

THE ACT OF WORSHIP – Making a Big Deal Out of God

Today we will be starting a new series on the “act of worship.” In Old Testament times Abraham built alters to the Lord and this form of worship required no elaborate priesthood or ritual. Subsequently, God established the framework and principles of Israelite worship [Exodus 25-31; 35-40], however, this wasn't to last. Israel's exposure to Canaanite worship effected the nation's own worship and Israel clearly adopted some of the pagan practices that it's people were subjected to. But God and His special spokesmen were quick to condemn such idolatry.

Old Testament and New Testament worship differed somewhat. OT worship was characterised by the Law and NT worship was characterised by joy and thanksgiving because of God's gracious redemption in Christ. The Sabbath was soon replaced by the first day of the week as the time for weekly public worship [Acts 20:7]. This was the occasion for celebration since Jesus arose on the first day of the week [Mark 16:2]. Possibly for a time Jewish Christians would go to the synagogues on Saturday and to their own worship meeting on the Sunday.

Although the New Testament does not instruct worshipers in any specific procedure to follow in their services, several elements appear regularly in the worship practices of the early church. [1] **Prayer** had a leading place in worship (1 Thess. 5:17). [2] **Praise**, either by individuals or in hymns sung by assemblies, reflected the frequent use of psalms in the synagogue. [3] **Readings**, lessons from the Bible to be read and studied were another part of worship. [4] **Preaching**, inspired preaching and prophecy by one filled with the Holy Spirit helped build the church (Eph. 12:6). [5] **Offerings**, weekly contributions were also collected (1 Cor. 16:12).

All these five elements were regularly included in the weekly worship service. however, they do not give direct insight into the *lifestyle* of worship that every believer is expected to adopt. Jesus said that God is looking for true worshipers - those who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Therefore, we cannot look at what's happening in our weekly services without first examining what's going on in our lives. Worship doesn't begin and end on a Sunday, it is expressed and demonstrated every moment of every day - it has eternal qualities!

So what is true worship, and what does it mean in both a spiritual and practical sense? Turn with me to **John 4** and let's read verses 21 to 24.....

In the Old Testament Jerusalem was appointed by God as the city [the location] where worship should be offered to Him. The temple in Jerusalem was seen as the dwelling place of God. But in the gospel age God does not have any particular place on earth where men must go to worship. What matters is not where one worships, but the attitude of heart and mind. True worship is not merely ritual or ceremony, but spiritual reality. According to the Greek word translated “truth”- true worship should be *open, truthful, heartfelt, real, unpretentious* and *genuine*. And this word also implies “achieved with integrity,” which tells us that first and foremost our worship should be *honest* as evidenced in character and actions. Your worship should be in perfect harmony with the nature of God Himself - for He is Spirit and He is Truth.

True worship means that you can enter into the presence of God by faith anywhere, and there you can praise and adore Him openly. Jesus announced to the woman that from now on worship of the Father would be unrestricted, honest, heartfelt, real, unpretentious and genuine. The Jewish people had reduced worship to outward forms, rituals and ceremonies. They thought that by religiously adhering to the letter of the Law, and going through certain rites and formalities, they were worshipping the Father. But their worship was outward and not inward. Their bodies might be bowed down but their hearts were not right before the Lord. When Jesus said worship must be in Spirit and in truth, He was rebuking the Jews and the Samaritans for they were both in error. But He was also informing them that it was now possible for men to draw near to God through Him in true and sincere worship.

“The Father is seeking such to worship Him.” What each of us needs to ask ourselves is this. If God is very interested in the adoration of His people. Does He receive this from me? Do I make a big deal out of God? Do I applaud God loud and often?

The English word “worship” comes from the Old English word “worthship,” a word that denotes the worthiness of the one receiving special honour or devotion. There is no doubt that God is worthy of honour and devotion, but does He get it from you? And if He does, does He get it all the time?

Those who worship God must do it out of their very being, their inner man, their true selves - in adoration and devotion. There is no place for "self" in true worship. You should not be self-secure or insecure, but 'God-secure' - with a value system based on your identity and true worth as a child of God. This will cause you to be a true worshipper, and you will worship as naturally as you breathe. And remember, the main reason you should be applauding God is because He deserves it! And if you want another good reason, here it is - "God would die for your sin before He would let you die in your sin."

Honest and sincere worship lifts your eyes of self and sets them directly on God. So stop making a big deal out of your self, your bad circumstances or even your big accomplishments.

Start making a big deal out of God! For He, and only He, truly deserves it. The Bible's best known worship leader wrote this, "**Give honour to the Lord for His glory and strength. Give honour to the Lord for the glory of His name. Worship the Lord in the splendour of His holiness**" [Psalm 29:1,2].

Worship gives God honour, it offers Him standing ovations. You can make a big deal out of God on Sundays with your songs of praise and on Mondays with your strengths and abilities. Every day, in every deed, you can give Him honour. Often people come to worship God and act as if they are the audience and God is the one doing the honouring. But your correct posture is highlighted in the Greek word translated "worship" [*proskineo*] which literally means "to kiss towards." And it implies, in submission and reverence [like bowing down]. Worship places God on centre stage and you in proper posture. Worship properly positions the worshipper!

Let me say this, "*You must worship God because you need to!*" If singing did nothing but weary your voice, if giving only emptied your wallet - if worship did nothing for you - it would still be the right thing to do. Why? Because you need it! Do you know that God has never taken His eyes off you. Not for a millisecond. Even while you were being formed in your mother's womb, He kept His eye on you. He is always near you. He lives to hear your heartbeat. He loves to hear your prayers, and He promises to inhabit your praises.

What do you do when confronted with such love? Don't you sing to Him? Don't you make a big deal of Him by confessing, declaring and proclaiming His name? Don't you bow your knee and lower your head in submission and reverence? Don't you lift up your gift in worship? Of course you do!!! So applaud God loud and often - for your sake, you need it. And for heaven's sake, He deserves it. Give Him standing ovations!