

# How We Worship

## INTRO

- I want you to imagine the thoughts and feelings you would have if you got a chance to have lunch with someone famous you are really impressed by or someone you really admire. Saban, Bo Jackson, Lewis&Tolkein or fav author, favorite music artist/band, etc.
  - We're all thinking in that scenario, "no way, this is so cool! I can't believe I have this opportunity!" We would be overcome with excitement.
  - Want to know what else I would be doing? Being incredibly thoughtful of everything I say and do. Don't want to: foot in mouth, talk while eating, try not to make a mess, not offend them.
  - In a situation like that we would be so excited about the opportunity and so concerned about what we say and what we do. And I think these things are a pretty natural reaction for most of us.
- I want us to consider that if this is our reaction towards some person, who we think is cool, then how much should our attitude be like this towards God. So today we're going to look to the Bible for examples of and teaching about worship. We're going to see some that God doesn't appreciate and some that He does.
- **PRAY**

## TYPES OF WORSHIP

### Ignorant Worship

- **Read Acts 17:19-25** – "They took him and brought him to the Areopagus, and said, "May we learn about this new teaching you are presenting? Because what you say sounds strange to us, and we want to know what these things mean." Now all the Athenians and the foreigners residing there spent their time on nothing else but telling or hearing something new. Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said, "People of Athens! I see that you are extremely religious in every respect. For as I was passing through and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar on which was inscribed, 'To

an Unknown God.’ Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it—he is Lord of heaven and earth—does not live in shrines made by hands. Neither is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives everyone life and breath and all things.”

- Paul comes to these people in Athens and appeals to how very religious they are. Maybe there is a little something to be commended here. They worship in ignorance this unknown God. They don’t really know much about Him or what He wants, they’re worshipping a bunch of other lowercase g gods, but they are trying to worship Him.
- Paul proceeds to make it clear that they shouldn’t go on like this. He talks about Jesus and about how humans are made in God’s image and so making some idol to him in ignorance is not the way. Then look at **vv. 30-31**.
  - The time for ignorance has passed, its time to repent and follow Jesus and his commands. Worshipping God on His terms. A day of judgment is coming soon for those who are not following and obeying Jesus as God’s appointed King and Messiah. So, we see that ignorant worship does not cut it.
- How we fix that? Read his book.

### Vain Worship

- **Read Matthew 15:1-9** – “Then Jesus was approached by Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem, who asked, “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they don’t wash their hands when they eat.” He answered them, “Why do you break God’s commandment because of your tradition? For God said: Honor your father and your mother; and, Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death. But you say, ‘Whoever tells his father or mother, “Whatever benefit you might have received from me is a gift committed to the temple,” he does not have to honor his father.’ In this way, you have nullified the word of God because of your tradition. Hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied correctly about you when he said: **This people honors me with their lips, but their**

## **heart is far from me. They worship me in vain, teaching as doctrines human commands.”**

- Here the Pharisees come to Jesus and question him about his disciples not following one of their traditions. Jesus responds by questioning them about one of their other traditions that gets in the way of one of God’s commands. The Pharisees had propped up their traditions to be on par with God’s commands. They built fences around the commands of God and then bound their fences and traditions as if they were the same as God’s word.
- Jesus rebukes them by quoting Isaiah 29. And says that their binding of human commands and traditions is to worship God in vain.
  - We can be especially susceptible of this at times and so we need to be constantly coming back to God’s word and constantly seeking to restore and examine what we do with the book God has given us

### Self-Made Worship

- **Read Colossians 2:18-23** – “Let no one condemn you by delighting in ascetic practices and the worship of angels, claiming access to a visionary realm. Such people are inflated by empty notions of their unspiritual mind. He doesn’t hold on to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and tendons, grows with growth from God. If you died with Christ to the elements of this world, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations: “Don’t handle, don’t taste, don’t touch”? All these regulations refer to what is destined to perish by being used up; they are human commands and doctrines. Although these have a reputation for wisdom by promoting self-made religion, false humility, and severe treatment of the body, they are not of any value in curbing self-indulgence.”
- Here, Paul is warning the Christians in Colossae about some false teaching that has come among them. There seem to be multiple facets to this false teaching, but without getting into too much detail here, one of the main principles is that this worship was one that

was focused on self and the things of this world. The purpose and motivation were about what worship does for me. How does it boost me up or make me look better somehow.

- Culture is very different now. In their culture, the more religious or spiritual you were, the better. So these people are doing some extreme fasting, harming themselves to make themselves look more righteous. Paul seems to indicate that this is because these people are focused on self and the things of the world.
- Today, I think the principle applies, but it just looks different. God isn't pleased when we think worship is about us. If we are finding ways to worship God that we don't find in the Bible, then ultimately that is self-made worship.
- It's easier to be guilty of this than you think. Have you ever left a worship assembly and thought/said, "I just didn't get anything out of that today."? I have, guilty. The problem with that line of thinking is that it is the same attitude that is underlying self-made worship. We're concerned about what I am getting out of worship, what worship does for me. When our concern should be, am I bringing and giving my genuine all to God.
- Not having this kind of attitude towards worship is precisely the thing that could lead us to care less about what God's word says and more about what appeals to me.

### True Worship

- **Read John 4:19-26** – “Sir,” the woman replied, “I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus told her, “Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth.” The woman said to him, “I

know that the Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Jesus told her, “I, the one speaking to you, am he.”

- Here Jesus is speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well and she begins to make some comments about what kind of worship is appropriate. Jerusalem or somewhere else? Jesus says a time is coming AND NOW IS when the question will no longer be about which mountain to worship God on, but it will be about worshipping God in spirit and in truth.
- Jesus himself gives us direction on what worship should look like now that he has come.
  - First and maybe most obviously, it should be directed towards God. The creator of heavens and earth who became Jesus as a man for our sake.
  - Second it should be done in spirit and in truth. We have already alluded to both of these elements but it seems that the right attitude towards worship is crucial, and worshipping in the ways that God has revealed to His people is also crucial. We need both of those working in harmony to be worshipping the way Jesus describes here.
    - If we find ourselves with best attitude and motivations in the world, but we do not worship God in the ways he desires then it is not pleasing to Him.
    - If we find ourselves worshipping in the ways that please God, but we simply go through the motions with bad or indifferent attitudes then it’s the same as the reverse. Not pleasing to God. God deserves our very best.

## **LIVING SACRIFICES**

- This lesson is not one of our lessons that is directly about our theme for this year, which is “Living Sacrifices,” but I do think it is appropriate and applicable to make a connection to our theme here.
- **Read Romans 12:1-2** – “Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your

true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.”

- Paul tells followers of Jesus to present ourselves as a living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. Paul is calling on a powerful image of the sacrifices that were offered to God in the Old Testament. You know what those sacrifices were in the OT? They were a part of worshipping God.
- Paul says that our bodies, our lives, who we are, is to be sacrificed and given over to living His way as a part of our worship. So what we have talked about certainly applies to what we do together here when we assemble here for the purpose of worshipping God. But it also applies to how we live our lives. These principles and attitudes that we have discussed can be just as much of a problem in our every day lives as they can inside these walls.

## **CONCLUSION**

- So again, we need to be constantly seeking after God’s word, always restoring, always coming to know God and His will better so that we serve and worship Him in a way that he more than deserves, because of all that He has done for us.
- Close & Invite