

True and Acceptable Worship

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Worship has become perverted in many congregations today in that it often reflects the will of man rather than the will of God. In the same manner, worship has become perverted by many individuals who attend sound congregations. The focus today seems to be on ourselves rather than on the God of Heaven. In far too many cases our worship is “How Great I Am” instead of “How Great Thou Art.”

The words of Jesus teach us that “*God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth,*” John 4:24. The basic idea is that of praise, adoration, gratitude, respect and dependence toward our Creator, Sustainer and Savior. True worship requires courtesy, thanksgiving and reverence to God. It is God-centered and God-pleasing. There are added benefits for the worshippers, but God is the primary focus.

Acceptable worship begins with a proper relationship. Jesus said in John 4:23 that “*the true worshippers shall worship the Father.*” Only His children can call Him Father, and therefore only they can come to Him in true worship because they have “*obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered*” them (Romans 6:17). Those who reject the commandments of God, like the Pharisees, offer up only vain worship (Matthew 15:9). Anyone who lives in rebellion to God’s commandments cannot worship Him acceptably, but those who live according to His will have the privilege and joy of true worship. So if you do not enjoy worship, you may want to closely examine your relationship with God. True and acceptable worship is dependent upon the love and adoration we have for the Lord as His children.

Acceptable worship also demands proper preparation. Jesus said we must worship God in Spirit and in truth. To worship in Spirit means that our worship matches the One who is worshipped. God is a Spirit; therefore, we must worship Him in Spirit. In other words, our worship is not mechanical, but rather it comes from the heart with the right attitude. To worship in truth means to do so according to His word (cf. John 17:17). God has told us exactly how He desires to be worshipped in His word; therefore, there must be proper and sufficient study to know the manner of acceptable worship. We must also prepare our minds to be attentive and alert by being well rested. Our attention to worship on any given day should not begin seven minutes before worship, but rather seven days beforehand. Worship should be the highlight of the Christian’s life.

True worship is rooted in obedience. Acceptable worship involves our response to the truth. We must accept what God has authorized; no more, no less. The New Testament gives us the pattern that we are to follow. Today God speaks through Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2), Christ speaks to us through the apostles (John 17:8), and the apostles speak to us

through the New Testament (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Anything more comes from man and not from God.

Acceptable worship also involves participation – it is active, not passive. In fact, the word “worship” is generally used in the New Testament as a verb! God seeks worshippers, not spectators (John 4:23). Too often, we come to worship expecting to be entertained – seeking some sort of emotional high. And, unfortunately, many congregations have catered to this desire by implementing unauthorized practices such as “praise teams,” instrumental music and “love feasts.” Such innovations reflect an attitude of arrogance that makes man the recipient of worship, rather than God! Friends, entertainment has no place in our worship assemblies. Being accepted of God by doing all things according to His authority (Colossians 3:17) must be our sole purpose in worship, and knowing that He has been glorified will lead to the ultimate satisfaction.

One cannot go wrong worshipping God the way the Bible directs us. Offer your worship to Him and always present your best. Let us make sure that what we offer to God is true and acceptable to Him.