



followers of Jesus seeking to glorify God

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July 20 Devotional (for Sunday July 26)

Worship Series - 3 "Worship God as Priority #1"

The Scriptures are full of worship. Worship is commanded. Worship is also to be done in reverence and humility. (Lev. 10:3, Ps. 5:7, 29:2, 89:7, Ecc. 5:1, and Hab. 2:20. Also in John 4 when Jesus is speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well he explains to her that, "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. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

What does this mean? How do we worship in spirit and truth? How do I assess my life to know if I am? How can I if I am not? Steven J. Cole writes a helpful post on Bible.org.

Years ago when the billionaire Howard Hughes died, his company's public relations director asked the casinos in Las Vegas, where Hughes owned multiple casinos, to show him respect by giving him a minute of silence. For an uncomfortable sixty seconds, the casinos fell eerily silent. Then a pit boss looked at his watch, leaned forward, and whispered, "Okay, roll the dice. He's had his minute." (From the book, *Howard Hughes: The Hidden Years*, cited in "Our Daily Bread," 11/77.)

I wonder if sometimes we treat God as those gamblers in Las Vegas treated Howard Hughes. We interrupt our busy schedules once a week, rush into church, give God "His hour," and then forget about Him and get back to what we'd rather be doing.

John MacArthur was certainly correct to title his book on worship, *The Ultimate Priority* [Moody Press, 1983]. God created us for the ultimate priority of worshipping Him. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism puts it, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Or, as John Piper modifies it, our chief end is "to glorify God *by* enjoying Him forever" (*Desiring God* [Multnomah Books], 1996 edition, p. 15).

It's no accident that the longest book in the Bible, Psalms, is all about praising and worshipping God. When we get to the end of the Bible, we see the saints and angels in heaven falling on their faces and worshipping God (Rev. 14:7, 15:4, 19:10). And in Revelation 22 when John is overwhelmed by what he has heard and seen and falls down to worship at the feet of the one who had shown him the immediate response was, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!" (v. 9)

This is not only future but present that all who know God are to worship him with our whole lives and not worship anything else.

Here are a few definitions of worship:

John MacArthur: "Worship is our innermost being responding with praise for all that God is, through our attitudes, actions, thoughts, and words, based on the truth of God as He has revealed Himself" (*The Ultimate Priority* [Moody Press], p. 127). Or, he gives a simpler definition: "Worship is all that we are, reacting rightly to all that He is" (*ibid.*, p. 147).

William Temple: "To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, and to devote the will to the purpose of God" (cited in MacArthur, *ibid.*, p. 147).

My definition is not so eloquent: Worship is an inner attitude and feeling of awe, reverence, gratitude, and love toward God resulting from a realization of who He is and who we are.

Also, John MacArthur gives this helpful clarification (on gty.org, "Messiah: The Living Water," part 2): "Worship, by the way, is not music. Worship is loving God. Worship is honoring God. Worship is knowing God for who He is, adoring Him, obeying Him, proclaiming Him as a way of life. Music is one way we express that adoration." As Paul states (1 Cor. 10:31), "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Thus all of life is to be oriented "God-ward," permeated with a sense of His majesty and glory.

Jesus' words about worship to this unnamed Samaritan woman occur in the context of His witness to bring this woman to saving faith. We might not think that witnessing is the right context to talk about the priority of worship. But Jesus takes her implicit question (4:20) about whether Samaritan worship or Jewish worship is correct and uses it to zero in on the aim of the gospel: to turn sinners into true worshipers of God. We learn:

Since God is seeking true worshipers who worship Him in spirit and truth, we should make it our priority to become such worshipers.

Jesus tells this woman that a significant transition is about to take place (4:23), "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth." Jesus' presence began this change from the old covenant to the new. Under the old way of worship, place was significant: all Jewish males had to appear before God in Jerusalem for the three annual feasts (Deut. 16:16). But in the new way which Jesus inaugurated, He is the new temple (John 2:19-21). Believers are being built into a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:21; 1 Pet. 2:5). Thus where we gather to worship is secondary. **How and whom we worship is primary.**

Take some time to evaluate your current priorities. What are some influences that choke out worship in your life? How should you deal with them? Complete this sentence: If truly worshiping God is my priority, my daily schedule must change by

Ask God to answer these questions with you. What else does he seem to be saying to you? Are other scriptures coming to mind? Look them up. Write them down. Ponder and meditate on them. Take time to reprioritize now.

In fact maybe it would be good to assess more of life. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. Our spiritual health is not unconnected from the rest of us. Worship affects all of life. Worship is all of life, at least potentially. And all of life affects our worship of God.

Consider these questions prayerfully.

On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is terrible, unhealthy, barely keeping it together and 5 is soaring, two thumbs up and a delight, how do you rate your current health in these areas?:

Spiritual	1	2	3	4	5
Physical	1	2	3	4	5
Emotional	1	2	3	4	5
Intellectual	1	2	3	4	5
Financial	1	2	3	4	5
Relational	1	2	3	4	5

In fact it may be valuable to evaluate your relationships individually.

If you are married, where would you rate you marriage relationship right now? What needs to change to grow and strengthen this foundational human relationship?

How about with parents, children, siblings? What would move these in a healthy direction?

Consider your relationship with neighbors and in this world. Do you live with a sense of mission and calling? Is your job, career, education controlling you in some ways or are you able to work hard in these for the glory of God? Are they each an avenue for worship?

We can evaluate several areas of life at a time but it is unwise to try to change in more than 1 or 2 at a time. In collaboration with God choose one area to start to work on together with him. Share this with someone else. What needs to change? What are your challenges to make real adjustments in this? How can another person support you (share your burden as well as encourage you toward greater health and wholeness)?

We are all on journey. Together let's ensure we are following Jesus and bring glory to God more and more in response to who he is and all he has and is doing. Let's make worship our #1 priority.

Pastor Gary