

God Recognizes False Worship When He Sees It—Do You?

“It is appropriate to ask whether there is much genuine, deep, heartfelt worship in our churches. In many evangelical churches people do not truly worship God. ... If genuine worship is lacking in our churches, we should ask how we can bring ourselves to experience much more of the depth and richness of worship, which is the natural response of the believing heart ...” (Wayne Grudem).

Dr. Grudem is spot on—many who attend church are not worshipping God, they simply go through the motions. But what is genuine worship? Worship is a combination of attitude and acts focused on reverence to God. The Hebrew meaning denotes a “bowing down, or prostrating oneself”; it is a posture reflecting homage and reverence toward the one true and living God. If there is a problem with worshipping God, the problem isn’t with God; the problem is with us. Worship serves as the thermometer of the heart by measuring our spiritual condition ... are we hot, cold or lukewarm? Granted, worship isn’t necessarily measured by actions such as jumping up and down; it’s measured by the condition (temperature) of our heart—is it rejoicing for joy and breaking and submitting to God?

Sadly, many confuse false worship with genuine worship. According to numerous theological resources, false worship is when an entity, person or object is worshipped instead of God—our passion for “something” outweighs our passion for Him; it draws us away.

Most don’t have idols on the shelf because they are parked in the garage. We don’t pay homage to a statue in the living room because we are mesmerized by a 44” box affectionately known as “the entertainment center.” We don’t sacrifice things on the altar, but we do sacrifice our time (and time with of our

children) on the altar of misguided priorities.

Of course cars, televisions and the Internet are not evil, they are neutral; but it is our love for them that tilts the scale away from God. We find hours a day for entertainment, but have little time to worship. Do we honestly believe that this misapplication of priorities doesn't affect our spirituality? Think again.

False worship also includes inappropriate and improper acts supposedly directed toward God. Many simply go through the motions at church. They attend as if they are doing God a favor. The heart is not engaged and the soul is not lifted up ... they are bored.

Here is a test to measure the spiritual condition of the heart: Do we want the worship time to hurry and finish? Are we dreading another song as our eyes glance at the clock? Do we come late to miss the boring worship? If so, I would seriously encourage heart examination.

I am not suggesting that if the worship seems dead it's our fault ... not all of the worship taking place is heartfelt and Spirit-led. There is dry formalism and dead ritualism taking place in the church today. Many sing "about" God but they have never truly experienced Him—head knowledge without heart knowledge.

He is the Creator of heaven and earth. He is not a cosmic force, universal love or a doting grandfather, He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. We must worship Him. He created, redeemed and saved us. One of the countless hymns states it well, "O' the Blood: washes me; shed for me ... what a sacrifice that saved my life, yes the blood, it is my victory!"

Luke 19:10 records, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." John 1:29 passionately declares, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

And 1 Peter 2:24 reminds us that “He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” These facts demand worship. Many go ballistic when a favorite team wins, but appear handcuffed and bored in church. How sad.

Worship must be a priority. This is not optional, it’s vital. “Therefore I desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands ...” (1 Tim. 2:8). We cannot live like heathens all week and expect heaven to fall during worship. We cannot fill our mind with darkness all week and expect the light of Christ to shine during worship. We cannot worship ourselves and things all week and expect to turn our affections toward God on one designated day.

Worship is a lifestyle! Worship and holiness are interwoven. 1 Peter 1:16 says, “Be holy, because I am holy.” Holiness is not a strange, outdated word. Holiness is being set apart or separated from anything that causes us to sin, whether mentally (in what we think) or physically (in what we do). Holiness begins in the heart: “The Holy Spirit is first of all a moral flame. It is not an accident of language that He is called the Holy Spirit, for whatever else the word holy may mean it does undoubtedly carry with it the idea of moral purity” (Tozer).

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