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"Why Worship?"
John 1:1-26

Ray Stedman has written this about worship.

It is startling to realize that everyone worships! Everybody! Everywhere! Worship is the fundamental drive of life. Atheists worship. Infidels worship. Skeptics worship. Even Republicans and Democrats worship. Lawyers, insurance agents, and even Internal Revenue Service agents worship!

All people worship for worship is the fundamental difference between humans and animals. Animals do not worship. They have no sense of the beyond or of the numinous. But God has placed eternity in man's heart, as the book of Ecclesiastes tells us {Eccl 3:11}. This urge causes men everywhere to worship. If they are not worshipping the true God, they are worshipping a god of their own composition. Worship, therefore, is a universal phenomenon.

A.W. Tozer writing in his book, "Whatever Happened To Worship" agrees with Stedman when he penned, "There is not a tribe in all the world that does not have some kind of religion and some form of worship. Men and women have an instinct toward worship. He goes on to say that he wrote an editorial in which he pointed this out, and a man wrote in accusing him of being a completely liberal editor for saying that worship is a natural thing with mankind.

Then Tozer comments that "the fact is that God made us to worship Him, and if we had not fallen with Adam and Eve, worship would have been the most natural thing for us."

Of course now with having a sin nature inherited from Adam, we have all kinds of substitutes for worship, which is called idolatry. Yes, as Tozer points out, it may even be worship that seems authentic to the people involved, but it is not acceptable to the true and living God revealed in the Bible and through Jesus Christ.

What this means is that in order to discover what worship is all about, we need to discover what the Bible says about worship.

1. We must always be aware that the biblical God created mankind with a desire to worship Him. God has placed within each of us eternity (Ecclesiastes 3:11), a spirit made like the eternal God's with a mind, emotion and will. We are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28). We are created to adore God, enjoy God, love God, adore God, and glorify Him in all that we think, say, and do. Man's chief end, as the Westminster Catechism says is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

2. Man's sin in the garden of Eden now causes humanity to worship objects other than the true and living biblical God.

What did Christ say to the Samaritan woman?

John 4:22 – "You worship what you do not know"

What did Christ mean?

To understand what Jesus is saying here, we need a brief look back at the history of the Samaritans. In 722 B.C. Assyria took captive the northern kingdom of the people of the nation Israel and most of the people were taken captive to Assyria (II Kings 17:3-6). The very poor were allowed to stay in the land. Foreigners from Assyria and other surrounding territories were brought into the northern kingdom of Israel and intermarried with the Israelites who were left behind. The mixed population was given the name Samaritans after the city of Samaria. They found the country over run by wild beasts, and they correctly ascribed the plague to the displeasure of Jehovah whom they offended. They begged their monarch to send them an Israelite priest, who would teach them the law of the of the god of the land. What happened was an adulterated Judaism was grafted into the

pagan cult. When Jews returned to the land later under Cyrus in 536 B.C. and rebuilt their temple, they would not let the Samaritans have a part in their worship at Jerusalem, so the Samaritans hated the Jews and built a temple on Mt. Gerizim. This was destroyed in 128 B.C. by one of the Maccabean rulers, but worshippers continued to offer their adorations on the summit of the hill where their temple once stood.

The Samaritans and Jews had an ungoing dislike for one another, and according to the Pharisees they were not even to use the same drinking vessels (cf. John 4:9).

What Jesus was telling the Samaritan woman (in John 4:22) was that they worshipped at Mt Gerizim, some 30 miles or more north of Jerusalem but they were not really worshipping the true and living God, for they had created their own god with mixing other cultic gods with the true and living God. They were worshipping someone of their own imagination. Yes, they had the Samaritan Pentateuch, the first 5 books of the Bible but they did not accept the poetical and prophetic books of the Old Testament. They mixed their cultic ideas with their idea of the biblical God.

They really had the wrong object for their worship, which was described so vividly in Romans 1, when it tells us that when they knew God they did not honor God (which could be translated, did not worship or glorify God) or give thanks, but they exchanged the truth of god for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

What was happening to the Samaritans, what was happening to the Romans (and happened to the nation of Israel years before) is still happening in our day in which different religions as well in the different cults and isms, along with man worshipping himself, people, power, position, materialism, man made gods of wood and stone, worshipping the sun and stars, yes even worshipping satan himself. All which is idolatry, a substitute object for the worship of the true and living God.

But there is hope, eternal hope. Note again what Jesus told the Samaritan woman.

3. Christ has come to provide the way for us to worship God as He should be worshipped.

Note John 4:21-23.

"Jesus, said to her, "Woman, believe me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain (Mt. Gerizim) nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

Jesus is telling the Samaritan woman that true worship is provided through Him, who is a Jew, and the time is coming when there will not be worship at Mt. Gerizim or even at the Jerusalem, where true worship can be experienced.

What's Christ saying? He is looking forward to His time when He will suffer terribly at the hands of accusers, He will be crucified on the old rugged cross, being made sin for you and me (II Corinthians 5:21) to pay the penalty for our breaking God's law, be buried and then rise again from the dead on the third day.

Christ's death, burial, and bodily resurrection would win eternal forgiveness and life, while His death, burial, and resurrection, would end the Old Testament worship system of the tabernacle, the sacrifices, and feasts.

John tells us that the Word, Jesus Christ, became flesh and He tabernacled, tented, among us (John 1:14). Jesus is the living tabernacle, the living tent, by which all individuals, including the Samaritans, Jews, and Gentiles, all peoples, will be able to worship God as He initially intended before the fall in the Garden of Eden.

Hebrews 10:19-22b puts it so clearly, "Therefore brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith . . ."

4. Through faith in Christ for salvation, the believer can worship God the way He should be worshipped.

How does that happen? Again, note what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman in John 4:23.

“But an hour is coming and now is when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks (continually pursues –present tense) to be His worshippers.”

The only way we can become worshippers of Heavenly Father God, as He has created us for, is that He seeks out us to be His worshippers.

And why does God seek us out to be His worshippers?

He knows that if we don't come to worship Him as He initially intended before the fall of man, we will never experience His person as we were created for and end up in the place of eternal separation from Him – yes – the lake of fire.

In our selves which are self-centered and sinful, we don't seek after the true and living God, neither do we worship Him for who He is and what He has done in the death, burial, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Man on his own is not searching after the true and living God, he does his own thing, or he mixes a little of what the Bible says about the true and living God with his own ideas of God, or he denies the biblical God altogether and establishes his own god.

Our culture is a sad reflection, a very sad reflection of man worshipping himself and all the other combinations of some kind of a god.

In love, though, as God did with Adam and Eve when they sinned and sin came into the human race, God comes searching, pursuing after sinful man, seeking his worship.

God's seeking after worshippers has two phases.

(1) It involves Christ seeking out people to accept Him as personal Savior.

Luke 19:10 – Jesus told Nicodemus, “For the Son of Man his come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Jesus was seeking Nicodemus, the dishonest tax collector to be His worshipper. But before He could worship the Lord as He should, Nicodemus needed to realize that he was a sinner before the Lord, and accept Him as his personal Savior.

And that is what Jesus is doing her in his dialogue with the Samaritan woman. He is seeking to have her be one of God's worshippers. But in order to do that she needs to accept Jesus as her Savior.

This is an truly an amazing account in John 4. Certainly, our Lord knew what He was about. He knew that He had come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Of course, Jesus knew that He would have a conversation with this woman whom the Jews despised. But He loves all people, that is why He came to earth to show God's love to all people. He was stretching out His disciples that God's love includes all people.

His just asking this woman for a drink of water probably at the sun's zenith in the middle of day, led to a conversation about the eternal water Jesus could give her. Then that led to Jesus asking her to go and bring her husband, she saying she had no husband, Jesus telling her, yes, but you have had 5 husbands, and that led the woman to telling Jesus He must be a prophet, and the entire conversation turned to talking about Jesus, and worship, and finally Jesus pointing her to Himself when she starts talking about the Messiah and that he will declare all things to us.

Obviously, this woman needed the forgiveness and eternal life, eternal water that only Jesus can offer.

Her response of faith is evident in what she did in going back to town and telling others of Jesus, and for them to come and see Him for He told her all things that she had done. In other words, this man who spoke with her was God – the Messiah, the anointed one of God (John 4:39-40).

True worship of the true living and eternal God only comes as God pursues a person who needs his forgiveness and grace, and then that person responds in faith to the crucified risen Christ, acknowledging one's sin before Him, and asking Him to be one's Savior.

I trust that you have made that decision for Christ today, and you know you have been born from above by the Spirit of God and you know the Lord Himself lives in your life.

Knowing Christ as one's personal Savior brings us to the second phase of God the Father continually pursuing worshippers.

2. Accepting Christ as personal Savior, provides the believer a life-time of worshipping the true and living God for time and eternity.

For the believer in Jesus Christ receives the very life, the very nature of God – His spiritual mind, emotion, and will, so that now his spirit can be connected with God's spirit. On the basis of God's Word, the believer knows that he has eternal life (I John 5:11-13). Now the believer can worship God as He initially intended at the creation before the fall, the sin of Adam.

This is why the Jesus says (John 4:23-24) that God the Father, who is Spirit, is seeking worshippers who will worship Him in spirit, their spirits, which now have the life of Christ through faith in Him, and in truth, that which is based upon Him, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and the written Word of God which is truth.

Since true worship of the true and living God is for those who know Christ personally by faith, perhaps we need to discover what the word worship really means.

5. We need to have a definition of what the word worship means.

****The Old Testament word for worship.**

There are four different words that are translated "worship" in the Old Testament. The one used the most is "shachah," which means to bow down, to do homage. In Genesis 18:2, we are told that Abraham bowed down to the three visitors that came to him, and later he discovered that one of them was the Lord from heaven.

****The New Testament word for worship.**

Again there are several words for worship in the New Testament.

"**Proskuneo**" means literally "to kiss toward." It conveys the idea of reverence or doing obeisance to God – It is used here in our text John 4:21-24. The word is also used in regard to humans in Matthew 18:26 – "So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him"

"**Latreus**, Which basically means "to serve, to minister" as in Matthew 4:10 – "Jesus said to Him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your god and serve Him only.'"

"**Leitourgos**, which means a "priestly ministry" and gives us the word, liturgy.

The word worship, after considering all the different words, means to give God His worth, to give God His value.

****Definition - Worship is the response of all that we are (mind, emotions, will, and body) to all that God is and does.**

**6. We should have some understanding of what is involved in worshipping our God.
We need to know. . . .**

(1) What our worship of God is not.

****We don't worship God for what we get out of it, but because He is worthy of our worship.**

This means if we worship the biblical God because it pays, it won't pay. This runs contrary to much of what we may hear in the popular television programs which promise, health, wealth, contentment, and a problem free life if one turns one's life over to God. Wiersbe says that those who promote these ideas would be broken-hearted if their own children loved them only for what they could get out of them.

****Worship is not a rule of safety** – it is the adventure of the spirit, a flight after the unattainable. The Psalmist exclaimed that “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before Him?” (Psalm 42:2).

****Worship is not cheap entertainment. It’s a costly experience.** After Isaiah saw the Holy Lord high and lifted up, he realized He needed the Lord’s cleansing. God came and cleansed him and then he responded to the Lord in service as His prophet.

****Worship is not some kind of escape.** We have been told to leave our cares and pains behind when we come into the presence of our Lord to worship. But the Psalmist said that he couldn’t understand how the wicked were being blessed, and the righteous weren’t, but when he went into the sanctuary of the Lord, he found the solution. (Psalm 73:16-17).

(2) Our worship of God must be balanced.

Jesus said that the worshippers the Father finds, through faith in Him, will worship the Father who is spirit, in spirit and truth. **That is our worship of the true and living God is both subjective and objective.**

Worship is subjective because God has made us with emotion. It is objective because our worship needs to be kept in balance with Truth, that is with the unchanging eternal objective Word of God.

It is easy to go through a form when we worship whether individually, as families, or as a church family. Paul told Timothy that some have a form of godliness but deny its power (II Timothy 3:5).

Since we are different personalities, the Holy Spirit never violates a believer’s personality, but rather uses that personality to express worship and praise to God. If people want to raise their hands in private, family, or collective worship that is biblical (Psalm 134:2, says, “Lift up your hands to the sanctuary, and bless the Lord.”

If we want to clap our hands in collective worship that is great (Psalm 47:1-2, says “clap your hands, all peoples’ shout to God with the voice of joy. For the LORD Most High is to be feared, a great King over all the earth.”

Regardless, the Scriptural truth of the Bible must not be compromised in worship, and the teachings of Scripture must not be changed in worship.

(3) Our worship of God must be pleasing to Him.

David penned at the end of Psalm 139 – after talking about the Lord searching and knowing all about him, and that he was fearfully and wonderfully made – “Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my anxious thoughts, and see if there be any wicked (hurtful) way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”

****Coming in the presence of the true and living eternal God should be a humbling yet awesome experience.**

God is holy, without sin. We come as believers in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and we can come boldly as Hebrews 4:15-16 tells us. But we come with humility and reverence, and if need be confession – taking some time to give Him His worth in thought and word (Isaiah 6:1-6). We give Him His worth. He alone is worthy of our praise and worship. He’s our Creator and Redeemer. We fall down in our hearts, yes, sometimes on our knees and give Him praise and glory.

****Coming into the presence of the true and living eternal God should be a joyous experience.**

“Psalm 16:11 – In your presence is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forever more. Yes, we bow down in the presence of the living and eternal God, but we do it with joy and excitement, because God’s presence is a place of joy, a place of eternal satisfaction and pleasure.

Ephesians 5:18ff is a great passage to see what’s involved in worship that pleases the Lord.

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled (continually controlled) with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God even the Father;

The believer who is filled or controlled by the Spirit will have a life filled with worship, with praise to God whether by word, or by song. The believer will display a life that has God's kind of joy, His kind of contentment and peace.

Does this mean it will be always easy to have praise unto our God? Paul in asking God to remove His throne in the flesh, discovered that God had a bigger picture in mind for him as God gave Him the grace so He could praise God for His all-sufficient care and grace.

****Coming into the presence of the true and living eternal God should bring us a sense of wonder.**

The Psalmist penned, "What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him" (Ps. 8:4).

The wonder of creation.

After penning about God's workings in time, Paul continued to write, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" How unsearchable are His judgments and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

The wonder of God's working in time.

It's easy to become a people of definitions, analyses, outlines, charts, and formulas, and not have a true lasting experience with God our Creator and Redeemer. In so doing we lose the wonder, the majesty, and glory of who God really is. We will live more on the edge rather than in our nice comfortable little life-styles.

****Coming into the presence of the true and living God should be a life-changing experience.**

We tend to be imitators. Those who make and sell various styles of clothes know this. The music world knows this. The sports world knows this. Even adults try to imitate other adults by keeping up with the "Joneses."

If we take the time to worship God our heavenly Father through faith in Jesus Christ, His person, His character will affect our lives directly. **What will be the effect?**

Look at what happened to the woman at the well. Meeting Jesus, she was changed by being in His presence because she believed that He was her Messiah, the Savior. That caused her to hurry into town to tell the people to come and see Jesus. Many believed in Jesus Christ as personal Savior (John 4:28-30, 39-42).

Being in the presence of Jesus changed her life for time and eternity.

It should do the same for us!!

Galatians 5:22-23 tells us what worshipping our God should be producing in our lives. We will be acting like Jesus Christ would act, in thought, word and deed. We will be imitating the Lord. That's why Paul tells the Ephesians, "Be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love as Christ also loved you . . ." (5:1).

If we spend time worshipping the Lord, His life will have a direct affect on our lives for godliness.

It will be so in our individual lives. – Is it evident that we are worshipping the Lord? Am I becoming more like the Lord in my attitude and actions?

It will be so in our lives as fathers. – Is it evident that we are worshipping the Lord? Am I becoming more like the Lord in my attitude and actions?

It will be so in our lives as mothers. – Is it evident that we are worshipping the Lord? Am I becoming more like the Lord in my attitude and actions?

It will be so in our lives as children. – Is it evident that we are worshipping the Lord? Am I becoming more like the Lord in my attitude and actions?

Spending time in God's presence worshipping Him gives us His perspective on what is important in time for all eternity. It's relationships that count and last. Without recognizing that, my relationship with the Lord means very little as well.

(4) Our worship of God is a life-style in time.

Worship is not just spending time in the Lord's presence individually, worshipping Him, or spending time with family or the church family worship.

Worship – giving God His worth – is a part of all of life. "Whether, then, you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (I Corinthians 10:31).

Hebrews 13:16 – "And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

Christ's grace to us in responding to Him in faith opens up the privilege to worship Him regardless of our task. God provides for us in His Son the amazing privilege to worship Him in even giving a cup of cold water in His name.

Why worship? We worship the true and living eternal God because He has made us people of worship. Because of our sin we worship everyone else or everything else but Him. Christ came to pay the penalty for our sin, so that through faith in Him and in His death, burial and bodily resurrection, we could now be restored to worshipping our heavenly Father in spirit and in truth with our lives giving Him His worth even in the smallest details and actions of our lives.

He alone is worthy of all of our worship in time.

(5) Our worship of the true and living God continues forever.

He alone is worthy of all of our worship in eternity.

"Worthy are You our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created." (Revelation 4:11).

"Yes, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (Revelation 5:12).

Take time this week to worship Him in wonder and praise.