

"True Worship"

We often look at worshiping God from our own perspective. How does God wish to be worshiped? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're exploring how we can truly worship God in the way God desires.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Because we love God, we want to hear what He says and to please Him. It isn't enough to just listen, we must also apply what He says. Pleasing Him means doing what He says the way He wants it to be done. We aren't here to invent new religious ideas or practices; we're here to listen to what the Lord has said in Scripture. Paying attention to the Lord shows that we love Him. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

The Scriptures describe worship and reveal its purposes. Worship glorifies and magnifies God in our hearts. In worship we praise the Lord with our lips and bless His holy name. Worship takes place when we give thanks to God for His blessings. In worship we're bowing before our great God. In worship we're confessing His goodness and righteousness with reverence and awe. We rejoice in singing, teaching and admonishing one another. We hear God's words spoken in Scripture. We remember the grace of God in the offering of the body and blood of Jesus as we eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine each Lord's day. We cheerfully give to the Lord to support the work of His church.

We assemble each Lord's Day, the first day of the week, to worship the Lord, to build up one another, and to remain faithful and committed to the Lord. Our gatherings help us to take up our crosses daily to follow Jesus Christ and be God's people. Now God expects His people to gather according to Hebrews 10:25, so they can "stir up one another to love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10 and verse 24).

Now we offer this study on true worship free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have many free programs and materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, we'll read from John 4:20 to 24, and examine how God wants us to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to John chapter 4 verses 20 to 24 and here we have the woman at the well making a statement to Jesus, but also wanting to know an answer. The woman said to him,

Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

That's the words of Jesus. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we pray that You will help us always to worship in spirit and in truth. To do as You would will. To please You and to show You our love and our praise. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

When we worship God, we enter into the presence of God and offer up to Him our lips and our hearts. Have you thought about being in the presence of God? It may frighten you. In Revelation 1:17 John found himself in front of Jesus and fell at His feet like a dead man. It may alarm your conscience as you remember your sins. Or it may comfort you. You know it's certainly a time to say "thank you!" to God. I hope when you come to worship and praise Him, you realize the grandeur and holiness of God. True worship begins by recognizing where we are and who Almighty God is. Exodus 15:11 says, "Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?" Worship is a time of recognizing God's holiness.

God created us, gives us His wisdom in the Bible, hears our prayers, and provides for our needs. David wrote in Psalm 103:1 to 5, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; Who satisfies your years with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle." We should prepare to worship God by focusing on the One whom we worship.

Second, we should examine ourselves, and our attitudes. Are we prepared to worship? How does God see us? Isaiah tells us about himself in Isaiah 6. Isaiah entered the temple and stood before the throne, He saw God high and lofty. He saw God as holy, holy, holy! In 6 and verse 5 Isaiah said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." When we worship we're people who have sinned seeking to glorify a God, a God, the God, who knows no sin but is completely holy.

Psalm 29 verse 2 says, "Give unto the Lord the glory due His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Psalm 89:7 says, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those who are around Him." We often lose sight of the holiness of God and have become casual in our gatherings, as if God was common. When we treat God as common, aren't we being profane rather than reverent? I fear many have lost their sense of anything holy.

Paul criticized the church at Corinth for their divisive spirit when they eat the Lord's Supper. Some were drunk and others went hungry; they were despising and shaming one another. The Lord's Supper was designed to remember the body of Jesus as they ate the unleavened bread and remembered the blood the Lord Jesus and what offered upon the cross as they drank of the fruit of the vine.

Their minds were elsewhere, so Paul warned them in 1 Corinthians 11:27 to 31, "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged." Well we too today should examine ourselves as we worship God, that our hearts and spirits are focused on what glorifies God and what God desires.

Third, we must ask the One we worship, "How do you wish to be worshiped?" Some think God ought to be satisfied by whatever we have to offer, but the Scriptures present for us many examples of worship that is unacceptable to God. Just because people think they are worshiping God acceptably doesn't mean that God accepts their worship. Isaiah 55 verses 8 to 9 reminds us, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Genesis 4 reveals the first example of God accepting some worship while rejecting other. Hebrews 11 and verse 4 says, "By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks." Genesis 4 and verse 5 says God had no regard for Cain or for his offering. Now in some way Cain lacked the faith that Abel showed. 1 John 3 and verse 12 says that Cain's deeds were evil and Abel's were righteous. We must never take God for granted. He knows our hearts and how we live.

In Leviticus chapters 8 and 9, Moses consecrated Aaron and his sons as priests. And ten times it says, as they were in that tabernacle that they did "just as the Lord commanded." But Leviticus 10:1 and 2 says, "Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD." They did what the Lord had not commanded. They presumed that they could dream up their own form of worship. We can't dream up how we wish to worship God. We must listen to the commandment and instruction of God.

Though Saul was king, he didn't listen to the prophet Samuel in 1 Samuel 10 and verse 8. Samuel said, "And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you should do." Well, Saul disobeyed God! 1 Samuel 13 verses 8 to 10 says, "Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him. So Saul said, 'Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.' And he offered the burnt offering."

Well, Samuel arrived just as Saul offered the burnt offering. Saul tried to justify his offering by saying in 1 Samuel 13:12, "Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.' So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering." Samuel said to Saul in verse 13, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you." Samuel later told Saul in 1 Samuel 15:22 to 23, there the bible says, "Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king."

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6 and verse 1, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven." Now He applies this to some Jews who sounded trumpets when they gave to the poor, and who made loud and long prayers in public, and who put on a gloomy face when they fasted. Well they did all this to show off to others; they should have done this in secret. And their reward came from the praise of men, but they lost God's reward.

In Luke 18:9 to 14 a Pharisee and a tax collector prayed to God. Oh the Pharisee told the Lord how religious he was, but he didn't impress God. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 18:13 to 14, "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

In Matthew 15, some Pharisees confronted and criticized Jesus for not keeping the human traditions of the elders by not washing their hands. Jesus responded in Matthew 15:7 to 8, “You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ‘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.’ ” When people follow human traditions and teach as doctrines the commandments of men, their hearts are far from God and their worship is in vain. God doesn’t accept our worship when our beliefs and practices come from men but not from God. We should ask about our worship and our beliefs, “do they come from God or from men?”

Since we’re Christians, we don’t go to the Old Testament to learn how we are to worship. We go to the words of Jesus and His apostles found in the New Testament. We don’t offer animal sacrifices, we don’t offer up incense, we don’t keep the Sabbath, or worship with instruments of music. These were for those who were under the Law. And Hebrews 10 verse 1 says, “For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.” Folks we are under the new covenant ratified by the blood of Jesus and we should follow the words of Jesus taught by the apostles.

For that reason, we sing praises from our hearts. Hebrews 13 verse 15 says, “Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.” Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Singing words from our lips and hearts is what God desires. We’re not in the performing business but in the worshipping business. And we don’t need instruments to accompany us. They are a human addition that came along many centuries after the church was established. The early church never used instruments of music in worship, because they had no authority from Scripture to do so.

The early church met on the first day of the week to worship according to Acts 20 and verse 7 and 1 Corinthians 16 verses 1 and 2. Now when John mentions the Lord’s Day in Revelation 1 and verse 10, he’s speaking of the first day of the week, when churches broke bread by partaking of the Lord’s Supper. That particular word “Lord” found in 1 Corinthians 11:20 is speaking of the Lord’s Supper and in Revelation 1:10 speaking of the Lord’s Day. It’s the same word in both passages. And so we associate taking the Lord’s Supper every Lord’s Day; this was the way of the early church worshipped by taking the Lord’s Supper.

The New Testament church met each first day of the week to sing, to pray, to study God’s word, to partake of the Lord’s Supper, and to contribute to the needs of the church. We should follow that pattern of worship today in spirit and in truth so that we may please God. We know that these are what God wants, because they have a foundation in the New Testament. Let’s stay with what we know comes from God.

Let’s pray together. Heavenly Father we’re grateful for Your love and we’re grateful for the fact that You have given us Your word. Help us to love You so that we will always keep Your word and to do as You would will for us live. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

John 4:23 says, “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.” Yes God is seeking true worship in spirit and in truth from you. God distinguishes true worship from worship that’s not genuine or pleasing to Him. We must worship God acceptably by doing what He instructs us. The Lord

Jesus said in John 4 and verse 24 that, “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Have you examined your own spirit when you worship. Does praise, thanksgiving, and adoration come from your heart and through your lips? Are you worshiping according to what God desires or according to your own desires? Worship is not a passive thing where we only receive what others do. Worship must come from each of us. No one can sing for me, hear God’s word for me, commune in the Lord’s Supper for me, or make a financial contribution for me. No one else can substitute for us. God seeks true worshipers.

Beyond that, no one else can get right with God for me—not my parents or my children. Now I have to do it myself. Without faith it’s impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6); I can’t count on other people’s faith. If I don’t repent, I’ll perish (Luke 13:3). If I don’t love the Lord, I’ll be accursed (1 Corinthians 16:22). If I don’t confess Jesus, He won’t confess me before the Father (Matthew 10:32 to 33). If I’m not born of water and the Spirit in baptism, I cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3 and verse 5). In baptism, God washes away my sins (Acts 22:16) He makes me His child (Galatians 3:26 and 7). Have you believed, loved the Lord, repented, confessed Jesus Christ, and have you been baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins? Why not respond today?

We hope that today’s study about the true worship has helped you see the need to worship in spirit and in truth. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There’s a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. And you can watch SEARCH on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, “SearchTVMinistry” and like the programs. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don’t worry, we’re not asking for money. We’re here to help you draw close to God.

Do show God your love by worshiping at church. You need a church family. And if you can attend, if can come, don’t neglect worshiping at church. There’s probably a church of Christ near you. And if you’re looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we’ll gladly help you find one. Well we’ll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God’s Word with us and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord’s Way.