

Man-Centered Worship

The practice of worship in Christian churches is drifting toward the "market church" philosophy and lively contemporary flavor from more traditional forms. Instead of producing biblical, exegetical, and sound doctrinal foundations for the practice of worship, the Christian churches had broken loose from its historical moorings. The crisis facing worship is just one of the many indications of how cultural modernization engulfed the minds of both the believers and unbelievers. Most of the so-called Christian worship are human reinvention to satiate the restless whims of an unredeemed world.

God must be the focus of worship. We worship God for His sake, not for our own, but when a person takes the position of prominence away from God, the biblical pattern of genuine worship has been violated. Twenty years ago, performance-oriented worship was the trend, where the music ministers performed like entertainers bringing the congregation to a mood of worship. Today, the trend is participant-oriented worship, where the congregation is made to feel like they have worshiped and reached the spiritual dimension.

Participant-oriented worship is more dangerous because those in the crowd are made to believe that they are spiritual and has experienced the presence of God. Majority of Christians go through the motion of worship in full ignorance. They did not know what they worshiped (John 4:22). True worshipers worship in truth; they worship with full knowledge of Bible doctrine. They know who and what God is, what God expects of them, how they stand before God, and how He expects to be worshiped by men based on the Word of God.

Biblical doctrine is the only basis of genuine Christian worship and it is the most essential part of every worship experience. Worship demands that we emphasize the nature of God and His works. No worship is genuine without clear knowledge of Divine essence.

Every worshiper must focus his soul in God alone during worship. No amount of sincerity and devotion can overcome the lack of true knowledge in worship. Your inability to concentrate on God during your worship demonstrate the lack of Bible doctrine in your soul. Christian must worship in his soul, not with his lips or not just with his brain.

The ancient Israel during the time of Joshua had the right doctrine, they had the right understanding but they reduced their religion to a complicated scheme of outward rituals apart from the conviction of the Holy Spirit in their souls. True worship requires the three vital elements of worship: salvation, Spirit-filled (spirituality) and Scripture. Only the redeemed soul can worship God, although the unbeliever and carnal believer can practice worship sincerely. They are sincere and devoted but their worship is futile. Worship is adequate only when done with the right Bible doctrine in the soul and with the proper status of the soul (spiritual).

Since the focus of worship is God (through understanding of proper biblical doctrine) the primary attitude in worship must be in reverence. The verb revere as translated from both the Old and New Testament means to "to bow down" or to "prostrate oneself" from where we derived the verb "to worship". To bow down before royalty is the ultimate demonstration of humility. In effect, it says that the worshiper does not wish to be seen, but the one worshiped must be seen by all. Secondly, bowing down is also a demonstration of submission. The bowing worshiper is ready to hear and obey anything the sovereign might ask. Worshipers today are very proud and irreverent.

We have lost our sense of reverence toward God that we consider ourselves too good to submit before the King of kings. There is nothing wrong with enthusiasm in worship, but enthusiasm alone is no substitute for reverent joy. Reverence and inner joy wonderfully coexists in worship.

Maximum Bible doctrine in the soul produces genuine inner happiness that comes only through maximum knowledge of who and what God is.

Some pastors are under great pressure to change their worship format to please their members, leaders, supporters or everybody. It is futile to try pleasing everybody around you. In almost every case, what people clamor for is not what is right or biblical. You might need to change your worship in order to make it God-centered and to allow the people to worship in "spirit and in truth." Let the Word of God change you, not the public clamoring and demands.

PRINCIPLES RELATED TO TRUE WORSHIP

True worship is a priestly function of the believer in the privacy of his own soul.

Worship always involves giving back to God something we possess from him.

We can give honor to the Lord in this life, but only when we have acquired honor, virtue, integrity from God. We can give God thanksgiving only if we have gratitude to give. Any believer who does not understand through knowledge of Bible doctrine what God has done for him cannot be grateful to God.

For ignorant believer (without Bible doctrine) in the soul, true worship is impossible.

Worship by believers apart from Spirit-filled and Scripture becomes religion, which is the enemy of Christianity.

Worship by unbelievers is nothing but a cult.

Any practice of worship without Bible doctrine in the soul results to self righteous arrogance.

Any overt activities connected with worship must be performed unto the Lord, not to please men.

The most important aspect of worship is the perception of Bible doctrine.

All other expressions of worship is possible only if we are redeeming the time daily through systematic and progressive intake of Bible doctrine (Eph. 5:16).

Concentration in learning the Word of God is the highest form of worship directed toward God (1 Tim. 4:12, 15-16).

At any given act of worship, where men are elevated above the Word of God in the church scale of values, that worship is misdirected toward men and therefore, rejected by God and nothing but a waste of time and energy.

The virtues of worship are nullified and the worshipers are forced in subjective reality whenever a human being becomes the center of the worship.

We can only worship God based on WHO AND WHAT HE IS, through what He has done on the cross to make us justified before God, according to how He expects to be worshiped by men.

What the unbeliever and carnal believer can do, practice, produce cannot be of the Christianity or of the Christian way of life.

Genuine worship is not left to the capriciousness, innovation or creativity of men. The perfect and holy God clearly revealed in His work the perfect way to worship Him. We cannot design our own style and manner of worship.

Creativity and innovation in worship is acceptable only when it is within the perimeter of doctrinal truth.

Sincerity and devotion cannot take the place of strong doctrinal knowledge. Worship is adequate only when done with the Bible doctrine in the soul.

No worship is acceptable when done under scriptural ignorance.

No changes in worship are right when pressured by the public clamoring and demands.

A believer misdirects and distorts worship when he assumes that he is pleasing to God by being good and honorable.

The expressions of worship:

- Assembly of believers (Heb. 10:25)
- Singing hymns (Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16)
- Prayer (Eph. 6:18, 1 Thess. 5:17)
- Grace Giving (2 Cor. 9:27)
- And others expression must be done under the filling of the Holy Spirit.

There is no true worship without the three elements of worship:

- Salvation of the worshiper (by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone)
- Spirituality or Spirit-filled life of the worshiper
- Scripture stored in the soul of the worshiper (that is Bible doctrine resident, functional and operational in the soul).

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