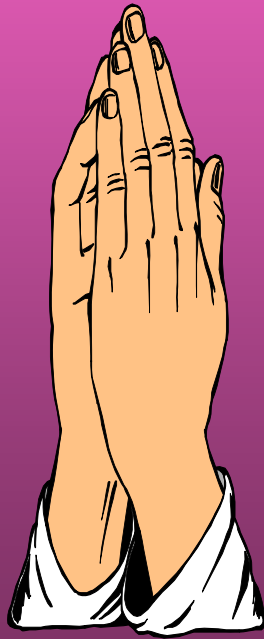


HOME BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Correct WORSHIP To God



- 1. What is Worship?**
- 2. Why Worship?**
- 3. Avenues Through Which We Express Worship.**
- 4. Principles Governing Worship**
- 5. Corruption of Worship**
- 6. Responsible Worship Leaders**

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*Lesson One***"What is Worship?"**

Let's suppose that you have a furnace that will not heat your house properly. You complain daily, but the furnace does not do any better. In desperation you go and stand before the burner and shout: *"You will not get one more piece of coal until you start putting out more heat."* Do you suppose that such action will cause the burner to put out more heat? It could be that the same thing is true concerning the Christian and worship. He goes to the assembly and comes away feeling cold and unsatisfied. He complains and even decides that he will not go anymore until he can get something out of worship. Is it possible that the problem is within him and not necessarily the worship assembly?

A survey was taken among a certain religious group. They found that 65% of their dropouts left because the people felt the worship service was not meaningful. What were those people looking for in their worship assembly? Were they desiring to be entertained—like when sitting before a television? Just why do people leave worship assemblies and not feel uplifted or that it was good to have been there? In order to arrive at some kind of an answer, it is necessary that we first see what true worship is all about.

DEFINING WORSHIP

The word "worship" occurs about 60 times in the King James Version of the New Testament. It is an Anglo-Saxon word that indicates "worth-ship." It is a way of expressing to God how much we value Him in our lives. It is an effort to show homage, reverence, honor, and respect to the God of creation. A worship assembly should be gathered together to pay honor and devotion to the God who has redeemed us. If God has given specific instructions as to the activities we are to engage in to show our respect for Him; then, we show our reverence for Him by doing what He tells us. Obedience to God is critical in worship! **Nadab** and **Abihu** were priest of God in the Old Testament. They offered strange fire unto God which God had not prescribed. God took their lives on the spot! Why? Did they not worship God? No! They dethroned God and worshiped themselves! (Lev. 10). **Saul**, the first King over Israel, was told to utterly destroy the Amalekites, to leave no one alive, and not to bring back any bounty or spoils of war (1 Sam. 15:1-3). They disobeyed God and brought back the best of the spoils—saying, they wanted to offer them to the Lord at Gilgal (1 Sam. 15:21). Saul and the people were strongly rebuked for their disobedience and God would not accept their worship. Why? They rejected the Word of the Lord! (1 Sam. 15:22-23). They did not respect God, but looked to their own hearts for direction. God called their actions rebellion and insubordination—so, any efforts at worship would

be rejected by God! When men respect God, they listen to God. When they do not respect God, they turn a deaf ear to His Word.

THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP

One of the main struggles that God had with the Israelite people under the Old Covenant arrangement was **IDOLATRY!** At times, they refused (as the nations around them) to give recognition to the True and Living God of Heaven and turned to idols that were so far inferior to Him. Idolatry is a dethroning of the True God and placing an inferior thing in His place (Exo. 20:1-6). Idolatry also invents its own approach to their gods! This led to all kinds of sinful, selfish, indulgent activities (Exo. 32:1-10; Rom. 1:18-32).

Thus, the real test of true worship to God rest upon our giving to Him proper recognition as to who He is and to be obedient to Him—showing our reverence for Him. Worship is indicating that we recognize who the Creator is and who the creature is (Rom. 9:20! Man's greatest sin is his pride; which is a failure to give proper recognition to the God of Heaven. Man, as well as Satan, wants to usurp the person of and the place of the True God of Heaven (1 Tim. 3:6; James 4:6; Jude 6; 2 Thess. 2:3-4)! ***"This people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me."*** (Matt. 15:8). True worship must come from a heart that is awake and open to God and that expresses reverence, awe, respect, adoration, gratitude, thanksgiving, and love! False or vain worship is shown by people who seek their own will and not God's will. It is shown by a heart that is prideful, self-centered, and self-satisfied as Jesus pointed out (Luke 18:9-14). It is also shown by a heart that lacks shame, sorrow, or mourning for sin in his life (Matt. 5:3-7).

Who is this God that we desire to worship? (Isaiah 6:1-8). He is a Being of:

1. Overwhelming majesty, holiness, sinlessness, and perfection.
2. He is all-powerful—nothing is too great for him to accomplish.
3. He is all-knowing—all is laid open before Him.
4. He is everywhere-presence—there is nowhere we can go that God is not there.
5. He is just and righteous—He does not act unfairly or incorrectly.
6. He is faithful—He never breaks a promise or goes back on His word.
7. He has great compassion, mercy, and love for His creatures. He has shown this by the giving of the greatest of gifts to redeem us back to himself.

Without some knowledge and recognition of these things, true worship cannot take place! Millions around the world go to a place of worship, but does true

worship take place in honor of the True God of Heaven? Just to go to an assembly of people and go through some activities together does not automatically guarantee acceptable worship to God! Don't misunderstand...the first two factors are important, but they alone do not assure us that we have worshiped the True God of Heaven. In later lessons, we will look closer at the importance of faithfully attending the assemblies and being obedient to God by engaging in the activities of worship that He has prescribed.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HEART

It is important that we realize that God knows our hearts (Ps. 44:21; Acts 1:24). We cannot deceive Him or fool Him. He knows if we are sincere in our worship or insincere. God wants our heart, but a sincere heart (Eph. 6:24; Josh. 24:14; 1 Cor. 5:8). It is with this outlook that God desires us to approach Him in worship. See the Scriptures below:

Jer. 24:7—God wants the whole heart!

Deut. 4:29—We are to seek Him with all of our heart!

1 Sam. 12:24—We are to serve Him in truth with all our heart!

1 Pet. 3:15—We are to sanctify the Lord God in our heart!

Ps. 51:17—A broken and contrite heart God will not despise.

The heart of man must be turned to God before he can properly worship the true God of Heaven.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

When we leave the Assembly of God's people, how can we truly know that we have "worshiped" the God of Heaven? Was our heart truly in the things that we did? Did we show reverence, respect, and honor to God—which He rightfully deserves? Or did we try to worship God with a "*polluted heart*" (Ezek. 20:16); a "*Lifted up heart*" (Ezek. 28:17); or with a "*divided heart.*" (Hosea 10:2). Are we aware when our heart is not in our worship? If we go away from the assembly and are not built up or edified, **who is responsible?**

Jesus gave recognition to two things about our worship to God that are critical: "*In spirit and in truth.*" (John 4:24). To worship God in spirit has reference to the heart or mind of man that must be involved. This is what our discussion has been about in this lesson. The third lesson will deal with the concept of worship in truth. We must worship God with both concepts—it is not an either/or matter—it is a both matter! When people do not participate, or they indicate an indifference or unconcern about worship, or if their actions show disrespect...does worship take place for them? Do we purposely attend the assemblies of God's people to truly worship God? Can we truthfully say that it was "good" to come together with brethren to worship the True God of Heaven?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Of what value is our complaining about the worship assembly?

2. What is meant by the expression: "The worship service was not meaningful?"

3. How is the word "worship" to be defined?

4. What two examples illustrate the wrong attitude towards God?

5. What role does obedience play in worship?

6. How does idolatry "dethrone" God?

7. Why was God so concerned about Israel not turning to idolatry?

8. Is it possible for people to go through activities of worship and not worship?

9. What are some worshipful attributes of God?

10. Why does God want our "whole heart?"

Lesson Two

"Why Worship?"

We have already looked at what is worship, which should in and of itself give us a very good reason for wanting to pay homage to God. We also saw that true worship requires our heart, mind, spirit—the inner man that gives recognition and reverence to the Creator and Savior of mankind. Since God has appointed for man to worship Him, there must be good reasons for such. What God requires always has value and is primarily for the good or benefit of His children.

REASONS FOR WORSHIP

1. Worship to God is essential to salvation! God has commanded such of His creatures:

- a) Ps. 99:9—*"Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy."*
- b) Matt. 4:10—*"You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve."* (Quote of Deut. 6:13).
- c) John 4:23—*"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him."*

To not worship God is a basic evil of mankind! (Rom. 1:21, 25). Worship is not only a duty, but it is his pre-eminent duty! Jesus did not say "you may worship God if you feel like it," but he stated it as an imperative: *"You shall worship the Lord your God."* We either pay proper homage to God now (in this life), or we will pay homage to Him in the judgment to our everlasting shame (Phil. 2:9-11). No wonder that the Hebrew writer was gravely concerned when those to whom he was writing were forsaking the assembly of public worship to God (10:25).

2. True worship is at the root of our spiritual life, growth, and steadfastness as a Christian. (Heb. 10:23-25). Failing to worship God shows a bad heart condition (Acts 8:21); as well as, it indicates a lack of love for God (1 Jn. 5:3). Our spiritual man needs constant nourishment (Matt. 4:4; 1 Pet. 2:2). The dangers are real that we can depart from God because of an *"evil heart of unbelief!"* (Heb. 3:12). Because of the way we have been designed by God, we need companionship, friendship, and fellowship. The early church realized this and met daily to worship and to fellowship with one another (Acts 2:42, 46). There is spiritual strength to be found in these kinds of assemblies. We not only receive spiritual grounding that gives conviction and steadfastness, but courage to live a godly, holy life to bring glory to God! Walking in the light is not the easiest thing to do. We need all the strength and encouragement we can receive

to endure to the end (Heb. 3:14).

3. It promotes the oneness of God's people! We are admonished to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). Jesus, Himself, prayed that we would maintain that oneness (John 17). The public worship of God is so designed by God to help promote such! We all are participants, not spectators, in common things and common beliefs. The religion of Christ is one of togetherness—a brotherhood of saints (1 Pet. 2:17). We function as a body of people (Rom. 12:4-5). Public worship of God brings kindred hearts together, in a common faith in God, with mutual love for one another, and holding firm to common goals in life. These are all expressed in our worship assembly!

4. Public worship encourages faithfulness and fidelity to Christ! (Heb. 10:25; 1 Pet. 3:15; Heb. 2:1-4). Our assemblies of worship are open and public confession of our faith in God. Faithful attendance to these assemblies is a testimony to the world that we stand with Christ. We receive strength while in these assemblies to be loyal to Christ every day and every where! It will protect us against wrong concepts or mis-understandings of God's Word so that we will not make shipwreck of the faith (1 Tim. 1:18-20). It helps us to maintain our relationship with God and one another. If we are indifferent and unconcerned about public worship, we are already on our way to departing from God!

5. Public worship is a special way of drawing near to God! (Jas. 4:8). God seeks for or desires for His people to worship Him (Jn. 3:23-24). But James challenges us to *"draw near to God and He will draw near to you."* What better way to draw near to God than in worshiping Him together? It is a special time to express our love to God for what He has done for us. He deserves our praise, honor, and reverence! (Rev. 5:9-10; 7:12).

A TRAGIC HINDRANCE TO ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

James indicates this problem in the same verses where he admonishes God's people to draw near to God! (James 4:8-11). Notice what he says, by inspiration, that a man must do in order to draw near to God.

1. He must cleanse his hands of ungodly involvement.
2. He must cleanse and purify his heart.
3. He must be regretful (mourn & lament) over his mistakes.
4. He must humble himself before God.

The Old Testament Prophets pronounced God's disgust of His people coming before Him to worship and living ungodly and unrighteous lives! Isaiah 1:10-17 illustrates this concept very vividly! God said that He took no pleasure in all the many sacrifices and offerings they brought. He even indicated that they were an abomination to Him. The reasons are clearly stated: *"Your hands are covered*

with blood," "Cease to do evil," "Learn to do good, seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow." Their sins were hiding God's face from them and their prayers were not heard! (see also Isa. 59:1-2). Amos 5:21-24 states basically the same thing that their worship to God is worthless because of their ungodly lives! Today, under the New Covenant, we offer as our sacrifice to God—not an animal—but our bodies as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2). But notice that our bodies are offered as that which is holy and acceptable to God! Jesus pointed out this concept in Matt. 5:23-24 when He said: *"If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."* How we live our lives and how we conduct ourselves among our fellow-man can make a big difference as to whether our worship will be accepted by God. Jesus continually referred to such people as hypocrites (Matt. 23:23, etc.). To think that I can correctly worship God and continually act unrighteous towards my fellow-man is pure self-deception!

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC WORSHIP

There is no question in regards to Scripture teaching that God wants both public and private worship! Both are discussed in Scripture (Matt. 6:5-6; 1 Cor. 11:17; 16:1-2; Acts 20:7; etc.). Each has its own place and time as well as its own values. But, it is definitely not an either/or question, but both are necessary for the Christian to be right with God. The time may come when we are physically no longer able to attend the public assemblies of the church; but, until then, we should take advantage of both situations.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Jesus, in His conversation with the Samaritan woman, stated that the time was coming when public worship to God would no longer only take place in the Temple of God in Jerusalem, but that people would worship God everywhere. He was referring to the New Kingdom of God (the church) that was soon to be set-up (John 4:20-21). The Revelation letter envisions peoples from all nations and tongues giving worship to the God of Heaven (Rev. 7:9-12). It is certainly a great privilege to be a part of the redeemed of God that worship Him continually while in this body, but who will someday be around that glorious throne to offer our worship face to face.

Man is designed by God to worship. Let's be sure that our worship is not hindered by ungodly and unrighteous living on our part. Let's learn to recognize the many values of worshiping God from our hearts. And whether our worship is private or public, let's be sure that it is not only offered with our mouth, tongue, and body, but most of all from our heart (our inner man)!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In what sense is worship essential to our salvation?

2. Has God commanded public worship?

3. What does a failure to worship God indicate about us?

4. How does public worship promote oneness among Christians?

5. How does worship encourage fidelity to Christ?

6. How does one draw near to God?

7. What part does holy living play in our efforts to worship God?

8. How does one offer his body as a living sacrifice to God?

9. If we worship privately, do we need to also worship publicly?

10. Over-all, why is worship so important in the life of a Christian?

Lesson Three

**"Avenues Through Which We Express
Worship to God"**

*"I know that I must worship God, but does it matter **HOW** I worship God?"* Has God indicated what He wants us to do in the way of worshiping Him? Can we design our own activities of worship? If it is left up to us to decide how to worship God, what would be the basis for making such decisions? If you are aware of the teachings of Scripture on these questions, you know for certain it does matter how we worship God. We are not the ones who decide on the avenues or activities of worship—God does!

An important factor in determining the acceptability of our worship by God is in our submission or obedience to what He has given us. Look again at the following Scriptures: (Gen. 4:1-8; Heb. 11:4; Lev. 10:1-2; 1 Sam. 13:8-14; 15:1-23; Isaiah 29:13; Amos 5:21-22; Matt. 15:9; Lk. 18:10-14). How could anyone say that it doesn't matter how you worship God as long as you are sincere after reading the above passages? We need to be sincere in our worship; and, the sincere person will want to know what God commands and will do what He commands! (Matt. 7:21-23; Acts 22:3-4; 23:1). Jesus said that God is to be worshiped in **"spirit and in truth!"** (John 4:24). It takes both to make worship acceptable. It must be from our heart, mind, spirit, the inner person; but, it must also be done in the way that God requires—the avenues that He has given for us to express our worship to Him. Without our hearts being in our worship, the activities of worship become nothing more than a form (Matt. 15:7-9). Let's take a brief look at each of these avenues of worship.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

This in reality is not a meal, but merely a taking of a piece of bread and drinking some juice. By themselves, without a proper understanding, they are meaningless! It is the connection that gives meaning and purpose to what we do. We eat the bread and drink the cup of juice that represents to us the death of Jesus on the cross for the benefit of all mankind (1 Cor. 11:23-26). When a person just goes through the outward form of eating and drinking, it has no benefit spiritually for that person. Instead, he actually brings judgment upon his soul because his mind and heart is not involved in the process (1 Cor. 11:27-29). Different terms are used in Scripture to identify this activity:

1. It is a memorial "feast." (1 Cor. 11:24).
2. It is a communing together. (1 Cor. 10:16).
3. It is a proclamation. (1 Cor. 11:26).
4. It is a time of self-examination. (1 Cor. 11:28-30).

5. It is the breaking of bread. (Acts 2:42; 20:7).

We honor and show reverence for God by worshiping Him *"in spirit and in truth!"*

SINGING

What a blessing that God has ordained for us to worship Him with singing! *"Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms."* (James 5:13). Singing played a major role in the worship of God under the Old Covenant. The book of Psalms shows this clearly. Today, Christians are admonished: *"...be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."* (Eph. 5:18-19). In Paul's Letter to the Colossians, we find out HOW we can be filled with the Spirit: *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."* (Col. 3:16). Paul stated in 1 Cor. 14:15 that the Christian should sing with the spirit and understanding. We have much to sing about (1 Pet. 2:5, 9, etc.). We must remember that just to enjoy the aesthetics of singing does not make it worship—it must come from our hearts!

GIVING

Giving has always been a part of man's worship to God through the centuries. To offer an animal sacrifice was a form of giving to God. Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils taken in battle to Melchizedek, the priest of God (Gen. 14:20). Jacob offered to give a tenth to God from his prosperity (Gen. 28:22). Under the Old Covenant, God required the giving of a tenth of their prosperity, plus additional giving (Num. 18:24). In the New Testament, a lot is said about our giving to God, but it does not set an amount as previously indicated. It is possible that the concept of a tenth was so obvious that there was no need to mention it. However, much effort is spent in the New Testament to be sure that we give from the heart so that our worship will be acceptable to God. Our giving should be given on the first day of the week when we come together according to our prosperity (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Our giving should be characterized by generosity, purposeful, and cheerful (2 Cor. 9:5-8). It is given to help carry out the work of the kingdom—as well as to help the needed (1 Cor. 9:11-14; 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:1-8, etc.). If our giving is not done with the right spirit, we have not worshiped God. If our giving is not the proper amount, we still have not worshiped God. Obedience from the heart makes it worship!

PRAYER

Since we have six lessons on this subject in this special series of studies, we will not spend much time with it here. Prayer as a part of our worship assembly takes on a little different aspect than when we pray alone.

The Apostle Paul listed Prayer as one of the special activities that gives us the strength to do the will of God in our lives (Eph. 6:11-18). When he had finished with the listing, he immediately admonished the saints at Ephesus to collectively pray for all saints and for the Apostle that he may be bold in his proclamation of the Gospel (Eph. 6:18-19). He constantly admonished those to whom he wrote that they pray for others and for him in particular. When Peter and John were persecuted because of their preaching and finally let loose, they went to meet with the saints and reported all that had been done. Then, they raised their voice to God with one accord! (Acts 4:24-30). When they finished praying, the place where they met shook and the Apostles continued to speak the Word of God with boldness! (Acts 4:31). Persecution and Prayer helped to cement the saints together as one and caused them to unselfishly share what they had with others (Acts 4:32-35). Sincere pray that comes from the heart has great uniting power on the church. We all benefit when we sincerely worship God as He directs.

EXHORTATION

A part of the worship of the early church was the reading and study-ing of the Word of God. It is a way of feeding the soul with healthy food (Matt. 4:4; John 6:27). It is a way of showing respect for God by wanting to listen to His Word, but desirous of doing what He says (James 1:21-22). The men who lead our worship are to: *"...give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine."* (1 Tim. 4:13). What makes it worship to God is our attitude with which the exhortations are given and received. To be indifferent, unconcerned, or even rebellious to the Word of God makes it "vain worship." It must be emphasized that we are not just listening to a man giving his worldly wisdom, but we are listening to the admonitions and exhortations of God.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Worship is to be from the heart according to the directions of God. (John 4:24). When such is done, God is pleased, and we are built up. Disbelief or disobedience is not truly worship or acceptable worship to God. We must show honor and reverence to God as we participate in the activities that God has prescribed. Failure on our part robs us of the blessings that God has designed for us. True worship helps to transform us into the image of Christ—that is, we become complete in Him! Worship is designed to benefit the inner or spiritual part of man, not the physical. In the words of the Psalmist: *"Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."* (Ps. 29:2).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How important is it to worship God according to His instructions?
2. What example in the Bible has impressed you with this concept?
3. What part does sincerity play in acceptable worship?
4. What causes the eating of bread and drinking of juice to be worship to God?
5. How does a person eat or drink damnation (judgment) to his soul?
6. What makes the act of singing worship to God?
7. How do we know that the act of singing was a vital part of the Old Testament worship?
8. How did the concept of giving a tenth to God get its start?
9. Why is "corporate" prayer so important?
10. What makes "listening" worship to God?

Lesson Four

"Principles Governing Worship"

"Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all you stars of light! Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created." (Ps. 148:1-5). Man's fascination of created things has led to the exploration and better understanding of them; but sadly with many, it has not led to the fascination of the One who created them. God's problem with man is not so much to get him to worship, as it is to worship correctly. There is a fundamental principle that man must learn if he is to worship God acceptably—**Subornation of the human will to the Divine Will!** *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."* (Eccl. 12:13). In past lessons, we have already emphasized two other basic principles: To worship God in spirit and in truth! But there are other key principles and/or regulations that help to make our worship acceptable to God and beneficial to man.

ACCEPTABLE & BENEFICIAL WORSHIP

1. It needs to be with understanding. (1 Cor. 14:15). We must realize what we are saying, singing, or doing. There is no value to God or man if there is not understanding. Worship involves the mind, thinking, and reasoning of man. We are to worship intelligently! Our worship should not be characterized as "emotionalism," but as an intelligent approach to God. Our emotions may be stirred within us in the process, but it will be controlled and guided emotions that are real and not put on! It is not ignorant worship (Acts 17:23).

2. It needs to be sincere and without hypocrisy. (Phil. 1:10; Matt. 6:2). Some of the strongest words of Jesus was to condemn hypocrisy in the lives of not only the people, but the leaders of the Jewish people. Worship comes from **Joy** (Ps. 66:1); **Happiness** (James 5:13); **Fear** (Ps. 33:8); **Love** (Matt. 22:37); **Thanksgiving** (Ps. 100:4); and **Praise** (Acts 16:25). It is not something that is cold and stiff, but practical and meaningful.

3. It needs to be with reverence and respectfulness. (Heb. 12:28; Ps. 89:7). How can a man truly worship God when he does not reverence, fear, or respect Him. This attitude is shown by our seeking after God—to know Him and to serve Him (2 Cor. 8:12; Ps. 42:1-2).

4. It is not a performance we watch, but a participation we engage in. (Matt. 4:10). It is something we do—we worship God! It involves our heart and our actions. In worship, we express the feelings and understandings of our heart. Our thinking, our hearts, and our feelings have all been affected by what God has done for us in making us His children and given us hope of a resurrection unto eternal life.

5. It is to be done decently and in order. (1 Cor. 14:40). The church at Corinth were having several men to try to speak at the same time—which caused confusion. God wanted their worship to be appropriate and in an orderly fashion so that all could profit by it. We need to avoid as much confusion and distraction as possible in our worship assemblies. Our worship is not light and frivolous, but serious and challenging.

6. It must be designed to glorify God. (Matt. 4:10). Worship is God-centered, not man-centered! We do not come together to worship ourselves or some man, but to offer worship to our Creator and Savior! In Jesus' story about the Pharisee and Publican the difference is obvious (Luke 18:10-14).

7. It must be designed to edify (build up, strengthen) God's people. (1 Cor. 14:26-33). Proper worship not only glorifies God, but it helps to give strength and endurance for Christians. The end result of worship therefore is not for our amusement, entertainment, or self-display, but for our moral and spiritual improvement! Worship is not an end in itself! It has a two-fold purpose (Col. 3:16). In proper worship assemblies, there can be healing, enlightenment, encouragement, moral strength and conviction, and outreach to those not right with God.

8. It needs to be designed to impress and affect visitors spiritually. (1 Cor. 14:22-25). The early church must have drawn visitors into their assemblies and concern was expressed to the church at Corinth for them. They were to so conduct themselves in worship that the unbeliever is brought to belief!

9. Our worship must exemplify our love for each other. (John 13:34-35). In the middle of the chapters in 1 Corinthians that discusses the exercising of gifts in their worship assemblies is the chapter on Love. Paul stressed the importance of using the miraculous (as well as the natural) gifts to edify and build people up—not to use them for our own aggrandizement!

Possibly other things could be suggested from the Scriptures, but these will at least illustrate the seriousness with which we are to come together to worship God. The growth of the church both numerically and spiritually is greatly dependent upon proper worship assemblies. How each of us conduct ourselves during the worship assembly can make a big difference in visitors coming back or not. Even the way women dress themselves as they come into the assembly

can be a factor that helps or detracts from the good that is done in the assembly (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ON WORSHIP

There are other insights that might be suggested for our meditation in regards to making our worship assemblies as effective as possible.

- 1. Realize that God does not give everyone the same abilities.** (1 Cor. 12:4-11).
- 2. God considers each person, regardless of his abilities, as important.** (1 Cor. 12:12-19).
- 3. No one should look down on someone else for his lack of abilities.** (1 Cor. 12:20-24).
- 4. Unity of the body of Christ is very important to God.** (1 Cor. 12:25-27)
- 5. It is proper to say "amen" if you understand and agree with what is said.** (1 Cor. 14:1-6).
- 6. People should take turns in teaching and being quiet when another is instructing.** (1 Cor. 14:29-32).
- 7. Our worship must not be confusing—for God is not a God of confusion.** (1 Cor. 14:33).
- 8. Women were not to be in leadership roles in the worship assemblies.** (1 Cor. 14:34-36; 1 Tim. 2:8-15).
- 9. Do not recognize those who refuse to follow God's teaching concerning worship.** (1 Cor. 14:37-38).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Some go to church to take a walk;
Some go to church to laugh and talk;
Some go there to meet a friend;
Some go there, their time to spend;
Some go there to meet a lover;
Some go there a fault to cover;
Some go there for speculation;
Some go there for observation;
Some go there to doze and nod---
The Wise go there to worship God!

We all should want to assemble to truly worship God correctly. Worship is more than a duty, it is a great privilege! It is primarily for our benefit that we worship God. Therefore, it behooves us all to try to make our worship as correct as possible so that God can truly be glorified in our midst. However, when we

come to worship, it should not be with the attitude "*What can I get out of it,*" but more correctly "*What can I give!*" **HOW IS YOUR WORSHIP?**

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What thought summarizes man's responsibility before God?
2. How would you define the difference between "emotionalism" and "emotions" in worship?
3. What does true worship come from?
4. Does a person worship God if he does not participate in the acts of worship?
5. How does one show reverence in worship to God?
6. What is so important about worship being done "orderly?"
7. How can worship become man-centered?
8. How does worship edify God's people?
9. What is a key attitude to have as we worship together that Jesus says will let men know that we are true disciples of His?
10. Why is it important to realize that people have different abilities to participate in worship?
11. What is the difference in getting and giving in worship?

Lesson Five

"Corruption of Worship"

God wants His people to offer worship to Him! But He wants correct worship, not corrupted worship! He knows we have our weaknesses, limitations, immaturities, and failures.....and His forgiveness and offer of help are continually held out to us. But God does not countenance shoddy and half-hearted worship nor a rebellious and disobedient spirit. He has a right to expect proper worship from those whom He has redeemed from eternal ruin. In this lesson, we want to look a little more in detail at the things that corrupt our worship and make us unacceptable to God.

BY WHAT & WHO WE WORSHIP

One of the great problems of the Nation of Israel was the enticing temptation to turn from the true and living God to worship idols. The Gentile world in general was idolatrous. It was not just "one" idol that represented "the one true God," but many "idols" of all kinds of "gods!" God made it very clear that He did not want Israel to worship "other gods" nor make any likeness of them to worship and serve them (Exo. 20:2-6). After they had conquered the land of Canaan and settled it, Joshua reminded them of the great choice they needed to make and hold to: ***"Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord."*** (Josh. 24:14). Idolatry eventually led to the destruction of the "Northern Kingdom of Israel." And Idolatry led to the 70 years bondage of the "Southern Kingdom of Israel" when they were taken away by the Babylonians.

The New Testament also has its strong admonitions against idolatry as well (Acts 15:20; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 Jn. 5:21; 1 Cor. 6:9; 10:7; Rev. 21:8). God makes it very clear that He will not accept such worship. But idolatry can be understood to include other concepts. The following things can be considered idol worship:

1. **Covetousness.** (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5)
2. **Stubbornness.** (1 Sam. 15:23)
3. **Loving one's parents or family more than God.** (Matt. 10:37)
4. **The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the pleasures of life.** (Matt. 13:22; Luke 8:14).

Idolatry may also be looked upon as placing anything before God which dethrones God in our hearts—as the above things indicate. The obvious problem with idolatry is that whatever we turn to and idolize, such has no power to forgive, save, or cleanse us and make it possible for us to be resurrected some day unto eternal life. (Jere. 2:28; 10:5, etc.). If we want our worship to be accepted, we must worship the One, True, and Living God!

WRONG ATTITUDES

One of the great values of the Old Testament to us today is that we can see how God reacted to the Israelite people when they obeyed Him or disobeyed Him (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11). We can also profit from Jesus' teachings that showed the Israelites where they had missed the mark in being right with God. Let's look at three attitudes that are clearly stated to be unacceptable to God.

1. A Self-Righteous Attitude. (Luke 18:9-14). He told the Parable about two men who went into the Temple to pray because of a "self-righteous" attitude on the part of men! God has purposefully chosen the things that the world considers "foolish," "weak," "base," "despised," and "the things that are not" to put the so-called "righteous" or "wise" to shame and so that they cannot boast or glory in the presence of God! (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

2. A Rebellious or Proudful Attitude. (James 4:6; 2 Thess. 2:3-4; Isa. 1:2, 5). Isaiah characterizes the Jewish people as a "sinful nation" that had revolted and rebelled against God. The Apostle Paul's description of the "man of sin" is one who exalts himself above all—even God Himself! Man's haughtiness and proudful spirit makes it impossible to truly worship the God of Heaven.

3. A lack of Respect for God! (Malachi 1:6-9, 13-14). Malachi speaks for God and is asking the Jewish people: "Where is My honor and respect that is due Me?" What did Malachi say showed this lack of respect? They were presenting defiled food on God's altar—the blind, the lame and the sick. He reminded them of an obvious truth—present your gifts to your governor and see if he accepts it. They were satisfied with giving to God the mediocre, shoddy, inferior, and diseased animals. But God demands the first and the best! We show our honor and respect to God when we offer the best to Him.

WRONG ACTIONS

God has prescribed the avenues or activities of worship that He wants for His people to engage in. We invalidate our worship when we "add to" or "take from" what He has given (Deut. 4:1-2; Rev. 22:18-19; 2 Jn. 9-11, etc.). Nadab and Abihu, who were sons of the High priest, help to illustrate what we mean by wrong actions—and of course, their wrong attitude was showing as well. God pointed out that they "offered strange fire" that He had not commanded. As a result, God burned them alive on the spot (Lev. 10:1-2). God may not punish us immediately as He did these two men, but that doesn't mean that He will accept our wrong actions as worship. We are warned not to change God's message, but abide in it! (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9). It should be obvious that it is usually the "self-righteous," "the rebellious or Proudful," or those "who do not respect God" that

will be guilty of adding to or taking away from what God has commanded.

But there is another sense in which this concept is clearly condemned in both Old and New Testaments. An ungodly or unrighteous life will make our efforts of worship **VAIN!** Notice the description of such people by the Prophet Isaiah:

1. Their Sacrifices—They brought multiplied sacrifices (1:11); burnt offerings of rams (1:11); the fat of fed cattle (1:11); the blood of bulls, lambs, and goats (1:11)—all of which God had requested of His people. But look what He said about their worship: worthless offerings (1:13); an abomination to me (1:13); He hated their festivals and feasts (1:14); He considered them a burden (1:14); He was weary of bearing them (1:14); and He said that He would hide his face from them and would not hear or listen to their prayers (1:15). What was wrong???

2. Their worship was vain because of their lives. Notice how He describes their lives—They had revolted (1:2); They were sinful (1:4); corrupt (1:14); they had abandoned God (1:4); They had despised the Holy One (1:4); They had turned away (1:4); and They had rebelled (1:5). He continued by pointing out their sinful ways: Their hands were covered with blood (1:15); The faithful city had become a harlot (1:21); They were no long righteous and just (1:21); they were murderers (1:21); Your rulers are rebels (1:23); They are companions of thieves (1:23); They love bribes (1:23); They do not defend the orphan (1:23); They will not hear the widow's plea (1:23). Their sinful lives were invalidating any efforts at worship—even if they were correct actions.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The prophet Isaiah's advise to them should also be advise for us to seriously consider—Wash yourselves and remove the evil deeds from My sight (1:16); Cease doing evil (1:16); Learn to do good (1:17); Seek Justice (1:17); Remove the ruthless (1:17); Defend the Orphan (1:17); and Plead for the widow (1:17). They were evidently thinking that they showed their love for God by doing His bidding, but failed to show their love for their fellow-man and their worship was made vain. Our worship must not be designed to please us, but to please God.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. If an idol is worshiped that is supposed to represent the one true and living God, what would be wrong with such?**

- 2. How would you define idolatry that would include things or people other than idols.**

- 3. What are some wrong attitudes that can make our worship vain?**

- 4. How can we show our disrespect for God in our worship?**

- 5. How does God react to the proud person?**

- 6. In what sense did Nadab and Abihu worship God incorrectly?**

- 7. Why did God condemn the Israelite people even though they worshiped God correctly by bringing sacrifices that He required?**

- 8. What part does a godly, righteous life play in acceptable worship?**

- 9. What advise did the Prophet Isaiah give to the Israelites about correcting their incorrect worship?**

*Lesson Six***"Responsible Worship Leaders"**

Correct Assembly Worship to God requires leadership. This leadership has been given by God to the men of the congregation (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 1 Cor. 11:3). Women were not permitted to speak before the congregation as the men did, nor were they to take a lead role over the man. It is important to recognize that this was not a cultural thing, but God's plan from the very beginning (Gen. 3:16; 1 Cor. 14:34). Men need to accept this responsibility and handle it properly. It is a very important responsibility that affects the whole church.

RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP

A great deal is said in the Scriptures over the responsibility of good leadership. Look at some of the things that God has said:

1. Men are to be appointed elders that meet certain qualities of leadership over people (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9).
2. Men are to be appointed deacons that meet certain qualities of leadership over people (1 Tim. 3:8-10, 12-13).
3. Elders and deacons' wives need to meet certain qualities to be a spiritual help to their husbands (1 Tim. 3:11).
4. Elders are to be examples to the church (1 Peter 5:3).
5. Preachers are to be examples to the church (1 Tim. 4:12).
6. The "faith" of those who lead should be followed by the members of the church (Heb. 13:7).
7. Older widows who are supported by the church to work with other women need to meet certain qualities as well (1 Tim. 5:5-12).

In other words, the church needs wise, faithful, and responsible leaders to help the church to grow and mature not only in their daily lives, but also in their time of worship together! Without proper leadership, the church will be in danger of becoming lukewarm, indifferent, immature, carnal (fleshly-minded), worldly, slowing drifting from a close relationship with God.

THE BENEFIT OF THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

When we read the 1 Corinthian Letter, we are amazed at the problems that the church had. But God was able to take this church and teach all other churches of Christ how we ought to conduct ourselves in our worship assemblies. Let's imagine for a few minutes that we were among the number who obeyed the Gospel under Paul's preaching. We begin meeting with the church to worship

God. Knowing what we do now, just how long would you have remained with a church that had all the problems that Corinth had? Look at some of the problems that this Letter dealt with:

1. They had leaders who were helping to cause division and strife among the group.
2. The "wisdom of men" was either being taught among them or in danger of such.
3. The church was also responsible for promoting some leaders over others.
4. They had a person guilty of open sexual immorality and nothing was being done about it.
5. They were threatening or even taking brothers before the law courts of the land.
6. They were confused over proper teachings about marriage.
7. Some were having problems with eating meat offered to idols.
8. They were questioning the teachings of Paul as being from God.
9. They were making a mockery of the Lord's Supper.
10. Some women were not respecting God's arrangement of headship.
11. They were respecter of persons—looking down on some members.
12. They were lacking greatly in having the love of God in their hearts.
13. Their worship assemblies were disorderly and confusing..
14. They were questioning the resurrection.
15. And possible other things that could be given!

Why did the church have such problems? Did they not have the "inspired" teaching of the Apostle Paul for some 18 months in their midst? Why didn't his message get through? Three reasons in particular are given by Paul for the problems:

1. They had not grown as they should have—they were babes still and carnally-minded (fleshly-minded). (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Evidence of their carnality was seen in their envy, strife, and divisions among them.
2. The church in general was guilty of playing favorites with their leaders. They were gathering around the teacher they liked best (1 Cor. 1:11-13). They were exalting men above that which they should (1 Cor. 4:6).
3. They had not grasp sufficiently what it means to love as God loves. People are generally self-centered and primarily concerned for themselves—what pleases them. God's love helps one to be other-person-centered and to do what helps the other person (1 Cor. 13:1-8; Phil. 2:1-8).

I am sure that more things could be pointed out, but these three things just jump out at you! It is so obvious why they were having so much confusion. The solution for their problems at Corinth could be easily taken care of!

RESPONSIBLE WORSHIP LEADERSHP

It should be obvious that the church needs leaders—not only in a general way, but especially in our worship assemblies. This leadership can be a help or a hindrance—depending upon the person leading or the attitude of the congregation. Corinth is a very helpful example for us today. In 1 Cor. 12-14, they were having problems over the proper use of miraculous gifts in their assembly; but, the real problem underlying the use of the gifts was the real issue. And it is because of this that we can profit by the admonitions given to them—even though we do not have miraculous gifts today. Look at the lessons we can learn from chapter 14:

1. Pursue love. (14:1). This is basic and underlying and the solution to much of their problems.

2. Desire gifts, but especially to Prophecy. (14:1-26). This whole discussion in these verses emphasize the responsibility of the one who leads to speak so that the church is edified (verses 3, 4, 9, 12, 16, 19, 24, 26). Paul contrasts the gift of tongues and prophecy. The main reason for preferring prophecy is that it can be understood, while tongues cannot (unless interpreted or translated).

3. Speak one at a time. (14:27-33). More than one person was speaking at the same time causing confusion and NO WORSHIP! Even the tongue speaker was not to use his gift unless there was an interpreter or a translator in the assembly. When he said that the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets....it was to emphasize they could wait their turn. They were too eager to get up before the assembly and speak. Their concern was not edification, but self-exaltation.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Divinely instituted worship is not designed to please the carnally-minded person, but the spiritually-minded (1 Cor. 3:1-3; Rom. 8:5-9). We should watch very carefully that we do not make our worship that which appeals to the fleshly man, but that which appeals to the spiritual man. The gift of tongues might be exciting and prophecy boring to the carnally-minded; but, God's intentions were to make use of both gifts in a way to satisfy the spiritually-minded.

Is the worship assembly boring to you? Then, are you concerned to find the answer? Is the problem with us; or, is it with improper leadership or the wrong activities? Have you noticed that sports-fans like overtime games? What about Christians, do we like overtime worship? Or, do we even like worship? We need leaders to help us understand what we are doing in worship and why we do what we do. They also need to set examples before us of a right spirit, right actions, right desires, and the right approach to worship. Praise God for such leaders among us!

