

Back to the Basics: Worship

John 4:19-26, Romans 12:1-2

Introduction

Now that we're into the summer months and everyone will be away a lot, we'll start having lessons that are shorter, where each Sunday can stand alone. This week, I'm bringing another installment in the "Back to Basics" series. We've studied prayer and Bible study already. This time we'll talk about worship.

What is worship? _____

When was the last time you worshiped? _____

Background Passage:

What is the context of John 4? The Samaritan woman at the well.

John 4:19-26 – ¹⁹The woman *said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." ²¹Jesus *said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when **neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father.** ²²You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵The woman *said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." ²⁶Jesus *said to her, "I who speak to you am *He*."

Jesus was having a conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. When He accurately assessed her former and current marital difficulties, she recognized Jesus' role as a religious leader of some sort and immediately started into a religious debate with Him. Her topic was worship. Then He just blew her away first by showing her that not only was she wrong in the details, she was wrong in the big picture, as well. He then said two sentences that give us a fundamental understanding of what worship is supposed to look like. And then He finally reveals to her far more directly than at any time up to then that He was the Messiah. Let's look in depth at those two sentences describing true worship and worshippers.

Defining Our Terms:

What does "worship" even mean?

Psalms 95:6 – Come, let us **worship** and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.

07812 שָׁחָה *shachah shaw-khaw'*

a primitive root; TWOT - 2360; v

KJV - worship 99, bow 31, bow down 18, obeisance 9, reverence 5, fall down 3, themselves 2, stoop 1, crouch 1, misc 3; 172

1) to bow down

1a) (Qal) to bow down

1b) (Hiphil) to depress (fig)

1c) (Hithpael)

1c1) to bow down, prostrate oneself

1c1a) before superior in homage

1c1b) before God in worship

1c1c) before false gods

1c1d) before angel

In the OT, the word worship meant to physically bow down before someone.

John 4:24 – God is spirit, and those who worship Him must **worship** in spirit and truth."

4352 προσκυνεω *proskuneo* {pros-koo-neh'-o}

from 4314 and a probable derivative of 2965 (meaning to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand); TDNT - 6:758,948; v

AV - worship 60; 60

1) to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence

2) among the Orientals, esp. the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence

3) in the NT by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication

3a) used of homage shown to men and beings of superior rank

3a1) to the Jewish high priests

3a2) to God

3a3) to Christ

3a4) to heavenly beings

3a5) to demons

In the NT, "worship" also meant to physically bow down before someone.

The English word "worship" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon [word] **combining "worth" and "ship"** – meaning one worthy of reverence and honor.

When we worship, we are declaring God's worth. – Dr. Franklin Segler

Bible Study:

Verse 21 – Setting the stage for His description of true worship:

"Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when **neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father.**

The question is, "What is the correct place (and time) to worship?" _____

Read verse 21. Jesus wasn't predicting the diaspora. It wasn't a matter of the correct place for worship relocating somewhere else.

What do we call the place where we have "big church?" _____

How do we describe in our weekly schedule what happens at 11AM on Sundays? _____

When we are finished with our Sunday morning Bible study, where do we dismiss ourselves to? _____

Have we made the same mistake as the Samaritan woman? _____

Verse 23 – If there are true worshipers, then are there are false ones, too?

... an hour is coming, and now is, when the **true worshipers** shall worship ...

What do you think would make someone a "false worshiper"? _____

The Samaritans worshiped their own way at their own place. And neither was correct. Theirs was according to their own traditions and rules.

The Jews worshiped the right way at the right place. But theirs wasn't right either. Theirs was legalism – to the letter. 2 Cor. 3:6 – "...the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

Jesus is about to define true worship as worship done in the Spirit, and according to the Truth. And in the process, He will declare many to be false worshipers.

Verse 23 – God is looking for people who will worship Him!

... **such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.**

Imagine a poster like the classic Uncle Sam recruiting poster from WW I. But in this poster, there is a cross and it says, "I want you for worship. Nearest church.

Why would God seek people to worship Him?

What would be the requirements to be eligible to join that army?

Who are the recruiters?

Verse 24 – God is spirit.

²⁴God is spirit ...

I memorized this verse years ago in KJV, which says, "God is a spirit..." Nearly all translations leave out the indefinite article. What does it mean that God is spirit? _____



"**God as to His nature is spirit**, and for those who are worshipping, it is necessary in the nature of the case to be worshipping in a spiritual sphere, and in the sphere of truth." – Kenneth Wuest

God is spiritual.

Verse 24 – If we are going to worship God, we must worship God the way He wants.

... those who worship Him **must** worship ...

The Samaritans and Jews worshiped God the way they thought best in Jesus' day – and failed. There are many today who do the same.

If we are going to claim to be a God-worshiper, then we need to learn His way and do it.

Verse 24 – We must worship God in the spiritual realm.

... those who worship Him must worship in **spirit** ...

Worship is a passionate response from our heart. It will likely have physical side effects such as tears, shouts, kneeling, jumping, dancing, raising hands, clapping, and even other biblical signs. But those are always secondary to the spiritual engagement of our heart with the Spirit of God.

For some, worship is a carnal expression.

What does it mean to worship God in spirit? _____

How can worship be carnal? _____

(Possibly when the physical side effects listed above are the primary acts of worship instead of driven by a heart passion for God. Possibly when leading worship becomes an effort to induce emotion. Possibly when worshipping becomes an act to be viewed by others. Possibly when the modes, actions, or focus of worship violate God's Word. Possibly when the result of worship is carnal or fleshly. Possibly when someone besides God gets the glory.)

Verse 24 – We must worship God in truth.

... and **truth.**"

There is but one truth. It is God, and the only certain transmission of it is God's written Word, the Bible. Thus, our worship must be in perfect alignment with the Bible.

That both limits our worship, and expands it. Many of us have so limited worship that the parameters and expressions of it are far smaller than seen in

His Word. That makes us no more spiritual and effective worshipers than those who far exceed His truth.

And note that **sincerity does not constitute truth**. Many sincere worshipers from many traditions are simply sincerely wrong, and, just like the Samaritans, not truly worshipping God.

We must also be careful not to limit our expression of worship because of our concern for what others may think. David faced that situation with Michal and honestly worshiped God, even though she chided him for it later.

2 Samuel 6:12-23 – ¹²Now it was told King David, saying, “The LORD has blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, on account of the ark of God.” And David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness. ¹³And so it was, that when the bearers of the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. **¹⁴And David was dancing before the LORD with all his might**, and David was wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁵So David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouting and the sound of the trumpet. **¹⁶Then it happened as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.** ¹⁷So they brought in the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. ¹⁸And when David had finished offering the burnt offering and the peace offering, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. ¹⁹Further, he distributed to all the people, to all the multitude of Israel, both to men and women, a cake of bread and one of dates and one of raisins to each one. Then all the people departed each to his house.

²⁰But when David returned to bless his household, Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, “How the king of Israel distinguished himself today! He uncovered himself today in the eyes of his servants’ maids as one of the foolish ones shamelessly uncovers himself!” ²¹So David said to Michal, **“It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel; therefore I will celebrate before the LORD.** ²²And I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes, but with the maids of whom you have spoken, with them I will be distinguished.” ²³And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.

What can we do to minimize our concern for the opinions of others when we worship? _____

Musical Interlude:

Have you identified examples of “worship” that were not spiritual? _____

Have you identified examples of “worship” that were not in truth? _____

“Worship is an end in itself; it is not a means to something else. Karl Barth has appropriately declared that the “church’s worship is the *Opus Dei*, the work of God, which is carried out for its own sake.” When we try to worship for the sake of certain benefits that may be received, the act ceases to be worship; for then it attempts to use God as a means to something else. We worship God purely for the sake of worshipping God.”
– Dr. Franklin Segler, *Christian Worship*

To worship is:

- To quicken the conscience by the holiness of God
- To feed the mind with the truth of God
- To purge the imagination by the beauty of God
- To open the heart to the love of God
- To devote the will to the purpose of God

– Dr. Franklin Segler, *Christian Worship*

When was the last time you worshiped? _____

Where was the last time you worshiped? _____

Do you worship in the “worship service” at church? _____

Living a Life of Worship:

Worship is life

In a sense, worship is practicing the presence of God in every experience of life. – Dr. Franklin Segler, *Christian Worship*

Romans 12:1-2 – ¹I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, **which is your spiritual service of worship.** ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

2999 λατρεία latreia {lat-ri'-ah}

from 3000; TDNT - 4:58,503; n f

AV - service 4, divine service 1; 5

1) service rendered for hire

1a) any service or ministrations: the service of God

2) the service and worship of God according to the requirements of the Levitical law

3) to perform sacred services

The idea of worship ties us back to our study on being ready for Christ's return. We concluded that study understanding that we were to live each day understanding that our plans, hopes, possessions, relationships, and even our lives were God's for the taking.

The word translated "worship" in Romans 12:1 is the same word from which we derive the word "liturgy". It has come to be used to describe the order of a church service. But what it really means is that your entire life is to be an orderly expression of worship of God.

How can we make that so? _____

Worship is celebration

We are so willing to shout, clap, and cheer whenever our favorite team does something great. I have really come under conviction about how seldom I do the same about God and His works.

Worship is dialogue

"In worship man experiences God in a conscious dialogue. Worship is both revelation and response. God takes the initiative in revelation, and man responds in worship." – Dr. Franklin Segler, *Christian Worship*

This is where it is important to remember the "truth" side of biblical worship. God's written Word must be central to the entire conversation to make sure our emotions, experience, and other proclivities don't lead us astray from God's truth.

In recent decades there has been a well-intended, and often needed focus on the revelation of God through His Word in Christian services. That focus has in some ways, though, taken away from the "upward movement" of the response of the people back to God.

Worship is giving

Psalm 96:8 – Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name; **Bring an offering**, and come into His courts.

Most expressions of worship in the OT include bringing an offering or sacrifice to God. This reflects again back to the living sacrifice of Romans 12:1.

Whenever we give of our possessions to God, we are saying that God is worth more than them. That is the epitome of worship.

Worship is an act of the heart, not the mind

"Definitions and propositions cannot adequately delineate the experience of worship, for worship is an act of faith. It is not adherence to propositions, declares Carl Michalson, for 'faith's propositions are always invocations. Not,

"I consent to agree intellectually, but a *sursum corda*, a lifting up of the heart in willing response." – Dr. Franklin Segler, *Christian Worship*

A wonderful example of a worship encounter:

Isaiah 6:1-9 – ¹In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. ²Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." ⁴And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.

⁵Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

⁶Then one of the seraphim flew to me, with a burning coal in his hand which he had taken from the altar with tongs. ⁷And he touched my mouth *with it* and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven."

⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

⁹And He said, "Go, and tell this people: ...

This passage in Isaiah is so clearly typical of true worship. First we see the awesomeness of God and the reverence of His other servants around Him. Unfortunately rare is the physical manifestation of God's actual presence. But so often true is the immediate and overwhelming realization of Isaiah's unrighteousness in the face of God's holiness. God's promised response of grace and forgiveness, though, is fully adequate. Often as a result of an encounter of worship, we are given direction.

Conclusion

What could be our response to the challenge of living a life of worship? _____

Can you give others an example of a meaningful worship experience? _____

Are there particular circumstances, settings, music, etc., that often cause you to worship effectively? _____

What steps could we take that would better position ourselves to have regular times of true spiritual worship? _____

What might be the outcomes? _____