

6 Ways Worship Changes Us From the Inside Out

Many of us talk as if God is real, but act as if He's not. We are witnessing a generation of people hearing the word of God but not applying it. James 1:22 warns, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

Many of our problems are created by our own deception ... we are "hearing" but not "doing." A recent example came via email: *"I'm at a loss. My 'Christian' husband is verbally and physically abusive. Ironically, he thinks that I'm the problem; he sees no need to change. He'll quote Scriptures about submission while yelling and cursing. His anger is also destroying our children. A home once filled with laughter and joy is now filled with fear and depression. We walk on eggshells and cherish the times when he is gone. He also loves his porn more than his family. I can no longer bear it. I never thought of divorce, but now its a daily struggle."*

We may be convicted, but what will it take to turn that conviction into action? Will it take the death of a marriage, a broken relationship, or a prodigal child? Jesus left no room for confusion when he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Hear the crying of our children; hear the pleading of our spouses; hear the weeping of broken families.

One way to position our hearts to hear God is through worship. Worship is not designed to fill in the gap at church until its time for the message. Often, it is the message. Worship is a lifestyle of laying our heart before God in reflection and meditation—tremendous joy and healing often take place. It is during this time that spiritual surgery cleans the vessel and opens the blockage so that restoration with God can take place.

A person who does not worship will have a difficult time hearing and discerning God's voice ... His truth. Worship positions the heart to receive, the eyes to see, and the mind to comprehend the will of God.

"We want God as long as He doesn't change what we like. But any person not open to change is not open to revival ... Revival will come only to a desperate church, not a content church. He is the Rewarder of those who 'diligently seek Him,' not the mere casual inquirer ... Most Americans worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship" (Al Whittinghill).

How many of us truly worship? I'm not talking about listening to music as we go about our day; I'm talking about stopping our day for a significant amount of time and listening to God via prayer, worship and His word. Does God get as much time as Cinemark? Are we spending more time with the Father than Facebook? Is Hollywood saturating our thought life or is the Holy Spirit? We must go the Great Surgeon, the Healer of our Soul through worship if we truly want to be transformed.

When we surrender to worship, we open spiritual floodgates and allow God to cleanse. Jesus referred to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as living water—*Let it Rain, Come to the Water, Let he who thirsts thirst no more, Open the Floodgates*, are all lyrics from worship songs reflecting our need for this living water.

For example, "I've got a river of life flowing out of me" is an old favorite, but if the river of life isn't flowing in through prayer and worship, it won't be flowing out. One of the primary roles of the pulpit is to motivate and encourage worship. Woe be to the pastor who doesn't worship—we're going to feed God's people, yet we ourselves are malnourished. We're going to preach about brokenness and humility, and not humble ourselves through worship? God help us.

Please don't misunderstand: although worship is vital, we need

all three to thrive spiritually—His Word, prayer, and worship.

- If we only have the Word of God, we can become cold, callous and mechanical. We will have the letter of the law but lack the compassion of Christ. Hearts will become dry and dead; pride will dominate: “knowledge puffs up” (1 Cor. 8:1).
- If all we do is worship, we may have emotional highs, but no foundation. We may inevitably shape God into who we think He is. Worship is theology being sung. We must look to the Word for guidance in this area. We cannot sing about God as if we are on a date with Him; He is a holy and righteous God. Worship is holy ground.
- If we do not understand heartfelt prayer, it can become a monologue and a stale list of demands and dead repetition: “But when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words” (Matt. 6:7).
- Why don’t many spend time worshiping God? In short, it hurts ... it’s hard. During worship, we realize that we need God ... our utter dependence on Him is magnified, and our sin is exposed. But that can be good. As the hymn *Amazing Grace* puts it so well: *Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind, but now I see. T’was grace that taught my heart to fear. And Grace, my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.*

Worship heals, restores, renews, breaks, builds and encourages us toward God. Take time now and begin worshipping Him. Call upon His name and He will save you ... He will deliver you.

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Watch the sermon, "In Vain They Worship Me":