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a resource in:

Spiritual Growth

Worship



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Every endeavor has basic skills that support the success of the effort. For example, tying rope-climbing knots is a basic skill for rock climbing. Study skills are rudimentary for a student. These basic skills are sometimes called disciplines. They are the practices from which success springs. The Christian life has disciplines which must be learned. The more we practice these disciplines, the more we grow and mature in them.

As followers of Jesus, we are to become more like Jesus. Spiritual disciplines are meant to help us grow in this godliness. We know this, yet often struggle to engage disciplines that position us to grow in godliness. Even when we engage these disciplines, we often feel frustrated with how difficult they are and how little they seem to change us. Take heart, if this is where you are. The fact you desire for greater fruit in your life is evidence of the Holy Spirit working in you. Sanctification is both a wonderful and challenging journey. We will have seasons of great joy and triumph and seasons of great discouragement and struggle. It is our hope these lessons on Spiritual Disciplines give you greater understanding, hope and most of all, a more fervent pursuit of God. This document gives some brief thoughts on:

1. What is Worship?
2. Why Worship?
3. How to Worship?

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

The Hebrew word *shachah* means “to worship, prostrate oneself, bow down”. In *1 Samuel 24:8* *shachah* is translated “bowed” when describing David’s response to King Saul. In *Exodus 34:8* it is translated “worshipped” describing Moses’ reaction to experiencing the Lord’s presence on Mount Sinai. In general, *shachah* gives the picture of acknowledging and yielding to a higher authority. In the example of *1 Samuel 24:8* David bowed to King Saul not as an act of worship but to simply show respect to God ordained authority. Although this yielding is a necessary component, worship also goes beyond this attitude to a deeper level.

To worship something or someone is to put it first in our lives. It is the thing we ultimately desire. In *Exodus 20:3* we are told “*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*” The verse teaches us to put God first and acknowledges that it will be our tendency to elevate other things over God. Something will be valued above all else. When we worship something, we elevate what we worship to a position of primary focus and pursuit. We put ourselves under its authority and power. We yield to its desires, instructions, or urges. Worship is giving it our allegiance and following where it leads. The one thing we should worship is God. Paul describes the Christian life as a “*living sacrifice*” in *Romans 12:1*. While Paul does not use the word “worship”, he describes the inner-attitude and focus of a life that is focused on worshiping God. It is a life yielded to God and His instruction for living.

God’s creation is good - corrupted by sin, but good. One of the ways God’s goodness is displayed is through Him creating good things and giving man the capacity to enjoy these good things. Scriptures give us freedom to enjoy many things like work, relationships, beauty, creation, and food to name a few. However, worship goes beyond enjoying something, and God alone is to be worshiped. When we value something, we will spend time thinking about and understanding it. We get excited when it comes to mind and are on the constant lookout for the desired object. We experience sadness and hurt when we experience loss or when what we desire doesn’t come through in the way we hoped. You can see how this might be with many different possible objects of worship like: God, sports, sex, money, relationship, appearance, affirmation, food, pleasure, work, and so on. The more time we spend pursuing something, whether mental or behavioral, the more it

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will begin to take “center stage” in our lives. As it moves to “center stage” its importance is becoming more elevated and we become more emotionally invested in it. This emotional attachment can happen with anything in life and is not necessarily bad. It is important however, to recognize our human tendency to elevate something as most important either by conscious choice or by the amount of time and resources we put into something. This object, whether good or bad, will become what we worship.

This highlights the importance of deliberately choosing what we will worship and setting aside time to worship. If we don't consciously choose to worship God, then we will inevitably end up worshipping something or someone else. This is one of the reasons Joshua challenges the people in *Joshua 24:15* to “choose you this day whom you will serve”. Joshua knows the people will serve and therefore worship something. He is exhorting them to make a conscious choice about who or what they will serve. Without purposefully choosing our object of worship, we will drift along in life. We will find ourselves pursuing whatever brings pleasure in the moment without even considering its impact. As we walk through life, we are to enjoy the good things we have been given but see them as blessings for our Creator. As we keep this reality in mind, we will be better able to enjoy the created while maintaining the ultimate purpose of worshipping the Creator.

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you define worship?
2. How does worship affect our heart, minds and body?
3. In what ways can you yield your life to God?
4. What is the difference between enjoying something and worshipping something?
5. List some of the people, things, desires that can become idols in your life.
6. Describe ways we can identify when we are worshipping something other than God.
7. How is worship both an act of the will and the heart? (Consider: Exodus 34:6-8 and Joshua 24:15)
8. How would you distinguish moments of worship from a life of worship?
9. Scriptures to Consider: *Deuteronomy 5:4-15, Exodus 20:2-6, Exodus 34:14, 1 Chronicles 16:23-31, Revelation 4:8-11, Philipians 3:3-11*

Resources:

- *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald S. Whitney
- *Gods at War: Defeating the Idols that Battle for Your Heart* by Kyle Idleman

WHY WORSHIP GOD?

When God is rightly seen and known we will recognize Him as the Great Redeemer, and we will worship Him. Worship is a right response to an object worthy of worship. A quick survey of the Scriptures gives you a clear picture of how unworthy man feels in the presence of God. One example is in *Isaiah 6:5* where Isaiah records this response after seeing “*the Lord sitting upon a throne*”. “*Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*” There is no doubt as we experience creation as well as what has been accomplished by man, we will have moments of awe. These moments of awe are to point us to God and worship of Him. This exposes the challenge of training our hearts and minds to an accurate view of God and Man. While man can accomplish many great things, the question “where does this ability come from” remains. How we answer this question will likely point us in the direction of what we worship.

The only person or thing that can sustain the weight of worship is God. All other objects of worship lead to bondage and destruction while the worship of God leads to transformation. God is worthy of worship, not because of what He gives but because of who He is. If we approach the question of what to worship from a “what do I get from ...” mindset then we will inevitably jump from one object of worship to another, never finding what we are looking for. There will be moments of pleasure and enjoyment but largely a journey full of emptiness. This is one of the main teachings in *Ecclesiastes* where the writer concludes that the whole duty of man is to fear God and keep his commandments. (*Ecclesiastes 12:13*) The worship of all other things will prove empty.

Even if you only consider one small aspect of creation, it is beyond our comprehension to think about God having the power to bring order from the chaos. He is our Creator. This alone gives us reason to lift His name, to make much of Him, to bow before Him and yield to Him. Not because He is a demanding King but because He is King. Not only King but a good King who knows and desires what is best for us. When we worship Him, we not only honor and reverence Him but we are doing what is best for us. We long to find something that will restore life to our hearts and the brokenness we see around us. We may not even be consciously aware of this longing, but it is there for each of us. (*Romans 8:22-25*) We have the ache that something is broken as we walk through this life. This ache is more noticeable at times, but there is usually a sense that something is off. Only God can deliver on this restoration our hearts ultimately long for.

We long for paradise regained where we have been restored and perfect union with God has been restored. The glorious news is that through worshiping God we can enjoy a glimpse of the restoration today. As we worship God, we will be transformed. We will begin to see the world as He does, care about the things He cares about, and seek to interact with our surroundings as He would. Worship is one of the ways we are conformed into His image. Worshiping God changes us into the kind of people who bring God’s glorious kingdom into a desperate and broken world.

Discussion Questions:

1. What makes God worthy of worship?
2. Why is worshiping God because of who He is rather than what He gives an important distinction?
3. Why is it wrong to worship anything other than God?
4. List different words the Scriptures use to describe God. (Example: Shephard, Rock)
5. How does one come to a right view of God?
6. How will worshiping God lead to transformation of a soul?
7. How will worship of other objects affect a soul?
8. Scriptures to Consider: *Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Exodus 7-12, Matthew 6:19-21, Mark 4:36-41*

Resources:

- How Clearly Do You See God? <https://www.accounseling.org/how-clearly-do-you-see-god/>
- Knowing God Podcast <https://www.accounseling.org/knowing-god/>

Worship

HOW TO WORSHIP GOD:

In *John 4:23-24* Jesus gives us two fundamental aspects of true worship, telling us true worshipers worship in spirit and truth. To worship according to truth means to rightly know and therefore elevate the God of the Bible through word and action. Throughout Scripture, God's mercy and justice are tied together; God is both merciful and just. When God is seen as such, we reverence Him. In addition to worshiping in truth, we worship in spirit. This means we have an inner attitude of submitting to God. God does not merely desire that we know information about Him but that we know Him relationally and that this connection with Him would then generate an inner desire to honor Him.

To do this, we must purposefully pursue times of focused worship. Setting aside times of purposeful worship of our great God indicates a pursuit both internally in our heart and externally in our schedule. While worship also can and should happen throughout our day-to-day activities, purposeful worship should not be neglected. We can neglect worship through not engaging acts of worship or by engaging the action of worship with an inner attitude that is far from God. (*Matthew 15:8-9*) Allow this principle to serve as a reminder that true worship is a pursuit of both an internal and external submission to God.

Worship can be done alone or in a group, and both are to be part of the believer's life. They will likely look different during different seasons of life but both are important. Through times of worship we are reminding our hearts and minds we are under the rule of God. We are reminding ourselves of who God is and the wonder of being His child. Worship is a response to encountering or considering the wonder of God's character, what He has given us, and what He calls us to. When we seek to pursue God we will worship Him.

Examples of Personal Worship Time:

- Getting to know Him more intimately through studying the Bible.
- Lifting God's name through kneeling and praying or as move through your day.
- Music: singing, listening, or playing instruments.
- Meditation focused on knowing and honoring God.

Examples of Corporate Worship Time:

- Small group Bible study
- Singing in a group
- Corporate prayer
- Corporate reading and teaching from the Bible
- Edifying conversation
- Service projects

These are only a few examples of personal and corporate ways of worshipping. For many of us, we prefer either personal or corporate worship; however, both are essential to our spiritual health. Without corporate worship, we can be more easily deceived and therefore not worship God according to truth. Without personal worship, our corporate worship can easily turn into external behavior not accompanied by an internal attitude of submission to God.

At times worship is an act of the will. It is a decision to honor and revere God. Other times worship is a response to experiencing the wonder of God. As we seek to rightly know God, and as He reveals Himself to us, our inner attitude toward Him will be transformed. This transformation is something we experience throughout the course of our lifetime rather than a destination to arrive at. At times worship may be full of knowledge and emotion. At other times worship may feel more like an act of the will that takes significant effort. As you experience these shifts, trust that through pursuing the Lord you are honoring Him.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe what *John 4:23-24* means when it talks about worshipping in spirit and truth?
2. How is rightly knowing God connected to worship?
3. List some barriers for you both to engage worship and to have internal attitudes of worship.
4. Worship is a purposeful action such as “I am going to church to worship” or “I am going to take time each day to pause and worship”. Worship is also something we do as we walk through life in a way that is seeking to represent Him well such as “As I do my job today I will do so with integrity because I love and am submitted to God” or “As I parent I will seek to do so with mercy and justice in an effort to give what has been given to me from God”. How do you see individual, purposeful times of worship throughout your day-to-day events?
5. What do you enjoy regarding personal worship and what do you have a difficult time with in personal worship? How about corporate worship?
6. How do you see personal and corporate worship impacting each other?
7. Do you go through times when worshipping God comes more naturally than others? Describe 3 or 4 things to remember during those times when worshipping God takes more purposeful effort.
8. What is one way you can purposefully worship the Lord this week?
9. Scriptures to Consider: *Hosea 6:6, Psalm 95, Psalm 100, Daniel 3:1-18, Amos, Matthew 4:10, Hebrews 12:28-29*

Resources:

- *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald S. Whitney
- ACCFS “Worship vs. Temptation” <https://www.accounseling.org/worship-and-temptation/>