

“WORSHIP – THE ULTIMATE PRIORITY” (Part 2)

Acceptable Worship (John 4:20-24; Heb. 12:19-26)

INTRO: We are studying what God says concerning “Worship – The Ultimate Priority.” Noted author and pastor James Boice wrote: “Christian worship is the most momentous, the most urgent, the most glorious action that can take place in human life.” True and strong words. Leland Ryken, author and Wheaton professor wrote: “We worship our work, work at our play, and play at our worship.” Review: Worship is ... We worship for 4 Reasons...

Everyone worships! ILLUS – Preacher’s horse... Anthropologists say worship is a universal urge, as natural as eating and drinking. Issue is what or who and how we will worship. G. C. Morgan... If we fail to worship God as He deserves, then we will worship a god of our own making – self, career, money, etc. All worship falls into one of two categories: true and acceptable or false and unacceptable. There is worship that pleases God and worship that doesn’t. The Bible is clear in commanding Christians to worship the Father (Jn. 4:23). The only thing recorded in Scripture that God *seeks* from His children is worship – all else will follow (giving, serving, etc.). Jesus also tells the woman in John 4 that where we worship is less important than WHO and HOW we worship. Jesus says worship can be acceptable or unacceptable (Ex. Pharisees Matt. 15:8-9). When is worship acceptable to God? Let me suggest essentials for acceptable worship. What kind of worship pleases God? Worship is pleasing and acceptable to God when it is:

I. OFFERED THROUGH HIS SON (v.22b “through the Jews)

- A. John 4:20-23 review – Father seeks true worshipers. True worshipers are synonymous with believers. True and acceptable worship can only be offered by those who place their faith in Jesus for salvation. Jesus clearly said He was the entry point (Jn. 14:6 the way; cf. door and gate). Look at Rom. 5:2 – access to the Father comes through Jesus Christ (cp. Eph. 2:18; 3:12). He came to seek and to save the lost to transform them into true worshipers (Lk. 19:10).
- B. Heb. 13:15 says “through Jesus” we offer our worship to the Father. Worship is acceptable to God when it is offered through the Son. Tozer wrote... Our worship begins when we accept Christ.

II. ASSISTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

- A. INTERNAL – Worship is first internal and spiritual before it is external and visible – or it’s phony. This is possible when we become believers. When we accept Christ, God gives us His indwelling Holy Spirit and one of His roles is to help Christians worship the Father. MacArthur wrote: “Worship is spiritual, flowing from the Holy Spirit within the believer. If we do not have the Holy Spirit or are not walking in the Holy Spirit, you cannot worship. God cannot be worshiped without His Spirit energizing that worship.”
- B. Phi. 3:3 supports that we who worship do so by the Spirit of God. W. Grudem: “Worship is a spiritual activity and it must be empowered the Holy

Spirit working within us. This means that we must pray that the Holy Spirit will enable us to worship rightly.” Must walk in HS to worship.

III. EXPRESSED FROM OUR HEART – (John 4:23-24 “in spirit” twice)

- A. HUMAN SPIRIT not Holy Spirit here. Jesus is saying we must worship from the very depths of our being – from the inside out. Jesus condemned the empty external worship of the Pharisees (Matt. 15:8). Acceptable worship is a matter of the heart more than the location. God is after our heart attitude. Remember worship is the believer’s *response* to God’s worth. Heartfelt enthusiasm is needed to worship God. Passive worship is an oxymoron. Several pathways . . .
- B. SCRIPTURE indicates what our heart attitude should be in acceptable worship (Heb. 10:22 Let us draw near...):
 - 1. *Sincerity* (Heb. 10:22; Ps. 86:11-12) – genuine, heartfelt; no pretension, hypocrisy, preoccupation with self, apathy – no wrong motive – issue is not what I received, but did I give God the glory and honor His worth deserves? Is He pleased?
 - 2. *Fidelity* (Heb. 10:22) – by simple faith alone do we have access to Him, so come boldly and confidently
 - 3. *Humility* (Heb. 10:22; 12: 28-29) – inwardly broken, reverent, and free of guilty conscience
 - 4. *Purity* (Heb. 10:22) – outward holiness

IV. ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH – (John 4:23-24 “and in truth”)

- A. BOTH spirit and truth are required. Avoid extremes and keep balance of heart (emotions) and head (intellect). Extreme heart leads to unbridled emotionalism. Extreme head results in cold formalism.
- B. Acceptable worship is founded upon the truth not our opinions or feelings, esp. the truth about God revealed in His Word. All worship has to be based upon truth. We worship what is true about God. MacArthur wrote “What we think about God is vitally connected to our worship. *A low view of God will result in little worship of God.* The better we know what God teaches us about Himself in His Word, the more we’ll be able to worship.” What we understand and think about God is tantamount. How big is the God you worship? John Ortberg ...

CONC: Acceptable worship occurs when it is... That’s why it is rare. Note that no specific style of acceptable worship is ever mandated in the Bible! Close with a penetrating quote from Tozer... Where does acceptable worship begin?