

The Privilege of Worshipping God

We often just look at things wrong. Sometimes, it is a “half full” or “half empty” perspective that causes problems, or limits our perspectives and therefore our abilities. At other times, we need to just step back (or around) to get another, and better, view. I remember once working on a hand-puzzle in a gift shop for quite a while, (as I waiting for female shoppers to finish!). I finally told the sales lady that if she would show me how to open it, I would buy it. Although she couldn’t remember how it worked, almost as soon as the puzzle was in her hands, I could see how it worked. I needed a different view of it to be able to “see” its solution clearly.

This problem, and solution, plagues us in many areas of our lives- not the least of which is our worship of God. Perhaps because we know that “worship” comes from a Greek word (*proskuneo*) that carries the idea of submissively and humbly paying adoration and homage to God (the word is further illustrated by the action of a dog licking his master’s hand), we tend to think of it as a **duty** or **obligation**. For some, this seems to be analogous to paying taxes or going to the dentist! It’s easy to see, from this perspective, that worship would quickly become something to be endured rather than enjoyed.

What if, on the other hand, we were able to “see” worship as a privilege instead of an obligation? Wouldn’t that change not only our perspective, but also our interest and participation levels? Sure it would! Activities we consider a privilege, we participate in with appreciation, honor, respect, and deep-felt emotion. But for those that we consider an obligation, we engage in with reluctance and a minimum of commitment and participation. One views the activity as a privilege and participates accordingly, and the other sees it as an obligation to be endured. Which are you?

I. Quick Self-Test to better “See” Your Perspective of Worship:

- A. Is worship something you look forward to each week, or is it something that comes around all too quickly, and “messes up” your weekend?
- B. Is worship something you *enjoy*, or *endure*?
- C. Is the time you spend in worship given *freely*, or only *begrudgingly*? (Do you view it as the most important thing you do all week?)
- D. Do you attend worship only when it is convenient for you (when you have no other plans), or is it something that always comes first?
- E. Do you participate in worship with your heart, or just your presence in the pew?

II. A Different Way to “See” Worship.

Worshipping the Creator of the Universe, and being in His holy presence, is an exalted privilege! To be able to come together with those of like precious faith and:

- Blend our voices in songs of praise knowing that such is a sweet aroma to Him, Heb.13:15;
- Join our hearts in petition knowing that He listens and is concerned, Jas.5:13; 1Pet.3:12;
- Center our minds on knowing Him and those things which please Him, Eph.5:10; Rom.12:2; and
- Commune with Him and one another in remembering and honoring the death of His Son, 1Cor.11:23-26.

What an exalted honor He has bestowed upon us to be able to approach Him in such fashion, Heb.12:25-29!

But, if we instead “see” (actually, *choose* to “see”) worship as an obligation to be endured, rather than a privilege to be enjoyed, we will:

- Be inconsistent in our attendance to the worship services (until the “obligation” factor finally forces our conscience to attend again);
- Attend only when it is convenient *for us*, and with as little time and involvement as we can;
- Participate with only *ritualistic observances* that are devoid of any true heart-felt involvement;
- Expect others to appreciate the “sacrifice” we’ve made by just being there (we seem to expect *our presence* to be a privilege for God to enjoy!); and
- “Worship” will only be a duty to be fulfilled rather than a privilege to be enjoyed!

The solemnity and privilege of being in the presence of God to worship Him is highlighted in Eccl.5:1-2. Please note the importance of:

1. **Preparation-** Our *steps* leading to the house of God should be *guarded* (safe-guarded and protected against departure), v.1a;
2. **Purpose-** We should *draw near* and *listen* rather than expecting God to accept any *foolish offering* we proffer and call “worship,” v.1b; and
3. **Practice-** Our *words* and *thoughts* must be carefully purposed to avoid becoming *foolish* in the *presence* of God, v.2.

III. Suggestions for Changing Your Perspective of, and Getting the Most out of, Worship:

A. Start Early to Prepare for Worship.

Begin Saturday evening to plan for worship. Have clothes ready, breakfast and other required pre-worship activities planned, and try to eliminate consistent distractions and diversions that seem to “arise” on Sunday mornings.

Go to bed in plenty of time to be well-rested rather than attempting to crowd so much into Saturday night that Sunday morning begins (if we drag ourselves out of bed at all) with us being sleep-deprived, dull, listless, and totally unprepared to offer anything but the most meager of worship to God on His day, Psalm 63:1. Also, arrive early for worship. If we’ve had to rush to even get here late, our minds are distracted from the whole purpose.

B. Participate in Worship.

Your *presence* is appreciated, but is not all there is to worship. Attendance is usually monitored by some means at most churches, but what if there were some measuring device that told us, the elders, the preacher, and other members how well or poorly we participated—that is, how *engaged* we were in the worship? Wouldn’t some sort of meter with a scale from zero to ten be great...or at least helpful?

When it’s time for worship, practice thought control. Take control of your mind and *drive* it toward God and the true worship of Him. Don’t allow your mind to wander about lunch, babies in the other pew, or afternoon activities. Maintain your focus. Reach down deep into your mind and heart to truly give yourself to God in worship, John 4:24. Don’t just bow your head, bow your heart. Don’t close your mind when you close your eyes. Open your heart when you open your mouth to truly praise God for His greatness! Truly *participate* rather than just showing up for a check mark by your name.

C. Look Past the Leader.

Whether we’re talking about leaders of songs, prayers, communion, or sermons, the leader is not the point- so don’t focus on him. Whether he’s good, or not-so-good, he’s not the point. You can sing or pray with *spirit*, *understanding*, and *heart* (1Cor.14:15) even if the prayer

is too long, too short, too filled with grammatical errors, or the song is too high, too low, too fast, too slow, or not one that you particularly like. Ditto for the communion leader and lesson deliverer!

Even if the leader's leading is beyond "professional" and bordering on being an expressed art form, he's still not the point: worshipping God is the point!

D. Public Worship has Private Benefits if We Take it Home with Us.

If you *prepare*, *participate*, and look *past* the leaders, worship can and will go home with you. I love to hear people joyously humming a hymn as they exit the building, or to hear of a discussion they had over lunch regarding the lesson. Worship went home with them! If you bring a big enough container with you to worship, you can take it home with you too. Then, it can continue to motivate and stimulate you to worship God privately all week; which will, in turn, guide you toward holy activity and conduct.

IV. Conclusion

The God of the Universe has given us the *privilege* of coming into His presence to worship, commune, and communicate with Him.

But if we choose to view this opportunity as a *duty* or *obligation* rather than a *privilege*, we will definitely have difficulty accomplishing true worship, or deriving any benefit from it.