



True Worship

by

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John 4:24 – “...must worship Him in spirit and in truth” Let’s consider this phrase and its meaning. To understand the concept of worshipping God in spirit and in truth we need to understand the meaning of each of the words that make up the phrase. What is worship, spirit and truth?

The world is full of ideas of what it means to worship God. We are told that every religion is as good as another and is a noble attempt to worship God. Islam, Judaism and Christianity, we are told, all worship the same God and their doctrines are equally affective in bringing man to God and His blessing.

Everyone has his or her idea of what it means to be spiritual. George Harrison is described as having been the “spiritual” Beetle. The reason is because he talked more about the purpose of life rather than the material and physical things of life. He looked for the understanding of the purpose of life in the mystical religions of the east.

I was recently told by an individual, that I believe to be a Christian, that they were a homosexual and that God had made them that way and that this individual considered themselves a “spiritual” person that was close to God and heard from Him directly.

Concerning truth, we are told today that there is no absolute truth. What’s true for one person is not necessarily true for another. Anyone can declare anything to be true and right. Since there is no accepted, clear, unchanging standard for truth, no one is allowed to question its validity. To challenge what one declares to be true is to be labeled as intolerant, unloving and close-minded. Unless of course you are challenging the truth of the Gospel and then you are considered enlightened and a defender of human rights.

We are going to use the Bible as our reference

source to understand these words and the concepts they represent. For the Christian, the Bible should always be the first and final source for understanding the questions of life, though sadly, for many it is not.

Of the non-Christian, I would ask you to consider the facts concerning the Bible. Consider the accuracy of its prophecies. Consider the accuracy of its insight into the plight of mankind. Consider its consistent message from Genesis to Revelation of God's plan of redemption. Consider the historical facts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His resurrection.

The world laughs and scorns at the Gospel of Jesus Christ as foolishness, but if you claim to acknowledge the Bible as God's Word, you must say what God says about worship, spirit and truth.

Worship – the Greek word for worship is a compound word. The first word means “near.” Now you would think the second word would mean temple, incense or altar or something associated with piety, but the second word means “dog.” One definition is to “come near and to kiss or lick like a dog licking his master's hand.” The thought is to fall prostrate and to kiss the hand of one worthy of homage.

Worship is first and foremost a humility of heart. We are nothing. God is our Master and Owner. We are as dependent on Him as a dog is on his master. A domesticated dog can survive for some time without a loving master, but it is merely an existence. To thrive and be healthy, he needs his Master. Worship is a desire to draw near to Him, acknowledge Him and enjoy His presence.

Example – This definition reminded me of a dog my girls once had. I've never been one to be affectionate with animals. I've never been cruel to them, but I pretty much have just ignored them. Yet, it's interesting, every dog that the girls ever had instinctively recognized me and

acknowledged me as the Alpha male of the family. They never challenged my authority and they actively sought my approval. It's as if they knew that I had the final word on whether they would stay or go.

This one dog had the habit, whenever I was sitting on the deck, to slowly begin to approach me. Sometimes she'd come a little ways and lay down and look at me for a while with her sad brown eyes and then she would come a little closer. Finally, she would come along side and literally position her head under my hand that was hanging over the edge of the arm of the chair. She would then lift her head till my hand was resting on her head.

She would stay like that until I did one of two things. I would either tell her to go away, which she would then do or in my weaker moments, when I was sure the girls were not watching, I would begin to scratch her head. The moment I showed any sign of acceptance, she jumped into my lap and started licking my face. In the most basic sense of the word, she worshipped me.

We are to approach God with such humility, awe, acknowledgement and desire to please. We are to desire to draw close to Him and enjoy His approving love and affection. This view of worship is completely opposed to the popular, seeker friendly approach to worship that so many Churches have adopted today to draw people into the Church. The seeker friendly worship demands God to accept us as we are. This mentality leads to the attitude that God exists to please and serve us rather than the other way around.

Many claim to be atheists who do not believe that such a Supreme being even exists. Others claim to be agnostic, which is an attempt to accept the presence of a God, but without any duty to acknowledge or worship Him.

Many others feel their need to worship God. Almost every religion acknowledges that there is one or

more supreme beings on whom we are dependent and need to acknowledge and give homage for our existence and sustenance.

The Bible declares there is a God and that there is only One God, who is worthy of our worship. *Isaiah 44:6* – The rest of the chapter is a satirical observation of the foolishness and vanity of worshipping any other god. Cut down a tree – with part of the wood – bake, cook, warm – with the remainder carve an idol and cry save me. The wood couldn't save itself from the fire, how is it going to save you?

To attempt to worship anyone or anything else is just as foolish and vain. Either the God of Israel is God and what He declares about other gods is true or He is a liar and the figment of someone's imagination. Israel herself is one of the greatest evidences of the reality of her God. Who but God can declare the end from the beginning and then bring it to pass?

Acts 17:24 – 31 – He is worthy of our approaching Him in humility and acknowledgement of our absolute dependence on Him. What's more He requires it and will judge those who do not do so. The fact that some deny He exists doesn't change the fact of His existence or of His righteousness in judging those who will not worship Him in spirit and in truth.

He does not accept worship of "a" deity as worship of Himself. He demands that we worship Him as the One True God – *Isaiah 42:8 - Jehovah*

In our opening text, we find that this God is looking for, desirous and inviting worshipers. He invites us to enjoy His favor and approval, but the only worship that He accepts is worship in spirit and in truth.

To be able to worship the One True God, we need to be able to understand Who He is and what He desires in us and for us. That brings us to the need of spiritual worship. God is Spirit. The only way to know Him is

through the spirit.

Spirit – Thayer’s – “the vital principal by which the body is animated.” “the power by which the human being feels, thinks and decides.” The spirit of man is the part of us that is able to understand and communicate with God. The only problem is, that because of sin, man is spiritually dead - *Ephesians 4:17 - 19* – our understanding of God and His will has been blinded by our disobedience and rebellion.

Worship is not mere external ceremonies. It is an understanding of God and His ways. Many attempt to worship God with blind worship, doing what is right in their own corrupted, carnal thinking. They decide, “I think this thing or action is pleasing to God and will bring His blessing.” - *Colossians 2:20b - 23*- Paul calls this “will worship,” which is self-imposed religion. The result is carnal worship that indulges the lust of the fallen nature instead of spiritual worship based on an accurate understanding of God and His will.

The only remedy for those who are spiritually dead toward God is to be given new life, to be born again. *Ephesians 2:1 - 7* – that is exactly what God offers lost humanity. He offers the opportunity to know Him and His will and to worship Him for Who He is. He is seeking and inviting such worshippers, but if it is going to be truly spiritual worship, it must be according to truth.

Truth – Our worship of God must be according to what God declares to be true and right. It cannot be according to the traditions of carnal man. It cannot be according to man’s imagination about who God is and how He is to be approached.

Many today are swallowing the lie that it doesn’t matter how you worship God or even which God you worship. The God of the Bible declares certain things to be true and right and rejects all worship that is not in accordance with His truth. *I Timothy 2:3 - 7* – The grace

and love of God does not mean that He accepts any and all sincere worship or approach to Himself, but that He desires all men to be saved by the acceptance of His revealed truth found in His Son Jesus Christ.

John 14:6 – now either this statement is true to the exclusion of all other theories and ideas or it is a lie. If it is the truth, how important is our message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:15 – 17 – We need a renewed zeal for the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As the world grows darker, as Christendom becomes more corrupt, we need to stand for the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and proclaim the message of salvation in Jesus name without compromise. There is no other name under heaven whereby men must be saved.

God is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth and has made it possible for whosoever will by providing us His Son to die for our sins that we might receive His life. He offers us spiritual and eternal life and the revelation of the truth of Himself and His eternal plan for us through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

True worship will manifest itself in many different ways, but it begins and ends with Jesus Christ.

Revelation 4:8 – 11 – those who will obtain to the highest place in glory, will be those who have taken the fullest advantage of the opportunity to worship God in spirit and in truth while in this life.

The phrase “in truth” also has the meaning of “worshipping Him in reality.” God hates hypocrisy. He hates a pretended worship. **Isaiah 29:13 – 15** To live contrary to revealed truth and pretend to draw near to God in worship is to live a lie.

The following are several ways in which true worship will manifest itself in the lives of the believer who worships in spirit and in truth.

Private – **Hebrews 13:15** – praise and thanks. **I**

Peter 5:6, 7 – prayer

Public – **Psalm 34:1 – 10** – let us exalt the name of the Lord together. **Psalm 107:31, 32** – in the assembly.

Colossians 3:16, 17 – admonishing one another.

Lifestyle - **Romans 12:1, 2** – a life that is governed by His revealed will is our reasonable and acceptable worship.