

Bible Study for February 13th & February 15th

Worship is the Duty and Privilege of All People

Jesus Himself reemphasized and obeyed the Old Testament command “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” It is the duty (and privilege) of all people to worship their Creator. “O come, let us worship and bow down,” says Psalm 95:6, “let us kneel before the Lord our maker.” God clearly expects us to worship. It’s our purpose! Godliness without the worship of God is unthinkable. But those who pursue Godliness must realize that it is possible to worship God in vain. In *Matthew 15:8-9*, Jesus quoted an Old Testament passage to warn of worshipping God vainly:

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Worship is Focusing on and Responding to God

Worship is a difficult thing to define well. To worship God is to ascribe the proper worth to God, to magnify His worthiness of praise, or better, to approach and address God as He is worthy. He is worthy of all the worth and honor we can give Him and then infinitely more. Notice, for instance, how those around the throne of God in *Revelation 4:11* and *5:12* addressed God as “worthy” of so many things.

The more we focus on God, the more we understand and appreciate how worthy He is. As we understand and appreciate this, we can’t help but respond to Him. Just as an indescribable sunset or a breathtaking mountaintop vista evokes a spontaneous response, so we cannot encounter the worthiness of God without the response of worship. If you could see God at this moment, you would so utterly understand how worthy He is of worship that you would instinctively fall on your face and worship Him. And to the degree we truly comprehend what God is like, we will respond to Him in worship.

That’s why both the public and private worship of God should be based upon and include the Bible, because it reveals God to us so that we may worship Him. Bible reading and preaching are central in public worship because they are the clearest, most direct, most extensive presentation of God in the meeting. For the same reasons, Bible intake and meditation are the heart of private worship.

Worship often includes words and actions, but it goes beyond them to the *focus* of the mind and heart. Worship is the God-centered focus and response of the inner man; it is being preoccupied with God. Since worship is focusing on and responding to God, regardless of what else we are doing we are not worshipping if we are not thinking about God. No matter what you are saying or singing or doing at any moment, you are worshipping God only when you are focused on Him and thinking of Him.

Worship is Done in Spirit and Truth

To worship God in spirit is to worship from the inside out. It means to be sincere in our acts of worship. No matter how spiritual the song you are singing, no matter how poetic the prayer you are praying, if it isn’t sincere then it isn’t worship, it’s hypocrisy.

**NOTE: THIS TUESDAY’S
STUDY WILL MEET IN 4th
FLOOR LOUNGE DUE TO 436
BEING USED FOR ANOTHER
GROUP THAT DAY.**

**Legislators’ Weekly Bible study
meets each Tuesday (*except
following a Monday holiday*) and
Thursday in Capitol Annex
Room 436 from 12:00-12:30 pm.
It is the same study both days to
allow flexibility for everyone’s
committee schedules.**

The balance to worshipping in spirit is to worship in truth. We are to worship according to the truth of Scripture. We worship God as He is revealed in the Bible, not as we might want Him to be.

So we must worship in both spirit and truth, with both heart and head, with both emotions and thought. If we worship too much just by spirit we will be mushy and soft on the truth, worshipping according to feelings. That can lead anywhere from a sleepy tolerance of anything in worship at one extreme to uncontrollable spiritual wildfire on the other. But if we worship by truth without spirit, then our worship will be taut, grim, and icily predictable.

Worship is Expected Both Publicly and Privately

That believers are expected to participate regularly in corporate worship is given in the command of Hebrews 10:25 – “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

Christianity is not an isolationist religion. The New Testament describes the Church with metaphors like *body* (1 Cor. 12:12), *building* (Eph. 2:21), and *household* (Eph. 2:19), each of which speaks of the relationship between individual units and a larger whole.

The quality of your private devotional life doesn't exempt you from worshipping with other believers. You may have the devotional life of a George Muller, but you need corporate worship as much as he and the Hebrews did. There's an element of worship and Christianity that cannot be experienced in private worship or by watching worship.

On the other hand, no matter how fulfilling or sufficient our regular public worship celebration seems, there are experiences with God that He gives only in our private worship. Jesus participated faithfully in the public worship of God at the synagogue each Sabbath and at the stated assemblies of Israel at the Temple in Jerusalem. In addition to that, however, Luke observed that “Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (5:16). As the familiar Puritan commentator, Matthew Henry, put it, “Public worship will not excuse us from secret worship.”

We must not forget that God expects us to worship privately so He can bless us. We minimize our joy when we neglect the daily worship of God in private. Think of it: The Lord Jesus Christ is willing to meet with you privately for as long as you want, and He is willing – even eager – to meet with you every day!

Worship is a Discipline to be Cultivated

Jesus said, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God” (Matt. 4:10). To worship God throughout a lifetime requires discipline. Without discipline, our worship of God will be thin and inconsistent.

True worship is always covered with heartprints. Worship can't be diagramed or calculated, for it is the response of a heart in love with God. And yet, we also must be able to think of worship as a Discipline, a Discipline that must be cultivated just as all relationships must be to remain healthy and grow.

Worship is a Spiritual Discipline insofar as it is both an end and a means. The worship of God is an *end* in itself because worship, as we've defined it, is to focus on and respond to God. There is no higher goal than focusing on and responding to God. But worship is also a *means* in the sense that it is a means to Godliness. The more truly we worship God, the more we become like Him.

People become like their focus. If we would be Godly, we must focus on God. Godliness requires discipline worship.

This study adapted from chapter five of *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald S. Whitney.