

. WORSHIP .

Matters

“I urge you, therefore, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, pleasing to God, which is your true spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Romans 12:1-2

GROUP STUDY

Bottom Line: Worship is primarily a personal activity before it is a corporate activity.

Open the group time by asking this question: What is worship?

It's a common error to limit our concept of worship to what we do on Sunday mornings in the sanctuary. But understood rightly, worshiping together on Sunday is only a very small part of what worship is. Worship in the Bible is described several different ways.

Read and discuss the following passages. What do we learn about worship from them?

John 4:19-21—Worship is not confined to a certain location.

John 4:23-24 – Worship is done in spirit (with our hearts) and in truth (with our minds).

Romans 12:1-2 – Worship is right living in accordance with the will of God.

Hebrews 13:15-16—Worship is continuous and sacrificial.

This is only a small sampling of what the Bible has to say about worship, but the point should be made: worship is more than just what you do on Sunday morning, it is a lifestyle. And Romans 12:1-2 breaks down for us some of the elements of a lifestyle of worship.

Read Romans 12:1 again. What does Paul say the motivation of our worship should be?

Paul says, “I urge you, therefore, *by the mercies of God...*” Paul is saying that our worship should be a response to God's mercies toward us. God's mercies are everything that He has given us that we do not deserve.

How has God shown mercy to you? (kindness, love, salvation, patience, forgiveness, hope, joy, etc.) **Has the reality of any of these mercies grown cold to you? Why do you think that is? How can you protect your heart from this?**

Back to Romans 12:1. What do you think “present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice” means?

This means that we are to give everything to God. Because God has shown us such incredible mercy, we are to present ourselves to Him completely, to be used for His service. Our thoughts, our actions, our desires, our dreams, our hearts, our minds, our souls; every part of us should

be surrendered to Him. Paul says that this kind of “offering” is our true form of spiritual worship.

When we worship God, we are proclaiming His glory and His majesty. And even more, we are not merely proclaiming His glory, but we are also delighting in it. Worship happens when our joy in God overflows into praise and adoration. When we offer our bodies to God as a *living* sacrifice, our joy in God is overflowing to say, “I will continually and willfully pour myself out in service to Your Kingdom.” When we offer our bodies to God as a *holy* sacrifice, our joy in God is overflowing to say, “I will fight against delighting in anything other than You.” In this way, complete surrender to God is the truest form of worship we can engage in.

What parts of your life are you not presenting to God? Are you more of a living sacrifice or a holy sacrifice? How can you grow in either area?

Now read Romans 12:2. How do we grow in our true spiritual worship of God? (We renew our minds) How do we renew our minds?

There are two steps we must take if we are to renew our minds. First, we must stop letting worldly ideas and thoughts into our minds. This is what Paul means when he says that we should not “conform to the pattern of this world.” We must put forth the effort to cleanse our minds of what is not godly and holy.

How do we allow worldly thoughts and ideas into our minds? What measures should we be willing to take to protect our hearts and minds from the world’s influence?

The second step we must take to renew our minds is that after we stop the flow of worldliness into our minds, we replace it and fill our minds with godliness. Paul tells the Philippians “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about these things” (Phil. 4:8). If we fill our minds with these things, then we can be assured that we are fostering a proper environment for the Holy Spirit to do His work of renewal and cleansing (Titus 3:5).

How do we fill our minds with godliness? What activities should we engage in to help us with this? How do those activities help renew our minds?

As you can hopefully see, worship is primarily a personal activity before it is a corporate activity. True worship finds its root in a life that is committed to celebrating God’s glory by renouncing sin and serving the Lord. If this is not present, then it doesn’t matter what you do on Sunday morning.

How do you need to prepare your heart and mind to be able to truly worship before the next worship gathering?