation as humble servants of our Creator. May we see that it is not just the job of professionals and specialized vocations to ‘avad’ and ‘shamar’ Creation – but it is a basic human vocation for all of us – especially those of us who are disciples of Jesus.”

So what is your *avad* (service)? Remember the three meanings of *avad* overlap, service, work and worship. Does it make you feel differently about those outside that tight knit group of Church goers we see every week? I hope so. Only then are we doing the service on this earth that God intended.

Next time *avad* as work. What do you think it means?