

Worshipping God



*"Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord
in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2)*

*"Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.
For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand"
(Psalm 95:6-7)*

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Did Man Create A God To Worship?

“Nor is He worshipped with men’s hands as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25)

INTRO—Did man create a god to worship, or did God create man to worship? Sigmund Freud said that because man needs security, has deep-seated fears, and lives in a threatening world which feels out of his control, he invented a superior, supernatural being. Like the “bogeyman” represents all of our deep-seated fears, “God” represents our confidence in the face of those fears.

Does man really experience all of those anxieties? Does that mean that man invented God, or just that man unquestionably needs God?

I. GOD IS WORTHY TO BE PRAISED

- A. He Must Be The Only Object Of Man’s Worship.** Is there any other being that is worthy to be worshipped?
- Exodus 20:3-5—
 - Psalm 115:1-8—
 - Matthew 4:9-10—
 - Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9—
- B. God Is Worthy To Be Praise Because Of Who He Is.** If we have the proper view of God, then we cannot do anything but honor and praise Him (Hebrews 12:28). Paul established God as being worthy of praise because of who He is. What did Paul say about God in each of the following verses?
- Acts 17:24a—
 - Acts 17:24b—
 - Acts 17:25b,28a—
 - Acts 17:29—
 - Acts 17:31—
- C. God Is Worthy To Be Praised Because Of What He Is.** His nature and character show God to be far superior to man or man-made gods. Paul also established God as being worthy of praise because of what He is. What did Paul say about God in each of the following verses?

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- Acts 17:24—
 - Acts 17:25—
 - Acts 17:27b—
 - Acts 17:29—
 - Acts 17:30—

D. Glimpses Of God's Glory. Read the following passages which attempt to describe God's immaculate glory, then share some of your impressions about God that are formed from reading each passage.

- Isaiah 6:1-13—
- Ezekiel 1:1-28—
- Daniel 7:9-10—
- Revelation 4:1-11—
- Revelation 21:22-22:5—

CONCLUSION—Freud said that man in his fears created God—the Bible says that man in his arrogance denies God (Romans 1:18-32). Man does not wish God into existence. If he could, man would wish God out of existence (Psalm 10:4; 14:1).

What Is Worship?

"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42:1-2)

INTRO—Do you ever get tired of this world? Do you get tired of the monotony of life and seek a higher, more exciting plane? Do you ever long to leave all the filth and degradation behind, for just a little while? Would you like a break sometime—to just get away from it all, and go to a place where you can just leave it all behind? That is what worship does (Hebrews 4:15-16)!

I. WORSHIP IS.....

- A. Hard To Define.** It is not really defined in Scripture—it is shown, but not explained. The primary Old Testament term translated “worship” means “*to bow down... to prostrate oneself*” and the primary New Testament term literally means “*to kiss toward*”.
- *“It may be regarded as the direct acknowledgment to God, of His nature, attributes, ways and claims. Whether by the outgoing of the heart in praise and thanksgiving... or by deed done in such acknowledgment” (W.E. Vine)*
- B. Sacred.** Many people do not recognize the sanctity of certain things. To them, holy things are common. How does such a casual attitude toward God, cause us to lose sight of the aura of awe and majesty that surrounds Him (Hebrews 10:29; 12:28)?
- God seeks intimate fellowship with us. But what do we need to remember (Psalm 8:3-4; 89:7)?
- C. A Spiritual Exercise.** It is an exercise of the mind and heart, more than just an action of the body. How is each of the following expressions of worship an exercise of the inward man? (Remember that each of these can be done without really worshipping God.)
- Ephesians 5:19—
 - 1 Corinthians 11:23-29—
 - Hebrews 4:15-16—
- D. Man’s Link With God.** Worship transports us from this earthly realm to the heavenly. It conveys us into the company of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 4:15-16).
- In what manner can we now “*draw near*” to God (Hebrews 10:19-22)?
 - Why do we come before Him (1 Peter 2:5)?

E. Man's Gift To God. God is the giver of every good gift (James 1:17). Everything we have received already belongs to Him (1 Chronicles 29:14).

- How is worship the one thing which comes from us— which we can give back to God (Hebrews 13:15)?

F. Expression Of An Adoring Heart. How we worship God reflects our impression of God (Psalm 98:1-4). How we worship God reflects our thankfulness (Hebrews 13:15; Ephesians 5:19-20; Philippians 4:6-7).

CONCLUSION—Worship proclaims our dependence on God. Worship is always offered to a greater being from a lesser being. God does not need our worship (Acts 17:24-25) but He does seek it as an expression of our love and communion with Him (John 4:23-24).

Importance Of Worship

"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord'" (Psalm 122:1)

INTRO—When Christians assemble together to worship, we come into the very presence of God (Hebrews 4:16). This involves more than just “going to church”. It should be a period of devoted worship to God. In keeping with Christ’s command (Matthew 4:10), we should regularly and faithfully worship God.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF WORSHIP

A. Why Worship Is Important. Actually, our attitude toward worship is an identifying mark of our discipleship. What does that attitude say about us (Philippians 3:3)?

- Worship does not take the place of faith and obedience (Psalm 51:16-17; cf. Micah 6:6-8). Can faith and obedience take the place of worship either, for those who don’t worship God?
- Worship is a spiritual booster (Hebrews 10:24-25). What greater boost to our faith can there be than to worship God with others who love Him just as much?
 - What is the primary command of this passage (Hebrews 10:24a)?
 - In what three ways do we accomplish this (Hebrews 10:24b-25)?
 - Who benefits when we come together to worship God?

B. The Importance Jesus Attached To Worship. Often, we read of Jesus preaching and worshipping in the synagogues throughout Judea and Galilee. What was His custom, despite much traveling (Luke 4:16)?

- Jesus frequented the synagogues (Matthew 4:23; Luke 4:15-38). Where could the people have found Him at any time when seeking Him (John 18:20)?
- Jesus frequented the temple (Luke 2:41-49; Mark 12:35-13:1). Where could the people have found Him when He was in Jerusalem (Mark 14:49)?
- Has Jesus quit assembling with His followers—even today (Matthew 18:20)?

C. The Importance The Disciples Attached To Worship. We find them together often, worshipping God and edifying one another in good times and bad times. They never saw a good reason not to worship God. Identify the settings in which they worshipped God in the following passages.

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- Acts 2:46-47—
 - Acts 4:23-31—
 - Acts 12:5,12—
 - Acts 16:25—
 - Acts 20:7-12—

CONCLUSION—Man is God’s masterpiece of creation, and man, more than anything else, should ascribe glory and honor to God and worship Him (1 Peter 2:5,9). Is it important for the creature to worship the Creator (Revelation 15:3-4)?

One day every knee shall bow before Jesus Christ—we can humbly worship Him now to our salvation or we will worship Him at the judgment to our condemnation (Philippians 2:9-11). Which will it be for you?

Assembling To Worship

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25)

INTRO—The New Testament often mentions saints assembling together for worship and mutual edification (Acts 2:46; 11:26; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; etc.). Even in the shadow of persecution and death, they made great sacrifices to meet together to worship.

I. ASSEMBLING WITH THE SAINTS TO WORSHIP

A. Command Or Privilege? Why not both? It is sometimes hard for us to imagine a command as anything other than something we must do rather than something we get to do (Psalm 29:2; 122:1)! How are each of the following both a command and a privilege?

- Psalm 95:1-7—
- Psalm 96:1-9—

B. Focusing On God. Worship is an exercise which transports us from this mundane world to the very presence of God (Hebrews 4:16). We are allowed into His presence to worship, but where is our proper place still (Psalm 99:5; 132:7)? Note how each of the following acts of worship are focused on God.

- Acts 12:5—
- Colossians 3:16—
- Ephesians 5:19—
- 2 Corinthians 8:4-5—
- 1 Corinthians 11:26—

C. Coming Together For Edification. Worship also has secondary benefits. Who else benefits from our assembling together (Hebrews 10:24-25)? Edification builds up and promotes spiritual growth. Note the importance of edification when Christians assemble together (even though during an age of ‘spiritual gifts’) in the following verses.

- 1 Corinthians 14:3-5—
- 1 Corinthians 14:12-17—
- 1 Corinthians 14:26—

D. Importance Of Personal Contact. We can never overemphasize the importance of personal contact among brethren. It is far more than mere socializing. What benefit do you see in the personal contact between brethren in each of the following assemblies?

- Acts 11:19-24—
- Acts 14:26-28—
- 2 Corinthians 8:16-24—
- Philippians 2:25-30; 4:16-18—

E. Decently And In Order. Confusion existed in the assemblies at Corinth, and that was much of the reason for Paul writing his first epistle to them (1 Corinthians 14:33,40). There is no divine order in which we are to carry out God's prescribed acts of worship, but there are at least two things we need to avoid in our worship.

- 1 Corinthians 14:40—
- Matthew 15:8-9—

CONCLUSION—Worship expressed in an assembly of the saints can be a delight to God, our brethren, and ourselves, but only if we consider the desires of the Creator, and only if we are there!

Worship As A Way Of Life

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1)

INTRO—We are prone to think of worship as something that can only occur in a meeting house among Christians. But worship is a broader concept than that. Those acts of worship we participate in during our assemblies are really an overflow of a worshipping life—a life of sacrifice and service to God (Romans 12:1). Everything we do is an offering that we lay at the Master's feet for His approval.

I. A LIVING SACRIFICE

A. Sacrifices Were Always Offered As An Act Of Worship. They consisted of something that was given back to God, or something brought near to God for His approval and for man to be accepted (Exodus 23:15b; 34:20d; Deuteronomy 16:16-17).

- How does one become fit to stand before God (2 Timothy 2:19-21)?

B. Lives Are To Be An Act Of Worship. In the same sense as the sacrifices described above (Romans 12:1; Hebrews 12:28). The New Testament prominently uses two words for worship—*proskuneo* which means “to kiss toward”, “to kiss the hand”, or “to bow down”, and *latreuo* which suggests “to pay homage” or “do the service”. Thus, worship is anything we offer toward God. What are some of the things we should do as an offering or act of homage to Him?

- 1 Peter 2:13—
- Ephesians 6:1—
- Ephesians 6:7—
- Colossians 3:23—
- 1 Corinthians 10:31—
- Colossians 3:17—

C. Worship In Three Dimensions. A key thought in the New Testament that describes proper acts of worship in daily living is the word “*acceptable*”. This carries the same thought as sacrificial offerings or acts of worship to God.

- Outward dimension. What actions—expressed on behalf of others—are received by God as acceptable service (Romans 14:18; 15:16; Philippians 4:18)?
- Inward dimension. What kind of personal behavior is accepted by God as reasonable service (Ephesians 5:8-10; 1 Timothy 2:1-3)?

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- Upward dimension. How are the actions that benefit others also sacrifices which glorify God (Hebrews 13:15-16)?

CONCLUSION—Worship is not just a specific set of actions in which we publicly engage, but also a series of actions that overflow from a dedicated heart, and a worshipping life (James 5:13; Philippians 4:6-7; Hebrews 13:15). That is not to say that we can just be content to worship God by the way we live, and not assemble with the saints for worship. That very attitude shows that we do not have the worshipping heart that we claim.

Developing Intimacy With God

“And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took Him” (Genesis 5:24)

INTRO—In the frantic pace of modern living, it is very possible that many of us are relatively religious, but not very spiritual. There is a difference. One is more outward, the other more inward. We may know much about God, but struggle to really know God (Philippians 3:10; 1 John 5:20).

I. DEVELOPING INTIMACY WITH GOD

A. God Desires Communion. Don't let the greatness and awesome majesty of God fool you—He desires communion with His creation. Note how He has sought communion with man at various times.

- Genesis 3:8-9—
- Exodus 25:8-9—
- 1 Kings 6:11-13—
- Matthew 1:23—
- Ephesians 2:19-22—
- Ephesians 3:17—
- 1 John 4:12-16—

B. Communion Through Meditation. Meditation allows us to suspend the world around us for a time while we consider things of a spiritual nature (Psalm 4:4). What does “meditation” help us to do?

- Psalm 5:1-3—
- Psalm 19:14—
- Psalm 46:10—
- Psalm 49:3—
- Psalm 63:6-8—
- Psalm 143:5-6—

C. Communion Through Worship. Worship lifts us to a higher spiritual plane, where we come in contact with the Lord Himself (Hebrews 4:16). How does each of the following bring us into communion with God and Christ?

- Assembling for worship (Matthew 18:20)—
- Prayer (Philippians 4:6)—
- Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:23-29)—
- Singing (Hebrews 13:15)—

CONCLUSION—There is great joy and rich blessings in “knowing God” and sharing that intimate relationship with Him (Jeremiah 9:23-24; John 17:3). Such is the kind of men God seeks (Hosea 6:6). The man who sets out to know God and His Son, never arrives—he keeps on arriving all the time. He never fully comprehends—but he keeps on comprehending. He never knows God completely, but each day he knows Him better.

The Psalms—Inspired Expressions Of Worship

“Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand” (Psalm 95:6-7)

INTRO—The book of Psalms is preserved to impress us with the spirit of true worship (Romans 15:4). It examines the depths of the human heart that uses poetry as a means of expressing praise and worship to God. Thus, the Psalms indicate how we should worship God, and give us ideas about the purpose, plan, and expressions of worship to God. They are a call to worship, and an example of how to worship.

I. INSPIRED EXPRESSIONS OF WORSHIP

- A. What Are The Psalms?** The Hebrews entitled this portion of Scripture *Tehillim* which means “Praises.” Psalms are expressions of adoration and reverence to God, appeals to God to answer prayers, and songs about most all of man’s life experiences.
- B. Inspiration Of The Psalms.** The Psalms are just as inspired as any other of the writings of the Old Testament—but like the others, they are not law for us to live by (Colossians 2:14; Romans 7:1-4).
- 2 Samuel 23:1-3—
 - Matthew 22:43-45—
 - Luke 24:44—
 - Acts 1:16,20—
- C. The Purpose And Nature Of The Psalms.** First used by the Jewish people as a hymnal for temple and synagogue worship, then by first century Christians (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), now we can benefit from the writings too (Romans 15:3-4).

Psalms was a favorite book of New Testament Christians—of the 283 direct quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament, 116 are from the Psalms.

- They furnish us with models of devotion, since they are Spirit-inspired.
- They impress us with God’s existence, greatness, glory, and majesty.
- In other books God speaks to man—in the Psalms, man speaks to God.
- If poetry is an expression of a man’s heart, and David was “*a man after God’s own heart*” (Acts 13:22), what can we learn from David’s psalms?

D. Exalted Expressions Of Worship. Notice how the Psalms elevate the level of worship to God, and see if they don't inspire you toward more heart-felt expressions of worship (Psalm 30:4; 57:9-10; 59:16-17; 135:3; cf. Hebrews 12:28).

- Beauty of holiness (29:2; 96:7-9)
- Wholeness of heart (86:12; 111:1)
- Joyful (95:1-2; 100:1-2)
- Thankful (69:30; 92:1; 107:1-2)
- Reverence (5:7; 89:7)
- Continuous (34:1; 104:33)

CONCLUSION—By studying the Psalms, more than any other section of Scripture, we can actually “*taste and see that the Lord is good*” (Psalm 34:8). Through its poetic expressions, we can learn how to give even greater praise and glory to God in our own worship (Hebrews 13:15).

True Worship

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him...” (John 4:23)

INTRO—Is God just a petty, arrogant being who demands worship and praise to feed His ego, or is there a more noble reason for Him desiring worship? Does God seek extravagant, entertaining, outward expressions of worship, or just simple, heart-felt expressions that spring from deep within (Philippians 3:3)? Man glories in outwardly impressive displays, whereas God glories in the inward movement that articulates itself in worship.

I. TRUE WORSHIP

A. Five Kinds Of Worship. Among religious activities, we see many different expressions of worship toward God—describe each of them.

- Ignorant (Acts 17:23)—
- Vain (Matthew 15:8-9)—
- Self-righteous (Luke 18:9-14)—
- Self-imposed (Colossians 2:23)—
- Spiritual (John 4:23-24)—

B. Worship In Spirit And Truth (John 4:19-24). What is Jesus telling us about the nature of worship? The common explanation is that worship is to include the right spirit and the right actions. But notice Jesus is making a contrast between two expressions of worship, to this woman at the well (John 4:21).

- Did Old Testament worship require the right spirit and right actions (Psalm 24:3-6; Isaiah 1:10-15; Malachi 1:6-14)?
- Does New Testament worship require the right spirit and right actions (Matthew 15:7-9)?
- What is the contrast then? What would be the difference between Old Testament and New Testament worship—between what Moses brought and Jesus brought (John 1:17; Colossians 2:14,16-17; Hebrews 8:4-6; 9:9-10; 10:1-4)?
- What is necessary for us to be true worshippers (John 4:23-24; Philippians 3:3)?
- Would it be right, wrong, or indifferent if we went back to the worship of the Old Testament law (Hebrews 9:9-15; Romans 7:1-6; Galatians 5:1-4)?

CONCLUSION—It is very important that our expressions of worship to God be consistent with His will and be from the depths of our hearts. God despises worship that is done only for show. True worship has graduated from the outward aspects of the Old Testament law to the inward expression of the New Testament law. Let us keep it on that high spiritual plane.

How We Glorify God In Worship

"Give unto the Lord, O you mighty ones, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:1-2)

INTRO—To be obsessed with the glory of God is the consuming passion of the true worshipper who lives to exalt God. The chief end of man is to glorify God, and enjoy Him forever—magnifying His glory now, and relishing in it throughout eternity (Jude 24-25; Revelation 5:13; 7:9-12). Therefore, we view all of life through eyes that are filled with the wonder and glory of God's attributes.

I. HOW WE GLORIFY GOD IN WORSHIP

- A. Glory To God.** "Praise, honor, exaltation"—all define the word "glory," but there is an obvious struggle in trying to adequately define it.

The word "glory" is found 379 times and "glorify" is found 27 times in the Bible. One thing is certain about "glory" though—that it must be expressed by those who stand in awe of the glorious one (1 Chronicles 16:23-29; 1 Corinthians 10:31)!

- Living For God's Glory Eliminates Hypocrisy (Matthew 6:1-2,5,16). What is the hypocrite trying to steal for himself?
- Living For God's Glory Means Sacrificing Self (1 Peter 4:14). How would Peter himself glorify God in self-sacrifice (John 21:18-19)?
- Living For God's Glory Gives Hope That We Will Share In It (Philippians 3:20-21). What does that give us the ability to do (Romans 8:18)?

- B. How To Glorify God In Worship.** Glorifying God is nothing if it is not active and dynamic. One of the greatest tragedies of contemporary Christianity is that we have allowed the concept of worship to degenerate to nothing more than sitting quietly, piously, and dreamily in a worship assembly.

- Verbal Praise (Psalm 50:23; Hebrews 13:15). When we give God thanks for what He has done, how does that thanksgiving glorify Him (cf. Psalm 107:8,15,21,31)?
- Confession Of Sin (Nehemiah 1:5-6; Daniel 9:3-19). How can we possibly glorify God in our confession of sins? What are we saying about Him when we confess our sins?
- Prayer (John 14:13). What does the prayer that is asked in faith, and answered by the Lord, say about God?

CONCLUSION—We cannot bring glory and honor to God by merely following the prescribed acts of worship. We give life to worship and glorify God by other things too—the manner in which we perform worship, the heart which we pour out in devotion, and the majesty of God which we uphold in those acts.

To be wholly obsessed with the glory of God is the consuming passion of the true worshipper who lives to exalt God.

The Prayers Of The Church

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42)

INTRO—There is one thing Christians can do today which will help us with our problems, provide us with everything we need, strengthen us, draw us closer together, enhance our lives, build us up, and bring us to higher spiritual planes and to communion with God—prayer! The power of prayer is virtually untapped, yet its resources are limitless. We cannot wear it out or use it up! Yet, part of prayer’s power is dependent upon us (Mark 11:22-24). If we don’t believe, we will never see the full extent of its power!

I. THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

A. The Nature Of Prayer. Prayer is a very powerful exercise. As an act of worship, it expresses our dependence on God, and our recognition of His unlimited power. Notice the extent of its impact.

- Our Connection With The Spirit World (Hebrews 4:16; 10:19-22)
- Our Confidence In God’s Working (1 John 5:14-15)
- Prayer Stalls Heaven (Revelation 8:1-4)

B. Strong Emphasis On Congregational Prayer In The Early Church. The unmistakable conclusion from reading the book of Acts is that prayer was a vital exercise, not just a worn out ritual. We see everyone from new converts to seasoned Christians dependent on it. Notice some of the situations that brought brethren together to pray.

- Acts 1:13-14—
- Acts 2:42—
- Acts 4:23-31—
- Acts 6:1-6—
- Acts 12:5,12—
- Acts 13:1-3—
- Acts 14:21-23—
- Acts 16:13,16—
- Acts 20:36—
- Acts 21:3-5—

C. Prayer Was Enjoined In Other Places Too. Therefore, it must have tremendous benefits of some kind (cf. James 5:16b). What benefits can prayer bring, as seen in these passages? Why did Paul personally request it for himself?

- 1 Timothy 2:1-3,8—
- 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2—
- Romans 15:30-32—
- Philippians 1:19—

CONCLUSION—Praying together is one of the most intimate activities brethren can share with one another. We enter the depths of one another's hearts and share our innermost needs and spiritual desires.

When we pray together, we enter a spiritual realm together, coming directly to the base of God's throne through the intercession of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:14-16). One man leads our group in our petitions to God and we add our hearty Amen to establish our agreement to what he said (1 Corinthians 14:15-16). Such prayer needs to be a constant exercise (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Offering Acceptable Prayer

"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (1 Peter 3:12)

INTRO—Prayer is our spiritual lifeline. It connects us to the source of our spiritual life—God. We cannot overemphasize the importance of prayer. We need to ensure that our prayers are effective and that God is hearing them, because God does not acknowledge the prayers of all men (1 Peter 3:12; cf. Luke 18:9-14).

I. OFFERING ACCEPTABLE PRAYER

- A. Preceded By Faithful And Righteous Living (1 Peter 3:10-12).** Prayer is not a substitute for righteous living but a reinforcement. It does not require sinlessness (Luke 18:13-14; James 5:16), but note the importance of having a righteous life precede it.
- Proverbs 15:29—
 - Proverbs 28:9—
 - 1 John 3:21-22—
- B. Offered In The Name Of Christ (John 14:13-14).** More than just a proper closing to include at the end of our prayers, this is a recognition that Jesus is our only advocate and mediator between us and God. Why must we come to God through Jesus?
- Ephesians 2:18—
 - Hebrews 8:1-2—
 - 1 John 2:1—
- C. Offered Consistently With God's Will (1 John 5:14-15).** God answers our prayers when we comply with His conditions for receiving those things.
- What do we pray (Luke 11:3)?
What must we do (2 Thessalonians 3:10)?
 - What do we pray (Matthew 6:12)?
What must we do (Matthew 6:14-15)?
 - What did Jesus pray (Luke 23:34)?
What did they have to do (Acts 2:37-38)?
- D. Offered Sincerely (Psalm 17:1).** God gains no benefit from memorized prayers that are recited for His hearing. It is better to have the heart without the words than the words

without the heart! What does Jesus warn us about in our prayers?

- Matthew 6:7-8—
- Matthew 15:8—

E. Offered Fervently (James 5:16-18). Prayers must not be one-time requests of God, but diligent, earnest, continual pleas. Why must our entreaties be so fervent?

- Luke 11:5-13—
- Luke 18:1-8—

CONCLUSION—Prayer is really an act of faith (Matthew 21:21-22). Doubts make those prayers void (James 1:5-8). Perhaps that is one reason many of our prayers are never answered. If prayer is not an act of faith, it is an exercise in futility. If God is not hearing us, it may be that we are hindering our own prayers.

How To Speak To God

“And it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught His disciples’” (Luke 11:1)

INTRO: Do we find ourselves praying for the same things over and over? Sometimes we struggle to break free from ritualistic prayers learned by memory and uttered without much thought.

If those common expressions help us express ourselves, that is not necessarily bad, because *the power of prayer lies more in what we are than what we say* (Romans 8:26-27). The heart that expresses them—not the words themselves—are the key to acceptable prayer. It is possible to disguise the heart with eloquent words and, at the same time, to disdain a sincere heart because it lacks articulate expressions!

I. HOW SHOULD WE SPEAK TO GOD?

- A. Reverence (Hebrews 12:28).** God despises irreverence in worship to Him (Psalm 89:7). Although we can address Him as our Father, what do we always need to remember about God (Isaiah 55:8-9)?
- B. Adoration And Praise (Jude 24-25).** Our prayers noticeably lack this quality. We pass over the introductions and get right to the point—the things we want or need. Why is it important to express such adoration and praise to God in prayer (1 Chronicles 29:10-15)?
- C. Thanksgiving (Colossians 4:2).** Sometimes we do too much asking and not enough thanking. What should be our first reaction after receiving God’s blessings (cf. Luke 17:15-18)? Is there a place for selfishness in a thankful heart (Philippians 4:6-7)?
- D. Confession (1 John 1:9).** Confession can only come from a humble heart—the proud will not admit his sin or turn away from it. Prayer without confession is void of humility (cf. Daniel 9:3-19). What else must precede that confession of sins (Acts 8:22)?
- E. Petition (1 John 5:15).** This is merely asking God to fulfill our needs. By the time we get to this point though, we are so thankful for all God has given, and realize our own unworthiness, that we are not asking for quite so much. What are some of those things for which we can petition God (Matthew 6:11; James 1:5; 5:13-16; 1 Timothy 2:1)?

II. HOW SHOULD WE NOT SPEAK TO GOD

- A. Not As A Last-Ditch Effort.** Many problems arise which we cannot handle. We have exhausted all our abilities, and now decide to turn to prayer. Everything else has failed, “*what have we got to lose?*” Right? Wrong! (James 4:1-2) What would have happened had we prayed in the first place (Matthew 7:7-8; 1 John 5:14-15)?

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- B. Not As A Selfish Gesture.** Prayer is not just a method of asking for the things we want or need. What is God's response to selfish prayers (James 4:3)?
- C. Not Just Wishful Thinking.** Many Christians don't believe God answers prayer today because they don't believe He acts directly in this world—prayer is just wishful thinking. Does God hear and answer prayer (James 5:16; John 14:13-14)? Is there a time when God will suppress an answer to our prayers (James 1:5-8)?

CONCLUSION—Prayer is not just psychological therapy. It is not just a spiritual pick-me-up. Prayer is good therapy though—not for the benefit it has on our minds and emotions, but because it allows God to bring us freedom from fear (Psalm 118:5-6), strength of soul (Psalm 138:3), satisfaction (Isaiah 58:9-11), fullness of joy (John 16:23-24), freedom from anxiety (1 Peter 5:7), and peace of mind (Philippians 4:6-7). Why would we possibly ignore it?

Sing Praise Unto The Lord

"From the rising of the sun to its going down, the Lord's name is to be praised" (Psalm 113:3)

INTRO—What is the appeal of singing? Does it benefit God or the ones singing? Or both? Why is it that Christians enjoy singing—even those who don't understand the mechanics of singing? Why is it such an emotional lift when we are down, or an effective outlet for our exuberance when we are up? Is the church's music something we observe or something in which we participate?

I. SING PRAISE UNTO THE LORD

- A. Singing Is Not Just A Filler (Hebrews 2:12).** It is not something we do to get us settled in, to get our children quieted, or something we do until the latecomers come in.
- B. Sacrifice Of The Lips (Hebrews 13:15).** It is an offering of praise we bring to the feet of God for His acceptance.
- What kind of sacrifices has God always expected? (cf. Malachi 1:6-8)
 - What is the nature of the sacrifices we offer to Him? Why? (1 Peter 2:5,9-10)
- C. Praise To God (Romans 15:9-11).** Two prominent ideas of *praise* are to “cause to shine” and to “celebrate God in song.” When we sing about God's glory, we cause it to shine even brighter. The Psalms were full of such adulation and exaltation. What did the Psalmist see in God that was worthy of praise—that is *still* worthy of our praise?
- Psalm 9:1—
 - Psalm 9:14—
 - Psalm 21:13—
 - Psalm 35:28—
 - Psalm 42:5,11—
 - Psalm 47:7—
 - Psalm 63:3—
 - Psalm 99:3—
 - Psalm 106:1—

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- Psalm 118:21—
 - Psalm 139:14—

D. Psalms, Hymns And Spiritual Songs (Ephesians 5:19). What is the nature of the songs that the Bible commands us to sing (also Colossians 3:16)? What is the distinction between them—if any?

- Psalms—
- Hymns—
- Spiritual Songs—

CONCLUSION—The Psalms serve as wonderful examples for the nature of *our* worship in songs to God (Romans 15:4)—they were intensely emotional, they were preeminently religious, and they were always reverent. To the God who listens, our songs are beautiful (Psalm 33:1; 147:1). “*I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.*” (Psalm 104:33; 146:2).

Why Singing?

"Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth; break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises" (Psalm 98:4)

INTRO—God's people have always been a singing people. God is lifted up and exalted in the praises of His people, *"but you are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel"* (Psalm 22:3). Why did God choose and command singing as an outlet for our praise?

What else is happening toward God while our mouths are singing and speaking to one another (Ephesians 5:19)? What else are we expressing to God while we are teaching and admonishing one another (Colossians 3:16)?

I. WHY SINGING?

- A. Everyone Can Do It.** God did not choose that which only the most talented people can do. Neither did He choose something that we would have to sit and watch without participating—like choirs or choruses. Singing becomes a personal experience and a personal expression to God (Psalm 104:33).
- B. Singing Reminds Us Of God's Work.** Sometimes we forget God's promises, faithfulness, and wisdom. What can songs bring to our memory (Psalm 105:2-5)?
- C. Singing Is A Powerful Motivator.** It can lighten the depressed spirit, refresh the heart, and motivate the soul onward. Why were Paul and Silas singing while in prison (Acts 16:25)? What additional effect did it have on the jailer (Acts 16:25b,29-30)?
- D. Singing Is A Wonderful Teaching Medium.** At times, words alone are empty and meaningless, but sometimes the words of songs strike the right chords in the hearts of others (Colossians 3:16). Aren't there songs that do that for you?
- E. Singing Encourages One Another.** What can singing accomplish, even when we don't know the right thing to say or do to edify one another (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16)?
 - When do we find Jesus singing (Matthew 26:30)? How would that benefit Him in that situation?
- F. Singing Is An Effective Outlet For Thanksgiving.** Like a cup that overflows as more water is poured into it, singing spills forth from a heart that is filled to the brim, and more, with God's blessings (Psalm 95:1-2).
 - What should motivate our singing (James 5:13)?
 - What do we have to be happy about?

CONCLUSION—Why should we sing? Because God deserves our praises like none other (1 Chronicles 16:23-25,29). We should sing because we rejoice in our salvation and our Christianity (Philippians 4:4). God is listening. What is He hearing from you (Psalm 147:1)?

Why Not Instrumental Music?

“Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19)

INTRO—Should Christians today use instrumental music in our worship to God? That question has been a wedge of division between religious people. Yet, as controversial as the question is, there are many who think that the discussion is trivial—that it simply doesn’t matter. Should we, shouldn’t we, or does it even matter?

I. WHY NOT INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC?

A. New Testament Worship Is Spiritual Not Physical. What was the distinction Jesus made between the worship of the New Covenant and that of the Old (John 4:19-24)?

- Was one to worship God “with the proper attitude and in the proper way” under the Old Testament law (Exodus 25:2; Deuteronomy 5:32; 6:4-9; 12:32)? Then what is Jesus contrasting?
- How were the things of the Old Testament law described (Hebrews 8:4-5; 10:1-4; Colossians 2:16-17)?
- Why did God send the physical types and symbols of the Old Testament first (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:46)?
- How do the things of the New Testament law replace the Old (Matthew 5:17-20; John 1:17)?
- Are musical instruments part of the shadows and types of the Old Testament, or the spiritual fulfillment of the New (Colossians 2:16-17; Ephesians 5:19)?

II. ARGUMENTS USED TO JUSTIFY INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP

A. It Was Authorized In The Old Testament. That’s true. Actually, they were commanded (2 Chronicles 29:25-30). Are we still subject to the Old Testament Law?

- What happened to the Old Testament (Hebrews 8:6-13)?
- When was it replaced (Hebrews 9:15-17)?
- What are the consequences of using the Old Testament Law for authority in religion (Romans 7:1-6; Galatians 5:4)?

B. Silence Of The Scriptures. The Bible doesn’t *condemn* the use of instruments in New Testament worship. Must God specifically condemn a practice for it to be wrong? Can you give any examples?

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- How can we know the mind of God—by what He says or doesn't say (1 Corinthians 2:9-14)?
 - What was true about Jesus Himself, even though the Bible never said anything about priests *not* coming from the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:11-14; 8:4-5; cf. Numbers 3:5-10; 18:6-7)?

CONCLUSION—As beautiful as musical instruments sound, what can they never do (Ephesians 5:19)? After graduating to the *spiritual* worship of the New Testament, would we be moving forward or backward to include instruments? Now worship can be carried out in a spiritual plane (Philippians 3:3).

The Lord's Supper

"...Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you'" (Matthew 26:26-27)

INTRO—Man has erected many memorials and monuments to remember great men and events—pyramids, Statue of Liberty, Washington Monument, Lincoln Monument. God has also left us with memorials as tokens of important events and covenants—rainbow (Genesis 9:11-17), pot of manna (Exodus 16:32-34), stones from Jordan River (Joshua 4:1-9), Passover (Exodus 12:1-14). The Lord's Supper is the world's greatest monument commemorating the world's greatest event (1 Corinthians 11:26).

I. THE PASSOVER AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

A. Significance Of The Passover. When was the Passover first instituted (Exodus 11-12)? What did it celebrate? How does Jesus Himself relate to this special event and present Himself as the key to the real meaning of the Old Testament offerings (Matthew 5:17-18)?

- Passover Sacrifice (Luke 22:15-16; 1 Corinthians 5:7)—
- Sin Offering (Leviticus 6:24-30; Matthew 26:28)—
- Covenant Sacrifice (Exodus 24:4-8; Luke 22:20)—

B. Relationship Between The Two Meals. The gospels record that “the Last Supper” was a Passover Meal (Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12,16; Luke 22:15). Using these emblems and representations, He instituted a new Supper to remind them of an even better sacrifice.

C. Institution Of Lord's Supper. When Jesus instituted this Supper, He chose the emblems for their convenience and significance. We have no right to substitute something else.

- Unleavened Bread. Why “unleavened” bread (Matthew 26:17; cf. Exodus 12:15-20)? What does it symbolize (Luke 22:19)?
- Fruit Of The Vine. What does it symbolize (Matthew 26:27-28; Luke 22:20)?

II. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LORD'S SUPPER

A. Who Is It Designed For? Is it a memorial for all persons who are interested in sharing it, or is it designed with certain people in mind? Does the church decide to whom it will be “open” or “closed”? What does each of the following passages indicate?

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- 1 Corinthians 10:16-17—
 - 1 Corinthians 10:21—
 - Matthew 26:29—
 - 1 Corinthians 11:28—

B. When Should It Be Observed? If we had no instruction regarding a day or time, then it would be up to our judgment. But what does the Bible indicate about...

- The day (Acts 20:7)—
- The frequency (Acts 20:7; cf. Exodus 20:8)—

CONCLUSION—The Lord's Supper is a wonderful channel for worship. It is not to be the only time of our busy weeks that we remember the Lord's death and seek communion with Him though. Actually, it is designed to be a memorial of the communion that we share with the Lord each day.

The Lord's Supper—A Fitting Memorial

"And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me'" (Luke 22:19)

INTRO—Read Matthew 27:11-54. Those words mean much to us after hearing them. The scene is vivid and lifelike in our minds. But what happens after a couple of days pass?

Jesus wanted His disciples to never forget what He had done. He set up a memorial—shared by millions of people over 2000 years—which still has not lost its significance to participants.

I. PROPER MANNER OF OBSERVING LORD'S SUPPER

- A. **Not In Confusion (1 Corinthians 11:17-26,33-34).** What caused all the confusion in the Corinthian church's observance of the Lord's Supper? What was God's response to their corruption of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)?
- B. **Observe Worthily (1 Corinthians 11:27-30).** The Lord's Supper is a sacred exercise. He does not say we must "be worthy" but must take it in "a worthy manner"—what is the difference? What would be an "unworthy manner" to partake of it (11:29b)? What are the consequences of partaking unworthily (11:27,29)?
- C. **Observe In Peace And Harmony With Brethren (1 Corinthians 10:17).** The Lord's Supper is a ritualistic farce if there is bitterness between brethren who are partaking. What does the Lord's Supper signify about the relation of the brethren who share in it?

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

- A. **Understood Only By Its Participants.** It is a simple act. What would you think about it if you had never come in contact with Christianity? How can its participants appreciate it so much, when others cannot even comprehend it (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8:5-9)?
- B. **Memorial (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).** What is one of the worst reactions we could have to the Lord's death and suffering? Why was the Lord's Supper instituted?
- C. **Proclamation (1 Corinthians 11:26).** What kind of things are we telling the world about when we partake of the Lord's Supper?
- D. **Anticipation (1 Corinthians 11:26).** Not only does the Lord's Supper point backward as a reminder, but it also points forward. What kind of things does it look forward to?

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- E. Introspection (1 Corinthians 11:28).** As much as this memorial points to Jesus, it also makes us look at ourselves. What are we examining within ourselves?
- F. Communion (1 Corinthians 10:14-21).** What is the significance of something being a “communion”? In what way is the Lord’s Supper a communion with...
- Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16)—
 - Brethren (1 Corinthians 10:17)—

CONCLUSION—The single greatest event in history darkened the sun at noon, but the way our lives move in fast forward motion, we have a hard time remembering what happened last week, much less what happened 2000 years ago. The Lord’s Supper is a special memorial which takes us out of the mainstream of life for a short time to have spiritual fellowship with our Lord and our brethren. Don’t forget!

Before We Give

“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come” (1 Corinthians 16:2)

INTRO—Televangelists have corrupted the Lord’s commands for giving. Likewise, churches support all kinds of programs for raising money.

Some people think that religion has become a leech on society, feeding off the good will of good people. But it is our free-will offerings, given as an act of devotion and adoration, which are a true sacrifice to God. God seeks free-will offerings because they are such a good indication of the devotion of the giver (Exodus 35:4-29; 36:6-7).

I. CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE WE GIVE

A. What Is Giving Really About? If we are not careful, we can look at giving from a selfish viewpoint, and see it only as a loss without any gain.

- Giving Is About Us And God (Malachi 1:8,13; 3:8-10)
- Giving Is Not About Dollars (Luke 12:31-34)
- Giving Is About Sacrifice (2 Samuel 24:24)

B. The Gift Of Sacrifice. If it doesn’t cost us something, then it is not giving. If there is no sacrifice then it is not a gift. Consider what each of the following has sacrificed.

- God (John 3:16)—
- Jesus (John 15:13; 2 Corinthians 8:9)—

How does God expect us to respond to these sacrifices (Luke 14:27-33; Philippians 2:5-8)? What have others sacrificed for Him?

- Poor Widow (Mark 12:41-44)—
- Early Church (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-37)—
- Stephen (Acts 7:54-60)—
- James (Acts 12:2)—
- Paul (Philippians 3:7-11; 4:12)—

C. Stewardship. A steward is one who has been given custody of something that belongs to another, and is expected to use it as the owner instructs (1 Corinthians 4:2).

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- Why do we give to God (1 Chronicles 29:14)?
 - Who benefits from our giving (Acts 20:35; Philippians 4:17-19)?
 - How does God determine our dedication to Him (Matthew 25:14-30)?

D. Lay Up Treasures In Heaven. One who heaps up treasures will enjoy them only for a short time, but one who uses his resources for good will benefit throughout eternity.

- Matthew 6:19-21—
- 1 Timothy 6:17-19—
- Galatians 6:7-8—

CONCLUSION—Our weekly giving is a good indication of our dedication to God and a good test of our commitment—especially in a day and time when money is the ruling force in the world! Giving must be done generously, not as an obligation. Obligations hurt. Generosity never hurts (Proverbs 11:25; 13:7). Generosity always comes back to bless us (Luke 6:38).

Principles Of Giving

"He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:6-7)

INTRO—Although giving is a personal act that signifies the devotion of the giver, it is also regulated by God. Giving in general, is an action that shows a true love (1 John 3:16-18) and a living faith (James 2:14-17). Such gifts please God (Hebrews 13:16) and insure His blessings (Acts 20:35).

I. BIBLE PRINCIPLES REGARDING GIVING

- A. Regularly (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).** It is not a sporadic thing. God relies on such gifts of devotion to accomplish much of His work in this world.
- B. Proportionately (1 Corinthians 16:2).** Instead of comparing our giving with what others are doing, how should we determine the extent of our own giving?
- C. Liberally (Romans 12:8).** Why is it that the more we can afford to give, the less we give proportionately? What do we learn from the poor Macedonians (2 Corinthians 8:1-4)? How were they able to give so generously (2 Corinthians 8:5)?
- D. Readiness (2 Corinthians 8:11-12).** This refers to the hearts of these givers. It was a desire and yearning to actually participate in the giving.
- What made them ready to give (2 Corinthians 8:12a)?
 - How much does God expect us to give (2 Corinthians 8:12b)?
- E. Purposefully (2 Corinthians 9:7).** This denotes a fixed plan or budget. When you are budgeting your finances, do you include your weekly contribution?
- What was the purpose for Barnabas' giving (Acts 4:34-37)?
 - What was the purpose for Ananias' and Sapphirra's giving (Acts 5:1-11)?
- F. Voluntarily (2 Corinthians 9:7).** Our offerings don't benefit God. He doesn't need our money, He needs our hearts. Consider how a voluntary offering benefits the giver (2 Corinthians 8:7-10).
- What does it prove (2 Corinthians 8:8)?
 - What advantage was it for them to complete their giving (2 Corinthians 8:10-11)?

G. Cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7). Whether rich or poor, there must first be a willing mind (2 Corinthians 8:12). He who gives only when he is asked waits too long.

H. Confidently (2 Corinthians 9:8). We can give abundantly and remain confident that our blessings will be multiplied for giving. God sees and rewards generosity (Proverbs 13:7). What all does God provide for us?

- 2 Corinthians 9:10a—
- 2 Corinthians 9:10b—
- 2 Corinthians 9:10c—

CONCLUSION—How much should we give back to God each week? If you will be mindful of the great sacrifices made by Jesus and early disciples... if you will remember that you are a steward of God's possessions... if you will remember that liberal giving is laying up treasures for yourself in heaven... if you will be thankful for what God has done... then you should be able to answer that question yourself. But if you cannot grasp these things, it is possible that you will never know!

Preparing To Worship

“But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15)

INTRO—Standing before God at Mt. Horeb, Moses had to remove his shoes (Exodus 3:4-5)—why? Then receiving the Ten Commandments, Moses bowed his head to the ground (Exodus 34:8-9)—why? When Solomon dedicated the temple, the people bowed when they worshipped (2 Chronicles 7:3)—why? When the restored remnant congregated to hear the reading of the law, they bowed and worshipped (Nehemiah 8:6)—why? Maybe you are thinking, *‘it should be obvious why’* (Psalm 96:1-9)!

I. PREPARING THE HEART TO WORSHIP

A. Preparing The Heart. The preparation of each individual worshipper is the most important thing before entering worship. Acceptable worship does not happen spontaneously. What kind of preparation does God expect from His people?

- Hebrews 10:22a—
- Hebrews 10:22b—
- Hebrews 10:22c—
- Hebrews 10:22d—

B. Knowing God. Sometimes we are ill-prepared for worship because we do not adequately know God. Understanding God, we begin to see why men act a certain way before Him (Hebrews 12:28).

God is personal and allows men to come before Him, but we must be cautious of the manner which we present ourselves before Him (Romans 1:21). What mistakes did the following characters make when they approached God?

- Cain (Genesis 4:3-7)—
- Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-3)—
- Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:16-21)—
- Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)—

C. Reverence In God’s House. When we come together as God’s house, He is with us (Matthew 18:20; Ephesians 2:19-22). Some conduct befits our worship and some does not. We must remember why we are here (Hebrews 2:12; Romans 15:9-11).

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- Old Testament priests had to approach God in a suitable manner (Exodus 28:31-43). How does that principle relate to us as Christian priests (1 Peter 2:5,9)?
 - Prudence is needed when entering the presence of God (Ecclesiastes 5:1-7). What does the wise man warn us against?
 - After completing the walls of Jerusalem, the people of Israel called for Ezra the scribe to read God's law to them. What kind of attitude did they exhibit when they came before God (Nehemiah 8:1-12)?
 - Jesus has opened a greater, more excellent way for us than before (Hebrews 10:19-22). Is it possible for us to profane holy, sanctified things by treating them like they were common (Hebrews 10:28-29; 12:16-17)?

CONCLUSION—Acceptable worship takes place in the heart, as it focuses on God in each of the ways it expresses worship—prayer is offered *"unto God"* (Acts 12:5), songs are sung *"to the Lord"* (Colossians 3:16), giving is possible because we first give of self *"to the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 8:5), and the Lord's Supper is done in *"remembrance of me"* (1 Corinthians 11:24-25). The building we meet in is not holy, but what we do in it is holy!

Performance Or Participation?

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him” (John 4:23)

INTRO—Some people today clamor that worship does not have to be modeled after a divine pattern, but rather should be a moving, existential experience. Modern changes are leaning toward more of a worship performance than simple participation.

Considering the emphasis we have placed on worship thus far in this study, what would your initial response be—is worship more attuned to *performance* or *participation*? Are God’s things ours to tamper with (1 Samuel 15:22-23)?

I. PERFORMANCE OR PARTICIPATION?

- A. Influence Of Contemporary Society.** Our society is in a constant state of flux—so accelerated that it makes our head swim. How does that influence the present day church?
- When is change good (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)?
 - When is change bad (Revelation 22:18-19)?
- B. Influence Of Modern Entertainment.** Our culture wildly seeks more entertainment in all areas of life. What is the problem with such an obsession (Ecclesiastes 2:1-3)?
- How much effort should we exert to cater to the interests of those who are marginally curious (Acts 17:20-21)?
 - How can those performing in such a worship service become *celebrities* with no real spiritual credentials? How can that detract from true worship (John 5:43-44)?
- C. Is Worship God-Centered Or Man-Centered?** Who is the central figure in our worship and the main reason why we have assembled together (John 4:23)? For whose benefit is all the modern orchestration and choreography (John 4:24)?
- For whom should we be concerned about sounding good (Ephesians 5:19b; cf. 1 Samuel 16:7)?
 - What are some ways that modern worship services try to accommodate people? Is there any evidence at all of the New Testament church doing such things?
- D. Worship Performance.** All Christians have God-given gifts (Romans 12:3-8), but many churches are gravitating toward having “*worship specialists*.” Specialization causes us to defer to those who are more talented, and in worship, takes opportunities away from the common Christian who wants to worship and serve God where he can.

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- Give examples of how this entertainment philosophy has spilled over into modern worship.
 - How can preaching become a performance? What should be the proper emphasis in preaching (1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 2 Corinthians 4:5)?
 - Is worship designed to be a tool to appeal to the “*unchurched seekers*” or is designed to glorify God and edify brethren (1 Corinthians 14:20-33,40)?

E. Biblical View Of Worship. Are these questions ours to decide or God’s? Whose church is it anyway? The Bible emphasizes mutual participation and fellowship in worship.

- Assemblies are pictured as times of joint participation, and mutual sharing of praise and edification (Acts 20:7-12; 1 Corinthians 10:14-17; 11:18-20,33).
- Assemblies are beautiful periods when hearts join together to express joy and thanksgiving (Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:15-16; Hebrews 2:12).
- Assemblies provide opportunities for simple people to express simple acts of devotion that please God (Hebrews 13:15-16).

CONCLUSION—It is important for us to recognize the difference between our own preferences and Biblical authority. And then to recognize there are some people who just don’t like change, even though there may be some changes that are necessary for progress (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

Improving Our Worship

*"For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints...
Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:33,40)*

INTRO—The worship ideal which is presented in Scripture is a joyous thing to participate in—it is reverent, exuberant, and heart-felt. Yet worship in many places seems to be lifeless, dull, and void of any real enthusiasm of the heart. It is mere routine—a collection of actions performed by rote (Matthew 15:8-9). Doesn't God deserve better than that? What can we do to make worship more meaningful?

I. IMPROVING OUR WORSHIP

A. Not By Improving On God's Plan. No improvement can be made to worship itself. Improvement begins with the *worshipper*, which then results in vastly improved worship (John 4:23-24).

- What happens when we try to change the worship (Matthew 15:9)?

B. Improving Our Worship By Making Improvements To Ourselves. If we will look honestly, we will see that *we* are the ones who are hindering worship.

- Prepare For Worship (2 Chronicles 30:18-20). A heart that is prepared to seek God will be heard by God. What are some practical ways that we can individually prepare ourselves for worship (cf. Psalm 46:10)?
- Plan The Worship (1 Corinthians 14:33,40). It is easy to fall into the mistakes of spontaneous worship all the time, or worship so structured it is routine. What can planning do to improve our worship?
- Participate In Worship (1 Corinthians 14:15). Worship is designed for God's glory, but also for our edification (Colossians 3:16). Who usually criticizes and complains the most—the participants or the spectators?
- Create An Appetite For Worship (Psalm 122:1). If we are not enthused at our opportunities to worship, then we need to work on our hearts (Psalm 42:1-2). How can we renew our hearts (Psalm 51:10-17)?
- Lose Sight Of Ourselves (2 Corinthians 10:5b). We tend to have problems worshipping God because we can't get our minds off of *ourselves*. Our worship assemblies are for God's glory and brethren's edification (Hebrews 10:24-25).

C. Decently And In Order. God wants orderliness in our worship rather than confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33,40). But remember, there is no divine order of worship. God has prescribed the acts of worship He desires, but human wisdom and order is not divine!

- What happens if we make laws for God—dress codes, ritualistic demands, liturgical requirements, etc. (Matthew 15:9)?

CONCLUSION—Our public worship should not be a sloppy thing. God demands orderliness, so we must do everything we can to improve our worship. We must not allow our own weaknesses and sins to hamper our worship to God, and bring us into judgment for profaning such a holy thing (1 Corinthians 11:17-34).

Faulty Fixes For Worship

"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9)

INTRO—Sometimes when worship begins to feel mundane and meaningless, we try to fix it. We try to spice it up, hoping such attempts will bring back the emotion, and make us feel closer to God. Too often we use the wrong things to liven it up. Actually, changing the methods and manner of worship is not the answer; instead we need to change the heart that worships.

I. FAULTY FIXES FOR WORSHIP

- A. A Necessary Balance.** God has always emphasized both attitude and action (Joshua 24:15; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Acts 10:35; James 2:17). We cannot sacrifice one for another. Our worship needs the same balance of attitude and action, emotion and substance.
- B. Focusing On Externals.** Sometimes we try to enhance the spirit and heart of worship by changing *external* things—but externals really have no power to change *internals* (Colossians 2:23; cf. Mark 7:14-23).
- What are some external things we could change in the worship service which really don't help change us within?
- C. Emphasis On Emotions.** The craving to make things emotional, exciting, and entertaining is the wrong motivation.
- What part of man does God appeal to first—even before the emotional (Acts 8:30; 26:25; Isaiah 1:18)?
 - Can things like lifting up hands, dramatic presentations, hand clapping, choirs, concerts, etc. make worship more “spiritual”? Do those activities emphasize the “outward” or the “inward”? What does “spiritual” emphasize?
 - What are some other things that churches are presently doing, in an attempt to make worship a more meaningful experience? Do these things make it more meaningful for *God* or *men*?
- D. Denominational Tactics.** We often become enamored with the innovations of denominational churches, and rush to be like them. We must not be concerned with whether or not it appears to work, but with whether or not God is pleased with it.
- Choreographed Worship—
Is that the same thing as worshipping orderly (1 Corinthians 14:40)?

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- Drama Productions—
Is that the same thing as gospel preaching (1 Corinthians 1:21; 2:1-5)?
 - Hand Clapping—
Is that the same thing as expressing “Amen” (1 Corinthians 14:16; then 50 more times in New Testament)?

CONCLUSION—We must be careful about what we try to change in worship to God. Those who want to revolutionize worship are on dangerous ground, because they ally themselves with a long line of individuals who have clamored for change with disastrous results (Exodus 32:1-28; Leviticus 10:1-3; Numbers 12:1-16; 2 Chronicles 26:16-21).

“The new approach to worship is actually a rejection of the biblical nature of worship. ‘Worship’ means acts of reverence paid to God. True worship is not performance for consumers, but participation in honor and praise of God.” (Tom Holland, *The Spiritual Sword*, Vol. 24, No.2, p.34)

When God Despises Scriptural Worship

"I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies. Though you offer me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings." (Amos 5:21)

INTRO—Can you imagine God setting someone at the door of the church building to forbid people from coming in to worship? There have been times that God has said the equivalent of “*Don’t even come into my house*” or “*Get out of here!*” (Malachi 1:10). There are times when God despises scriptural worship—that is—worship done with the right *forms* and *rituals*.

I. WHEN GOD DESPISES SCRIPTURAL WORSHIP

A. How Can God Despise The Very Actions Which He Commands? Understand that by “scriptural worship” we are discussing that worship which follows the commanded form in its outward actions and motions.

In the following examples, God despised the scriptural forms of worship and apparent acts of devotion they offered to Him. Explain why.

- Isaiah 1:11-17—
- Amos 5:10-13,21—
- Zechariah 7:4-14—
- Matthew 5:23-24—
- Mark 3:1-6—
- John 19:31-33—
- Matthew 23:23-24—
- Romans 2:21-29—
- 1 Corinthians 11:20-30—
- 1 Corinthians 13:1-3—

God is not only concerned with *what* we do, but also *why* and *how* we do it. Formal religious service is important, but without the heart and attendant faithfulness, it is meaningless ritual.

B. What Does God Really Want? Trying to answer that question, man might think God merely wants more, greater, and costlier sacrifices (Micah 6:6-7). What does God really want (Micah 6:8)?

In the following examples, determine what God is really seeking from us—not instead of worship, but as an internal foundation from which acceptable worship flows.

- 1 Samuel 15:22—
- Psalm 51:16-17—
- Isaiah 1:11-15—
- Hosea 6:6—
- Amos 5:10-13—
- Matthew 9:13; 12:7—

CONCLUSION—As we try to emphasize the pattern of worship that we are to follow under the new covenant, we must recognize the importance of these accompanying actions and attitudes. Without them, we are just going through the motions and bringing God’s anger upon us (Psalm 15:1-5; 24:3-6).

Heaven—Worship Without End

“And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of many thunderings, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord omnipotent reigns!’” (Revelation 19:6)

INTRO—Do you ever get the impression that heaven will be a boring place? Be honest. If heaven is merely floating around on clouds playing harps, or sitting in our mansions with nothing to do, then it *will* be a boring place.

Heaven will be a place where we worship God eternally—where we experience that same thrill without end. A person who finds no joy or edification from worshipping God now, will likely find heaven boring.

I. HEAVEN—WORSHIP WITHOUT END

A. Will Heaven Be Boring? The problem we have is trying to humanly visualize heavenly things that are unfamiliar. Our experiences are earthbound (1 Corinthians 15:42-49), time-bound (2 Peter 3:8), and self-centered (Galatians 5:16-17).

- What spiritual problems does our dual nature present to us (Galatians 5:16-17; Romans 8:5-6)?
- How will heaven release us from that struggle (Ecclesiastes 12:7; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)?
- When clothed with a spiritual body, what will happen to our physical desires (Romans 7:22-25)?
- On earth we are told to think on heavenly things (Colossians 3:1-3). In heaven we won't have worldly things to cloud our thinking (Colossians 3:4). Who will be the center of everything (Revelation 21:22-24)?

B. Why God Deserves Eternal Worship. We honor and admire our peers because of their accomplishments, their intrinsic qualities, and the benefits they have provided for us. How much more so are the Father and Son worthy of our praise!

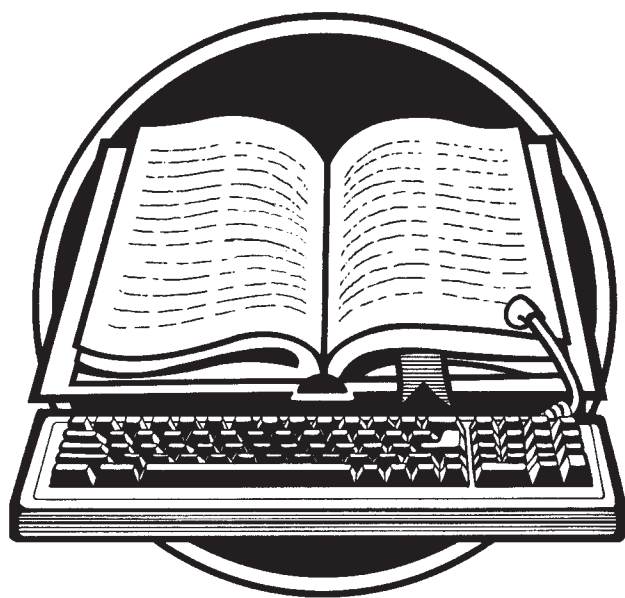
In the following passages, comment on the worship which is offered to God—how, why, what things make Him worthy of worship, the nature of the worship, etc.

- Revelation 4:1-11—
- Revelation 5:1-14—
- Revelation 7:9-17—
- Revelation 11:15-19—

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- Revelation 15:1-8—
 - Revelation 19:1-10—
 - Revelation 21:1-8—

CONCLUSION—Will heaven be boring? Without physical, earthly things to cloud our desire to exalt and serve God, we will experience ultimate happiness in a place where God is all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

All men will ultimately bow the knee to worship the Lord (Philippians 2:9-11). We can do it to our salvation or to our destruction. Those who refuse to acknowledge and worship Him in this life will suffer eternal separation from His presence (Romans 1:18-21).



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