

# “When Worship is Difficult!”

Job 1:20-22; 2:10

**Intro.** – During the centuries of Roman persecution, Christians fled to the catacombs. There are almost six hundred miles of these underground cave like passage ways where generations of Christians secretly retreated to worship together. Archaeologists estimate somewhere from one to four million Christians were buried there. It was over a basic principle of Christianity that resulted in these deaths. Rather than offer worship to Caesar (“Caesar is Lord...”), they chose to worship Christ alone. It was all over an issue of *whom* they would worship not *how*. Needless to say this made for difficult worship times together and individually...

Do you ever find your worship offered to God difficult? Let’s be honest, there are moments we all find it hard to worship the Lord. Why? Various reasons. There are people sitting beside you right now with circumstances of which you are not aware. Maybe it’s a husband and wife who had a shouting match on their way here... Maybe someone is physically exhausted because they are caring for a loved one... Maybe someone else this past week learned they’re going to be laid off from work... Maybe it’s a person who is barely hanging on financially and emotionally... Maybe it’s a person who is in a great deal of physical pain... Maybe it’s a young person wrestling with not being accepted by their peers at school... Tough situations in this life make it difficult to properly worship:

*Purpose: to identify three hindrances that makes worship difficult*

## I WORLDLY HINDRANCES

- life often throws curves making worship difficult. It’s hard to praise, concentrate, and give thanks when life is full of the world’s “stuff.” And yet, God’s Word tells us to worship Him!
- life of Job will help you and me understand how to worship in difficult circumstances:

### A. Job the Man

1. Very wealthy: 7 sons, 3 daughters, 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 1,000 oxen, 500 donkeys
2. Described as “*the greatest among all the people of the East.*” --blameless, upright, feared God and shunned evil – God was pleased with Job’s life.
3. Satan accused Job of being devout to God only because God had blessed him so... Lord allowed Satan to do whatever he wanted with Job’s material possessions.
  - a. it’s a surreal scene in 1:13 – first the oxen stolen by the Sabeans, then the sheep by lightning, then camels by the Chaldeans – all within a few moments of each other = Job lost all wealth!
  - b. vv 18-19 “*While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, ‘Your sons and daughters were feasting & drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house, when suddenly a mighty windswept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!’*”
  - c. what would one expect Job to do upon hearing this news? (vv 20-21) “*At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in **worship** and said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.’*” = That’s worship in tough situations!
4. Things got worse for Job – Satan allowed to take health away = covered head to foot in boils...
  - a. wife turned on him: 2:9-10 “*His wife said to him, ‘Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!’ He replied, ‘You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?’ In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.*”
  - b. 17:6 “*God has made me a byword to everyone, a man in whose face people spit.*”
5. Job’s response to all of this hurt is to **worship** God and it does not change throughout book. O, Job wonders/wrestles with the tough questions life can serve, but he never turns on God.

How did Job make this happen when life spit in his face? How did Job worship in difficult times?

### B. Job the Worshipper

1. He kept “things” in perspective:
  - a. Job recognized everything he had was from God... it was on loan and if Lord saw fit to take it back; this was the Lord’s right...
  - b. Job realized worship doesn’t depend upon outside circumstances – happens in spite of them...

James 4:10 “...*humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up.*”

2. He recognized God’s awesomeness
  - a. Job often delved into matters deeper than he could understand/comprehend (42:1-6)
  - b. Job humbled himself before the Lord – he kept a living realization of Who God is and how seemingly insignificant man is by comparison. All of this moved Job to *worship Him!*
3. He looked beyond this life
  - a. though the book of Job filled with questions and a dismal assessment of his own life, Job still had some bright spots all of which shows us what kept him afloat.
  - b. 19:25-27 “*I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes – I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*”
4. He worshipped regardless how he felt
  - a. often *feeling* is a result of *doing* -- i.e. to get to “feeling like it,” we need to “engage in it!”
  - b. point – whatever your circumstances consider Job and how he worshipped when it was tough!

## II SPIRITUAL HINDRANCES

- worship always takes spiritual preparation:

### A. Failure to Repent and Confess

1. Turning back to God is something we all need to do daily
2. Psalm 32:1-5 where HS inspired David writes, “...*Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered... I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.’...*”

### B. Failure to Forgive

1. How can we meditate on/rejoice in God’s forgiveness if we refuse to do the same to others?
2. Ephesians 4:32 “*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ forgave you.*”

### C. Failure to Control Anger

1. Unholy anger is never conducive to worship of God
2. James 1:19-20 “...*everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.*”

There are other *spiritual* hindrances, but you get the idea. When they are present, worship is hard.

## III PERSONAL HINDRANCES

- in specific, personal tastes or preferences being violated – realize this is touchy, but needs attention:

### A. Examples Vocalized

1. “Music is too old... too new... Why don’t we sing peppier music?... Why don’t we sing more reverent music?... I don’t like those drums... Where are the drums today?... I wish the organ would play more... Why don’t we stop using instruments?... Why do we sing off a screen?... Why did the Lord’s Supper come after the sermon?... Why is it so light in here?... Why is it so dark in here?... The sound is too loud... I can’t hear a thing... We’ve never done it that way before...”
2. Things aren’t always done in a way that suit our personal tastes... this makes it a challenge to worship doesn’t it? And Yet God’s Word tells you and me to do what? Worship HIM!

### B. Biblical Example of This

1. David and Michal were husband/wife – David tried to return Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem after Philistines had capture it. Not doing it God’s way, Uzzah ended up dead... Finally, David made arrangements to bring it back home. This time doing it God’s way.
2. 2 Samuel 6:12-15 “*Now King David was told, ‘The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God.’ So David went down and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the city of David with rejoicing... David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might, while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.*”
  - it must have been quite a time of worship -- there were trumpets, shouting, crowd, & dancing!

3. Michal had a narrow appreciation for the importance of the day – **resented the way David chose to worship!** 2 Samuel 6:16-20 *“As the ark of the Lord was entering the city of David, Michal, daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart... When David returned home to bless his household, Michal, daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, ‘How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!’”*
4. David responds (6:21-22) *“David said to Michal, ‘It was before the Lord, Who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the Lord’s people Israel – I will celebrate before the Lord. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor.’”*
5. Was David right? Had Michal spoken out of line? V 23 confirms that she was in the wrong. What had she done? She had looked upon the way another person expressed worship, found it not her way and criticized him for it... Try to use this passage to build a case for dancing and you’ve missed the whole point. The point: David’s worship was for the Lord, not Michal or anyone else!
6. Illus. – Grady Nutt (preacher & humorist) told of the time growing a beard in ministry. 2 weeks into it he had a lady of church put her finger in his face saying, “I don’t like beards.” He looked at her and said, “Then don’t grow one!” Hard to worship when things in worship time don’t suit us...

### C. Personal Response

1. Don’t put weight on personal tastes and opinions when it comes to corporate worship together:
  - a. how many people does it take to have two different opinions? One, because opinions change. Tastes change too. How many of you who eat broccoli today liked it as a kid?
  - b. we’re not a body/family because we have the same tastes – my personal tastes will vary from everyone’s here. Doesn’t matter because there are far more important matters than my or your tastes = the souls of lost people for one!
2. Ask the right questions when it comes to worship time
  - a. i.e. emphasize the right things: 1) Is it true? 2) Does it honor God? 3) Is God pleased?
  - b. Illus. – lot of folk like hymns of Church. I’m one of them. Want younger people to grow up with great appreciation for great hymns of the Church. What makes them “great”? Is it because they’re a nostalgic experience for me bringing back good memories of my younger years? Don’t mistake that for worship! What makes the great hymns great is not their age or their style. It’s their content. Same reason some of the new, contemporary songs are great – their content is THE WORD OF GOD!

When it comes to personal tastes in worship, let’s be sure to judge by right standards: Is it true? Does it honor God? Is God pleased? After all, worship is all about Him NOT about us!!

### Conclusion/Application:

- 1) **Learn to Worship Privately** – Bible full of examples those who did not limit their worship to corporate times alone. Daniel took a stand for the Lord because of his commitment to private worship. Jesus made private time with the Father a priority. He instructed us to do the same.
- 2) **Prevent Opinions/Tastes from Interfering with Worship to God** – Satan is delighted when we major in minors and minor in majors. Anything that will take our minds off where they ought to be is fine with him. We must be undeterred. We must focus on worship when we are together for that purpose!
- 3) **Prepare for Corporate Worship** – we prepare for all sorts of activities... Why not do the same and more for our worship time together? Saturday evening time to prepare... Don’t let Sunday be a zoo!
- 4) **Identify What’s Keeping You from Worship** – this is a personal matter. No two people are alike. Identify area(s) that are hindering your true worship. If not conscious there is a need, you won’t deal with it!
- 5) **Seek the Lord’s Wisdom and Strength** – too much for you/me to do on our own. We really need the Lord’s wisdom and strength in this matter!

Can’t give an “EASY BUTTON” for this. What hinders you this morning from worshipping God? More importantly what hinders you from accepting grace and making Christ the Lord/Savior of your life? Something is preventing you from making that decision. Think about this: whatever it is, it’s not from God... Remember Job worshipped the Lord in the most difficult times. You and I must learn from his example!