

Worship: Giving God What He's Due

We are a few weeks into a sermon series on the spiritual disciplines, the Bible's means and methods for developing intimacy with Christ and becoming like Christ. To put it another way, we are talking about spiritual habits that help us to be WITH Jesus and become LIKE Jesus. Over the last few Sundays, we took time to look at the biblical basis for disciplines, the role of the Word as the foundational discipline, getting alone with Jesus (away from the hustle and bustle of life), and prayer. Today we want to explore the biblical discipline of worship.

Defining worship generally is easy enough. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "to feel or show adoration and reverence for a deity or participate in a religious ritual." The dictionary has to be general, of course, so everything under the sun falls under that camp, but a definition of worship according to the Bible is a bit more challenging. There are innumerable examples of worship in the Bible, both biblical worship of our God and unbiblical worship of idols.

For our purposes, we want to define worship simply. The word is derived from the old saxon "worth-ship," to give God his worth, all that he is due (and he is due quite a bit). Donald Whitney, author of the workbook that Victor is doing on Sunday mornings defines worship as "focusing on and responding to God [I will add the word 'appropriately']." There are, of course, inappropriate or inadequate ways of responding to God. Are those ways really giving God all that he is due, his worth? Hardly. That is how I want to define worship -- giving God all that he is due.

Worship is your entire response to who God is and what he has done. To worship God is to fulfill the first and greatest commandment, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to do that which goes with it -- love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commands rest the entirety of the Law and Prophets, Jesus said. In other words, Loving God and loving your neighbor is the essence of what it means to live a life of worship to God, how to honor him best.

What does it mean to love God? What does it mean to love my neighbor? Who is my neighbor? Won't you be my neighbor? See, the simplicity of worship breaks down as we begin to debate and argue over nuance. Here is what I would like to explain today. First, you God what he's due by fulfilling the Great Commandment (loving him with your heart, soul, mind, strength). Second

you give God what he's due by fulfilling the Great Commission (spread his worship to every dark corner of the world).

Give God what he's due by fulfilling the Great Commandment

I was always struck by Deuteronomy 6 and its corresponding passages when God commands us to love him with 100% of our soul. I'm not sure I understand the question. What does it mean to love God with my soul? Certainly that is different than loving God with my mind or my heart. The soul is something altogether different from my faculties, spiritual in nature, and something that I seem to have very little control over at all. Manipulating my soul feels more Eastern New Age than biblical. So, what does it mean? I would like to suggest that you give God what he's due with your soul by being born again and receiving his Holy Spirit.

Jesus' most profound teaching in the New Testament on worship is in John 4 during his encounter with the woman at the well. After a small debate about how, when, and where worship of God is supposed to occur, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman in John 4:23-24, "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

I think there is a parallel here between worshipping God and loving God. To worship God in spirit and truth is very much to love God with your heart, mind, and soul. But before we can worship in spirit and truth we must have the one who is called "the Spirit of Truth" in John 14:17, the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit only lives within those who have repented of their wayward path and trust in Christ by faith. Unless the Holy Spirit dwells within you, no true worship can happen.

Paul unpacks this further in 1 Corinthians 12:3 when he says, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit." That is not to say you cannot teach someone to say those words, or that they are a magic incantation. It is to say that the Holy Spirit must do a regenerative work in your life to be truly born again. We are born again not by the will of any man, but as a gift of the Father in heaven. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts us of our sin and rebellion against God, who makes Christ irresistible as he draws us to him, who opens our mind to truth, and awakens a dead heart to hear his call. The Holy Spirit establishes the ability for us TO worship God, to draw near (as the author of Hebrews says), but that doesn't mean that we will worship, that we

will draw near, or that we will give him his due. So to recap, you worship God first and foremost by giving him what he's due with your soul by being born again and receiving the indwelling of His Holy Spirit.

Deuteronomy 6 says that we don't just love God with our souls, but with our minds. We live in a day and age where the mind and the affections seem to be at odds with one another, but that is a completely ludicrous. We do not worship a God of our own design. We do not suppress the truth, rather we embrace the truth. In Romans 1, Paul argues that the fall of man was, in large part, because he refused to embrace the truth and so God gave him over to a depraved heart, mind, and soul. As those who worship the Lord by the Spirit of truth, part of giving him his due is to diligently look to him and know him all the more.

God has blessed us with his revealed word that we might know him more clearly and truly. Worshipping God with our minds, giving him what he is due in our minds, begins in the truth of Scripture. We worship God as he is revealed in the Bible, not as he is revealed in the zeitgeist, pop-culture of the day. We do not worship as we wish he were, or as what we want him to be, but as he is. We worship the God who pours out mercy and the God who pours out wrath. We worship him according to his truth: he is God of justice, love, mercy, grace, and wrath who welcomes into heaven and condemns into hell. Do we like all of those things? Not necessarily at all times, though we might understand it more as the years go by. Nonetheless, we worship him as he truly is, not as a figment of our imagination.

Beyond this we worship him according to how he clearly commands. When we return to 2 Samuel, we will see how God struck Uzzah dead because he touched the ark without permission. In Leviticus we see how Nadab and Abihu were smitten by God for offering "strange, unauthorized fire" in the tabernacle. The New Testament gives regulations for public worship, encouraging the preaching of the Word, the reading of Scripture, the sharing of testimonies, songs and utterances, an appropriate process for celebrating the Lord's supper, giving, leadership, caring for widows, and so much more. To follow God in these prescriptive patterns is also worship. If we are to give him what he is due, then we need to study his Word, be students of his character, behold him, fix our eyes on him, and hear what he has to say to us.

But truth without affection is a terrible place to reside. In his book on missions, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, John Piper wrestles with this tension -- is it our duty to worship God or is it our delight?

Indeed, you could say that there is a dangerous duty OF delight in the Bible. The Israelites were brought under judgment in part because they did not serve the Lord with gladness, and instead served him with complaints. We are called to be a people full of affections for our God, and as we behold him more our affections should increase. Allow me to state it this way: you do not find a cold, lifeless worship example in the Scripture... except for the times when someone is so overwhelmed that they fall over as if they were dead.

Think of the angelic host and the elders in the book of Revelation. They see God in all his glory and they cannot help but worship him. Without regard for their hairstyle or what they look like, they cry out, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY!" Imagine the scene if one of the seraphim suddenly turned to the side and said to his friend, "Bother, this song is so repetitive. I'm gonna go run to the foyer and grab a sip of water" or "This isn't really my preferred musical genre, I think I will intentionally show up 15 minutes late. I never like it when Gabriel leads worship anyway."

Those would be ludicrous ideas. We do not worship because of the music, or the singers, or the worship leader. We worship because of the King! If worship has a discipline, it's pushing yourself aside, giving him what he is DUE -- your mind and your emotions. Mind without emotions is dead orthodoxy. Emotions without mind is paganism. We give God all that he is due - we worship him in Spirit and in truth.

Church, hear me. Some of you who struggle to exhibit any emotion on a Sunday morning will have no problem hooting and hollering at your television in a few short hours. Worship can be defined as a spontaneous outpouring of joy. As you get ready to hoot, holler, and push each other into the bushes (or) collapse into a complete pit of despair, perhaps you should ask yourself, "Where are my affections?"

At the same time, we had a friend in college who proudly told us that she didn't read her Bible and instead she would just listen to worship music because she was a "worshipper." That's great to be a worshipper, but do me a favor, and don't check your brain at the door. Be a student of the Word. Ignorance is not an admirable trait in any person. Can you imagine if you said to your future spouse, "I don't want to get to know you too much -- I like this puppy love stage when you still think I don't use the bathroom ever."

Worship the Lord in spirit and truth. Give him what he is DUE. Give him your mind by pursuing him in his word. Give him your affections, but not disconnecting your heart! He is worthy of both. Worship God by fulfilling the Great Commandment - love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Give God what he's due by fulfilling the Great Commission

John Piper famously said, "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions...When passion for God is weak, zeal for missions will be weak. Churches that are not centered on the exaltation of the majesty of the beauty of God will scarcely kindle a fervent desire to 'declare his glory among the nations.'"

To put it another way, "How can people who are not stunned by the greatness of God be sent with the [missiological] message: Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods." If your heart doesn't beat on fire for worship, you have no business carrying his name across the pond, and if your heart doesn't burn for the nations, you need to take a cold, hard, honest look at your affections.

When I look at my own life, I see various phases of surrender (now this is I, and not the Lord, necessarily). I surrendered to Christ as my savior and LORD. I surrendered to his invitation to pursue him wholeheartedly. I surrendered to his burning desire to see his fame spread to the nations.

I want to see the glory of God spread because I love God, not because I love <insert people group> as my primary motivator. This week, one of the most impactful things for me and my family was not the mission trip, necessarily, but the travel.

On the way there and back, we encountered dozens of people on our plane flying to Jeddah to participate in ummrah. As one of the five pillars of Islam, Muslims are required to make a pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The whole process takes the better part of a week, and it happens during a very particular time in the lunar calendar (this year sometime in June).

Any Muslim with the physical means to do this pilgrimage in their lifetime is required. A voluntarily pilgrimage of sort is called ummrah. It is a time when you can travel to Mecca for a few hours or a few days not during Hajj. It is a time for devoted followers of Mohammed to pursue their faith. They have the affection and the desire... they lack the truth. There are 37,400,000 unreached people in Saudi Arabia not counting the 100,000,000 who travel there every year. Al-Azhar, a school in Cairo, originally began as a mosque and school of theology ("madrassa") in the 10th century. Today, it boasts a massive campus with 20,000 teachers and over 300,000 students.

Doesn't Jesus deserve to be worshipped there? Doesn't Jesus deserve to be worshipped in Mecca instead of Mohammed? Isn't that his due? Hasn't he purchased men for God from every tribe and tongue and nation? Doesn't Jesus deserve to be taught about in Cairo? Jesus have your due, your worth, your sum - the fill of every nation, tribe, and tongue...

After the trip with our team, my family jumped over to neighboring island paradise for a little family vacation. The predominant religion there isn't muslim, but Hindu. As we explored a city called Ubud, where people come from all over the world to seek spiritual enlightenment, our hearts broke. Dozens of people -- locals, foreigners, westerns alike -- stood in line to offer sacrifices of fruit, money, and incense to stone gods. After paying homage, they stood in line waiting to wade into a pool of water, stripped down with nothing but a sarong, so they could stand in the fountain and be cleansed. We didn't go into the temple, and definitely not into the bathes, but I asked a tour guide what they were doing. He told me, "They are being cleansed."

"From what," I asked?

"From any kind of impurity or evil. Such as if you have to cremate a family member and become unclean, or someone curses you. From evil and immorality," was his paraphrased response.

Friends, there is a fountain There is a sacrifice.... There is a savior... There is a hope for the nations...

Doesn't Jesus deserve to be worshipped there in Ubud instead of some monkey god, instead of some chunk of rock? Is Vishnu the one true God is YHWH?

Worship. Worth-ship. Giving God what he is due.

God is worthy of your soul. He is worthy of your mental focus. He is worthy of your affections. He is worthy of the nations. He is worthy of it all.

But if you worship lesser things, your heart will burn for lesser things. You will be content with vacations, campers, boats, and BBQs. Your heart won't pine for the deeper things of the spiritual journey to which we've been called.

You won't pray for impact, for nations to come to faith, for sacrifice, or for conviction.

You will pray for comfort, for ease, for complacency.

Jesus, have it all. That is worship. Jesus, have all of me, all the time, and have your way with my life. For your glory, your great name, and the spread of your fame across this world. Jesus, have it all.