



TRUTH MATTERS

A Newsletter Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters

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Have We Forgotten How to Worship?

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It is often touted among evangelicals that God is only concerned with our sincerity when we worship. If sincerity is the secret which makes every form of worship favorable in God's sight then why did *The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals* issue formal statements like these?

"Evangelical churches today are increasingly dominated by the spirit of the age rather than by the Spirit of Christ. As evangelicals, we call ourselves to repent of this sin and to discover the historic Christian faith."

"The loss of God's centrality in the life of today's church is common and lamentable. It is this loss that allows us to transform worship into entertainment, gospel preaching into marketing, believing into technique, being good into feeling good about ourselves, and faithfulness into being successful. We must focus on God in our worship, rather than satisfaction of our personal needs. God is sovereign; we are not. Our concern must be for God's kingdom, not our own empires, popularity or success."

Prepare Your Heart for Worship

In our upcoming study "Have We Forgotten How to Worship" we will focus the majority of our attention on the forms or external ways involved in the Sunday worship time. It is critical to keep in mind that the external aspects of worship are only half the story, and the second half at that! A body of believers can perfectly take every external step in worship and still fall far short of authentic, God-pleasing worship. Some people take all the correct external steps and yet are still only going through the motions of worship. Jesus said of the Pharisees "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." (Matt. 15:8)

Authentic, God-pleasing worship starts in a person's heart and their worshipping heart then shapes or affects their external actions in the worship service. Psalm 86:11-13 "Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name. I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forevermore. For great is Your mercy toward me, and You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol."

A person's heart represents their entire inner being (their mind, will and emotions). A person's heart is the seat of their appetites and desires: It is the home of their passions, inclinations and resolutions. A person's heart is "The Control Center" of their life from which all their attitudes and actions are launched. Therefore it is critical for every aspect of a person's heart – or inner being – to be united in a commitment to revere God and really honor Him with every aspect of their being if they want to authentically worship God.

Please spend time in prayer and quiet reflection in God's Word preparing your heart prior to gathering with God's children for our study on worship.

A Worship Examination

With such a wide variety in the approach to worship taken by churches in our age every child of God must become a qualified "Examiner of Worship". When God's people understand the

answer to the question "How should we worship?" they become qualified to answer the question "Where will we worship?" When we understand what pleases God in worship that is where we should desire to be.

To be qualified as an "Examiner of Worship" you must first evaluate yourself as a worshiper.

To help you in this effort I have listed several questions aimed at Self Examination and Service Examination.

Self Examination

1. How much do I understand about what the Scriptures say about worship?
2. Is my primary desire when I worship to enter God's presence and draw near to Him?
3. Is my chief concern to please God or myself when I am involved in worship?
4. Am I willing to worship in God's way without having a judgmental (or condescending) spirit toward others?

Service Examination

{Ask these questions about a church's worship service before you commit yourself to attending}

1. Does this church love God and His Word and submit to its authority over their life?
2. Is the worship of this church oriented toward pleasing God or people?
3. How much of the service revolves around Christ and our right relationship with God through His Son?
4. Is the Word of God routinely read in the worship service?
5. How much of the service is devoted to prayer and singing songs which are biblically based?
6. Is the preaching focused upon God and overflowing with His grace or is it consumed with man and his human efforts?
7. Are there aspects of the service which are aimed more at entertaining people than at pleasing God?
8. Is there a Scriptural balance between praise and personal reverence for God?
9. Are Christ and the Gospel central in the service or something infrequently mentioned?

Worship is much too important in the life of God's children to be considered casually. We need to carefully study God's Word so we can know how He would want us to worship. You are invited to take the first step in doing this by attending our two part consideration of "Have We Forgotten How to Worship". Hopefully our time together in God's Word will stimulate you to think in a more Scriptural way about worship so that you can do it in a way which pleases God.

Psalm 95:6-7

"Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.
For He is our God,
and we are the people of His pasture,
and the sheep of His hand."