

# How to Worship

John 4:21-24

## Preface

Before Jesus, the Jews and Samaritans argued continuously over how to worship. Who can worship God? Where can God be worshiped? What is the right way to worship God?

These are also questions the church continues to wrestle with today. We have different opinions and attitudes about worship from one denomination to another, one church to another and even one member to another.

Illus: Talking with pastor who has a Sunday night contemporary service and the older adults don't come in the door until the preaching begins. There is something wrong with that attitude. We should all desire to worship and enjoy seeing others worship. Instead of supporting the youth, they distance themselves.

Illus: Auction of the ladies stuff. May seem like junk to me but every item is of special meaning to her. The same is true in our worship of God.

Illus: Yesterday I saw Billy and Julie McKenzie trying to get Billy's truck washed at the mechanical car wash at Deli Depot. Billy didn't pull in far enough and it wouldn't start. Then he pulled in too far and it started but immediately stopped. Finally when he got the truck in just the right place where the sensor could be triggered, the machine fired up and gave him the car wash.

Fortunately, worship isn't like that. We don't have to get it just right or exactly a certain way in order to experience true worship. But there are some key aspects of worship I want us to see today.

## Scripture

<sup>7</sup> When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" <sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

<sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)<sup>a</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

<sup>11</sup> "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

<sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." <sup>16</sup> He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." <sup>17</sup> "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup> The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." ----- Sermon Text Begins

<sup>19</sup> "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

<sup>21</sup> Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

<sup>23</sup> Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:7-24 NIV

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a Or do not use dishes Samaritans have used

## Introduction

A fresh crop will not grow on hard ground. A seed must be planted in fertile soil. The same is true with spiritual growth.

In order for us to grow spiritually, God begins with plowing up conviction. He brings us to a point that we realize something isn't right in our heart. It is with the fertile heart that He works.

Jesus aroused the woman's mind and heart by going straight to the most significant problem in her life. Sin! Sexual sin yes; but the result of spiritual problems.

Her response is, "I have no husband." And then she immediately attempts to change the subject by talking about religion.

We do the same thing today. We are always ready to talk about religion but rarely desire to talk about our own spiritual condition. We are fine talking religion just don't talk about sin or spiritual conditions.

She attempts to take a detour on Jesus and He appears to take the bait but later gets right back to her spiritual condition. Rest assured **our detours might fool men but never God. He always knows your heart.**

But Jesus allows the conversation to progress on the matter of worship and there is much for us to learn about worship from the conversation.

Illus: Gordon Dahl said, "**Most middle-class Americans tend to worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship.**" I am afraid this is a true statement.

Illus: I sat here in utter amazement as I contrasted last Sunday with Easter Sunday. We went from a packed house to only a handful in last week. Our giving went from over \$11,000.00 to \$3,900.00. I watched during the offertory as people began to talk and socialize. I could not believe the talking that went on during the offering. I watched as we sang the song Alpha & Omega. At least a 3<sup>rd</sup> of our congregation was not singing. I looked around the room in amazement. Tight lips appeared defiant about singing praises to our Lord. What happened to the joyous worship occasion of Easter Sunday?

How can it be real worship when it is great on Easter Sunday but bland and unimportant to us the following Sunday.

God intends for worship to be so much more for all of us. How?

## Content

### 1. Worship In Honesty

Jesus told the woman that true worship has to be in truth.

The woman used a tactic that she probably used many times before. The Jews believed they should worship in Jerusalem and the Samaritans believed they should worship on Mt. Gerizim. This was a long standing debate.

Then she tried to just evade the whole conversation by saying one day the Messiah would come and settle the issue. She didn't really want to worship God, she was just justifying herself.

Illus: People that do the same thing today. They find a comfortable excuse that works for them and they stick with it. People do this every day. "I can't go down to that church with that bunch of hypocrites." "I have too much work to be done." "The kids have ball." The list goes on and on.

The sad thing is that even Christians also find comfortable excuses why they don't "sell out" to God.

People say things like, "Well to me, God.... And, they fill in the blank with their favorite excuse.

We need to understand that God is not here to fill our human opinions, philosophies or preconceptions. God is God and nothing we "think" is going to change who he is or what he expects of us.

**Our excuses are hollow and meaningless. They fool no one and cheat only ourselves.** There is a surrender that we must face. We must learn to accept God no matter what we think.

God is not politically correct. He is not an American. His not a great grandfather. And, brace yourself, he is not always fair.

God is like a wild animal that never quite fits into our human definitions of Him.

We must reach a point that we accept God for being God. Let me put it another way, we must reach the point that we accept who we are, God's creations and he is God the creator!

Only then does worship become truly honest. We must stop rationalizing about what we think about worship and just be honest with God.

Worship is about God, Not You! Be honest before him.

## 2. Worship In Spirit

When Jesus said to worship God in spirit, he wasn't talking about the Holy Spirit - he was talking about your own spirit. That part of us which is made in God's image. That part of us that communes with the Holy Spirit of God.

Romans 8:16 says, "The spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

We are to love and worship God with all of ourselves. With all of our heart, soul and mind.

The bible says that **man looks at the outside but God looks at the heart.**

God always intended for our worship to be genuine and heartfelt.

Too often we reduce worship to a formula or set of steps. We associate worship with the music or the preaching.

We gauge worship by how we feel or how entertained we are.

Hymns and songs have such powerful meanings and words, yet we sing them with a bland heart. Sometimes we just button up our lips and refuse to sing them. Why is that so?

Worship is meaningless because our spirits are not worshipping. God doesn't want hypocrisy in worship. He wants to be impressed by our devotion and spirit. He wants to allow spirit to communicate with His spirit.

Quote: Rick Warren said, "**We can worship God imperfectly, but we cannot worship Him insincerely.**"

We may not know all we need to do to worship God perfectly, but there is no excuse for our hearts not being in the right place and attitude of spirit when we worship.

How is your spirit about worship? Do you come to worship in spirit? What is your purpose here today?

Illus: "We know we need to be in church for the kids." No, you need to be worshipping God for God and for you.

You will never be faithful in worship as long as you are doing it for the wrong reason.

Illus: Billy Graham found praying, "Oh God take everything I have from me if you want but don't take your spirit from me." We need to treasure our worship in spirit.

## 3. Worship In Reality

The woman was saying that she was waiting for God to become real to her and He would make her beliefs make sense.

I don't want you to miss this important point. She had her perception of God and she was just waiting for God to be what she desired. The irony is that **He was standing right before her.** She just needed to realize it in heart and spirit.

Many of us are the same way. We are waiting for God to be real to us in our lives but He isn't. We reason that if God would be real to us then we would do this or that...

The problem is not that God isn't real, the problem is that God is not who we want to make him be.

Illus: Suppose God spoke to us this morning and assured us that if we return next Sunday, he will be here personally in all of His glory. Suppose he promised everyone who returns next Sunday will receive a great blessing.

Do you think it would affect your priorities? Is there anything that would keep you away next Sunday? Do you think you might let it slip your mind? Would the children's behavior keep you from coming? Would you sleep late?

I think you would all be here early and ready for your blessing from God. Heck, you might even find the will power to invite a friend to come with you.

And, what about your appointment with him? Do you think you would think about it all week? Would you contemplate what you might say? Would you eagerly anticipate the moment?

I suspect all of us would carefully consider the moment with great anticipation. We would be eager to speak openly and freely with God. We would throw out our excuses and our religious clothes and be prepared to do spiritual business with the King.

The truth is that God will be here next Sunday just as he is here every Sunday. **The problem is that we don't come to worship in spirit. We come to be entertained.**

**The problem is that we don't come to worship a real God! We just play church waiting for the day when God becomes real to us.**

## **Conclusion**

On Easter Sunday we had the Cardboard Testimony time. That may have seemed like a strange thing to do on Easter but it wasn't. It gave people an opportunity to share what Christ has done in their life. It is really what Easter is all about.

You may have noticed that I sat down front and wept the entire time. I could not control my emotions.

I want you to understand something. I wasn't impressed with the people or their wordings. It was God with whom I was impressed. I sat in awe as person after person testified what God has done in people's lives.

In people's darkest moments, God brought them through and they were standing here giving him the glory.

God was impressive.

God is alive and present!

What kind of worshiper are you? God is seeking worshipers who worship him in honesty, spirit and reality.

Worship is not about you, it is about God!