

**CEP 2023**

**The Worship Series**

**01 January 2023 -**

**19 February 2023**

## **Lesson 1: Worship and the Lord's Supper**

**Objectives:** Re-visiting what constitute worship as described in Scripture and how this understanding helps us appreciate the Lord's supper.

**Text:** 1 Cor 11:17-34, Exodus 12, Matthew 26:26-28

**Memory verse:** And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you (Luke 22:19-20)

### **The origin and intention of the Lord's Supper**

1.1 The Lord's Supper can be traced back to the Passover meal at the time of the Exodus. It was instituted by Jesus at the time of his final meal with his disciples. The bread and the cup point to his broken body and shed blood and are the definitive symbols of the New Covenant in Christ. All would agree that the bread and the cup are symbols of Christ's redemptive work at Calvary, of the fellowship of the people of God in Christ, and of the coming day when a redeemed people will gather in the presence of the Saviour.

1.2 The existence of the people of God in the Old Testament was grounded in the work of deliverance that God brought about at the Exodus. He pronounced judgment on the land of Egypt for their mistreatment of Israel, but as he did so, he provided a means of salvation for his people. A lamb would be slaughtered, and the blood of the lamb would be put on the doorframes of the houses of God's people. When the angel of death passed over, the homes where the lamb's blood was visible would be spared the plague of the death of the firstborn son. The lamb died instead of the firstborn son of the household. The people of Israel would eat the supper of lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread as they prepared to flee. The Passover meal (Exod. 12) was to be a continual reminder of the great salvation that God brought to his covenant people through a great act of judgment.

1.3 The final meal that Jesus had with his disciples immediately before his betrayal and arrest was the traditional Passover meal. As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after

blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:26-28). Symbolically, Jesus referred to the bread as His body and the wine as His blood. The body was to be broken and the blood would be shed as a sacrifice on the cross. The blood is now the “blood of the covenant” – the new covenant that Jesus would institute through his death and resurrection. As the Passover meal was symbolic of an old covenant of God saving His people from Egypt, the Lord’s Supper represented the new covenant, taking place on the eve of the saving work that Jesus would achieve on the cross. As the Passover meal served as a reminder of the redemption that the Lord achieved for his people in bringing them out of bondage in Egypt, the Lord’s Supper becomes a powerful reminder of the redemption that the Lord Jesus achieved for his people in releasing us from sin. The Lord’s supper is therefore the symbol of the new covenant.

1.4 Jesus speaks of his disciples obeying his instructions “as often as” (1Cor. 11:25-26), indicating that this should be an ongoing practice; as such, since the establishment of the church, the believers “devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). As such, the Lord’s supper is an integral part of our worship because we exalt Him as our only God and our redeemer. More importantly, we proclaim that only He is able to save us, and no one else can do so.

## **Worship in the Lord’s Supper**

2.1 Essence of Worship re-visited. We know that worship is about our soul’s preoccupation with the Lord Himself. In scripture, the Lord is above all, and His death on the cross is one act because it is through this that we are saved from our sins. All the events in Old Testament, all the old teachings were meant to prepare us for the event on the cross. As such, our exaltation of the Lord is centred on this and that is why the Lord’s supper becomes the focus of our worship.

2.2 Remembering the Lord. First, the Lord’s Supper expresses the value of Christ by reminding us of him. Notice the word “remembrance” twice. Once in relation to the bread in verse 24 and once in relation to the cup in verse 25. Christ gave us this simple “Lord’s Supper” to help us keep him in memory, especially as His blood and body was given up in death. We

worship Him on this aspect as we acknowledged that He is God alone and only He alone could save us from our sins. We must remember his death because it is what gives us life. As an assembly, we come together to worship and partake in the Lord's supper specifically because it helps remind us as an assembly about the redeeming works of the cross.

2.3 Exalting the Lord. The Lord's Supper allows us to exalt the true worth of the Lord by proclaiming his death. Verse 26: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." After we remember the Lord, we want to also exalt Him, not just to ourselves, to each other and to those who have not yet known him. In our worship, we exalt Him for the wonderful work on the cross through his death. In exalting, we also tell others what He has done. Partaking in the Lord's supper is part of our worship because when we remember the important work on the cross, we are, in fact, also exalting his Godliness and sovereignty over our lives.

2.4 Renewing our faith in the Lord. The Lord's Supper enables us to find meaning in our lives through our life in Christ. If we come to Christ over and over and say, "By this, O Christ, I feed on you. By this, O Jesus Christ, I nourish my life in you. By this I share in all the grace you bought for me with your own blood and body" (1 Corinthians 10:16) - if we come to Christ over and over with this longing and this conviction in our heart, our faith will grow and this would inevitably strengthen the quality of our worship.

### **Other Aspects of the Lord's Supper**

3.1 Our attention during the Lord's supper. In Scriptures, we are meant to "look" in a number of directions with the eyes of faith as we share in the Lord's Supper. In doing this, it will help us come to the Lord in the manner that is pleasing to Him and by extension, offer Him the worship He deserves.

3.1.1 First, we are to **look back** with gratitude to Jesus and his death at the cross (1Cor. 11:24).

3.1.2 Next, we are to **look around** at the body of believers with whom we share the Supper. It is something we do as we come together (v. 17) and discern the body of

Christ (v. 29) as we eat. Sharing the one bread together is a sign of our fundamental unity (1Cor. 10:17).

3.1.3 We also **look up** to heaven, where the risen and ascended Christ intercedes for us as our great High Priest (cf. Heb. 4:14-16).

3.1.4 Finally, we **look forward** to the day when Jesus will return (1Cor. 11:26). The celebration of the Supper serves as a proclamation of Jesus' death which anticipates his return. Jesus himself, when he instituted the Supper, ate it in anticipation of the future (Matt. 26:29). The ultimate outworking of God's salvation plan has long been associated with the promise of a great banquet (Isa. 25:6; cf. Rev. 19:9). The Lord's Supper serves as a foretaste as well as reminding us of the only basis of our hope for participating in it.

## **Conclusion**

4. The Lord's Supper is worship because it exalts the infinite worth of Christ. No one is more worthy to be remembered. No one is more worthy to be exalted. And no one can save our souls with eternal life and give our lives meaning but Christ.

## Discussion Questions

1. If the Lord's supper is an important part of worship, how can we prepare properly for it before coming to the Lord's supper?
2. Which of the three aspects of the Lord's supper in relation to worship (para 2.2 to 2.4) do you resonate with the most? Share with your group on this.
3. What does the Lord's supper mean to you on a personal level?

Written by: Gerald Sim

## **Lesson 2: The Priesthood of all Believers**

**Passages for consideration:** Numbers 3:10; Exodus 19:4-6; 28:1; Heb 8:1-6; 9:1-10; 13:10-16; 1 Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 1:5-6; 5:9-10 (*extra reading: Exodus 29, Leviticus 9, 10, 21:1-22:16*)

### **Objectives:**

Understand and appreciate the priesthood of all believers to worship God in a manner pleasing to Him.

### **Notes:**

#### **1) Definitions of Priests and Priesthood:**

*Merriam Webster Dictionary:* Someone who is authorized to perform the sacred rites of a religion especially as a mediatory agent between humans and God. *Specifically:* an Anglican, Eastern Orthodox, or Roman Catholic clergyperson ranking below a bishop and above a deacon.

*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words:*

- i) Strong's number **G2409** *hierous* "one who offers sacrifice and has the charge of things pertaining thereto" [i.e. of pagan priests (Acts 14:13), of Jewish priests (Mt 8:4), of believers (Rev 1:6), of Christ (Heb 5:6), of Melchizedek (Heb 7:1), or
- ii) Strong's number **G749** *archiereus* "designates", of that of a high priest, the chief of priests (Heb 4:14, Acts 4:6)

*Martin Luther:* "All Christians are altogether priests, and let it be anathema to assert there is any other priest than he who is Christian; for it will be asserted without the Word of God, on no authority but the sayings of men, or the antiquity of custom, or the multitude of those that think so."

*Collected writings of J.N. Darby: Doctrinal part 3:* "There is not in the New Testament one passage which speaks of or alludes to a priesthood upon earth, save as every Christian is; or supposes the existence of a priesthood on earth save that of all Christians... Christ is the great High Priest. All Christians are priests, and no other priesthood than this is owned among Christian men in the New Testament."

*William Hoste – Bishops, Priests, and Deacons:* "Who are recognized as priests in the epistles? The answer is: all heart believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, without distinction of age or sex, and as to high priests, there is only one, Jesus, the Son of God, and no vice high priests."

2) Tradition of Priests and Priesthood: (see appendix A for further information)



Figure 1: A history of priesthood in Scripture and in secular history



### 3) Implications of Priests and Priesthood [of the NT assembly]

#### a) In relation to the OT priesthood:



Figure 2: Four characteristics of the Levitical priesthood

- Compare Ex 19:6, Hos 4:6, and 1 Pet 2:5,9,10. The national priesthood privilege was offered to the nation of Israel, but they sadly forfeited this special position due to failure. Christian priesthood fills this privileged position till a future day (Is 61:6).
- By divine election and new birth, every NT believer is brought into this priestly privilege.
- **Key lesson: Phil 3:3; Rev 1:5,6 - All believers are priests and as such can worship God. They become so at the moment of conversion, when born-again from above. Just**



as the priesthood in Israel was by birth right (of Aaron’s family), believers are priests by divine right of the new birth.

b) In relation to our great High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ:

- There is only one High Priest now, and no vice-high priests. The rest of all believers are priests. No other sacerdotal office should be present in the local assembly.
- Christ’s priesthood is not Aaronic, but of the higher order of Melchizedek; royal in its dignity, continuous in its character, eternal in its duration, and heavenly in its sphere of action. It could not be earthly, for our Lord was not from a priestly tribe (Heb 7:11-14; 8:4), but His would be a better covenant than the old with Israel.
- If our Lord did not exercise priesthood upon earth, how could Gentiles, like ourselves, outside of the tribe of Israel do so then? As Christ followers and associated with Him in such a heaven-ward priesthood, the sphere of our priesthood is then heaven, and not of earth.
- The priesthood of Israel was selective, symbolic, and earthly; that of the Christian in contrast is universal, substantial, and heavenly.
- **Key lesson: Col 2:16,17; Gal 4:9; Heb 8:5; 10:1 – We have nothing to do with following the shadows of the Levitical priesthood. What is there of Heaven in the priesthoods of the great religious systems of the world, with their earthly sanctuaries, material altars, and literal vestments? Christ is the centre of our gathering and present as High Priest, it is presumptuous for any man to take and dictate the worship of an assembly.**

c) In relation to our current function in the local assembly



Figure 3: A holy and royal priesthood of all believers

- 1 Peter 2:5,9 describes for us that all believers are a HOLY and ROYAL priesthood – holy as to the divine purpose, royal as to their priestly dignity.
- As priests of God, the veil between God and us is rent. Now that He is revealed to us, we must draw near to God Himself through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.
- All may draw near on the ground common to all believers by the blood of Jesus Christ.
- In calling us priests, God reminds us that we are His worshippers, and that we have somethings to offer. The highest privilege of a believer is that of being a priest, for in our service we are occupied with man, but in our worship with our God. – Lincoln, W.
- We are called to offer sacrifices as priests as our worship to God:
  - a. A living sacrifice – Rom 12:1 *‘I am bought with a price; my life is not my own.’*
  - b. A sacrifice of praise – Heb 13:15 *‘I can always give thanks; my soul rejoices.’*
  - c. A sacrifice of good works – Heb 13:16 *‘I can give my all, my possessions and time’*
  - d. A sacrifice of sharing the gospel – Rom 15:16 *‘I love, because God first loved me’*
  - e. A sacrifice of service in the assembly – Phil 2:17 *‘I serve with my whole being’*
- **Key lesson: Heb 10:19-22; Rev 4:10,11 – As a holy and royal priesthood, we can come boldly to the throne of grace ourselves to worship God. We have to consecrate ourselves – out of the abundance of the heart the hand works, and the mouth speaks. The glorious destiny of every priest is to worship God, and we worship God through the sacrifices that are acceptable to Him. We are training for reigning.**

#### 4. **Application** for Priests and Priesthood – focused particularly in worship

- While there are no prescriptive practices written in the Bible for us to follow, there are very clear principles which God has shown through the examples of people and through the apostles’ doctrine for us to adhere to.
- This will gird the boundaries and settings of how we ought to practice these principles – in all orderliness and simplicity (1 Cor 14:40).
- Worship is an act of i) reverence (Acts 16:14), ii) homage (Mt 8:2), iii) service (Heb 13:10) to God. We are giving back to God and offering our sacrifices to Him, adoring Him on account of His essential worthiness (Ps 104)!

- Worship in the highest sense of the word is always the result of a present sight of God in Christ (William Hoste) Ps 23:5 – it is an overflow of a heart filled with Christ. Only saved people can truly worship God, and all saved people must worship God!
- Worship as such is intricately linked with priesthood – it is a lifestyle. Just as the vocation of a priest was a lifestyle for the family of Aaron, it is likewise a lifestyle for all priests (believers) today. The life of a believer is worship to God.
- The OT priests had scheduled sacrifices throughout the year which were a culmination of their daily and weekly offerings. Likewise, for us, the Sunday breaking of bread meeting is but a culmination of our daily worship with the focus solely on the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ (*see appendix B*).
- As priests, we have to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23)
  - a. **In spirit** denotes that this worship is not soulish or sentimental, depending on beautiful music, painted windows, fine architecture, and spectacular effect, things that appeal to the flesh of men, but not spiritual.
  - b. **In truth** denotes that this worship is not according to the traditions and commandments of men, but according to the Word of God; not with lip service, but with the heart.
- A few practical applications drawing from the principles in the above sections:
  - a. As priests, we need to serve God in:
    - i. **Participation** – Assembly activities and fellowship
    - ii. **Prayer** – Corporate and individual prayer. The prayer meeting
    - iii. **Purse** – Giving of possessions, money, and time.
  - b. As priests coming to congregationally worship in the Lord’s supper (Heb 10:19-25):
    - i. The purpose of “open worship”:  
All human arrangement of worship hinders the free operation of the Holy Spirit; all are priests and can worship God directly (1 Cor 14:15-17). To have led worship implicates a return to a clerical system, and that of a “professional priesthood”.
    - ii. The privilege and responsibility of “open worship”:  
To be brought into the presence of God as true worshippers is a privilege and responsibility. Privilege begets responsibility, we must have worshipful attitudes.

Men are to audibly participate, women in silence to participate (1 Cor 14:34). On the flip side, to therefore not participate implicates a withholding of sacrifice. To flippantly participate implicates a flippant attitude to holy service.

William Hoste: ‘Less hurry is needed, more quietness of spirit, less familiarity, more spirituality. Some [Christians] are always on their feet, swift to speak, swift to pray, swift to give out a hymn; but the power of the Spirit is lacking in their utterances. Others are like ‘the dumb dogs’ of whom Isaiah speaks. They seem content to worship by proxy. But have they nothing to praise for?’

iii. The preparation for “open worship” (1 Cor 11:28):

There is a silence which reveals the flesh, and a silence which reveals God. We all must look in the mirror of God’s word (Jas 1:23-24) and see ourselves for who we are. Do note we are not looking for some ground of acceptance; for we are already accepted through the blood of Christ, nor for some personal worthiness; we have none, but we cannot sit at the table of God our father as like a child with soiled hands and expect to eat cleanly. Mal 2:6 gives us a reminder to be clean before God.

iv. The physical aspects for “open worship”:

Leviticus 21 contain regulations which prevent priests with physical defects from serving the Lord. The priests had to be unblemished; in OT Israel, the physical so often reflected the spiritual. We thank God that when the Lord Jesus came into this world, He dealt with the physical and external consequences of sin. Yet let us also remember, that just as the priests had to be physically well for manual service, for the menfolk who participate audibly today, it is an act on behalf of the entire congregation to the Lord. As such, it should be done with clear speech, understandable words, having a right character, and avoiding vain repetition.

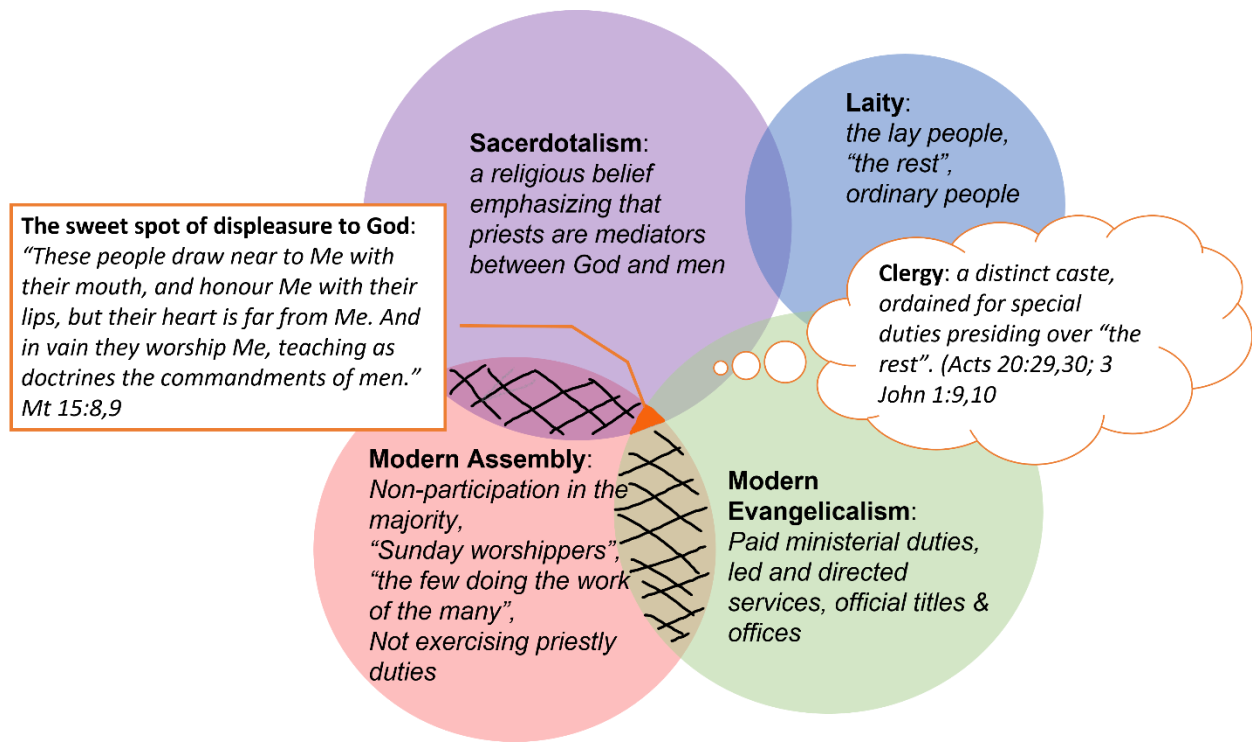


Figure 4: A summary of the issues against the priesthood of all believers.

**Questions:**

1. Consider the qualifications of the Levitical priesthood to worship God in the following table created for you. What will be the spiritual counterpart in the Christian priesthood? List the characteristics and descriptions.

The Levitical Priesthood	The NT Christian Priesthood
They were <i>called</i> (Ex 28:1; Heb 5:1,4; 1 Pet 2:9)	
They were <i>cleansed</i> (Lev 8:6)	
They were <i>clothed</i> (Lev 8:13; Ex 28:40)	

They were <i>consecrated</i> (Lev 8:24, 30)	
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2. List one misconception you might have had about the priesthood of all believers before today's lesson.
3. List one thing that you have learnt today with regards to the priesthood of all believers.
4. Read Mal 2:5-7, what are priests meant to be like? List 5 characteristics of a godly priest.
5. How should you exercise your HOLY and ROYAL priesthood? What are some sacrifices you can give to God? Consider it in the aspects of daily living, church activities, breaking of bread meeting, and work-life.
6. Consider how we should respond to others of different faith and practices if confronted on this topic of the priesthood of all believers. How would you describe this concept?
7. The beauty of the priesthood of all believers shows that we all have equal access to God through the blood of our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. Write down one thought that you can bring to the Lord for the coming Sunday's breaking of bread meeting as an act of sacrifice for worship. How can we help one another to worship?

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## Appendix A

Further information on priesthood tradition:

- Already during the NT times, the rise of the clerical system to differentiate men of office and the lay person existed and persisted (1 Pet 5:3; 2 Pet 2:2, Acts 20:29,30).
- One could understand that in a time when copies of Scripture were few, there would doubtless be certain members in the assemblies who would desire to have someone gifted, able to teach and preach to “minister” and to lead.
- It is also not unreasonable to think that there would be carnal men among this group who would dominate authority and claiming superiority in spiritual matters (Jude 8; 3 John 10).
- William Lincoln: *‘Clerisy chiefly depends for its existence and sufferance upon the notion that Christianity is nothing but the expansion of Judaism’.*
- J.G. Toll writes a useful paragraph on the history leading on from this: *‘In the year 313 A.D., the Roman emperor Constantine reversed centuries of Christian persecution as he himself professed conversion to Christianity. This led to the legal establishment of Christianity, and its ascendancy over other religions – Constantine showed great favour to the dignitaries of the “church”, participated in their councils, and assumed supremacy in church affairs. The head of state became the head of the church; the church and the state became united in one confused mixture. It was from this time forward that the term “Catholic” (meaning universal) became connected with the church.’*
- The rise of “Christendom” initiated sacerdotalism in the church and the rise of such priests; men who had distinctive robes and vestments, set up as indispensable mediators between God and men, copying the Jewish model.
- Only they alone were “qualified” to do certain things such as dispensing communion, granting absolution, and pronouncing a benediction. Only they alone could approach the “altar”.
- Worship, if not practiced in silence, was in a language (e.g. Latin) which was foreign to congregational members. It was ritualistic and formalistic, with outward rites and ceremonies, and the observing of “days, and months, and times and years” (Gal 4:10). Practices even “forbad marriages and commanding to abstain from meats” (1 Tim 4:3).

- Much of the Reformation [the rise of Protestantism] fought against the established Christendom of the Middle Ages. Yet while the Reformers rejected priestcraft in its office, they substituted for it, not the priesthood of all believers, but ministerialism, which, rapidly reverting to type, became a priestcraft under a new guise. (W. Hoste)
- The universal priesthood of all believers is a divine reality, to be grasped by faith and enjoyed in the power of the Spirit (W. Hoste). Unfortunately, only the minority of believers across the world practice it in accordance with the Word of God.

## Appendix B

Further information on priesthood and the Lord's supper (adapted from Lacey, H):

- It is interesting to note that nowhere in Scripture is the meeting to remember our Lord Jesus Christ's work on Calvary called the "worship meeting".
- It has only been called the "breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42) and the "Lord's Supper" (1 Cor 10:20)
- The epistles which deal with priesthood (1 Peter and Hebrews) do not deal with church order.
- The epistles which deal with church order particularly (1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy) do not directly mention priesthood.
- Furthermore, all the spiritual sacrifices seen above in section (3c) are seen to be acceptable to God through the Lord Jesus Christ
- It is therefore hardly with propriety that the priesthood of believers is limited to celebration of the Lord's Supper.
- Rather, since Christian priesthood embraces all else of genuine Christian life, it should also rightly embrace the Lord's Supper.
- Therefore, let us be clear that as priests -> we are to offer spiritual sacrifices daily -> this is our act of worship -> this means that daily living is worship to God -> we do not just worship on Sunday, but every day through our offering of spiritual sacrifices through our head, heart, and hands.

Written by: Nigel Wong

### **Lesson 3: The Meaning and Importance of Worship**

#### **Discussion questions:**

1. What does worship, be it corporate or personal, mean for you? Why do you consider it important or not?
2. Consider the following accounts in the Bible. What was the cost, reward and manner of their worship? Why do you think they were able to worship in this manner?
  - a. The Three wise men (Matthew 2:1-16)
  - b. The woman with the Alabaster Jar (Luke 7:37-50)
  - c. Abraham's test (Genesis 22:1-18)
3. An evangelist once said: "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn't". By this statement, evangelism is meant to point people to worship God. If our worship is poor, so will our joy in evangelism. To what extent do you think this is true?
4. To what extent do you think our joy in worship is dependent on our view of God and what He has done for us?

#### **Application questions:**

1. Why might you struggle with worship be it personally or at church? How can we fix our eyes on God, the figure of our worship?
2. Similar to the characters we saw earlier, what may be a cost (e.g. financial, energy, time, life, etc.) to worship which you are willing to part with and why?
3. Amidst the abundant CNY celebrations many of us would be enjoying, may we take time to reflect deeply on God who has given us His Son, that we may have life, and life abundantly (John 10:10b). As we consider His worth, worship (or worthship) will be made easier and all the more enjoyable.

Written by: Darren Kui

## **Lesson 4: The Authority and Object of Worship**

### **Objectives**

To understand & discern between the False & True Authority (Basis) of Worship & the True & False Objects of Worship

### **Key Texts**

John 4:21-24, Matt. 15:1-20, Deut. 6:13, 10:20

### **Memory Verse**

Deut. 6:13, 10:20

“You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by His name.”

“You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name.” NASB

### **Lesson**

#### **1. The Authority for our Worship**

Even in the gospels, Jesus declares judgment on those who replace God’s principles with theirs as hypocrites; those with their own human standards of honoring God are in fact not honoring Him at all. Matt. 15:1-9 Thus it is important to make sure we get our bearings right with God concerning worship.

##### **a) False concepts & wrong estimates about worship**

Consider these 4 major sources of confusion & false worship

- **Human tradition (Commentary)** Matt. 15:6-9, Mark 7:9-13

Jesus kept to the Laws & Instructions of God, not just to Human Traditions.

- **Expediency (Convenience)** 2 Sam. 6:1-8, Num 4:15, 7:9

*Scriptural* - Bible-based principles

*Unscriptural* - opposed to Biblical principles

*Non-scriptural* - not mentioned in the Bible

“a great lack of real spiritual power”

- **Church decrees (Councils)**
- **Conscience (Choice)**

**Christ is the Only Head of the Church** He is now in Heaven, unseen, yet spiritually & always present with us through His Spirit. No other authority - from secular or church systems to self - should take His preeminent place. God is Perfect, so nothing should be added to how & what He has revealed in His Word about how we worship.

Next, Gibbs reminds us that “A false conception (understanding) always results in a wrong estimate” Here he shares some wrong estimates that result from using our limited, human understanding & perceptions to evaluate the value of worship.

- **The Materialistic** Ex. 5:1-17
- **The Religious**
- **The Uninstructed Believer** Matt. 26:6-13

All these wrong estimates result in a low & worthless valuation of true worship according to God’s Word. Thus, the only way to get a true & accurate perspective of worship is from God’s own Word, which we will now look into.

***b) Our authority for worship is based on God’s Word alone***

***Old Testament*** (Key texts: Gen 22, Ex. 25-29, Lev 16, 23, Deut 16)

The Plan, Pattern & Purpose of worship is revealed by God. True Worship is based on faith - e.g. sacrifice Isaac while believing that God can raise him, not just ritualistic works borne from human imagination

***New Testament*** - here we find principles to guide the church in true worship, NOT procedures to follow. This is a clear contrast to the ***false concepts & wrong estimates*** mentioned in section 1a above.

## 2. False objects of worship

- **Idols of various forms**
- **Other Men & Women (Fallen images of God)**
- **Other Created Wonders - Angels & Nature**

## 3. The Only Object of our worship

- **Worship the Father**
- **Worship the Son**
- **Worship Not the Holy Spirit**

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# True vs False Objects of Worship



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## Discussion Questions

### 1. The Authority for our Worship

a) The Greek word *proskuneo* (Strong's no. 4352) is used in Jesus' summary of true spiritual worship in John 4:21-24. It is also the most commonly-used Greek word for worship in the NT. It has the literal meaning of "to kiss towards" (from *pros*, "towards," and *kuneo*, "to kiss"). What does this teach us about worshipping God? Compare with some Hebrew words (Strong's no. 5456, 5457, 7812) related to worship to understand better.



b) Discuss Judas' reaction in Matt 26:6-13, do we see any of his wrong attitude & estimates of worship in our lives? How much time do we spend in preparation for corporate worship? If we stay up late for chats, gatherings, or even hosting people on Saturdays, can we make similar sacrifices for corporate worship?

c) Look into the OT pictures related to worship - altars, offerings, sacrifices, tabernacle, temple, psalms of worship & praise & thanksgiving (Ex. 35-40, Lev. 16, 23, Deut. 12, 16, Ps 2, 118 etc). How do these types & patterns of worship correspond with what the NT teaches?

## **2. The Object of our Worship**

a) Who is the Only One worthy of our worship as believers/disciples? From the morning ministry & CEP notes, what examples guide us to the answer?

b) Who did Christ worship & honor during His first coming? Did He worship any of the **false** objects? Give examples from what He said or did. Mark 10:17-18, John 5:19-24, 7:14-18 What about some OT examples of God's people worshipping false objects? (i.e. Aaron, his sons, King Jeroboam (Israel), the people of Judah during Hezekiah's time etc)

Look at our own lives, which **false** objects are we worshipping instead of God?

c) Using 2022's CEP notes & morning ministry recordings etc, plus your own books/resources on God's Person & Character, why is the Holy Spirit not worshipped? (refer below for some suggestions)

## **Life Application**

1. What is affecting how I worship? What influences my understanding of worship - is it the latest Christian songs, my other Christian friends, the presentation styles, the church we attend, other trends etc? Reflect & review on your life & reevaluate.

2. Who are we actually worshipping? What have we been spending the bulk of our time & money on? Can we identify some idols as mentioned in the notes (i.e. science, nature, family etc)? What other idols may be taking our time, talents & resources away from God? (e.g. Insta stories, social media, internet TV etc)

## **Bibliography**

- a) “Worship: the Christian’s Highest Occupation” Chps 9-15  
Gibbs, A.P.

## **Resources/Suggested Reading**

- a) “Alone in Majesty”  
Macdonald, William
- b) “The Knowledge of the Holy”  
Tozer, A.W.
- c) “The Holy Spirit at Work”  
Emmaus Course
- d) “In the school of Christ”  
Gooding, D.

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## **Lesson 5: The Ground and Power of Worship**

### **Objectives:**

To learn how the believer is to be made spiritually capable of true worship. At the end of the lesson, he or she should freely worship understanding why and how it should and will be well pleasing to the Lord.

### **Text:**

Mt 4:10 / Deut 6:13-15/ Jn 4:20-24 and Rev 22:8-9

### **Memory Verse:**

God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:24(NASB)

### **Introduction**

1. Worship is the Christian's Highest Occupation as defined by AP Gibbs. The worship of God is the greatest privilege and responsibility of not only a believer but also of all mankind. It is therefore fitting to declare that every heart should pour out its homage as they consider the glories of God. Sadly, not all mankind has this desire to pay homage to the God of the bible but rather choose to direct that worship to another. Celebrity worship is an obsessive addictive disorder as defined by Wikipedia. It is like a person who becomes overly involved with the details of someone special like a film star, singer, footballer, football club or for that matter a successful worship leader. Please note, no ill intent is meant to offend any die-hard football fans or belittle anyone by this statement. If only that ground for celebrity worship, that energy could be properly channeled to the God who demands worship from us, it would be an honoring delight to the Father. In our series on Exaltation, we learned from earlier studies, what does it mean to worship & the importance of worship. For today's lesson, we come to the topic of Ground of Worship and the Power for worship.

### **Ground of worship**

2.1 Every creature has the capacity to worship. We have evidence of it all over the world, be it other faiths or cults or famous celebrities. On the other spectrum, those that seek to be

worshipped create an opposition for the worship of the genuine God. However, we read from Scripture that the only One we, as believers are to worship is God alone, He, being a Jealous God. (Deut 4:24). Many a mega star rises to fame and becomes a model or even an idol for many followers. What does the bible have to say about those who seek to be worshipped instead of seeking to worship? We read of Lucifer in Isaiah 14 and of Herod in Acts 12. Both faced the just consuming fire of a Jealous God. It is thus not an unfathomable thing for many to follow deceitful teachings that turn them away from God. There will come a time, the bible revealed that the Anti-Christ will appear and lead all away from God and turn the worshippers to himself (Rev 13:4 & 8). Thankfully, the same bible tells us of the destiny awaiting such an imposter of God. Outrightly, the created has no right to seek to be worshipped but obviously the Creator God has every right to be worshipped. Worship then as defined in the earlier ministries focused on casting our total devotion in obedience to the Holy Triune God by unrighteous men, who acknowledged their sin and received the salvation provided by God to a new life in Christ Jesus. And with such transformation yearns to worship God, drawing from their hearts to consider the glories of God and His work with an outpouring of praise and adoration.

2.2 This is fulfillment of the ultimate design and purpose of God in creation, (Ps 8 & 19). As in all things pertaining to life and godliness, we should know where we stand, we should have a good grasp of the basis we are to worship God. Especially so in this world and age, everyone believes and worship something but a good question to ask is on what basis does the Christian worship God?

Just as the Samaritan woman who claimed to be a worshipper in God, the Lord lovingly directed her to a correct basis for becoming a true worshipper of God, whom God seeks. He said to her in Jn 4:22-24, “You worship what you do not know... true worshippers know who they worship and they worship in spirit and in truth”. We will look at the worship of the Father “in truth” first and then follow by the worship “in spirit”.

2.3 There are three fundamental truths to establish without doubts, our ground for worship of the living God. They are redemption, relationship, and representation.

## **Redemption**

3. Truth of Redemption. Not everyone can come to the presence of God and worship Him. Even the OT eg in Ex 19 spelled out all the restrictions or requirements for Moses, the priests and the people to approach God. In the NT, the gospel accounts show us that there was little spiritual resemblance manifested by the Pharisees, Priest and religious leaders of the Lord's time as compared to those in Exodus days. And during the birth of the Church in Acts, there resurfaced what the strict requirements were. In Acts 5 account, we read of some purging of sin and in 1Cor 5 & 6 more of the sin's immorality and legal tussle of the church. Are these capable of worship with so much sin and hypocrisy prevailing? How then can a true worshipper come into the presence of God and worship today? Redemption by God, alone.

3.1 Holiness. To have an acceptable ground of worship begins from the fact that the infinite holiness of God demands that all those who approach Him with the view to worship must be acceptable to Him. Despite the strict requirements in the OT for the priesthood and the nation of Israel, they repeatedly failed in this aspect of maintaining holiness. A quick definition of holiness from Heb 1:9a is "a love of righteousness and a hatred of iniquity". Since Rom 3:10 states that "there's none righteous, no not one", how then can God ever be able to find worshippers fit to stand in His holy Presence and even to offer worship acceptable to Him, delighting His heart?

3.2 Grace. The solution cannot be from us but only from God. Only by the way God has appointed, scripturally presented, divinely accepted and a substitutionally sacrifice satisfied. This is evidenced from Gen to Rev that a Redeemer who will pay the price and draw us nigh to God those who are afar off. This we know is the salvation plan of God (Eph 2:8-9). For wretched sinners, God has provided a Savior to redeem us from our sin estate, ie from the love of iniquity and hatred of righteousness to the love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity. According to Rom 12:1-2, unless one is utterly transformed by the power of God the Holy Spirit, there is no way one can acceptably approach God in worship. When the Lord told the Samaritan woman to worship in truth, it is the truth that a Saviour was necessary to satisfy God's just demand for all His truth. The woman had totally missed the point and was pre-occupied about where they worship avoiding the deeper question of

who & why was God to be worshipped simply because her Gentile forefathers added much pagan concepts to their worship. Recognizing her lack of truth, the Lord reinforced that since she believed Him now to be a prophet, the time has come for true worshippers to worship God in spirit and in truth. There can be no approach to God, no worship apart from the substitutionary sacrifice, bearing the sinner's sins, dying in his place. Apart from Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, no worship is acceptable, no matter how sincerely devoted to God or religiously keeping the commandments of God. The woman believed and acknowledged Him as the Messiah that came as she left her pot immediately to tell the truth discovered. Leading others also to believe in the Savoir of the world. (Jn 4:42)

3.3 Example of Holiness and Grace. Reading Ex 19-20, we see that the Israelites stood at the foot of Mt Sinai and received what Moses had relayed to them from God, they declared all that God demanded, they "would do" but soon they failed in their promise. God in His holiness will still need to uphold His laws as given to Moses. Though destroyed, another set was given and in addition He also gave them the grace of redemption. In this God gave them the commandment of an altar of the earth to sacrifice so that He can bless. This is an excellent example of the Holiness of God and the Grace of God. This emphasizes the only way to approach God who is holy is by His grace through a substitute whose life and blood was given on our behalf. In the NT, Heb 9:22, reinforces this, without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. Here we see truth in the law for all to be holy and spirit in the grace of God to provide for man through a sacrifice to approach Him. Thus, God being spirit must be worship in spirit and in truth.

## **Relationship**

### 4. Truth of Relationship

4.1 Most of us will agree that there is certainly a relationship necessary between God and man, just like there exist between two entities. All throughout the bible, the relationship of God as the Father is more than sufficiently emphasized. God wants to relate to us as a father who loves and cares to the uttermost for His children. Many accounts of father and son relationship were recorded in the OT. In the NT, the Lord Himself also gave many

examples of the Father's relationship between Himself and the Lord and His born-again children. Looking at our text in John 4, we see that when the woman referred to worship, she did not even mention God. The Lord was right about them that they worshipped what they know not. And interestingly to note, the Lord referred worship directed to the Father and repeated that the Father seeks such worshippers. In other gospel accounts eg in Matt 6:9, the Lord taught the disciple how they were to relate to God in this teaching on prayer, "Our Father in heaven...". Look at other similar records just in Mt 6 alone, there are at least 9 other times the Lord referred to "the Father".

4.2 What is and how should we then relate to the God? As the bible intended and expressly stated when we received Christ, we become children of God, we gained the right to be called children of God Jn1:13 born not by blood or by the will of the flesh, or man, but by the will of God. Also emphasized by the concept of being born again in Jn 3 in the Lord's discourse with Nicodemus. In the epistles, the apostle further stressed that we were not born again of corruptible seeds but incorruptible through the Word of God. 1Pet 1:23. In Eph 1:5, in love, He predestined us to the adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will. And many more verses are there with regards to this sonship with the Father.

4.3 So, what does this mean? As we become assured by the word of God in this unique relationship, we can, if not already doing so, approach His presence with much boldness (Heb 10:19) and with deep love and desire to be near and with the Father who loves us most dearly, crying out and up to Him "Abba, Father". In worship we could never be coming before a cold, aloof or distant, impersonal God whom we find great discomfort due to fear or inadequacies to satisfy His demands. We know in Christ; we have been brought into this sweet and everlasting relationship to address Him as our Father.

## **Representatio**

5. Truth of Representation. Almost every worshipper of any faith in this world has some form of representation for worship to be appropriately accepted. Basically, there will be a system organization or hierarchy or priest or service ministers representing their objectives. We noted in



the OT, there are accounts of the organization and priesthood that were designed and detailed out by the Lord through Moses. In the book of Exodus and Leviticus, the chosen people of God were delivered from slavery in Egypt so that they would be able to go and worship God. There are numerous exact details written concerning worship of God. One such inescapable detail is that of an ultimate representative before the Holy God. One among the chosen people of the priesthoods was to be the High Priest among the priests who was appointed to be a representative of God to man and man to God. This mediator priest was then to minister according to the requirements given and render the worship of God acceptable.

5.1 This OT principle of representation in worship, where God would require a mediator to stand acceptable between the gap of the Holy God and man, was the fore-runner to the NT and current principle of Christian worship before the Lord's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. Until then, we will still need a High Priest to be our representative before the Holy God (Heb9:11-12). This is clearly detailed in Hebrews where the Lord Jesus Christ is the Great High Priest before God for all the believers. Contrasted to the OT high priest, our Lord's high priestly ministry is infinitely superior in every and above that of the OT high priest. For example, our Lord's sacrifice was once and for all and everlasting while that of the High Priest had to be repeated year by year. Heb 10:14, "for by one offering, He had perfected forever those who are being sanctified". Furthermore, contrasting with Aaron's sacrifice, the Lord 's sacrifice is only for the people, needing none for Himself and the sacrifice was Himself, the Offeror was also the Offering. (Heb 7:26)

5.2 There are many more excellencies or better than those mediation of our Lord as contrasted to the OT High Priest. After reading Hebrews, one will conclude that what Heb 8:1-2 summaries: "Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected and not man..."

5.3 **We have such a High Priest**, a great wealth of meaning compressed in these 6 monosyllable words. This is the theme taken up by the whole Hebrew epistle. As we approach our God in boldness to worship Him with this basis, we have a high priest over

the house of God. Heb10:21.

5.4 The Father seeks true worshipper who worship Him in spirit and in truth. Those 3 truths highlighted point our focus to Christ as the Truth and our occupation is to be with Him, in Him and for Him in our worship in truth.

### **Power for worship**

6. The Father seeks true worshipper who worship Him in spirit and in truth. To answer the curious mind as to how to worship in spirit, a quick look into the original language worship was used in John 4. Proskuneo comprise of pros, towards and kyneo, to kiss. Meaning to go down on my knees, do homage, to kiss the ground when prostrating to worship and to adore. While this may be true of the posture of worship but to do so besides the necessary physical gesture is that which is suggested in this greek definition to do so with a willingness. How then can one worship in spirit? There must be that willingness to overcome all that hinders the pride or boastfulness of man to bow in homage to another. How should a believer worship?

7. The answer is in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Power for physical worship can be from charismatic men who devise and display piety or even supernatural performances to do so convincing, but the power for true worship is from the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead. In order then to worship in spirit, it is therefore essential to understand this 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the triune Godhead.

8. We acknowledge from Scripture who the Holy Spirit is and what are His roles. Thus, a review of the Holy Spirit will help us to better appreciate Him in our worship of God. The Bible portrays the Holy Spirit as a Person. This was the record from the words of the Lord Jesus Himself concerning the Holy Spirit and always referred Him as a He, one with personality. He is not a vague imagination, influence, or emanation but a distinct, divine Person equal and eternal with God the Father and Christ the Son. He has the personality as He exhibits Knowledge, knows, and guides believers in all truth; Feelings, grieves or quenched by disobedience; and lastly will, He strives, and He convicts men of righteousness.

9. The bible also describes the Holy Spirit by all the titles given to Him. For example, the Holy Spirit, signifying His absolute holiness; the Spirit of truth, being God, He's omniscience; the Helper/Comforter, the One who comes along side and just one last one among many more, the Spirit of Christ (Jn 16:14; Rm8:9), these verses tell us how the Spirit's role is to glorify Christ and the Father, and not Himself.

10. To understand the Holy Spirit is to allow Him to work more in our life. Where we know and get to know Him better other than from the Word of God and a living relationship with Christ our Savior and reverence for God, our Father. He was active in the life of the Lord Jesus while the Lord took on flesh and dwell among men. As we traced the life, death and burial and resurrection and ascension of our Lord, the Holy Spirit was there doing His work as the silent executor of the Father's divine plan. Similarly, as the Lord was dependent on the Spirit while He took on humanity, each of us believer is also to be dependent on the Holy Spirit to love Christ and to worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

11. What is the visible evidence of the Holy Spirit's power in our worship in spirit? The Holy Spirit does many things in the life of a believer but regarding worship, the needful answer is that of fruit bearing. Examining our lives, do we consistently develop this total dependence of the Holy Spirit in our daily living? Manifesting the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. (Gal 5:22-25). In the area of worshipping in spirit, are we often being led of the Holy Spirit in this awakening of our souls to our salvation through Faith in Christ, the opening of our eyes, minds and even mouths to offer this sacrifice of praise to God and giving thanks to His name which is the fruits of our lips? (Heb 13:15)

12. The end goal for every true worshipper of God is to glorify Christ by the leading of the power of the Holy Spirit. The worshipper will be led to an ever-increasing apprehension and appreciation of the Father and Son be it in reference to the Word of God, through a hymn or prayer of praise. Our worship to God in all its spirit led beauty and perfect harmony, assures us of such sacrifices, the Father is well pleased.

## **Summary**

13. True Spirit led worship will lead the believer to render royal service to the Lord. It will occupy the heart of the believer and essentially as we have already covered, it is not in getting to present our offerings after much motivation, meditation and preparation on the Lord's Day worship meeting but more so a daily pre-occupation of the Father and Son as the Holy Spirit leads. Read again Jn4:39-42...how the Samaritan woman's who had a genuine desire to worship in spirit and in truth, rendered service royal and true that testify to her world that the Savior of the world is Christ. Believers are to live a life of worship of a living God and Savior full of the Holy Spirit evidenced in walk because we have solid ground for this manner of worshipping life and the power of the Holy Spirit for it.

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. Is obeying or embracing the commandments of God in His word sufficient grounds for us to worship God? How can a Holy God receive worship from sinful men?
2. How should we address God in our devotion and worship and why? Would you confess that you have a personal relationship with God?
3. In the OT, we have representation of acceptable worship in that of the Passover Lamb and of the High Priestly line of Aaron. What do we have today to present to God as our reasonable acceptable service of worship? Heb 7:25-28

## **Life Application**

1. Reflect on the ground of worship in the Church. Can an unbeliever who is amid worshippers, joined in, to worship God? Should it be defended that the worship meeting is before God and should be reverently guarded?
2. Reflect on Heb 8:1..."we have such a high priest" and share how the Lord Jesus has been that to you?

3. Since the believer is made spiritually capable of true worship by the Holy Spirit, share how can you be led by the Spirit and guard against distraction by the world.

Bibliography and references

Worship- the Christian Highest Occupation by AP Gibbs

Written by: Tan Chee Hwee

## **Lesson 6 : Hindrances to Worship**

### **Objectives**

To identify what hinders the Christian's worship.

To learn how to overcome hinderances to worship.

### **Text**

Leviticus 10:1-3, John 4:23, 1 John 2:15-16, Galatians 6:14, Matthew 6:19-21, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Philippians 2:3, Proverbs 24:30-34, Romans 13:11-12, 1 Samuel 13:1-14, Psalm 62:5, Matthew 5:23-24, 1 John 4:20-21, Ephesians 4:31-32, Luke 18:10-14, James 4:6, Philippians 2:7-8 (All Scriptures Quoted in English Standard Version)

### **Memory Verse**

If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination. (Proverbs 28:9)

### **Lesson**

#### ***1. Introduction***

Have you ever experienced a “low period” when worshipping God? Does this happen often? When was the last time you felt like your worship is going nowhere and God seems so far away? Or perhaps in the past, you’ve had a great relationship with the Lord and worshipping him has been the greatest enjoyment in your Christian walk. Now you feel this enjoyment is no longer there. Instead, worship has become a chore, an obligation of the day, something that you just want to quickly get over with because you have been doing this day-in day-out, month-in month-out or even year-in year-out. Has worshipping God now become an elusive preoccupation that is hard to grasp and maintain? Worse, we may not even know that we no longer worship the Lord.

“Hindrances to Worship” is a subject matter most Christians are accustomed to yet so many refused to deal with it, let alone recognise it. Too often Christians do not feel like worshipping God and allow this condition to slip away. Soon, the Christian is no longer in fellowship with the Lord and the Assembly. Do know that the spiritual tone of your personal worship has a significant impact on the spiritual tone of corporate worship in the Assembly. Believers who do not live a life of true worship cannot expect the Assembly to lift holy hands and hearts in worship.

Since the act of worship is considered the Christian's highest occupation, it is no surprise that the devil will stop at nothing to disrupt this occupation. This includes putting several obstacles and hindrances in the Christian's occupation with worship.

## ***2. Hinderances to Worship***

A.P. Gibbs in his book "Worship, The Christian's Highest Occupation", identified nine (9) hinderances to worship. These hinderances are Self-Will, Worldliness, A Critical Spirit, Slothfulness, Impatience, Sectarianism, Formalism, An Unforgiving Spirit, and Pride. We will only consider and discuss seven (7) hinderances which are more pertinent to our current practice. We will give Sectarianism a miss since we do not embrace "fractions" or "isolations" in our Assembly. Likewise, we do not practice Formalism in worship, so we will also give this a miss. However, it should also be mindful that the list is not exhaustive; by and large, most hindrances to worship fall into one of these descriptions.

### ***2.1 Self-Will***

Simply put, self-will or self-expression is also akin to stubbornness. One simply chooses to worship God in his or her own way, rather than what God desires. An OT case in point is found in Leviticus 10:1-3. We read that the two sons of Aaron the high priest, Nadab and Abihu, put unauthorised fire and incense in their censers and offered to the Lord. In doing so, they have displeased the Lord by violating his command. God simply responded to this act of self-will with a severe judgement on both men. "And there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Leviticus 10:2).

We should never allow self-will to take control of our worship. If we are going to worship the Lord, let us do it on His terms, not ours. "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him." (John 4:23)

### ***2.2 Worldliness***

Worldliness brings about a compromised worship. Worldliness, therefore, not only consists of thought and attitude but encompasses outward behavior. Indeed, worldliness hinders the believer from worshipping in spirit and truth. The reference to all things pertaining to the world is to mean

God is being left out. Demas, one of Paul's fellow workers abandoned the ministry for the love of worldly pursuits (2 Tim 4:10). This can also happen to any believer today.

1 John 2:15-16 teaches us not to covet for things in the world. The Christian is in the world but not of the world. The believer should then strive to live a holy and new life in Christ having crucified all worldly things to the cross (Galatians 6:14). The believer should be constantly reminded that the things of the world are temporal in contrast with the permanence of heavenly things (Matthew 6:19-21). The extent of the believer's holiness is ultimately determined by the measure of his separation from the world and occupation with Christ.

### ***2.3 A Critical Spirit***

A believer with a critical spirit harbours a fault-finding attitude and does not know how much it affects his or her worship. A critical spirit negatively occupies the Christian with his fellow believers (and assembly), instead of with God. When a believer views everyone and everything with censorious criticism, everything becomes distorted in his or her vision. A critical spirit also develops a prejudiced attitude whereby the believer cannot appreciate the viewpoint of others. Worse, a critical spirit often develops a self-righteous attitude in the believer. Nothing will satisfy the believer in worship. Each worship leaves a sour after taste. Brethren, is this your worship experience?

How often have we entertained such critical thoughts:

- The speaker's message is boring, newscasting from the script, poor delivery, etc. or the message is running way overtime; I will miss my coffee break and fellowship.
- Our leadership is too conservative and unwilling to change with time.
- These young people have no sense of reverence in their behaviour and dressing.
- Those noisy kids in the hall are out of control; parents ought to leave their kids at home.
- This Assembly event is poorly organized and coordinated.
- Today's refreshment falls short in standard, terrible catering.

Such a spirit of criticism is both toxic and corrosive and eats away the spirituality, both of an individual and the assembly. To overcome a critical spirit, we do well to consider Paul's teachings below:



“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3)

## ***2.4 Slothfulness***

The hinderance of slothfulness points to the laxative believer. Gibbs describe the hinderance of slothfulness as, “...the failure to use the means God has provided to enlighten the believer as to the value of worship and to stimulate it in a believer’s heart.” Gibbs further elaborate that the act of worship comes with a high cost, hard work and requires constant renewing of relationship with God; quoted here, “The fruit of worship does not grow in the field of the slothful, but comes by persistent cultivation, and this necessitates the determined application of mind and will”, also referencing Proverbs 24:30-34. If one is slothful in worship, the consequences would be dire to one’s spiritual health.

“Spiritual lethargy” and “spiritual laziness” are synonymous with spiritual slothfulness. Paul exhorts the Roman Christians to wake up from their “spiritual slumber”, “Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” (Romans 13:11-12) Let us be diligent in our worship. Let us not keep our Lord waiting each morning by skipping devotion and each Lord’s Day by being late for Breaking of Bread Service.

## ***2.5 Impatience***

Impatience can hinder the believer’s focus in worship. The impatient believer fails to wait for God and upon God. Impatience is the opposite of the former hinderances of self-will and slothfulness. Therefore, the believer must avoid the pitfalls of lagging behind God and at the same time be beware of rushing ahead of Him. Gibbs provides an excellent contrast between the stubborn inertia of the mule and the impetuous spirit of the horse. God does not want any of these extremes in His people. He simply wants us to obey him in his own time and own way, “I will instruct you and

teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.” (Psalm 32:8). The believer needs to exercise the delicate balance between slothfulness and impatience. Psalm 37:7 exhorts the believer to “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;”

We have also been warned of the consequences of impatience. The example of King Saul provides a good illustration of how impatience can hinder worship. While waiting for the prophet Samuel to arrive, King Saul defied instructions and impatiently sacrificed an unacceptable burnt offering to the Lord. His impatience not only caused him his relationship with God (no longer in His favour) but also his kingdom (1 Samuel 13:1-14).

Brethren, what is the pace of your worship today? Are you still walking steadfastly in the Lord? Can you echo the Psalmist daily, “For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.” (Psalm 62:5)

### ***2.6 An Unforgiving Spirit***

An unforgiving spirit has a damaging effect on the worship of an individual believer or an Assembly of believers. Few believers realise they carry an unforgiving spirit day-in and day-out in their lives. Next to a critical spirit, the unforgiving spirit is one of the greatest barriers preventing the Christian from worshipping in truth. It almost makes the believer a hypocrite. On one hand, the believer worships God but on the other, he or she hold a grudge against a brother or sister. How then can one possibly worship in spirit and in truth knowing that there are seriously unresolved relationships?

Brethren, is there someone you hold a grudge in your family? Is there someone you cannot see eye-to-eye in the Assembly? Or is there someone who has wronged and hurt you so much that you cannot forgive? Consider the teachings of the Lord Jesus, the one who forgive unreservedly, “So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24) 1 John 4:20-21 should also be a great motivation for us to love and forgive others freely.

To forgive, let us first be reminded of Paul's exhortation, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:31-32)

### ***2.7 Pride***

Pride destroys genuine worship. Interestingly, according to Gibbs, "...worship and pride of heart are mutually exclusive, unless it be self-worship, and this is really what pride is."

Pride can exist so subtly that one can even be proud of one's own humility. Pride can also exist loudly in one's own personal charisma which leads the individual to give undue attention to himself or herself.

The Bible has numerous teachings about pride, warning us on the folly and dangers of exhibiting excessive pride. We need not look far in the Gospels to see how the pride of the Pharisees became serious hindrances to their worship. Luke 18:10-14 tells us the pride of the Pharisee and the humility of the publican. The root of the Pharisees' problem was obviously in their pride. The Pharisees were relying on their own (prideful) efforts and righteousness to gain acceptance from God without knowing how far they fell short of His perfection. The pride of the Pharisees has clouded their ability to worship God truthfully. Instead, they faked their prayers and worship, making it a spectacle for all to see (Matthew 6:5). Dear brethren, what area(s) of pride do you need to surrender today so that it will not be a hinderance to your worship? Is it your charisma? Your wealth? Your ego? Your skills? Or simply the things you own or brag? Let us be warned, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6)

When tempted in pride, let us again be reminded of our Saviour, "... (he) emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, ... he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:7-8)

### ***3. Conclusion***

God is sovereign in every believer's life; yours, and mine. He desires our worship and undivided attention. Exodus tells us how God has categorically removed the hinderances of Pharaoh to pave the way for the children of Israel to worship him in the desert. How much more today God would

desire of us, as children saved by grace in Christ Jesus, to worship him completely unhindered. Let us then cast aside all possible hindrances that come between us and our worship to the Sovereign One.

Overcoming hinderances to worship is a spiritual warfare. Satan is constantly at work to distract our worship to God. We could now identify what these hindrances to worship are. May we, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, see to it that none of these hinderances shall be allowed to jeopardise our relationship with the One who alone is worthy of our worship.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Idol worship may take different forms. What are some “false gods” that exist today that people can make a higher priority than worshipping the true God?
2. Identify some examples of Biblical characters who had to deal with hinderances to worship. What hinderances to worship are they confronted with? How did they deal with the issue(s). What lessons can we learn from them? (E.g., Nehemiah, Daniel)
3. Share with the group some key hinderances to your own worship either at personal level (e.g., daily devotion) or at corporate level (e.g., Breaking of Bread Service). Why do you think such hinderances has become an issue? What steps can you take today to deal with such hinderances?

### **Life Application**

1. Meditate on Matthew 5:23-24; *“So, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”* a. Is there someone, a family member, a brother or sister in the Assembly or a friend that you have a strained relationship with and affecting your worship?  
b. Share with the group how do you plan to resolve this in the light of Matthew 5:23-24 (read also Mark 11:25-26)?
2. What are some practical ways you can mutually support someone (i.e., buddy system) to overcome hinderances to worship? For example, it can be someone who no longer considers worship as a priority or irregular attendance at (physical) Breaking of Bread service. Pray that the Lord will open an opportunity this week.

**Bibliography**

“Worship, The Christian’s Highest Occupation”, Chapters 20 & 21

Gibbs, A.P.

**Other Resources/Suggested Readings**

“Real Worship”, Chapters 13, 14 & 15

Wiersbe, Warren W.

[Helps and Hindrances to Worship - William Kelly \(#67430\) - Bible Truth Library \(bibletruthpublishers.com\)](#)

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