

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

WORSHIP

INTRODUCTION

A. Definitions of worship

1. Thomas Carlyle, *Worship is transcendent wonder.*
2. Webber, *...a meeting between God and His people.*

B. Importance of worship

1. It is commanded, Matthew 4:10, *...You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.*
2. It is encouraged, Psalm 95:6-7, *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.*
3. It must be done acceptably, Matthew 15:8-9, *This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*

C. Thoughts on worship

1. Author unknown, *Worship that pleases God comes from an obedient heart.*
2. C. S. Lewis, *The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God.*
3. Martin Luther, *To believe God is to worship God.*
4. John Stott, *Worship is the highest and noblest activity of which man, by the grace of God, is capable.*
5. Richard J. Foster, *If worship does not change us, it has not been worship. To stand before the Holy One of eternity is to change. Worship begins in holy expectancy; it ends in holy obedience.*

COMPONENTS OF WORSHIP

A. Worship is affirmation

1. We affirm God's revelation of Himself
 - a. In creation, Romans 1:20, *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.*
 - b. In His Word, the Bible, Romans 15:4, *For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*
 - c. In His Word, Jesus Christ
 - 1) Hebrews 1:1-3a, *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature...*
 - 2) John 1:18, *No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*
2. We affirm His worth
 - a. Kenneth Gangel, *The word worship comes from the Saxon word, worthship. To worship God is to ascribe the proper worth to God, to magnify His worthiness of praise, or better, to approach and address God as He is worthy...to the degree we truly comprehend what God is like, we will respond to Him in worship.*
 - b. Donald Whitney, *Since worship is focusing on and responding to God, regardless of what else we are doing we are not worshiping if we are not thinking about God...Worship often includes words and actions, but it goes beyond them to the focus of the mind and heart. Worship is the God-centered focus and response of the inner man; it is being preoccupied with God.*
 - c. Bernard of Clairvaux, *One man praises the Lord because He is mighty; another because He is good unto him; and, again, another simply because He is good. The first is a slave, and fears for himself; the second mercenary, and desires somewhat for himself; but the third is a son, and gives praise to his Father.*

B. Worship is identification

1. In worship, Christians are identifying themselves with other people of like faith.
2. Kenneth Gangel, *The corporate worship of the people of God preserves and transmits the faith. They identify themselves with the people of God of all times and places.*

- C. Worship is edification
 1. Christians learn and apply truths of God experienced in worship.
 2. Kenneth Gangel, *The worshiper gains increasing understanding of God's person and truth because proper worship teaches theology.*
- D. Worship is celebration
 1. Communion is a beautiful act of worship which focuses on celebrating the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 2. Kenneth Gangel, *Believers celebrate their union with the Creator...His marvelous works. And they invite others to join them in their homage.*
- E. Worship is developed
 1. It is a spiritual discipline that requires effort.
 2. Donald Whitney, concerning modern man, *He worships his work, works at his play, and plays at his worship.*
- G. Worship is done in spirit and in truth
 1. The key passage on worship in the New Testament is John 4:20-26.
 2. It is worth examining in more detail.

<i>CONTRAST BETWEEN WRONG AND RIGHT WORSHIP - JOHN 4:20-26</i>

- A. Wrong worship (20-22)
 1. Wrong Place (20), ***Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you (Jews) say that the place is in Jerusalem where it is necessary to worship.***
 - a. Samaritans worship at Mt. Gerizim
 - 1) *worshiped*
 - a) The same word for worship is used 9 times in verses 20-26.
 - b) Literally, it means to place one's face to the ground in an attitude of reverence.
 - 2) Samaritans
 - a) They separated from mainstream Judaism when the kingdom of Israel was divided.
 - b) Foreign colonists were brought into Samaria by the Assyrians and intermarriage took place.
 - c) They accepted only the Pentateuch, the first 5 books of the Old Testament.
 - 3) Mt. Gerizim
 - a) Jacob's Well where the Samaritan woman met Jesus is at the foot of Mt. Gerizim.
 - b) The Samaritans held that Abraham offered up Isaac on Mt. Gerizim.
 - c) They built a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim.
 - b. Jews worship at Jerusalem
 - 1) The woman used the plural when she said, *you*.
 - 2) She is referring to the Jews - it was like a standard response by Samaritans, whether she knew any of the theological arguments, or not.
 - 3) Jesus got personal in verses 17 and 18, but she kept the conversation general.
 2. Wrong Time (21), ***Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, that an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem, will you worship the Father."***
 - a. Worship based on location will end.
 - 1) Jesus declared that worship will neither take place on Gerizim or in Jerusalem.
 - 2) He used the plural, as well, referring to the Samaritans.
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 3:16, *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?*
 - 4) True worship is relational
 - 5) The construction of the Greek is used when true Deity is the object of worship - the Father.
 - 6) True worship is a personal relationship with God the Father.
 - 7) Jesus will expand the role of the Father in worship in verses 23-24.

3. Wrong Content (22), ***“You worship that which you don’t know”***
 - a. Jesus again uses the plural for *you*, emphasizing the fault in Samaritan worship.
 - b. Samaritan worship is defective.
 - 1) They accepted only the first 5 books of the Old Testament.
 - 2) They rejected the Psalms, the historical books and the prophetic books.
 - c. Faith must be grounded on truth.

B. Right worship (22b-26)

1. Right content (22b), ***we worship what we know, that salvation is from the Jews.***
 - a. True worship is based on fact.
 - 1) Salvation is from the Jews.
 - a) The word *from* refers to origin.
 - b) Isaiah 2:3, *and many peoples shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*
 - c) Micah 4:1-2, *It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*
 - b. The fact is that Messiah is Jewish.
 2. Right Object (23-24)
 - a. True worshipers worship the Father (23), ***“But an hour is coming, and now is, when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeks such ones for worship.”***
 - 1) Jesus turned back to the relational aspect of worship.
 - a) He declares that there will be a change in how worship takes place.
 - b) Actually, it changed in front of her own eyes - Jesus the Messiah.
 - 2) He gives the means by which the Father is to be worshiped.
 - a) In spirit
 - 1] The human spirit is the point of contact between God and man.
 - 2] It must be energized by regeneration, Romans 8:11, *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*
 - b) In truth
 - 1] It is more than sincerity or blind faith, as noted in Jesus’ statement concerning the Samaritans.
 - 2] It is in accord with the revealed Word of God.
 - 3] True worship demands a growing knowledge of the Word which enables us to increase our appreciation of the God we are to worship.
 - b. The Father seeks true worshipers.
 - 1) He seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and truth, 1 John 4:10, *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*
 - 2) The Father sent the Son to seek worshipers, even in Samaria, even here.
 - c. True worship is based on God’s nature (24), ***God is spirit: and those who worship Him, must worship in spirit and truth.***
 - 1) God is spirit
 - a) He is incorporeal, not composed of matter and not bound by space or time
 - b) Vance Havner, *The problem with the typical morning worship service is that it starts at 11 o’clock sharp and ends at 12 o’clock dull.*

- 2) God is true
 - a) John gave testimony to God's nature in John 3:33, *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*
 - b) Doctrine is the foundation of true worship.
 - 3) Donald Whitney, *Having the Holy Spirit residing within does not guarantee that we will always worship in spirit and truth, but it does mean we can...To worship God in spirit is to worship from the inside out. It means to be sincere in our acts of worship. No matter how spiritual the song you are singing, no matter how poetic the prayer you are praying, if it isn't sincere then it isn't worship, it's hypocrisy.*
3. Right Revelation (25-26)
- a. Messiah will reveal truth (25), *The woman said to Him, 'I know that Messiah is coming, He who is called the Christ; when that One comes, He will declare everything to us.'*
 - 1) The Samaritans looked for a messiah they called *Taheb*, meaning *converter*.
 - 2) He would restore the kingdom of Israel and reestablish worship on Mt. Gerizim.
 - 3) The Samaritan woman was looking there for truth.
 - b. Jesus is the source of truth (26), *Jesus said to her, 'I am - He who is speaking to you.'*
 - 1) He is the Messiah.
 - a) This is Jesus' only voluntary declaration of messiahship in the entire New Testament.
 - b) He is the One she is looking for - He is truth.
 - 2) He is God the Son.
 - a) He declared to her, *I am*, an identification with the name of God revealed in the Old Testament, Exodus 3:14, *God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.'*
 - b) John further declares this in John 8:58, *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.*

CONCLUSION

- A. What can we learn about worship in this passage?
1. God seeks true worshipers.
 - a. He wants us to worship Him more than we want to worship Him.
 - b. Worship is not for the super-spiritual but for every child of God.
 - c. Worship has been defined as *a meeting between God and His people*.
 - d. Worship is centered on the Father - His attributes, His working in our lives, His personal communication with His children.
 2. True worship demands right doctrine.
 - a. God is so narrow that He decided the way in which mankind can enter His presence.
 - b. Salvation is from the Jews and comes by grace through faith in Christ alone.
 - c. Kenneth Gangel, *In worship a believer acknowledges that God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ demands response. The self-revealed God awaits the reaction of His creation and that response is a duty for God's redeemed people, not some kind of emotion that sweeps over them in a certain hour on a certain day. In true worship believers affirm that they are His people and that He is their God. Worship looks above.*
 3. True worshipers are not bound by space or time.
 - a. God is calling us to worship Him, at all times and in every place.
 - b. The only physical body God has is the believer in whom He dwells, 1 Cor. 6:19-20, *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*
 - c. If I am not worshiping God through the week, why do I think I can manufacture true worship on Sunday morning at 10:50 a.m. and turn it off at noon?

4. True worship demands right living.
 - a. God is holy so Christians are called to holy living.
 - b. A.W. Tozer, *To seek high emotional states while living in sin is to throw our whole life open to self-deception and the judgment of God...What cannot stand in God's presence cannot serve Him.*
5. True worship cannot be manufactured, Donald Whitney, *Every believer must cross a few spiritual deserts in his or her pilgrimage to the Celestial City. Some arid places may be traversed in an hour or a few days. Occasionally, however, you may be required to travel for weeks with an almost withered soul. Press on in worship...don't stop worshiping. Never give up in the desert. You don't know how wide it is and you may be almost across.*

B. What can we learn about God's role in worship?

1. Create a mood that gives a proper picture of our holy God - transcendence.
2. Anticipate a time of celebrating our personal God - immanence.
 - a. Acknowledge the power of God's presence in our daily lives. He is present among us by His grace.
 - b. Clement of Alexandria, *All our life is a festival: being persuaded that God is everywhere present on all sides, we praise Him as we till the ground, we sing hymns as we sow the seed, we feel His inspiration in all we do.*