

The Spiritual Habits of Jesus Series

Jesus' Habit of Worship with Others

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At A Glance:

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Jesus' Habit of Worship with Others

I. Introduction

- A. Have you ever felt a sense of freedom, thinking you don't need other people to worship God? I know I have. I used to think how nice it would be if I didn't have to spend hours of my life every Sunday in church. I thought about what I could do with that time, including sleeping in an extra day every week. There were times I grew tired of always having to attend church. It felt burdensome and a duty when I was an immature disciple. I didn't think church was worthwhile because it didn't help me in any meaningful way—I viewed it as completely irrelevant. If my heart had the choice, I would not have gone to church, as I rejoiced in those rare occasions when my parents said we weren't going to church. Thankfully, God has changed my heart so that I view church as a meaningful opportunity to live a life of significance built around that which is most important. But this change of perspective didn't happen overnight.
- B. It seems this understandable attitude has grown significantly since the time I approached God with this attitude. We live in a time when many people have cast off what they call “organized religion” (and in some cases with good reason) and prefer a more individualized approach to pursuing God; we need to recognize God's perspective on this human tendency. The church has been deeply influenced by our individualistic, anti-authority culture.
- C. As a quick review, we are learning from the life of Jesus to see how best to live a satisfying quality of life. We've seen how Jesus lived well with a strength and wisdom that no one else possessed. Jesus didn't just survive in life; He thrived with enough resources to help everyone around Him. Living this kind of life is good. Since Jesus lived so well, we are discovering how He was so successful in life by identifying the lifestyle habits that enabled Jesus to live the kind of life we observe.
- D. So far, Jesus' lifestyles habits that gave strength to His life are:
- ☑ Solitude—the activity of spending time alone with God
 - ☑ Prayer—the practice of communicating with God
 - ☑ Seeking the Father—participating in activities that result in an ongoing, close connection with God
 - ☑ Bible study—learning about God and what He wants from the Bible
 - ☑ Meditation—consistently thinking about God, His kingdom, and His message
 - ☑ Personal worship—honoring God as an individual.

These are six spiritual habits of Jesus that enabled and empowered Him to be able to live the kind of life we admire.

- E. Now, we are going to look at the next spiritual habit seen in the life of Jesus mentioned in Luke 4:16. In addition to His personal worship, Jesus regularly worshipped with others. For Jesus, in harmony with the Bible's teachings, living a life that is pleasing to God requires that people gather with others who are also living for God. The Christian life is a team sport, not an exclusively individual activity. Knowing this provides spiritual protection from danger, including self-deception.

II. Command to Worship with Others

A. As with most of the other spiritual habits discovered in the life of Jesus, the habit of worship with others is found on the very lips of Jesus as He endorses the commandment found in the Bible,

⁸ Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; ⁹ and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’” (Mt. 4:8-10)¹

B. Jesus is referring to the very first commandment (found in the summary of God’s way of life called the Ten Commandments) as it is repeated throughout the law (the first 5 books of the Old Testament written by Moses). This commandment says only the true God should be worshipped (Ex. 20:1-6, Dt. 5:6-10).² Jesus affirmed the divine command of the Bible to “worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only” (v. 10). Exclusive worship of the true God is the only appropriate avenue for our ultimate allegiance and our highest life priority. According to Jesus, all other religious systems should be avoided. While this message is unpopular today, being rejected as arrogant and intolerant, Jesus knows how harmful it is for us when we worship the wrong person, object, or activity. Only worshipping the true God is good for human flourishing. Anyone who has ever experienced a false religious system knows this. Many who have lived for the wrong priority in life have also come to this realization.

C. While it may appear loving to accept all religions and encourage everyone in their own pursuit of God, this is not healthy. Great harm is done to both individuals and societies when people get religion wrong. As is the case in every other area of life, if we misunderstand the nature of the world and live out of step with the way things are, we will experience negative consequences as a natural result; our quality of life diminishes to varying degrees. The bigger the gap between how a person *views* the world and the and how it *actually is*, the more our quality of life suffers. Imagine what would happen if a person live as if gravity didn’t exist, or if they thought food was harmful. Only the true God provides the resources necessary to live an ultimately full and abundant life both now and in the future. Jesus said that human teachings are an insufficient source to develop ideas about God (called doctrines); only the accurate words of God give structure to true religion, along with a genuine heart for God (Mt. 15:1-9, Mk. 7:5-13).

D. The Bible makes it clear that this general command to worship the God of the Bible who has worked throughout human history includes meeting together with other people who worship God as well,

²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Heb. 10:23-25)

¹ Lk. 4:5-8

² Dt. 6:13, 13:4

- E. From the very beginning, God built gathering with other people for the purpose of worshipping Him into the structure of how God’s people are to approach Him, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Worshipping God was never intended to be an exclusively individualistic activity. Those that think they can worship God on their own or “out in the woods” apart from other people don’t understand the basics of living a life that is pleasing to God. This isn’t meant to be insulting, but instructive, because many are confused on this point—especially today in our hyper individualistic culture. Following Jesus’ way of life is much more than our own individual pursuit of God.
- F. Notice what is commanded, “not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some” (v. 25). God understands the human tendency to isolate ourselves from others and worship God on our own without accountability. He specifically addresses this danger in this passage. Assembling together is a present action being done by God’s people. God knows we need other people to be spiritually healthy. Left to ourselves, it is too easy to be misled and deceived about our own spiritual condition. We are really good at convincing ourselves we are right with God and doing what He wants, even when we are not. This is why God wants us to pursue Him in community. In fact, when we have healthy connections with God’s people, it is a source of reassurance that we are right with God (1 Jn. 1:5-7, 3:10-11).
- G. Also take note of the other activities that are good for us that can only happen as we worship with others. First, disciples are to, “consider how to...” (v. 24) do certain activities in the church. As individuals, we don’t know everything—we need the wisdom of others in our pursuit of God. The specific activities in mind are listed next. Thought should be given to how the church is to carry out the tasks given to it by God. Second, God’s people are to “stimulate one another to love” (v. 24). Other people are required for love to be carried out the way God intends. A life of love can’t be lived by ourselves; we need other people for this. We also need to give and receive motivation from others to live this kind of lifestyle. Being isolated moves us away from a lifestyle of love and moves us toward a lifestyle of selfishness instead. This is why Proverbs warns against such isolation (Pr. 18:1). Third, we are to do the same with, “good deeds” (v. 24). Good deeds aren’t done for ourselves, but other people. Again, we need others to live the kind of life that pleases God. Other people help motivate us to live righteous and godly lives by doing good. Fourth, disciples are to be, “encouraging one another” (v. 25). Being faithful to Jesus and His words is difficult. We need the help of others, especially in our weak moments. Support can be both given and received from others in the times when we need it the most. All these activities require us to gather with others. Much is missing from our lives if we separate ourselves from corporate worship gatherings.
- H. Do you understand that regularly gathering with other people in the church is a requirement of the Christian life, or do you think your relationship with God is no one’s business? The Bible consistently teaches living for God is not an individual activity. For our spiritual lives to be healthy, we must pursue God with other people. If a person is not sharing their spiritual life with others, they are missing a large piece of what makes us spiritually healthy. While all of us have the tendency to keep others at arm’s length without really letting them see us for who we are, this keeps us trapped at our current level of spiritual development. When we confess our

sins to and pray for one another and develop open relationships with others who are pursuing Jesus, we discover healing (Jas. 5:16).

- I. If you don't have anyone to share your spiritual life with, I encourage you to find at least one other safe person with whom you can open up with regarding your spiritual condition, where you are at spiritually, where you need to go next, and share how you are learning and growing. Also, make it a high priority to regularly gather with other people who have a heart for God and are doing their best to pursue Him. If we do this, we will learn that no one has everything together and we are all on a journey of becoming the person God wants us to be.

III. Jesus' Habit of Worshipping with Others

- A. As with all of Jesus' other teachings, He lived out His teachings without mistake or inconsistency. The spiritual habit of worship with others is clearly identified along with some of the elements of this habit:

¹⁶ And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, ¹⁹ TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." ²⁰ And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²² And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?" (Lk. 4:16-22)

- B. The habit is directly mentioned, "as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath" (v. 16). Jesus lived His life with the regular pattern of meeting with other Jews for corporate worship according to the Jewish style of worship. Their spiritual gatherings happened, "on the Sabbath". Not only did Jesus attend the regular weekly local synagogue gatherings, He also annually went to the temple in Jerusalem for specific Jewish holidays (called feasts/festivals) and activities.³ This habit was started early in Jesus' life as an infant (Lk. 2:21-24), continued when Jesus was young (Lk. 2:41-49), and was adopted as an adult (Mt. 16:21, 20:17, Mk. 11:11, 11:27, Lk. 9:51, Jn. 2:1-17, 2:23). Jesus worshipped in this way, knowing that God was going to change this form of worship through Him (Jn. 4:19-24).
- C. In this passage, we not only clearly see this spiritual habit of Jesus, we also get an idea of what was included in this habit. First, there was a regular meeting time and location for the purpose of worship ("entered the synagogue on the Sabbath" v. 16). Second, reading of Scripture was a critical piece ("the book of the prophet Isaiah" v. 17). Third, preaching and teaching of the Bible was involved ("He began to say" v. 21 and "wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips" v. 22). Fourth, in these activities we see Jesus serving others for their spiritual

³ This fulfilled God's command for His people to gather to worship Him at specific times throughout the year (Ex. 23:14-17).

benefit. While more can and should be included in what it looks like for God’s people to gather for worship, this passage gives us a good introduction as to what is involved in these gatherings.

- D. When Jesus worshipped with others, He served them. Do you? Jesus didn’t merely attend worship with others, He actively participated in the activities that were happening. He didn’t sit idly by to receive benefit from others; rather, He contributed and gave to others. As we see Jesus gathering with others in both structured and unstructured ways, Jesus was constantly serving others for their spiritual good. While we will take a closer look at this habit of Jesus later, it is important to highlight the strong connection between gathering with others for worship and the service of others.
- E. While everyone will not be a teacher or preacher in the church, they are to become an active participant in some capacity according to their gifting. One of the tragedies of the modern church is that people have been given the incorrect impression that God doesn’t expect anything from them, other than having the right kind of beliefs about Jesus and perhaps attending church services. This is not the gospel Jesus presented. Yes, Jesus said to believe in Him, but He also said to worship God AND SERVE HIM, “and serve Him only” (Mt. 4:10). Too many people in the church are content to merely attend church while they do little to nothing to serve God. This approach is not the robust Christian life Jesus intends. A large piece of healthy spirituality is missing from people’s lives if they only consume what other people offer without personally participating and serving in the corporate life and gatherings of God’s people. To experience a full and satisfying quality of life, all components of the Christian life must be present in a balanced way. If a person pursues God on their own while neglecting the corporate life of the church, they will not become mature and fully healthy. In my experience, I’ve never met someone who neglects the regular participation in the church’s life and is spiritually healthy and mature. Watching church services on TV or online is not an adequate substitute for regular in-person gatherings, because important elements are missing (such as the ones mentioned above). Those who conduct their spiritual lives this way are in direct disobedience to God’s command.

IV. How to Practice Worship with Others

- A. Let’s briefly get practical. What does it look like for a disciple to participate in the practice of worshipping with other people who love and pursue God? While the New Testament has a lot to say about the church and its activities, an important summary of the most important elements comes in a passage that describes the development of the early church immediately following Jesus’ personal disciple making ministry. Acts 2:41-43 indicates a major step in the organization of the church where a shift occurs from individuals making disciples to churches being established to make disciples:

⁴¹ So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. ⁴² They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were

sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. ⁴⁶ Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- B. Peter preached the gospel message of Jesus, God moved so people responded, and a church was established in Jerusalem—the very place where Jesus was killed.⁴ If Christianity weren't true, could it flourish in the very place where its most important events took place? After a group of people who trust Jesus and commit their lives to Him, they start living and working together in a local area. This is what a church is: a group of people intent on living Jesus' way of life who partner together to do the work of God. When this group of people get together, they begin participating in specific activities to grow in their new life with Jesus and obey what He said.⁵
- C. There are eight activities that are mentioned as it pertains to worship with others that are taking place in the early church under the guidance and leadership of the apostles who had been personally trained by Jesus. Following Jesus' command, we see the practice of baptism being a part of the life of the church ("those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls" v. 41).⁶ Baptism was the activity that initiated people into the Christian life. This resulted from the message of Jesus being communicated in evangelism.
- D. The second activity also follows one of Jesus' commands ("they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching" v. 42). Christianity involves adopting certain personal convictions—there is a body of content that needs to be accepted as true. A group of teachings about God, called doctrines, must be affirmed for a person to become a disciple. This intellectual content comes from Jesus Himself through those who were entrusted to accurately communicate His message—the apostles. Regular teaching of and commitment to what the apostles were saying was a normal part of the life of the early church. The church adopted what the apostles were teaching as their own perspective.
- E. Third, worship with others will include building life relationships with others who love God ("and to fellowship" v. 42). Fellowship is the act of sharing in the activities or privileges of an intimate association or group.⁷ It is a communal form of life.⁸ Fellowship is multiple people living life together in close relationship. While this will not happen with everyone in the church,

⁴ In a short period of time, the church went from 120 people (Ac. 1:15), to about 3,000 (Ac. 2:41), to five thousand men estimating a total of around 20,000 total (including women and children) a little later (Ac. 4:4). All this in a city that had a population of around 180,000 to 200,000. It is likely there were others from outside of Jerusalem as well. Richard I. Pervo, [Acts: A Commentary on the Book of Acts](#), ed. Harold W. Attridge, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 86, David G. Peterson, [The Acts of the Apostles](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 159.

⁵ Other summary statements about the early church are found in Acts 4:32-37 and 5:12-16.

⁶ Matthew 28:18-20

⁷ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Acts 2:42 "fellowship"

⁸ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, [The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 31, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 269.

everyone who is part of the church will be relationally connected with someone in the church. Generally, people have 2-3 close, open, and transparent relationships. This notion is further described in verse 46, “breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart”. So close were the relationships of people in the early church that they were regularly in each other’s homes sharing meals together.

- F. Fourth, the early church not only routinely practiced baptism, they also participated in communion (“to the breaking of bread” v. 42). While this phrase probably included meals in general (as in v. 46), most scholars view the phrase as being used in the technical sense of the Lord’s Supper here (Lk. 24:30, 35).⁹ This is Luke’s usual way to refer to the Eucharistic celebration.¹⁰ The early church followed Jesus’ other command to practice the Lord’s Supper (Lk. 22:14-20) which Paul, as an apostle, also confirms (1 Cor. 11:23-26). The main question is whether verse 46 is further clarifying the statement here or is referring to something else in addition to the breaking of bread in verse 42.
- G. Fifth, worship with others entails praying with and for others, as well as having other people pray for us (“and to prayer” v. 42). When God’s people got together, they talk to God. There is great variety in what might be prayed for, including the work of the church and the spread of God’s message, along with the needs of individuals in the group. The content of their prayers is not mentioned here, although we get an idea of what was prayed for throughout the rest of the book; the point here is that prayer was an essential part of the life of the church. It is likely that the early church followed the pattern of Jewish prayer by praying at specific times throughout the day (Ac. 3:1). It is possible that specific prayers adopted from Judaism are in view.¹¹
- H. Sixth, individuals in the early church, “were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need” (vv. 44-45). Generosity flowed freely, and those who were able helped with the physical and financial needs of others within the church. The church took care of its own when it came to their basic survival needs (Ac. 6:1-2). Significant sacrifices were made for the benefit of others, even selling what they had to help others.
- I. Seventh, the early church was unified in purpose (“day by day continuing with one mind in the temple” v. 46).¹² This group of people got together for a spiritual purpose, including the other elements mentioned. They came together to be taught with the teachings of Jesus, to care for one another, to pray, to have fellowship, etc. This group of disciples had the same focus as one

⁹ Belinda Cheng and Robert Stutzman, [An Exegetical Summary of Acts 1–14](#), Exegetical Summaries (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2017), 75–76, I. Howard Marshall, [Acts: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 89, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, [The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 31, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 269. There are some who disagree and say this is simply a reference to regular meals: David G. Peterson, [The Acts of the Apostles](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 161, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, [“The Breaking of Bread,”](#) in *Authentic Christianity*, 1st U.S. ed., vol. 1, Studies in the Book of Acts (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 149.

¹⁰ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, [The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 31, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 269.

¹¹ David G. Peterson, [The Acts of the Apostles](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 162.

¹² Acts 1:14, Philippians 2:2

another. This group was united in their spiritual purpose and focus. This unity comes from being united with Jesus and sharing His perspective and values. There is agreement on the most important issues related to what they believe and how they live.

- J. Lastly, the church responded to God in wonder and worship (“praising God” v. 47). To praise means to extol the greatness of a deity or the deity’s works as an act of worship.¹³ In light of what God was doing in their midst, the people responded with worship while, “feeling a sense of awe” (v. 43). The church honored God together for who He is, what He has done, and what He is currently doing.
- K. How many of these activities connected to the habit of worship with others do you participate in? Which ones are a regular part of your habit of worship with others? Does this describe your experience with God’s people? The more activities from this list we personally engage in, the more fully we will be participating in the habit of worshipping with others, and the more enjoyable and enriching our interaction with God’s people will become. Resist the temptation to simply attend church services once a week on Sunday morning and move on with your life. If this is a person’s approach to God’s people, they will be missing out on so much! God has additional blessings and benefits that these people are not experiencing, and it is likely that their passion for God and His people will suffer as a result. Challenge yourself to participate in the life of the church more fully by using this list of activities as your guide.

V. Conclusion

- A. Jesus both commanded and participated in worship with others on a regular and consistent basis. Jesus didn’t just get together with others to receive from them and personally benefit from them; He sacrificed and served so others could benefit from Him. Jesus expected those who follow His way of life to serve God with others.
- B. We learned about the types of activities that are involved in the habit of worshipping with others through the early church. Jesus assumed His disciples would be gathering. While in the context of correcting a person’s immoral behaviors, this assumption of Jesus is clear, “²⁰ For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.” (Mt. 18:20). Jesus expects His disciples to gather together and promises to be in their presence when there is informed agreement.

VI. Questions for Further Thought

- A. What are some of your most enjoyable experiences with the people of God?
- B. In what ways did Jesus participate in the habit of worship with others? Can you think of any specific passages or examples?
- C. Can you come up with other activities that might be involved in worship with others besides the list provided from Acts chapter 2? If so, what are those activities?
- D. What challenges have you experienced in worshipping with others? How have those challenges affected you? How might those difficulties be overcome?
- E. What are your favorite activities when worshipping with others? Which activities should you either start or do more of?

¹³ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Acts 2:47 “praising”