

OFFERING OUR UTMOST IN THE WORSHIP OF GOD:
Applications developed from my exposition of Revelation 4:9-11¹
www.prshockley.org

If worthiness is giving what is due God, what are you offering Him in daily worship? Are you giving God a water gauge? Do you offer him what you enjoy and figure God will like it? Like a thoughtful gift, real worship means knowing what's important to the receiver.

1. What do you offer Him in your worship? Does that truly express His worthiness?
2. When do you offer such worship? Does that truly express His worthiness?
3. Why do you even offer worship?

I listened to the story of a pastor who went to minister in Africa. After being there for a while he turned to God in prayer-absolutely angry at Him. He said, "I came to preach the Good News of Salvation, to see these dear children be spared from the fury of hell and damnation. But it turns out that they aren't ignorant of your presence. Rather, they refuse to acknowledge your presence. Why? Why would you send me here to be in the company of rebellious savages who know you exist but refuse to acknowledge you?" Immediately after his complaint to God he came to a horrible realization: "To show you, preacher and pastor, that you are robbing me of my glory." See, this pastor went to Africa for his own sake, maybe for the sake of others, but not exclusively for the glory of God.

Who do we think we are kidding? When we are not offering him our utmost best, offering God the worthiness that is due Him, we are actually saying to Him, "God you are not worthy enough to receive my utmost." We know from the story of Cain and Abel that God doesn't like acts of selfish worship cloaked in unselfish appearances.

But then the question comes: **How can we offer Him our very best?** Surely, because of the residual effects of our sin nature, every act we do is tainted in some way with selfish motives or intentions.

On the surface, that seems right. (a) We are very selfish creatures. (b) There is this warring within, there is this old man (old sphere of rule) and (c) there are thousands of past experiences in our own lives to which we can appeal to demonstrate that though our actions appeared to be God-honoring, if the truth be fully known, our motives were indeed selfish.

If it is inevitable that at the core of every action is a selfish motive, even in those acts that appear to be most noble, then I don't see how any "*reward*" will survive the exposing fire at the judgment seat of Christ. Consider the words of 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 (2 Corinthians 5:9-10; 2 John 8):

1 Corinthians 3:10-15:

¹ The complete exposition is available on the website. It is titled, "The Worthiness of God" (Revelation 4:9-11) and is available in this spiritual life folder.

¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. ²

If all our actions are tainted with some self-serving motive, then every selfish act we did even as redeemed believers will be reduced to wood, stubble, & hay.

While I am not advocating perfectionism, I most certainly believe it is possible to offer our very best to Him with God-honoring motives *when* we are controlled by the Holy Spirit, walking dependently, step-by-step in His strength, bearing the fruit of the Spirit. In other words, it is possible to offer Him our very best because of the Holy Spirit's ministry (s) in our lives when we "*abide*" in intimate fellowship with our living Lord for the spiritual life is the life of Jesus Christ reproduced in the child of God by means of the Holy Spirit. Consider the following passages: John 15; Galatians 5:16-18; Ephesians 4 & 5; Philippians 3:12-4:1; 4:6-8. "I am in Christ and Christ is in me. I am in Christ in terms of my position, possession, safe-keeping, and association. Christ is in me giving me life, character, and dynamic for conduct." ~ L. S. Chafer.

Therefore, if anything less than my very best is what expresses His worthiness, then what steps I can take to offer my utmost in worship? In answering this question I am going to start with are affections, consider our appetites, then our thinking, and lastly, our surroundings. By approaching this holistically, we may better address this subject.

Beginning with our affections (the desires of our heart):

- 1. Pray to God every day that you will whole heartily seek to honor His name.**
Just as Jesus prayed in Matthew 6:9, "Pray then like this, 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. To see God's name honored should be the greatest joy of all who love God.
- 2. Pray to God every day that you will authentically find joy in worshipping Him.**
Do you realize time and time again the psalmists links the joy we have in God with the praise we bring his name. Consider Psalm 9:2, "I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O most High"
- 3. Pray to God every day that He will bind your heart to Himself.** Is that not what we ask God to do when we sing "*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*" by Robert Robinson?

² *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. 1 Co 3:10-15;

One of the reasons why I've come to enjoy this hymn so much is because I am acknowledging God's absolute right to bind my heart to Himself:³

*"O to grace how great a debtor, Daily
I am constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above."*

Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee. A "fetter" is a chain. We need to pray this with all our wandering heart, "Grant us, O God, to see the surpassing value of your goodness so that it binds us, as with a chain, to you. I offer you my heart...take and seal it, for your courts above."⁴

- 4. Regularly examine the desires of your heart and see whether they express the worthiness that is due Him.** Activities tend to follow the desires of your heart. Let me put it this way, "*What do you want out of life?*" Does what you want reflect the worship that is due Him with the remaining breath you have.

Like Dr. Ken Hanna states:

"We can't expect worship to flow from our lips on the Lord's Day if we keep it dammed in our hearts throughout the week. The waters of worship should never stop flowing from our heart, for God is always God and always worthy of worship. But the flow of worship should be channeled and distilled at least daily into a distinct worship experience."

Moving from our affections to our appetites:

- 5. Quit nibbling at the table of the world.**

John Piper puts it this way:

"If you don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great. God did not create you for this? There is an appetite for God. And it can be awakened. I invite you to turn from the dulling effects of food and the dangers of idolatry and to say with some simple fast: 'This much, O God, I want you.'"⁵

³ John Piper, *When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy*, 152.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 172.

Using Old Testament ceremonial language Paul says, “*Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be new lump, as you really are unleavened*” (1 Cor. 5:7). In other words, you are sinless in Christ; therefore become sinless in practice.

Moving from our appetites to our thinking:

6. Meditate on God’s Instructions:

*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
10 More to be desired are they than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping them there is great reward.⁶*

Other passages: John 17:17; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Timothy 3:16-17.

Moving from our thinking to our surroundings:

7. Give God your very best (Mark 14:3-8): There is really something beautiful when you give back to God what He has given to you. In that moment, when you give back the good and perfect gifts God has given you, He is worshipped...for you are willing to give up for the glory of God.

Consider the anointing of Jesus by Mary in **Mark 14:3-8**:

“3 While he was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; and she broke the vial and poured it over His head. 4 But some were indignantly remarking to one another, “Why has this perfume been wasted? 5 For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.” And they were scolding her. 6 But Jesus said, “Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me. 7 For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. 8 She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.”

Though you may not be able to pour costly perfume on Jesus’ head, in one sense you actually do when you sincerely love others, meeting the practical needs of others, even if that means demands self-surrender (1 John 3:16-18).

8. Determine what places, activities, and thoughts prompt you to worship. Incorporate those elements into your daily and weekly life. Devote quality time to them. Similarly, identify and avoid the things that hinder meaningful worship.

⁶ *The New King James Version.* Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ps 19:7-11

We must not forget, however, that God expects us to worship privately ... We minimize our joy when we neglect the daily worship of God in private. It is one of the great blessings of life that God does not limit our access to Him and enjoyment of His presence to one day per week! Daily strength, guidance, and encouragement are available to us. An invitation to grow in intimacy with Jesus Christ Himself is open every day. ... To worship God throughout a lifetime requires discipline. Without discipline, our worship of God will be thin and inconsistent. When I say that worship is focusing on and responding to God, I hope to convey my conviction that true worship is always covered with heart prints. Worship can't be diagramed or calculated, for it is the response of a heart in love with God. And yet, we also must be able to think of worship as a Discipline, a Discipline that must be cultivated just as all relationships must be to remain healthy and grow.⁷

9. Lastly, seek to see what few only take time to see: The glory of God revealed in creation.

Psalm 92:4 states "*For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.*" **Psalm 19:1-4** puts it this way: "*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out his speech and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. The measuring line goes out through the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*"

Do we *really* realize, in and through God's creation, God's creation reflects and even rests on the glory of Him I want to illustrate upon this last point by a sharing a story from C. S. Lewis' ***God in the Dock***.

I was standing today in the dark tool shed. The sun was shining outside and through the crack at the top of the door there came a sun-beam. From where I stood that beam of light, with the specks of dust floating in it, was the most striking thing in the place. Everything else was almost pitched-black. I was seeing the beam, not seeing things by it. Then I moved so that the beam fell on my eyes. Instantly the whole previous picture vanished. I saw no tool shed, and (above all) no beam. Instead, I saw, framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside and beyond that, 90 odd million miles away, the sun. Looking along the beam, and looking at the beam are very different experiences.⁸

See, here is a man who is able to see what few see. Every day take a moment, gaze upon some aspect of God's creativity, and allow that display of glory prompt you to worship Him, giving God, our Creator and Sustainer, what is due Him.

⁷ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian life*, p. 94.

⁸ C. S. Lewis, "Meditation in a Tool shed" in *God in the Dock*, pg. 212.