

In Spirit and Truth: Worship in Truth

WARM UP

1. How do you express thankfulness?
2. Who is your favourite famous person (actor/actress, athlete, musician, business person, scientist, etc.)? What do you know about their personal life? Does it differ much from their stage/work/professional life?
3. Describe a time when you realised your internal disposition and your outward mannerisms did not match up. *(A couple examples [leader to decide whether to share these, or start with their own example]: perhaps you were so angry on the inside but had a smile plastered across your face, or you were confused about something but when asked if everything was understood you said you were good)*

WORD

Key Scripture: John 4:23-24

...the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

We cannot have true worship without both Spirit and Truth. Singing worship songs is not the foundation of our worship. Music can draw us to God in our journey, but Jesus did not associate worship with music. Worship is knowing God for who He is, proclaiming who He is by how we live. Music is one way to demonstrate our worship.¹

1.) What keeps us from True Worship?

When we satisfy our appetites and desires outside of what God says what is good for us, we ensnare (in a sense enslave or entangle) ourselves with chains and obstacles that hold us back and make us feel far from God. These chains could be physical things, but also internal dispositions and attitudes.

James (the half-brother of Jesus) in 4:6, 10 tells us, *"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."* Our worship of God is a very humbling thing; it communicates that we believe: God is God, and we are not. He is the King, and has the final say on how we live. Our Loyalty resides with Him. James also encouraged those reading his letter:

¹ John MacArthur paraphrased on Worship.

*Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for **your loyalty is divided** between God and the world. - James 4:8 (NLT)*

When we recognise that there is a divided loyalty within us and impacting our life and worship of God, what do we do? When we are confronted with the difference of knowing God and knowing about God, it can be unsettling. Consider celebrities (the people we mentioned before), we know about them, but typically do not know them personally. We can do this with God, too: know things about Him without actually knowing & experiencing Him, and not allowing what we know to impact how we live our daily life.

2.) Will we choose to Believe and Follow Jesus?

Understanding the real power of Jesus and His work on the cross, and that we can be forgiven by such a Holy God, has significant implications. We make a choice to sacrifice things that we may like but are offensive to God and draw our heart, mind, and attention away from truly knowing God. Believing and following Jesus challenges us to actually live for God and eventually make Christ-like decisions. We willingly choose to believe and follow what God says is good, acceptable, pleasing, and perfect, and simultaneously, we turn and walk away from what is contrary to what God says is good, acceptable, pleasing, and perfect. The Apostle Paul encourages us:

*...dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. **This is truly the way to worship him.** Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. **Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.***

- Romans 12:1-2 (NLT)

We will learn to know God's will, that is a promise. It is also gradual. Learning takes time to absorb and retain the information. We are not cramming to simply pass a single test; we are learning and retaining truth about God, His character, His ways, His word that will transform the way we think and live. When our thoughts about God and lifestyle of obeying God align we exercise true worship. To Worship in Spirit can bring us into a physical posture when we understand God's awesomeness & power. The Holy Spirit opens our eyes to the truth of God.

3.) Where do we find the Truth of God?

*Let **the message about Christ**, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. - Colossians 3:16*

Jesus told us the Truth about God and His plan to reunited each person to God the Father in a loving relationship (reconciliation). We find that truth in Jesus's message, which is captured in the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They each tell a different perspective of the events they witnessed during Jesus's life. We find truth in the letters that early Christian leaders

wrote to encourage the newly formed churches to hold as true the good news about Jesus. Truth is found in God's Word, which has been carefully passed down and preserved through the years, so each generation can know God and live holy lives (not on our own attempts, but because of Jesus who sends the Holy Spirit to help, train and teach us). Peace floods us when we believe and live the truth of God.

"...you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus." – Philippians 4:7

We encapsulate truths about God found in his Word into hymns and spiritual songs. We can put pressure on ourselves that says we must worship in a particular way (gestures and/or physical postures) or with a particular style of music. If we are too self-conscious, having an internal monologue with ourselves, we miss what God wants us to be part of. This can bring us dangerously close to our worship becoming a performance: we are "all good" on the outside, but struggling on the inside with what is true and how to position ourselves to worship.

APPLICATION

1. What keeps you from true worship? What distracts you from spending time with God?
2. What's an internal dialogue that you have with yourself, that you believe the Lord would like to step into the conversation?
3. Do you feel pressured to perform or act a certain way? Why? What do you feel God has ask of you in this matter?
4. What is a non-musical way you worship the Lord?

PRAYER

1. Pray for grace to know the truth about God. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help live into the truths God teaches us about himself.
2. Pray a prayer of repentance recognising any areas where we may be performing/behaving a certain way because that is expected, rather than doing it because we genuinely believe the Lord and His truth.
3. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide and teach us to be more Christ-like. Pray for the transformation of our minds through knowing and believing what God's word says about God, others, and ourselves. Pray for the transformation of our lives as we learn to live the truths we believe.