



First Things First Week 1: Worship

September 10, 2023

What is the number one priority of the people of God?

Matthew 22:37-38 — “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment.”

There is nothing more important than loving God. What does that look like for us?

Matthew 15:8-9 — “This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me...”

To do something with your heart is more than outward action. Worship is an affair of the heart. There is no true worship where the heart is far from God.

Ephesians 1:17-18 — “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened...”

Paul is praying for a revelation for the Ephesians, that they would see the Lord.

Jesus confirms the importance of feelings in worship.

John 4:23-24 — “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

The two words, *spirit* and *truth*, correspond to the *how* and *whom* of worship. Worshiping in **spirit** is the opposite of worshiping in merely external ways. It is the opposite of empty formalism and traditionalism. Worshiping in **truth** is the opposite of worship based on an inadequate view of God. It involves worshiping in the ways that God has prescribed.

Worship must have right thinking, right feeling, and right actions.

Psalms 95:1-3 — “O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods”

God wants our meetings with Him to be full of joy, thanksgiving, enthusiasm, and demonstrative praise. Three important Old Testament words describe how our praise to God should be:

Yadah — to throw one's hands or to worship with outstretched hands

Zamar — to make music, praise in song

Halal — praise which is demonstrative, boastful, noisy, and braggadocious

Psalms 95:6-7 — “Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand...”

The primary word used to describe worship in the New Testament is *proskuneo*, meaning to “come close to and kiss, to reverence, to prostrate oneself, adore on one's knees.”

Our worship is to become very humble and intimate. After we draw near to God, He wants to speak to us.

Psalms 95:7-8 — “...Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts...”

He wants to speak to us through His Word and through His still small voice into our hearts.

There are a few things that can keep us from entering into worship in spirit and truth.

Hidden Sins

Unconfessed sin in the life of the believer restricts worship. Therefore, repentance, complete and thorough, is necessary for unhindered praise.

Proverbs 28:9 – “He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination.”

Proverbs 28:13 – “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.”

Cleansing is a necessary part of meeting with a holy God. Many come to worship services with sin in their heart, unconfessed, unrepentant, and wonder why they aren't experiencing the presence of God. To come and celebrate God when our lives contradict the gospel is false worship, and God will not manifest His presence among us.

Pride

Pride kills praise and worship. Pride is being more concerned about what others think about you than what God thinks about you. Many do not want to feel foolish in front of others; concern about what others think about them keeps them from seeking God with all their heart. If you don't seek God with all your heart, you will not find Him.

Tradition

Mark 7:6-8 – And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’ Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.”

Traditions of men are often set up to preserve the flesh. God's Spirit wants to put the flesh to death, not preserve it.

The Devil

The devil despises praise and worship and will do all within his power to stop it. Lucifer was probably the praise and worship leader in heaven before he was kicked out in his rebellion and thrown down to the earth. Even more than that, our praise and worship is a powerful weapon against the devil. That is why he wants to stop it.

The devil works to stop praise and worship because praise and worship stops him. His purpose is to attack us so that we will abandon our determination to worship with all our hearts.

If his attacks on the worshiper do not work, he will attack someone close to the worshiper. If the devil cannot defeat you, he will try to defeat someone whose defeat will defeat you.

Practical tips to worship in spirit and truth:

- Get a good night's sleep on Saturday so you are rested and ready to worship God on Sunday morning.
- Come ready to “enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise” (Psalm 100:4).
- Come with no unconfessed sin.
- Come ready to seek Him with all your heart.
- Don't be concerned about what others think about your worship.
- Worship with enthusiasm and passion.
- Worship with humble adoration.
- Listen and be ready to do whatever God says.