

“Making Worship Authentic!”

Exodus 32:30-35

Intro. – Please fill in the following two blanks: 1) “Worship is ...; 2) I know I have worshipped when...

It happened in October of 1977 in the town of Lake Arthur, New Mexico. Maria Rubio was rolling up a burrito for her husband Eduardo’s breakfast, when she noticed a thumb-sized configuration of skillet burns on the tortilla that resembled the face of Jesus. Excited, she showed it to her husband and neighbors. They all agreed that there was a face etched on the tortilla and that it looked like Jesus. So, Maria went to her priest to have the tortilla blessed. She testified that the tortilla had changed her life, and her husband agreed that she had been a more peaceful, happy, submissive wife since the tortilla had arrived. The priest, not accustomed to blessing tortillas, was somewhat reluctant but agreed to do it. Maria then took the tortilla home, put it in a glass case with piles of cotton to make it look like it was floating on clouds. This “altar/shrine” was then opened to the public. By 1979, 35,000 people had come to see the “Shrine of the Holy Tortilla.” All agreed the face in the burn marks on the tortilla was the face of Jesus, except for one reporter who said he thought it looked like former heavyweight boxing champion, Leon Spinks...

Clearly, we live in a world that is clueless about the matter of genuine worship to God. We now have “The Lite Church”...And when we start to consider how misunderstood it has been by most, we can more humbly accept the fact we ourselves have much to learn concerning the matter of worship to God.

Our text takes us to a time in history when the worship of God should have been authentic and genuine; however, the exact opposite was true. Moses returns from Mt. Sinai. After being in the very presence of God, Moses finds Aaron and the children of Israel worshipping a golden calf...

Purpose: to better understand how to make our worship to God authentic

I What Worship is NOT...

A. Not a Service on Sunday

1. In short, it is not an isolated act for a limited time and space.
2. We all make the mistake of *compartmentalizing* our lives.
 - a. tend to not let certain areas of our life be affected by what we think or do in other areas – we act one way in one situation, and entirely different in another.
 - b. specifically – the idea that your *religious convictions* ought to be kept out of your political attitudes, your workplace and school...
 - c. religious convictions that do not have bearing on these matters are not *convictions* at all; instead, they are *compartmentalized conveniences* that people cling to when its comfortable or easy.
3. Point: sadly, we all struggle with the temptation to limit our Christian lives to the time and place we “worship.” We section off that part of living and make it happen only then and there.
 - a. explains the danger in referring to what we do here each week as just “worship” = must not compartmentalize our lives and think worship is limited to this building on Sunday...
 - b. Colossians 3:17 “*Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*”

Worship is NOT just a service on Sunday!

B. Not a Ritua

1. We all keep *routines* = we get up same time each day, take shower, brush teeth, shave etc. = even be *religious* in the keeping of these routines... e.g. I religiously change oil in car/truck/tractor...
2. When you come here each week, are you worshipping, or engaging in a ritual/routine? Are you here to worship the Almighty God, or here to keep an established pattern or habit?
3. Illus. – know of church use to quote *The Lord’s Prayer* as congregation each Sunday. One Sunday, made a change and didn’t use it. That day, couples went home discussing whether they’d spoken it or not... It had become an empty ritual.
4. Hosea 6:6 “*For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings.*”

5. Micah 6:6-8 “*With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*”

Worship is not thoughtless/ritual...

C. Not Entertainment

1. Years ago, Jesse Tomlinson was circuit preacher in churches of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. He simply *had* to get the attention of the people, so he used a trick on the last nights. He'd get a boy from congregation. Give him a dove and put it in his coat, have him climb up into the rafters and hide. At a certain point in the meeting, Jesse would say, “Holy Ghost, come down.” At this point the boy was suppose to release the dove and the people would go nuts... Worked like a charm except in Yazoo City, MS. Everything was in place. Jesse called out, “Holy Ghost, come down!” but nothing happened. “It’s now, Holy Ghost. Come down!” Little Jimmy peeked out from the rafters with big eyes and said, “Preacher, I have a cat and the cat’s done ate Holy Ghost; should I send the cat down?”
2. Live in a time where people expect “entertainment, being indulged and pampered.”
3. Pressure is there to compete with the entertainment industry – to have to “wow” the people with worship times in order to retain their attention and to amuse with light-hearted, feel-good sermons.
4. Some preachers have given into this pressure and what has resulted is social gatherings not church
5. If what has brought you here this morning is a curiosity for entertainment or a “feel goodness” under the sanctified title of “church”... you really haven’t come to worship!
6. Psalms don’t say, “Come, let us worship and be entertained!” or “How entertaining it is to hear praises sung to God!”

Worship is not about entertaining you or me...

D. Not Emotional High

1. “So much of our activity is nothing more than a cheap anesthetic to deaden the pain of an empty life.” – I fear much of today called “worship” nothing more than making self feel good or better...
2. Worship must always result *from* the heart. It must come *from* a right understanding/attitude.
3. It’s primary function is NOT to *affect* the way we **feel** (such is an outgrowth and will be a result) but such must never become the *goal* of our worship to God!
4. Worship is far more than a human emotion sought after for selfish reasons.

Summary: to fully understand worship, we need to examine our motives/ourselves. Is worship a service confined to Sunday? Is it a ritual, a habit we mechanically perform? Is it but another form of entertainment and socializing? Is it an emotional high that we use to escape an otherwise empty life? When we make sure these and other misconceptions aren’t clouding our thoughts, we can forge ahead into what authentic worship is.

II What Worship IS...

- many have attempted to define in a few words what “worship” is. Let me share 3 I found to be solid:
- 1) “The reply of the creature to the Creator. It is the response of the beloved to the Lover. It is the reaction of the ransomed to the Redeemer. Worship is an experience of deliberate focusing on God for the purpose of encountering Him.”
 - 2) “Ordinarily it is thought that worship consists of the mechanical acts of singing, praying, giving, expounding God’s Word and taking the Lord’s Supper. But these external performances are not worship; rather, they are the outward expressions of it. Worship... is an attitude of the soul.”
 - 3) “Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose – and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable....”

A. A Response to God

1. Worship is a VERB and not just a title to a book!... – i.e. a deliberate act, not something that happens to you like catching a cold or winning the lottery.
2. Psalm 95:6 *“Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker!”*
3. Noteworthy: one of the most common words in the NT for “worship” means also “to serve” – Hebrews 12:28 *“Therefore, since we are receiving the kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.”*
 - a. Illus. – say it’s your birthday and your family has thrown you a party. They invite your friends and everyone gathers together. They all bring presents but none of them are for you. They sing songs, but to each other, not to you. The cake is cut, but you don’t get the first piece – fact is you don’t get a piece... (e.g. Christmas on Sunday). Such is how worship is received by God when people gather to receive something, to be served rather than to give.
 - b. our words often betray us when we say, “I did or didn’t get much out of the service today...”
4. Worship is *giving*, not getting. Worship is what you bring/offer, not what you receive/take away. Worship is a response to God, a response for Who He is and What He has done!

B. A Corporate Expression to God

1. Dan Dozier – “If the Church does not worship, it does not live!” = worship time together is a vital part of our worship life separately...
2. Jesus said that in the act of remembering Him about His Table “we proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes again.” I.e. what we do as a group together here today is a testimony as to the worth of our God to each other and those about us.
3. 1 Peter 2:5 *“You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”*

C. A Way of Life Before God

1. Worship is a lifelong response to God.
2. Romans 12:1 *“Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.”*
3. Even in our recreation we ought to be “living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God”...
4. Can’t just be limited to what we do in this place, at this time... Authentic worship must go beyond these doors to Jerusalem, Judea and to the uttermost parts of the earth!

Conclusion: But for the Grace of God where would you and I be today? Worship then is: 1) A Response to God.... His grace and mercy... 2) A Corporate Expression to God... together we give our full worth to Him... 3) A Way of Life Before God... living grace responsive lives...

Remember these posters from WW II?... Likewise and more, we cannot be “careless” in our worship to God...

Ask yourself again, “Have I worshipped right here, right now? Begin a life of worship today! Worship God with all of your life! Worship life *in Christ!*!”