

HOW NOT TO WORSHIP

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How not to Worship

The times which Apostle Paul predicted years ago are already upon us. 2 Timothy 4:3, “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers and turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” The Scriptures are twisted to suit the convenience of both the preachers and the listeners (2 Pet 3:16). The rules of Biblical interpretation are conveniently ignored. As foretold by Prophet Amos, there is a “famine” for the Word of God everywhere (Am 8:11). Amidst the flooding sermons and programmes, a scarcity for unadulterated preaching of the Word of God is experienced.

Paul admonished Timothy to “Preach the Word” (2 Tim 4:2), and Titus to “Speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine” (Tit 2:1). While writing to Titus, Paul began the admonition with the words, “As for you ...,” meaning, his ministry was going to be a different one and among the minority.

“Unlearning” is a prerequisite for proper “learning.” Christ operated on this principle as He ministered. He referred to various spiritual disciplines like almsgiving, praying and fasting in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:2,5,16. A careful study of these passages shows that Jesus first taught “how not” to practice a spiritual discipline, and then “how” to do it. We will follow this pattern in the study of the subject of **Worship** in this booklet.

Satan longed to be worshipped which was the sad reason for his fall (Isa 14:12-15). At the First Coming of Christ, when He was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me” (Mt 4:8,9). Jesus bid Satan an impolite goodbye at these words. As the momentum builds up even to the Second Coming of Christ, Paul warns the Thessalonian Christians, “Now brothers, concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together, we ask you, let no one deceive you by any means.” He adds that Satan, as the son of perdition, “opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess 2:1,3,4). Satan is always overoccupied with this desire. When he fails in his attempts,

frustrated with the failure, he distracts people from pure worship, and introduces a transgressed version. He subtly rides today on the revival wave of praise and worship. His craftiness makes false appear as truth.

In the forthcoming chapters, let's learn to cleanse our worship from 10 unscriptural things to make it totally acceptable to God.

HOW NOT TO WORSHIP

1

Do not worship for personal enjoyment.

The usual answers we get from people when they return from worship services are, "It was exciting ... I felt good" and so on. The modern mindset is after what it can get out of worship. The basic human tendency of what "I" would "get" has subtly entered religion. True worship will concern itself with what one "gives" to God. The famous worship Psalm 96 reads like this: "GIVE to the Lord, O, kindreds of the peoples, GIVE to the Lord, glory and strength; GIVE to the Lord; the glory due to His Name. BRING an offering and come into His courts" (vv 7-9). The command to "give" echoes repeatedly here. Verse 9 goes on to say, "O, Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," meaning giving to God is the beauty of holiness and real holy worship!

The Law of First Mention is one of the rules of Bible Interpretation. In order to study a doctrine, scan its first occurrence in the Bible. The salient features of that doctrine will usually emerge in that context. The word "worship" occurs first in Genesis 22:5, where Abraham said to his servants, "You stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and we will **worship** and we

will come back to you.” Abraham meant that he was going to sacrifice his son to God when he said, “worship.” For Abraham, the purest form of worship was not to receive but to release to God that which was precious to him.

In the New Testament, the word “worship” appears first in the incident when the wise men from the East came to see the Child Jesus. They asked, “Where is He who is born King of the Jews? We have seen His star in the east and we have come to **worship** Him” (Mt 2:2). They OFFERED to Him “gold, frankincense and myrrh.” Friends, our worship must be primarily concerned with what we can “give” to God rather than what we can “receive” from Him. Worship must be thus God-centered and not man-centered. Interestingly, the word “worship” has its origin from an Anglo-Saxon word, meaning, “**worthship**.” Worthship means “to ascribe to God that which is due to Him,” that is, supreme worth.

God is “worthy” to be praised. King David was a great worshipper. He says, “I will call upon the Lord who is **worthy** to be praised” (2 Sam 22:4). The Book of Revelation mentions the eternal occupation of the 24 elders: “The twentyfour elders fell down before Him who sits on the throne, and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, You are **worthy**, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power” (Rev 4:10,11). The crowns are worth nothing unless they are placed at the Lord’s feet and not on our heads. Isn’t this real worship?

Our communication to God usually falls into three categories: Prayer, Thanksgiving and Praise or Worship. It is necessary we understand how one differs from the other. The difference can be explained by a couple of examples.

“Lord, save me!” —This is Prayer;

“Thank You, Lord, for saving me!”

—This is Thanksgiving;

“I praise you, O Lord, and worship You because You are the Saviour!”

—This is Worship.

Another example:

“Heal me, O God!” —This is Prayer;

“Thank You, Lord, for healing me!”

—This is Thanksgiving;

“O Lord, I praise you because You are my Healer!”

— This is Worship.

Worship is of higher order than even thanksgiving. In thanksgiving we praise God for *what* He “gives;” in worship we praise Him for *who* He “is.” This means, we shift our concentration from the “blessings” to the “Blesser” Himself!

Yes, true worship does not concern itself with the blessings but does concentrate on the Blesser. Prophet Habakkuk came to this ultimate experience when he said, “Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vine, though the labour of the olive may fail and the flock be cut off from the fold, and there will be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the **Lord**, I will joy in

the **God** of my salvation” (Hab 3:17,18). This passage of worship ends with these words: “To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments.” Hallelujah!

Patriarch Job's experience identifies with that of Habakkuk. He “worshipped” amidst trauma: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, naked will I return. The Lord gave, the Lord took away. Blessed be the **Name of the Lord**” (Job 1:20,21).

Yes, true worship concerns itself with the Blesser and the Creator and not the blessings and the creature. The darkest passage explaining the depravity of man in Romans 1:20-25 ends like this: “They exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the **creature** rather than the **Creator**, who is blessed forever. Amen!” True repentance must shift our focus from the creature to the Creator and from the blessings to the Blesser.

Musicians and song leaders should be extremely careful and cautious to save themselves from turning into performers and entertainers. It’s the wrong place to stage talents. Shed theatrical postures. The Lord should be the only attention-getter. The attraction should not be towards the songleaders or musicians. When the 120 priests worshipped and praised God with trumpets, the people were not enchanted by the music. “The glory of the Lord filled the House” that the priests were not able to stand there.

The priests were hidden, tunes became secondary. They did not say the music was good, rather “The **Lord** is good!” (2 Chron 5:12-14). Don’t our worship services need this radical change?

Does it mean we will not be joyful in and after a Worship Service? No! But the joy is because of what “God” has received rather than what “we” have got! God has promised, “I will bring them to My holy mountain and make them **joyful** in My House of Prayer. Their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices will be **accepted** on My altar” (Isa 56:7). That is, we are made joyful because our offerings are “accepted” before Him.

As much as there is a revival of praise and worship, we need to come back to the Bible to learn the purest form of worship.

2

Do not sacrifice the Scriptures for the Spirit.

Jewish worship, as we observe in the Old Testament, was essentially ceremonial in nature. But the death of Christ rang the death bell for all ceremonial worship. When Christ gave up His spirit on Calvary's cross, the veil in the Temple was torn from top to bottom (Mt 27:51). The line of separation between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place was removed forever.

Foreseeing this change from the old **ceremonial** way of worship to the **spiritual** form of worship, Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "God is Spirit; and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24). Christ sympathized in His heart for the Samaritan woman who ignorantly clung on to the ceremonious worship on a mountain. We should not miss out on Jesus' emphasis, which demands a balance of the Spirit "and" the Truth. Fall follows imbalance! Our worship should be spiritual "and" Scriptural. Christ, in His High priestly prayer, confessed to the Father, "Your Word is Truth" (Jn 17:17). Therefore "worshiping in spirit and in truth" means worshipping with the help of the **Holy**

Spirit and according to the **Holy Scriptures**. Worshipping with the Spirit's help instills inspiration, and worshipping according to the Scriptures makes it rich with scriptural information. Inspiration and information must go hand in hand to strike a healthy balance in worship. Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "You worship what you do not **know**, but we **know** what we worship" (Jn 4:22). This means, "You worship guessing in the dark, but we worship in the clear light of day." We must "know" whom we worship. This knowledge of knowing whom we worship comes from the Word of God. Moving away from ceremonial forms of worship, while emphasizing the spiritualness, we have missed the truth content in worship. We must not sacrifice the Scriptures for the Spirit.

The knowledge that's essential in worship comes primarily from the Scriptures. Jesus told the Jews who sought to kill Him, "You search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life" (Jn 5:39). In other words, the Jews of Jesus' day studied the Scriptures in search of a blessing— "eternal life." But Jesus added something: "... and these are they which testify of **Me**." In other words, the study of the Bible is to know more and more about the God of the Bible. The central figure of all the Scriptures is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. On the road to Emmaus, the resurrected Saviour, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded to them in all the Scriptures things concerning **Himself**" (Lk 24:27).

The entire Bible is Christocentric—

In Genesis, He is the Seed of the Woman.

In Exodus, the Pascal Lamb.

In Leviticus, the High Priest.

In Numbers, the Smitten Rock.

In Deuteronomy, the Teacher from God.

In Psalms, the suffering Saviour.

In the Prophets, the Prince of Peace.

In Matthew, He is the King of the Jews.

In Mark, the Servant of Jehovah.

In Luke, the Son of Man.

In John, the Son of God.

In Acts, the Lord of the Harvest.

In the Epistles, the Lord of the Church.

In Revelation the Lord of the Nations,
and the King of kings.

Search, as you study the Bible, for the 100s of Names given to our God and meditate on each of them. Here is a sample list, from the Bible and hymnbooks:

1. Abba, Father
2. Advocate with the Father
3. Alpha & Omega
4. Amen, The
5. Ancient of Days
6. Anointed One, The
7. Author & Finisher of Faith
8. Bishop of our Souls
9. Blessed Redeemer

10. Blessed Trinity
11. Bread of Life
12. Breath of Life
13. Bright and Morning Star
14. Chief Cornerstone
15. Chief Shepherd
16. Consuming Fire
17. Dayspring
18. Defender, Our
19. Defender of Widows
20. Desire of all Nations
21. Emmanuel
22. Enthroned in Heaven
23. Eternal Spirit
24. Eternal Word
25. Everlasting Father
26. Everpresent Help
27. Father of the Fatherless
28. Father of Glory
29. Father of Lights
30. Fount of Every Blessing
31. Fountain of Love
32. Friend of Sinners
33. God of all Comfort
34. God of all Flesh
35. God of all Grace
36. God of Elijah
37. God of Heaven and Earth
38. God of my Salvation
39. God of Patience
40. God of Peace
41. God of the Living
42. God of the Poor

43. God of Truth
44. God Omnipotent
45. God Omnipresent
46. God Omniscient
47. God our Saviour
48. Good Shepherd
49. Great High Priest
50. Great I Am, The
51. Great Physician
52. Guide, My
53. Head of the Church
54. Heavenly Bridegroom
55. Hiding Place, My
56. Holy and Reverend
57. Horn of Salvation
58. Jesus of Nazareth
59. Keeper, My
60. King Eternal, Immortal
61. King of Heaven
62. King of Kings
63. Lamb of God
64. Light of the World
65. Lily of the Valley
66. Living God, The
67. Lord of Armies
68. Lord of Lords
69. Lord of the Harvest
70. Love Divine
71. Maker, Our

72. Man of Sorrows
73. Mighty Deliverer
74. Mighty Fortress
75. Mighty God
76. Most High God, The
77. Only Way, The
78. Only wise God, The
79. Praise of Angels, The
80. Prince of Glory
81. Prince of Peace
82. Prophet, Priest & King
83. Provider, My
84. Refuge, My
85. Righteous Judge
86. Redeemer, My
87. Rock of Ages
88. Rock of my Salvation
89. Ruler of the Universe
90. Sanctifier
91. Saviour of the World
92. Seed of the Woman
93. Son of God
94. Son of Man
95. Spirit of Glory
96. Spirit of Truth
97. Sun of Righteousness
98. Unchanging Jesus
99. Wonderful Counsellor
100. Word of God

Dwell on one Name each day for your worship. Worship will then become rich and rapturous. Worshipping God with an open Bible is recommended. Note down the specific characteristics of God in your worship notebook. This is perhaps the ideal way to avoid vain and unnecessary repetitions.

The neglect of the Scriptures makes worship meaningless. A condition that existed among the ceremonial worshippers in Jesus' time is what we see in Matthew 15:8,9, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth and honour Me with their lips but their heart is far away from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the **commandments of men.**" They worshipped in vain. They had more of traditions and human concepts than the truth of God's Word. Jesus rebuked them saying, "Why do you transgress the **commandments of God** because of your **tradition?**" (v3). Sadly, traditions replaced the truth. When our worship is void of the Scriptures, human ideas, concepts and thoughts subtly settle in. Our worship rises with real fragrance before God only when His Word is given its rightful place.

The Word of God and worship, so beautifully interwoven in Psalm 138:2 reads as, "I will **worship** towards Your Holy Temple, and praise Your Name for Your lovingkindness and for Your Truth; because You have magnified Your **Word** above all Your Name!" Here is a picture of spontaneous breaking forth of worship because of the realisation of the supremacy of God's Word.

Another passage in Psalms emphasises the same truth: Psalm 33:2-4, "**Praise** the Lord with the harp... Sing to Him a new song ... **FOR** the **Word** of the Lord is right!"

Once in Christendom there was too little worship and too much of preaching. Today the pendulum has swung to the other extreme. The time that must be set aside for the meditation and the exposition of God's Word is stolen by non-stop singing. People in the time of Nehemiah "stood up in their place and **read** from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for one fourth of the day. And for another fourth they confessed and **worshipped** the Lord their God" (Neh 9:3). What a balance! Three hours of reading the Word; and three hours of Worship. The time was equidistributed between Word and Worship! This is the revival and restoration we long for.

"Lots of worship is a good preparation for people to receive the Word of God"— is less than a mature argument. It's the other way about. Worship that flows out of a heart that is filled with the Word of God is richer than anything. Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians, "Let the **Word** of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and **singing** in your hearts to the Lord" (Col 3:16). It's the "dwelling" of the Word that is stressed, which means steady, regular and abundant intake of God's Word. A casual reading won't help. The outflow will be rich worship — through "psalms, hymns and songs." Such worship will not only exalt God but also edify others.

Corporate worship must have both these dimensions: Exaltation of the Lord and edification of the saints. Look at Paul's rebuke when the Corinthian Christians left at the second dimension: "You indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified" (1 Cor 14:17). This is illustrated in Isaiah's vision. The Seraphs cried to "one another" and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty" (Isa 6:3). They sang the Holiness of the Lord and simultaneously edified one another: These two dimensions in worship are clearly brought out both in Ephesians and Colossians: Ephesians 5:18,19, "Be filled with the Spirit, speaking **to one another**... and singing **to the Lord**." Colossians 3:16, "Admonishing **one another**... and singing **to the Lord**." How much we have neglected this truth!

HOW NOT TO WORSHIP

3 Do not leave the Spirit for the content.

We studied in the previous chapter how and why the Scriptures should not be sacrificed for the Spirit. This chapter deals with the other extreme.

The Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit carry equal importance in the matter of worship. One cannot be sacrificed for the other. Here are two classic passages on worship in the New Testament which reflect this truth—

Colossians 3:16, "Let the **Word** of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with songs and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord!" This passage paints the picture of worship that is born out of a heart full of the **Scriptures**.

The other side of the picture sketches worship born out of a heart filled with the **Holy Spirit**: Ephesians 5:18-20, "Do not be drunk with wine in which is dissipation, but be filled with the **Spirit**, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father."

These two passages, in Colossians and Ephesians, lay a balanced emphasis of coupling Scripture and the Spirit in worship. Worship is meaningless without the Scriptures; and it is unacceptable without the Spirit. “No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3). While the Holy Scriptures fuel worship, the Holy Spirit fires it up! These two must not be separated. The Holy Spirit Himself is the “breath” of the Holy Scriptures. Mere letter kills; but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor 3:6c).

The Book of Acts records how the Jewish and the non-Jewish believers broke in rapturous worship when they were filled with the Holy Ghost. It happened to the **Jews** on the Day of Pentecost. “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak with new tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). Full of the Spirit, they spoke the “wonderful works of God” (v11). Even though they were already given to worship, the anointing added to them a new dimension. Luke 24:52,53 narrates their pre-Pentecostal experience: “They worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and they were continuously in the Temple, praising and blessing God.” The same was the case with the **non-Jewish** converts also. Cornelius was already a worshipper of Jehovah (Acts 10:1,2). But the Holy Spirit added a new dimension to his worship experience. They spoke in tongues and “magnified” God (vv 45,46).

Hailing from a High Anglican background, I deeply appreciate the *Common Book of Prayer* of the Anglican Church. The worship and prayers

in it are rich in content. Nevertheless I realized the need for an inner release in my worship exercise. I experienced it when the Lord graciously filled me with the Holy Spirit in 1963. If you have inhibitions or apprehensions in worship, join those who are quite expressive and exulting in praise. “Blessed are the people who know the joyful **sound!**” (Psa 89:15). “Sing **aloud** to God our strength; make a joyful **shout** to the God of Jacob. **Raise** a song and strike the timbrel...” (Psa 81:1,2). Heaven is going to be a place of joyful shout all the time. The non-stop shouts of praise is highlighted by an interesting statement in Revelation 8:1, “There was silence in heaven for about half an hour!”

Of the 9 gifts of the Spirit listed out in 1 Corinthians 12:7-10, only the gift of speaking in tongues is chiefly meant to be addressed to God. The others are primarily directed towards men. For example, we don’t prophesy to God but to men; we don’t work miracles for God but for men; we don’t heal God but people! God has made this provision of speaking in tongues for the New Testament believers to break forth into joyful praise. From the day the Lord filled me with the Holy Spirit, I have been speaking in tongues daily to God. This I do in private for praise and prayer (Acts 2:11; 1 Cor 14:17a). When I speak in tongues, I experience an inner release in my spirit and am edified. This is one reason why people were found speaking in tongues so often in the Book of Acts when they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6).

When we emphasize the necessity to be ignited by the Holy Spirit in worship, we do not mean that we should always long for excitement in worship. Beware, mere excitement might end up in sensationalism. We are called to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor 5:7). Not by sight or any feelings. The point is, our worship will turn out to be a meaningless dead formalism if we do not seek the help of the Holy Spirit. Would we let Jesus mourn over a condition that, “You are neither hot or cold, but lukewarm” (Rev 3:16)?

HOW NOT TO WORSHIP

4

Do not forget the Father.

Aren't we seeing a total neglect of the “Father” in most of the modern songs and choruses used in worship? They are centered essentially around “Jesus” only. But a careful study of the Scriptures shows that it is the “Father” who is primarily seeking worshippers unto Him. Jesus Himself stated this truth in His conversation with the Samaritan woman: “The hour is coming and now it is, when the true worshippers will worship the **Father** in Spirit and in Truth; for the **Father** is seeking such to worship **Him**” (Jn 4:23). Begetting true worshippers is the Father's passion. This truth runs consistently through the Bible. Look at the following typical passages—

Philippians 3:3, “We are the circumcision who worship **God** in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus.” We worship “GOD” the Father, in the “SPIRIT,” and rejoice in “CHRIST JESUS” as a result.

Colossians 1:3, “We give thanks **to** the **God** and the **Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.”

James 3:9, “We bless our **God** and **Father**.”

Then comes a question: Where does Jesus come in worship? The answer is in passages like Ephesians 5:20, "Give thanks always for all things to **God the Father**, IN THE NAME OF our Lord Jesus Christ." That is, worship is addressed TO the Father, IN THE NAME OF Jesus!

Colossians 3:17 confirms this teaching: "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do all IN THE NAME OF the Lord Jesus, giving thanks **to God the Father**, through Him." Can words be clearer?

We cannot afford to miss an important principle of Bible Interpretation here: Any doctrine must be established only if there is a "consistent" teaching of the same throughout the Scriptures. A passage picked up from obscurity cannot fully establish a doctrine. This principle is clearly spelt out by Paul to the Corinthian Church: "This is the third time, I am coming to you. By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established. I have told you before and foretell as I were present the second time, and now being absent, I write these things to you" (2 Cor 13:1,2).

This does not mean we must not worship Jesus the Son. The **ultimate** worship must go to the Father. See how beautifully this truth unfolds in Philippians 2:9-11, "God has highly exalted Him and given Him a Name above every Name, that at the Name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, **TO** the glory of **God the Father**." We acknowledge the submission

of every knee and tongue to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, but ultimately the Bible teaches that it's all to the glory of "God the Father."

Christ Himself worships God the Father and confesses before Him, "I will declare Your Name to My brothers, in the midst of the congregation, I will sing praise to You" (Heb 2:12).

Jesus said, "I am the Way... No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn 14:6). Jesus is the "way," but the ultimate "destination" is God the Father. This truth is amplified for us in Ephesians 4:4-6 where we have the seven oneness factors: "One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father." While referring to the Father in this list, Paul writes, "One God and Father of all, who is **above** all, **through** all and **in** you all !" When he mentioned "one Lord" and "one Spirit" there was no such expansion. But while referring to "One God and Father" Paul adds, "who is above all, through all and in you all." The lesson is obvious.

That's why in the final stage, the Son also subjects Himself to the Father. 1 Corinthians 15:28, "When all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him, who put all things under Him so that **God** may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). Don't miss the crystal-clear teaching of this doctrine in the Bible.

What about the passages in the Book of Revelation which speak of worshipping the Lamb

of God? Revelation 5:13, "Every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, such as in the sea and all that is in them, I heard them saying, Blessing and Honour, Glory and Power, be TO HIM who sits on the throne AND TO the Lamb for ever and ever." Worship ascends to the One who is on the throne "and" to the Lamb of God. Another passage: Revelation 7:9,10, "Salvation belongs to the Lord who sits on the throne AND to the Lamb." The mediatory work of Christ, between us and the Father, would be over at our entry into Heaven. After that, both God the Father and the Lamb of God are worshipped together.

However we find no direct teaching anywhere in the Bible as to worshipping the **Holy Spirit**. Jesus declared in John 16:14, "The Holy Spirit will glorify **Me**." He went on to say, in John 17:4, to the Father, "I have glorified You on the earth." The order is important: The Holy Spirit glorifies the Son; and the Son glorifies the Father. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are coequal but we have to accept the divine order without questioning. Worship is to go TO the Father, IN THE NAME OF the Son, BY the power and enablement of the Holy Spirit.

Do not forget the Father!

HOW NOT TO WORSHIP

5 Do not neglect individual worship.

Individual and personal worship must precede corporate, collective and congregational worship. Worship must be far beyond what we do on a Sunday in the worship service. Corporate worship turns spontaneous and jubilant only if each individual would spend enough time in his private and individual worship. Psalmist David's testimony is striking: Psalm 34:1,2, "I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in **my** mouth. **My** soul shall make its boast in the Lord." He then says in verse 3, "O, Magnify the Lord with me. Let **us** exalt His Name **together**." He first talks about individual worship and then calls for corporate worship. Isn't it pitiable to see Pastors and the Songleaders struggling and exhausting themselves to draw people into the spirit of worship because of the ignored element of individual worship? A heart with its ground well-prepared makes a free flow of worship feasible for the worship leaders. Unfortunately, setting aside time for private worship is not the norm.

Here are some practical exhortations to enhance personal worship—

1. *Have a worship notebook.*

Begin listing out the various redemptive and compound Names of our God. Some of them are: Jehovah-jireh, Jehovah-shammah, Jehovah-nissi, Jehovah-raah, Jehovah-tsidkenu, Jehovah-rapha and Jehovah-shalom. Think and jot down the various characteristics of God like His love and mercy. God is love. God is light. God is merciful. He is the God of Peace, God of all Comfort. And so on. A study of the biographies and autobiographies in the Bible will bring out God's style of revealing Himself to His people. Highlight the particular character of God which shows a marked manifestation in the life of each individual. We know that God has shown Himself to His people as the God of Deliverance, God of the Covenant, God of Promise, Lord of Hosts and God of Glory. Pen these in your notebook and profess it in your regular personal worship

2. *Use spare moments to whisper praise.*

Psalms 34 records this as David's strength and hope. He said that he would bless the Lord at "all times," and His praise would "continually" be in his mouth. This is how we too can practice and realise the presence of God. David prophesied concerning Christ, in Acts 2:25,26, "I foresaw the Lord **always** before My face; He is at My right hand that I may not be shaken. Therefore My heart rejoiced and My tongue was glad." (Psa 16:8-11). Constant whispers of praise relax us in God's presence.

3. *Enjoy nature to remember God's glory.*

There is a fresh revelation of God's glory, every time nature is admired. This was the Psalmist's experience as he narrates in Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork." This was the theme of the hymnologist, Stuart K. Hine, when he sang,

*O, Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder;
Consider all the works Thy hands have made.
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.
THEN sings my soul my Saviour God to Thee!*

Walk by the fields, climb on the mountains and see God's glory and the beauty of His creation. No human artist can paint such colours! Shout aloud praises to God in open fields.

4. *Allot more time for praise than for prayer.*

I deduce this prescription from the practice of the Psalmist, Psalm 119:164, "Seven times a day, I **praise** You." He was probably praising God specifically every two hours during the working hours. As for as praying was concerned, he did it thrice a day. "Evening and morning and at noon I will **pray**" (Psa 55:17). So he prayed to God thrice and praised Him seven times a day. What a lesson to learn from the Psalmist! It's a healthy proportion! This means 70% of your time with God to be spent in adoring Him for who He is, and only 30% in asking Him for what you need! "It's

more blessed to **give** than to **receive**,” is the blanket teaching of Christ!

Friends, these changes cannot be affected overnight. We should take a conscious effort for a consistent application of these exercises. Update your worship notebook periodically. Review at the end of the day if the praises of God were continually on your lips. While it's not practical to go out to open fields everyday, have this exposure atleast once a week. If we do not take these measures seriously, we will be the losers of gaining fresh insights for worship. Make these prescriptions a part of you and you will find yourself moving out of meaningless traditions and into the truths of God's Word. Your worship will then be freshly aromatic before the Almighty!

HOW NOT TO WORSHIP

6 Do not separate life from worship.

A husband lamented, “My wife is an angel in the Church, but she is a devil in the kitchen!” This is probably true of most of us. True worship actually begins with our lifestyle. The familiar Romans 12:1 reads, “I beseech you, brothers, in the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable **worship**.” The presenting of our bodies as a living sacrifice is called as rational worship. What does this exactly mean?

There are two vital areas to be considered here. Paul explains the first one in Romans 6:19, “I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. Just as you presented your organs as slaves of uncleanness and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, present now your organs as slaves of righteousness for holiness.” We gave in easily to enticing temptations earlier; but now, we dedicate the organs of our bodies for doing only what's right, righteous and godly. The reward of that kind of dedication is the “fruit of holiness.” (v22). This is the holiness that is desperately needed in the area of worship. That's why the Bible repeatedly calls us to worship the

Lord “in the beauty of **holiness!**” This is stated at least thrice in the Bible: 1 Chronicles 16:29; Psalms 29:2; 96:9.

The other dimension of holiness for worship is our interpersonal **relationships**. Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: “I desire that men pray everywhere lifting up **holy** hands” (1 Tim 2:8). In the very same verse he explains what he means by “holy” hands: “Without wrath and without unnecessary dissension...” Holy hands mean sound relationships. This was the recurring message of the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah challenged God’s people, “When you spread out your hands, I will hide My face from you. Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear because your hands are full of blood” (Isa 1:15). In verse 17 he explains how this blood-stain refers to faulty interpersonal relationship: “Learn to do good. Seek justice. Reprove the oppressor. Defend the fatherless. Plead for the widow.” Yes, faulty interpersonal relationships are seen by God as bloody hands. This is what Apostle Paul emphasized, 1 John 3:15, “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer... No murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” That is why Jesus asks us to set right broken relationships “before” we approach the altar with our offerings: “If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. FIRST be reconciled to your brother, AND THEN come and offer your gift” (Mt 5:23,24). In the previous verse Jesus refers to verbal abuse and unreasonable anger (v22).

Referring to verbal abuse, Apostle James challenged, “With our tongue we **bless** our God the Father and with the same tongue we **curse** men who have been made in the image of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and curse. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh and bitter water?” (Js 3:9-11). When we raise our voices in worship to God we should reflect on how we have been interacting with people.

Holiness and relationships are inseparably interrelated. Hebrews 12:14 admonishes, “Pursue **peace** with all men and **holiness** without which no man can see the Lord.” Peace with men and holiness before God! One is not complete or possible without the other. Didn’t Apostle John write, “If you cannot love your brother whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have not seen?” (1 Jn 4:20). If someone will claim that this is possible, the Bible calls him a liar!

Christians can be divided into Sunday Christians and Monday Christians. Sunday Christians crowd the Church; but Monday Christians impact the society. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify the Father in heaven” (Mt 5:16). Yes, people glorify God only by our “walk” and “work.” They are least impressed by our “worship.”

Do not separate “secular” from “sacred.” Nothing is secular for a Christian. Whether he eats or drinks or whatever he does, it must be done for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). He must

walk without any offence to the nominal Christians—“Jews,” non-Christians—“Greeks,” and true Christians—“Church” (v32). Much is talked about worship these days than about lifestyle. But Jesus places lifestyle high above worship. Take for example What He spoke to the Samaritan woman. He first referred to her “family life” (Jn 4:16-18) before teaching on worship (vv 21-24).

Yes, beloved, it’s holiness that adds beauty to our worship, not the dresses of the singers, not the multiplicity of the musical instruments, not the hifi technics used in worship, and not the flashing colour lights. “Worship the Lord in the beauty of **holiness.**”

HOW NOT TO WORSHIP

7

Do not idolize objects, places or persons.

Idolatry is warned against with all seriousness in the Ten Commandments. The second commandment reads as, “You shall not make for yourself **any** carved image or **any** likeness of **anything** that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down before them nor serve them” (Ex 20:4,5). God’s reason behind this command is, “Because I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.” This is the first time in the Bible that God says He is “jealous!” Yes, God will not share His glory with anyone or anything.

a) Idolisation of objects

Idolizing objects is growing to be a common practice even in Christendom. God used King Hezekiah to bring reformation to His people. This is what we read about his acts for God: 2 Kings 18:4, “He removed the high places, broke the sacred pillars, and cut down the wooden images and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made. For until those days, the children of Israel were burning incense to it and called it Nehustan.” Though it was God who had commanded Moses to make the bronze serpent,

the King had to “break it into pieces” because what was to be held as a plain memorial for generations had grown to be an idol. Aren’t we feeding that virus today by bowing down to a cross or a crucifix? True, Jesus died on a cross, but bowing before it as sacred is outright idolatry.

b) Idolisation of places

Dare you idolize places! The Samaritan woman argued with Jesus over Jerusalem and the mountain being places of worship. Jesus corrected her saying, “Not on this mountain or in Jerusalem, God is looking for worshippers to worship Him **everywhere**” (Jn 4:20-24). The woman was talking about “where” to worship; but Jesus spoke about “whom” to worship and “how!” He then concluded with a tremendous revelation that, “God is Spirit,” which means God is neither a substance nor an object. He cannot be contained in any place.

When Jesus was transfigured Moses and Elijah were conversing with Him. It was an unusual experience by any standard. That mountain, according to the disciples, looked as a special and sacred place. So Peter was tempted to pitch three tabernacles—one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah (Mk 9:5-8). When Peter sought permission from Jesus, He would not allow it! The lesson is, we cannot attach sanctity to any place on the face of the earth today. We don’t read of a shrine being built on the Upper Room (Acts 1:13; 2:2). If the apostles had wanted it, they could have

built it because they had so much of money poured in by people! (Acts 4:34,35).

c) Idolisation of buildings

God is Spirit (Jn 4:24). He cannot be localized like a substance. This was emphasized by the first Martyr, Stephen. Acts 7:47,48, “Solomon built Him a house; however, the Most High **does not** dwell in temples made with hands.” Stephen did not speak these words with any bias or prejudice. It was the confession of Solomon, the builder himself! “Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heavens cannot contain You, how much less this temple that I have built?” (1 Ki 8:27). Simon Peter, one of the first disciples of Christ, stressed the same truth. Addressing God’s people he wrote, “You also, as living stones, are being built up as **spiritual** house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices” (1 Pet 2:5). He is contrasting the “living” stones from stones that are quarried or bricks which are burnt. God’s Temple is not built with brick and mortar. It’s made up of “living stones.” It’s not a material house but a spiritual one. Do you know there will be no temple in New Jerusalem? John wrote, “I saw no Temple in it. Because, the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its Temple” (Rev 21:22).

2 Chronicles 7:15 is conveniently quoted in spiritual circles today. It reads like this: “My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayers made in this place.” This verse is the commonest

walltext in prayer halls and worship centres. This is a misquote for the New Testament times. It actually referred to Solomon's Temple for a specific period of time only. The veil in the Temple tore from top to bottom at Jesus' death. Goodbye to the separation between the Holy and the Most Holy Place! Following the tearing of the veil, God allowed the Temple to be totally destroyed. There are no more holy and unholy places today. Quoting the abovesaid text is an outright deviation from the New Testament teaching, and a practice of **fraudism!** It's nothing but idolatry.

Today God's promise is that He would be present "wherever" two or three of His children would gather in the Name of Jesus. God does not sanctify places, but only peoples!

d) Idolisation of pictures

Idolizing pictures is another abominable act. Apostle Paul in Athens declared, "Since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to even think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone or something shaped by **art** and man's devising" (Acts 17:29). Deity cannot be represented by any work of art. Then the Apostle went on to say, "These times of **ignorance**, God overlooked. **But now**, He commands all men, everywhere, to repent." Yes, we need to repent of idolizing anything. How about portraits of Jesus Himself? The Bible answers this question in no uncertain terms: 2 Corinthians 5:16, "**From now on**, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the

flesh (some of us have seen and touched Him during his earthly life), **yet now**, we know Him thus, **no longer.**" Note the change that is happening here. Don't copy any preacher who advocates portraits of Jesus. May be he is focussing on "non-Christians." It's not for "believers." Because of what is said in 1 Corinthians 13:11, "When I was a child, I spoke like a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things," even an image or the portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ is totally inappropriate for a mature Christian.

e) Idolisation of persons

God abhors idolizing of men. When Cornelius the military official fell prostrate before Simon Peter, he stopped him and said, "**Don't do this**, I am also a man." Military officials would normally salute seniors. Simon corrected Cornelius when he fell prostrate (Acts 10:25,26). India is known for god-men! They enjoy being worshipped. Even politicians are showered with 'divine' titles. This is core stupidity in the sight of God. Don't even allow a trace of this demonic and devilish practice to creep into Christendom. Hero-worship paves way for idolisation of persons.

f) Worship of angels

Worshipping angels is never an angelic act. John wrote in Revelation 19:10, "And I fell at His feet to worship him. But he said to me, see that you do not do that. I am your fellow servant and of your brothers who have the testimony of Jesus.

Worship God.” John repeated this mistake: Revelation 22:8,9, “Now I John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me see that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant and of your brothers, prophets and of those who keep the words of this book.. **Worship God!**”

If even an apostle like John, having received so much of revelation, could make such a blunder out of religious excitement, how careful and watchful should we be?

8

Do not act disorderly.

An oft-quoted Scripture text to support freestyle worship is 2 Corinthians 3:17, “Now the Lord is the Spirit; where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” The Holy Spirit does give us a new release in worship but this text stands odd to the context of worship. This passage actually speaks about our liberation from the Law of the Old Testament, moving into the Grace of the New Testament. See verses 14-16: “Their minds were hardened until this day, the same veil remains **unlifted** in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is **taken away** in Christ. Even to this day, when Moses is read, the veil is on their hearts. Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” The liberation mentioned here actually speaks of deliverance from the yoke of the Old Testament law, to the liberty in the New Testament. The Bible repeatedly affirms, “We are no more under the law but under grace” (Rom 6:14). Therefore liberty in the Spirit does not mean licence to do whatever we desire in worship!

Here are some practical exhortations on how you can avoid disorderliness in worship—

a) *Sing aloud but not too fast!*

Psalm 81:1,2, "Sing aloud to God our strength and make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob. Raise a song and strike the timbrel, the pleasant harp with a flute." This verse emphasizes "pleasantness" along with singing with musical instruments. Do not beat the drum too fast to lead people into a kind of ecstasy. It borders on paganism and is normally practiced to invoke demonic spirits. Repetitions with speeding up of some stanzas are also meaningless.

Chapters 12,13 and 14 of First Corinthians contain the apostolic regulatory instructions about the operation of the gifts of the Spirit. The very beginning of the 12th chapter makes a reference to paganism: "You know that you were Gentiles carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led." You did whatever you liked; but now you have come to the Living Lord. Paul ends this passage in 1 Corinthians 14:40, saying, "Let all things be done decently and in order." He reminded them of how once they did things according to their own whims and fancies, and then he exhorted them to behave with "orderliness" and to do everything with "decency." The reference is specifically to the practice of speaking in tongues. The believers of the Corinthian Church were obviously overexcited with this new gift for which Paul lays down some regulations. He admonished them not to speak in tongues aloud "in the Church" unless it was interpreted. This is what he says: "I thank my God that I speak with tongues more than you all. Yet

in the Church, I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. Brothers, do not be children in understanding" (1 Cor 14:18-20). He speaks about 10,000 words vs. 5 words! Noise, repetitions and speed are to be regulated. He is drawing a contrast between childishness and maturity. Yes, decency and orderliness should pervade fellowships.

b) *Shout, don't scream!*

The frequently enjoyed and used Psalm 95:1,2 reads, "O come, let us sing 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." Amidst all the rejoicing in the presence of God, an important truth, not to be missed out, is in Psalm 2:11b, "Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with **trembling**." Holy reverence and trembling about the awesomeness of God should canopy over the rejoicing.

Roaring and barking are parading worship services. There's even a book titled, "*The Animal Sounds of the Holy Spirit*," published in the USA! Can we go anywhere below this? We have drifted far off from the boundaries of God's Word. Created in the image of God (Gen 1:27), made only a little lower than the angels (Heb 2:7), we are much higher than the animals and cannot stoop down. Becoming an animal is a curse and punishment from God, which was pronounced on King Nebuchadnezzar who was puffed up with pride. God wanted to abase him and drove him

away to live with wild animals (Dan 4:33,37). So bringing animal sounds into worship is totally unacceptable to the doctrine of God's Word.

c) Physical expressions to be controlled

All physical expressions must be under reins to keep decency. No one can excuse himself saying he could not control himself! The Bible says, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets; God is not the author of confusion but of peace" (1 Cor 14:32,33). If God's people would not keep their spirits under control for the sake of decency, God should not be blamed for the resulting confusion. The Word would never beget chaos. The Apostle urged this rule to be applied "in all the Churches of the saints." Yes, this has an universal applicability, not just for the Corinthian Church. Decency and orderliness should be the core style of all Churches, irrespective of their denominations and background. If you want to clap, do clap but do it with a rhythm! You can dance provided there's gracefulness! A sincere consideration for the fellow worshippers should be emitted in all that you do.

d) Feelings vs. Facts

Facts precede feelings. Regardless of the feelings, knowledge about the certainty of the presence of God is what is important. Hasn't Jesus promised, "Where two or three are gathered in My Name, **I AM** there in their midst" (Mt 18:20)? The moment God's children gather, Jesus IS already there! You don't even need to "invite" Him! Just "welcome" Him! Believe it, feelings may

or may not follow. It's first *facts*, then *faith*, and *feelings* come last. Never change this order.

e) Stay sensitive to culture.

Culture sensitivity is also vital. Bowing down and kneeling in worship is common among the Easterners. Psalm 95:6 says, "O come, let us worship and **bow down**, let us **kneel** before the Lord our God our Maker." Lifting up of hands was again an Eastern male custom. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Therefore, I desire, let the **men** pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands" (1 Tim 2:8). He exhorts the women in the very next verse, "In like manner, let the women adorn themselves..." Instructions are distinct for men and women. Women in the Western world lift up hands with no hesitation while Indian women clad in sarees find lifting up of hands not very comfortable. These issues should be taken into account when we talk about orderliness and decency.

We cannot discount Paul's instructions as his whims and fancies. In 1 Corinthians 14:37, which is the conclusion of the passage on spiritual gifts, he says, "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge the things which I write to you as the **commandments** of the Lord."

Beloved, do not hesitate to weed wrong actions of worship. Though some practices have sadly become so much a part of us, when you find it disharmonious with the Word of God, throw them away mercilessly. As disciples of Christ we are to follow His Rule Book!

9 Do not decry other forms of worship.

Churches can be broadly classified as Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal. Their basic divider is in the understanding of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is the greatest Unifier! It's sad and unfortunate that His work has become the bone of contention among Christians. Both the above-said groups have their strengths and weaknesses.

Pentecostals usually worship aloud while the non-Pentecostals are less noisy. Both these expressions find their place in the Bible. The latter portion of Psalm 46:10 says, "Be **still** and know that I am God." The following Psalm 47 begins as, "O clap your hands, all you peoples, and **shout** to God with a voice of triumph!" Psalm 46 and Psalm 47 do not indicate any contradiction between silence and shouting. Solomon with his practical wisdom combined both in Ecclesiastes 3:7, "There is a time to keep **silent** and a time to **speak**." Yes, God works in both the conditions powerfully to minister to His people.

God ministered to Patriarch Job and Prophet Elijah in different ways. He answered Job "**out of**

the whirlwind" (Job 38:1). But it was totally different for Elijah. 1 Kings 19:11,12, "God said, Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord. And behold the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a **still small voice**." The Lord spoke to Elijah in a still small voice! It was a whirlwind experience to Job but a whisper to Elijah! God is sovereign; He cannot be confined to our favourite pattern, whatever.

The Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals also differ by the liturgical and free or extempore style of worship. On comparison, liturgical worship is usually rich in its content, covering a wide range of subjects. Free worship carries with it spontaneity and ample creativity. Both styles have their strengths. Hailing from a High Anglican background, I have memorized lots of prayers and worship passages from the *Common Book of Prayer*. I have seen many "uncommon" prayers in that "common" book! The Lord filled me with the Holy Spirit in 1963. This did not cancel the earlier input I had received. Rather the infilling of the Holy Spirit gave me a new dimension and release in my worship. So it's not either or but both! We must not throw away the baby with the bath water.

The old hymns and the modern choruses differ, too. Most of the oldtime hymns were written during times of revival. God used Charles Wesley in the 17th century to compose hundreds of hymns, during the revival spearheaded by his preacher brother John Wesley (1703-1791). D.L.Moody (1837-1899) was instrumental for a mighty spiritual awakening in the 18th century. God used his associate Ira Sankey to compose hundreds of hymns. Such hymns are known not only for their devotional quality but also for their doctrinal content. The hymn by Bishop Reginald Heber (1783-1826) is a classic example—

*Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty,
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, Holy, Holy! Merciful and mighty;
God in three Persons, Blessed Trinity!*

It looks as if one can learn doctrine from these hymns!

Should we not sing NEW songs then? What does a NEW song mean? David said, “He has put a new song in my mouth: Praise to our God” (Psa 40:3). “New Song” simply means a contrast from the old life. A life of blasphemy to a life of triumphant testimony! God lifted David out of “horrible pit and miry clay,” put him on a rock, and gave him a “new song” (vv 1-3). His worship from a transformed life was the “new” song. We come across the same truth in Revelation 5:9,10, “They sang a **new song** saying, You alone are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals because You were slain and You redeemed us to

God by Your blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And You have made us kings and priests to our God and we shall reign on the earth.” “New” song here means the celebration of our redemption through Christ and position in Him. The “old” and “new” songs have no reference to the time period. If the ancient songbook of the Hebrews, the Psalms, was time-bound, it would be outdated. Cannot be! The Bible in fact calls us to use all these: “psalms... hymns... spiritual songs” (Eph 5:19). The Anglican Church set tunes to the “Psalms.” “Hymns” and Lyrics are regularly used in mainline Churches. The “spiritual songs” may be the choruses and modern songs used in the free Churches. It’s not this or that. It’s all three!

Yet another consideration: The young and the old in the Church are called to worship the Lord together. “Both young men and maidens, old men and children, you bless the Lord” (Psa 148:12). The young enjoy a fast-strummed guitar beat, but the old folks love the accompaniment of organ and piano. The youth must respect the taste of the elders. The seniors must not despise the youth but be appreciative. One must give preference to the other. On the first Palm Sunday, the children and the young on the streets sang, “Hosanna in the Highest!” The religious leaders were upset over the jubilation. “When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did and the **children** crying out in the Temple saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were indignant and said to Him, Did you hear what

these are saying? And Jesus said, Yes, Have you never read, out of the mouth of nursing **babies** and nursing infants you have perfected praise?" (Mt 21:15,16). In other words, the Lord defended the expression of worship of the younger generation!

Never ever decry other forms of worship just because they are different from yours. Our God is a God of variety. Don't miss the beauty in variety. Appreciating other forms along with yours, within the boundaries of decency and orderliness, adds fragrance to worship which in turn brings glory to God.

HOW NOT TO WORSHIP

10 Do not ignore the other side of worship.

Verbal praise is only one side of the coin. The Bible underlines several other acts as the other side of worship. We will look at four of them here.

a) Liberal charity

Hebrews 13:15, "By Him let us continuously offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name." The Bible calls this ministry of the lips as sacrifice and giving praise unto His Name. This is norm for most of us. The following verse says, "Do not forget to do good and to **share**; for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased" (v16). Worship is much more than just verbal praise. Verse 15 talks about the physiology of our **lips** in worship, and verse 16 about the physiology of our **hands**. Have we missed this truth? Wake up, if the act of lending hands to the needy, suffering and hurting, is forgotten! One is not more or less important than the other. Both the 15th and 16th verses speak about "sacrifice." Giving thanks to God is in no way superior to doing good to people.

Christ explains liberal charity with an excellent illustration. A traveler to Jericho fell among decoits who left him robbed and half-dead. A Priest, who was probably rushing to do his ritualistic duties in the Temple, chose to bypass him. A Levite did the same, not wanting to miss the group counting the offering, perhaps! Through their sincerities, they were blind to the need of their fellowman. Friend, do the poor find a place in your heart?

With the many hurdles and obstacles for her ministry of charity, Mother Teresa (1910-1997) stands as a role model with a constant self-motivation: "Whatever I do to the helpless and the suffering, that I do unto God!" That was her drive. On the final Day of Separation, the King would say to the ones on His right, "I was sick and you visited Me; I was hungry, you fed Me; I was naked and you clothed Me; and attended to My needs when I was in suffering." Little were they aware of helping Christ in that state. He then explained, "Whatever you have done to one of these little ones, that you have done unto Me" (Mt 25:34-40). Let's not forget that ours is the God of the poor.

b) Extravagant offering

Giving God our best and the dearest to our hearts is what is meant by extravagant offering. We can think of two outstanding examples—

Abraham without an offspring till his old age drives home this truth. God gave him a beautiful son, whom he named "Isaac" meaning "laughter."

The little one was a bundle of joy to Abraham and Sarah. Abraham would have been shattered when God asked Isaac to be sacrificed. Abraham did not think that it was too much for God to ask of him for Isaac. He trusted God and decided to obey Him without delay. Isaac was dear to his heart but he held God much dearer. He was one to obey God at any cost. He went on a 3-day journey and told his servants, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and **worship** and we will come back to you" (Gen 22:5). Abraham's extravagant offering, sacrifice and unquestioned obedience unto God was real "worship."

Hannah's lavish offering to God is recorded in 1 Samuel 1:27,28. After years of anguish and prayer, God granted her a son and she called him Samuel. She testified to Eli, "For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord." The next line in the Scripture record reads as, "So they **worshipped** the Lord there." Giving her precious baby over was no ordinary thing. That's the beauty of worship.

Dear friend, can you think of something which you hold very dear? Can you give it away to God? It can be a piece of jewelry or a property which may be a saving of a lifetime. Could it be your career you could leave behind to serve God and the poor fulltime? Can you do away with a comfort for the sake of the Gospel?

Mary owned a perfume which carried a value of a whole year's earning. She poured it out on Jesus and the entire house was filled with that fragrance. Jesus enjoyed that aroma (Mt 26:6-13). Yes, extravagant giving is another side of worship.

c) Patient endurance

Patient endurance of suffering is also another side of worship. 1 Peter 4:14 beautifully presents this truth: "If you are reproached for the Name of Christ, blessed are you; for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is **glorified**." Think of Paul and Silas. They were beaten and thrown into the innermost prison cell, a dungeon of dampness and darkness. Shackled in chains, "at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and **singing** hymns to God." They turned a cell into a Cathedral, and chains into cymbals. Worship won over Worry, and Praise over Prison!

Some of the best hymns of praise and worship were breathed out by saints amidst deep suffering. Amy Carmicheal (1861-1951) of Dohnavur Fellowship, survived a fall and was bedridden for over 20 years. Most of her poems were written during that phase. One of them had these lines—

*"One thing I have desired, my God, of Thee,
That I will seek, Thine house, home to me."*

The Church bells rang this song when she died in 1951.

Beloved, the world would only curse God when it goes through unthinkable and inexplicable suffering. But the saints would bless Him! Job's losses prompted his wife to persuade him to curse God and die. Job turned a deaf ear and said, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; **Blessed** be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21; 2:7-10). His posture when he made this statement is recorded like this: "Job fell to the ground and **worshipped**" (Job 1:20).

d) Faithfulness in regular duties

This is another facet of real worship. Colossians 3:16, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." This is only one side of worship. The other side is pointed out in verse 17: "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." The act of verse 16 is Sunday worship, and the act of 17 is Monday-thru-Saturday worship! Aren't we called to turn work into worship?

Conclusion

Here is a quote, from Bishop William Temple, which embraces all these 10 lessons—

True Worship...

- ❑ Quickens the conscience by the Holiness of God;
- ❑ Feeds the mind with the Truth of God;
- ❑ Purges the imagination by the Beauty of God;
- ❑ Opens the heart to the Love of God;
- ❑ Devotes the will to the Purpose of God.

“All of us” should become “all of Him.” “Everything of ourselves” should die and transform into “everything of Himself.” This is the meaning of what the Psalmist said in the opening lines of Psalm 103, “Bless the Lord, O my soul and **all** that’s within me, bless His Holy Name!”

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