

In Spirit and in Truth

John 4:23-24

The English word for worship originally referred to a state of honor, dignity, or worthiness. It then came to be applied to a religious activity, such as a prayer, church service, or other actions showing reverence or devotion for a deity. “Worship is reverence offered a divine being and the act of expressing such reverence.” This worship can include two difference principles. A specific act for or toward the object (truth). A specific attitude toward the object of worship (spirit—see Lev. 10:3). Worship that is offered to God must include a balance of these two principles. “...*true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24).

Worshiping in Spirit

In spite of popular belief, worshipping God in spirit does not mean creating an atmosphere of emotionalism that makes us feel good or joyful or that provokes some sort of emotional response. Our worship to God is not for the purpose of making us feel good and it is not for the purpose of entertaining ourselves. Rather than being something to provoke happy feelings in worshipers, spiritual worship is the **result** of the awe, honor and reverence that **already exists** within our hearts; it is the outpouring of our desire to honor God in accordance with His will. Such was the worship expressed by the Psalmist in Ps. 5:7; 95:1-7. It is a manifestation of the reverence that we have as we approach our heavenly Father. Notice the difference: Vain worship is offered by those who worship according to what makes them feel good, where true worship is offered by those whose interest it is to please God rather than self.

Worshiping in Truth

Many today say that truth is different for every person. But if we are to worship the God of the Bible, our Creator and Heavenly Father, then let us understand that His word is truth (John 17:17). When we approach God with a spirit of humility then we will strive to glorify Him rather than entertain ourselves with rock bands, pianos, organs or dramatic performances. If, in our hearts we approach God with awe and reverence, then we will worship Him according to His word. It is in His word that we learn what God desires. When our hearts are right then we can take joy in doing things God’s way. His commands will not be a burden, but a joy. His pattern will not be a cage to confine us, but a source of freedom from the ignorant speculation and vain worship that results from human tradition. “*Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus*” (2 Tim. 1:13).

By David Phillips
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