

INTENTIONAL WORSHIP

Jesus said "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." True worship is the heartfelt response of your whole being to the supreme worth of God, expressed in all you think, do and say, to glorify Him. Worship in spirit and truth is the activity of your true self, your spirit, according to God's truth, the Bible, by the Holy Spirit's power. True worship transcends place, posture, and practice.

True worship is an intentional spiritual exercise. Your heart muscle grows weak and flabby without exercise. Same is true of your spirit. Last time we explored how true worship is 1- God-centered, 2- Christ-focused, and 3- Spirit-empowered. Here are three more essential aspects of intentional worship:

4- True worship is WORD-based. God spoke the world into existence by divine activity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the three persons of the one true God. He reveals Himself through creation, and through the living Word, Jesus, and through His written Word, the Bible. God oversaw the writing and preservation of the Bible so that we can know Him. His Word reveals the truth of who God is, how to approach Him, worship Him, be redeemed by Him, to live for Him according to His word and ways.

That's why the Bible occupies such prominence in a church service. His written Word is the primary way He communicates to us, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In church we actually read His Word, sing His Word, pray His Word, preach His Word, then go live out His Word. An operative principle of the Christian life is "*the Spirit of God works the Word of God so the people of God become like the Son of God.*"

5- True worship is WHOLE-being. Jesus said "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength*" (Mark 12:30). God designed your whole being to worship Him, all that you are acknowledging all that you know of Him, to glorify Him. Worship in spirit and truth involves your attitudes, actions, articulations - thoughts, deeds, words, with all your heart, mind, will. This intentionally involves your whole being. Not just mechanically mumbling. Whether in public or private worship, you humbly present yourself before God, ascribing allegiance to Him. Does God hear words pass your lips? Does the Holy Spirit cause you to sing, whether or not you can carry the tune? Do you join in prayer, amens, offerings? To get your focus off yourself and others, and on to God Himself?

Theologian Sinclair Ferguson says it's the single most important activity of your life. You were made to worship God, offering your whole life, in all its parts, as a hymn of praise to the Lord. When the psalmist says "*Bless the LORD, O my soul, all that is within me, bless His holy name*" (Psalm 103) he speaks as a "spiritual athlete in peak condition, his entire life unreservedly directed to God in praise, with whole-hearted devotion to God his most obvious characteristic." Does this describe YOU? Ever?

6- True worship is EVERY-day 24/7. We miss the whole point if we make worship a Sunday morning ritual hour when you show up and shut up, just going through the motions of church. We go to church not "for worship" performance but "to worship" in participation. We honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy, "*considering how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another daily*" (Hebrews 10). But true worship is every day all day.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And WHATEVER you do, in word or deed, do EVERYTHING in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3). Many African Christians go about their everyday lives, working, making meals, etc, praying "in Jesus' name" with EVERY motion and activity. YOU can do this too. Your job performance, relationships, finances, every aspect of your life can be lived in Jesus' name, 24/7.

True worship is the activity of your true self, your spirit, according to God's truth, the Bible, by the Holy Spirit's power. It is the Worship of God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, according to God's Word, engaging your whole being, encompassing your whole life 24/7. May this be true of you!