

WORSHIP—A SERIOUS MATTER

The worship of Almighty God is both an exalted privilege and an awesome duty. Failing this realization has cost many much (e.g., Cain, Nadab, Abihu, King Saul, et al.). Jesus rejected the worship of the religious leaders of His day: “But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men” (Mat. 15:9). He also stated the two great cornerstones of God-pleasing worship: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Acceptable worship requires an understanding of its purposes.

- **To please God, not ourselves:** To worship “in truth” (as noted above) means to worship according to the Truth of God’s Word (John 17:17) or as God directs. Cain and all of the others named earlier, including the first-century Jewish leaders, did what pleased them rather than God. Men continue to be remarkable innovators in religion (e.g., prayer beads, instrumental music, choirs, corruption of the Lord’s supper, et al.). The excuse for all of them is, “We like it,” failing to consider whether or not God “likes it”—is pleased.
- **To express, not arouse spirituality:** *Worship* connotes bowing down, doing obeisance, venerating, paying homage. These all indicate an outward expression of an attitude of reverence and love for and submission to God and His Son by submission to their revealed will in the New Testament. Confused men demand that worship excite or entertain. If it doesn’t leave them on an emotional “high” each week, they are disappointed. Such a view is carnally motivated. Earnest Scriptural worship will stimulate one spiritually, but this is a wonderful by-product, rather than its purpose.
- **God is the “audience”:** Only in a limited sense are those in the pews the “audience.” God is the only “audience” that matters when we gather for worship. Failing to perceive this fact leads to the spectator/performer concept. The preacher, prayer leader, and others become “performers,” and those in the pews, “spectators” (with all of the “rights” to criticize belonging thereto). **All** who are gathered for worship are the “performers”; **God** is the audience.
- **We are primarily to give, rather than to receive.** In worship we are to “offer a sacrifice of praise” (Heb. 13:15; cf. 1 Pet. 2:5). When one complains, “I don’t get anything out of worship,” he misses the point. He has not learned that true worship is God-centered, not man-centered, in which we seek to give rather than get. However, all who sincerely worship as God has decreed are blessed greatly thereby.

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[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in the *Denton Record-Chronicle*, Denton, TX, August 15, 2014.]