

ACCEPTABLE SPIRITUAL WORSHIP

Psalm 95:6-7 = “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.” [ESV]

ACCEPTABLE SPIRITUAL WORSHIP

John 4:23-24 = “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” [ESV]

Worship vs. Service – Closely related ideas, but are not the same.

- Worship is defined as the adoring reverence or honor and respect given to a divine being or supernatural power. In our case worship is giving God honor and praise.
- Service is giving God obedience. Service is the way we conduct our lives. Part of our service to God is our worship to Him, but all service is not worship (ref. Abraham & Isaac in Genesis 22).

Colossians 3:17 = “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” [ESV]

- The idea that everything is worship actually takes away from the concept of worship. Worship becomes common, ordinary, and routine. Worship should be a distinctive action reserved for God alone. It is not a time for us (although we do benefit). It is a time to give God the glory and honor He deserves.

There has always been a danger of a lack of spirituality and meaningful worship among Christians.

- Jesus warned his disciples of vain (purposeless, meaningless) worship.
- **Matthew 15:7-9** = “You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ““This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”” [ESV]

- Paul rebuked early Christians for their lack of spirituality.

1 Corinthians 3:1-2 = “But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready...” [ESV]

- There can be no doubt that Christians today face this danger.

- There is also a danger of trying to fill that void in the wrong ways.
 - If we do not understand what real spirituality is all about.
 - If we do not understand the real nature of worship to God.
 - If we become bored with the sameness and repetitive nature of New Testament worship.
- **Colossians 2:23** = “These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.” [ESV]

INSINCERE SPIRITUALITY & SHALLOW WORSHIP

Scribes & Pharisees were experts of phony spirituality & worship.

1. Their phylacteries and enlarged borders.

Matthew 23:2-8 = "...For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers." [ESV]

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2. Their street corner praying.

Matthew 6:5-6 = “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” [ESV]

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3. Their fasting faces.

Matthew 6:16-18 = ““And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” [ESV]

- American “Christians” are great practitioners of phony religion.
 - Bumper stickers, T-shirts, placards, and Ten Commandment plaques are good examples.
- These are supposed to convince people that we take the Bible and our religion seriously.
- It is a lot easier to rally people around a slogan or a visual symbol than to really change hearts.
- The more animated or emotional a “worshiper” becomes, the more spiritual he is supposed to be.

- “New Testament Christians” are sometimes caught up in the frenzy.
- Look for ways to appear more spiritual.
- Look for some outward display of godliness to “make our worship more meaningful.”

SCRIPTURAL SPIRITUALITY & ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

❖ Scriptural spirituality is growing in grace and knowledge.

- 2 Peter 3:17-18 = “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” [ESV]

SCRIPTURAL SPIRITUALITY & ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

❖ Scriptural spirituality is displayed by our obedience to Christ.

1. Doing good works (of obedience).

- **Matthew 5:14-16** = “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that^[b] they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” [ESV]

SCRIPTURAL SPIRITUALITY & ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

2. Living a godly life in the midst of a crooked generation.

- **Philippians 2:14-15** = “Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...” [ESV]
- Our spirituality should speak for itself without our extraordinary efforts to call attention to it. NOTE: Last two Biblical quotes say “let light shine” not “shine your light.”

SCRIPTURAL SPIRITUALITY & ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

❖ Scriptural worship is made meaningful by understanding its meaning and significance.

1. We need to understand that worship is God-centered and not me-centered.

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A) It is what God wants and what I want in worship.

- **Leviticus 10:1-2** = “Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.” [ESV]

We need to understand that worship is God-centered and not me-centered

B) It is more concerned with being meaningful to God than being meaningful to me.

- **1 Chronicles 28:9** = “And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.” [ESV]

We need to understand that worship is God-centered and not me-centered

C) It only becomes meaningful to me when I surrender every thought to God.

- **2 Corinthians 10:5** = “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ...”
[ESV]

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D) Once our thoughts are surrendered to Him, scriptural worship cannot become meaningless.

SCRIPTURAL SPIRITUALITY & ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

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2. We need to study the Bible to learn and understand all we can about our worship.

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- The proper feeling that the worshiper should have toward God may be expressed to Him through five ways, and they are all suited to man's spiritual needs. Without them he cannot build the kind of character that God wants him to have.

**A) Prayer is speaking to God – not to impress men.
(Matthew 6:5-6)**

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B) Singing is “unto God” and to teach one another — not entertainment.

- **Colossians 3:16** = “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” [ESV]

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C) Preaching is relaying God's Word – not mere performance / presentation.

- **2 Timothy 4:1-2** = “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.” [ESV]

We need to study the Bible to learn and understand all we can about our worship.

D) Giving is an expression of love and fellowship – not merely to raise money.

- **2 Corinthians 9:6-7** = “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
[ESV]

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E) The Lord's Supper is a memorial supper with thanksgiving – hard to improve on the simplicity of the way the Lord did it.

- **Matthew 26:26-28** = “Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the^[c] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” [ESV]

SCRIPTURAL SPIRITUALITY & ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

❖ Scriptural worship is not improved by “touch-feely” exercises – but by a mind centered on God.

Concluding Remarks – Take Aways

- John 4:24 told us that “those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” We must be careful of two extremes that are possible and thus wrong – spirit without truth and truth without spirit.
 - Worshipping in spirit without truth involves an emotional high that makes one happy but does it make God happy? The world tells us it is all about our feelings. God tells us it is all about Him.
 - Worshipping in truth without spirit involving doing right outward acts for the wrong reasons or with the wrong attitude. A person’s arrogance and insincerity still do not personify true worship. We must have the right attitude and be in the right spirit.

Concluding Remarks – Take Aways

- God has always desired His people to make sacrifices. Today, instead of bringing to God the bodies of dead animals as sacrifices, Christians offer our bodies as “living sacrifices.”
- **Romans 12:1** = “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” [ESV]

Concluding Remarks – Take Aways

- Christians offer the parts of our bodies as “instruments of righteousness.”
- **Romans 6:12-13** = “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.” [ESV]
- This idea of sacrifice has so much to do with our worship together as Christ’s church – God’s family.

Concluding Remarks – Take Aways

- Let us always give God our best.
- Let us all become more spiritual by improving our knowledge of and obedience of God's word.
- Let us spend more time bringing our thoughts into obedience to God so that our worship will truly be meaningful.