

Living A Life of Worship

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Many people think that worship takes place only when they meet as a congregation, but there is more to worship than this. Worship is a lifestyle which involves every area of our lives. Paul in writing to the Romans, said: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:12)

Very early on in Israel's history, immediately after her deliverance from slavery in Egypt, Moses brought them to Mount Sinai. There God gave clear instructions to them on who and how to worship.

God said to the people of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generation of those who love me and keep my commandments." (Exodus 20:1-6)

Man Is A Worshipper

Interestingly enough, archeological evidence suggest that even before the advent of modern civilization, or Christian missionary activity, man has shown evidence of the activity of worship. He looked at things that were beyond his ability to comprehend and assumed that these were gods. Thus he would fall down and worship thunder, and usually tall tree, or any creature that had more legs than the usual four.

God created man to be a worshipper. He is to worship God alone. If he worships anything other than God the Creator, there is dissatisfaction in life. Whatever else he worships becomes an idol.

Years ago, William Temple gave this definition of worship: "To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness by God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge to imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God and to devote the will to the purpose of God."

Therefore, worship involves the total being of man – when his mind, spirit and body are in total submission to please and obey God. God Himself is the centre and the object of worship.

There is a chorus that goes like this:

*"Set my spirit free that I might worship thee....
Set my spirit free that I might praise thy name.
Let all bondage go and let deliverance flow..."*

Sin binds the man's spirit, rendering him unable to worship, but the Blood of Jesus Christ can liberate us into worship.

The spirit of man seeks fellowship with God. It is this which brings true satisfaction. This satisfaction is then demonstrated in everyday living by the change of lifestyle. We will live God-pleasing lives.

It is sad to note that many Christians (and some of these have been Christians for years) have not entered into true worship because they have not experienced the liberating of their spirit to true worship. In fact, many try to find substitutes for worship.

We can find some examples in the Bible of individuals who used substitutes for worship. We can learn useful lessons from these.

The First Example is Jacob

In Genesis 28:10-22, we read that Jacob was running away from his brother when out in the middle of nowhere, he had a revelation with God, who promised to be with him and watch over him (verse 13-15).

Jacob called the place 'Bethel' (meaning 'The House of God'), and he made a vow, saying, "If God is with me and will watch over me.... and all that you give me I will give a tenth" (verses 20-22).

So Jacob went from there and kept his covenant with God, tithing all that he received. He was a faithful tither. We read that God prospered Him, proving that the principle of tithing works. "Bring the whole tithe in the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (Malachi 3:10; Proverbs 3:9, 10; Proverbs 11:24).

Jacob prospered but he did not set his heart to continue his fellowship with God.

God does not want the believer to substitute worship with tithes and gifts. These are good ways or forms to use to express our worship but He wants first for you to live a life that daily express worship. This involves living a life pleasing and obeying God.

Jacob realized there was an emptiness within him. Earthly possessions could not satisfy his need to fellowship with God. Thus Jacob sought to be alone, that he might seek God (Genesis 32:22-24). That night, a man wrestled with him and Jacob asked the man to bless him. In verse 28, the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

This second encounter Jacob had with God was significant because this was a struggle to have to have God in his life – not a struggle to have more possessions. And thus Jacob began a new walk as Israel, which means "Prince of God". Are you living a life of worship towards the living God?

The Second Example is Moses

He grew up knowing that he was to be the deliverer of his people who were treated unjustly by the Egyptians. One day, he tried to help his people by killing an Egyptian but had to flee to the desert in failure. There he met God and then only did he become their deliverer by the grace of God.

You cannot substitute worship with social work that may relieve the pain and suffering of humanity. The Bible does say that we should neglect good works, but good works must not be a substitute for a lifestyle of worship.

The Third Example in the Nation of Israel

The children of Israel came to Moses with a request – they asked Moses to go before God on their behalf. "Go near and listen to all that the Lord our God says. Then tell us whatever the Lord our God tells you. We will listen and obey." (Deuteronomy 5:27) They only wanted a second-hand religion.

Do you know that God has made each of us a priest and we can all come boldly into His Presence? This is our privilege and responsibility. Like the children of Israel, we often seek others to hear from God for us. We request others to speak to God for us. Sometimes we look up to certain individuals to discern God's will or direction for our lives. This is not biblical. He has made it possible for each of us to fellowship with Him and He will show us and give us what we need. What others tell us come only as a confirmation.

An incident happened to me when I was in Cairo. A person wanted to know God's will for him through me. I said to him "Even if I tell you, you have no way of know if what I say is true until the Lord first tells you." So I asked him to seek the Lord before he hears from others.

God is a personal God who is interested in a personal relationship with you. There is to be no second-hand relationship with Him because He created in each of us the ability to reach out and touch Him. If you are not personally in touch with the living God daily, you are not worshipping Him.

In conclusion, remember this: The Bible says, "Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only" (Luke 4:8).