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WORSHIP

Creating A Culture of Authentic, Creative Worship

*23 But a time is coming, and even now has arrived, **when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.** 24 God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” 25 The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.” 26 Jesus said to her, “I am He, the One speaking to you.”*

JOHN 4:23-26, NASB



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Describe worship in your own words.
- Have you ever worshiped God without singing or playing an instrument? What did that look like?
- What Does Creativity Have to do with worship?
- What kind of worship is unacceptable to God? Why?

THE MAIN IDEA

Worship is not about our personal experience but our response to divine self-disclosure. The focus of worship is always on God, not us. Our reaction to divine self-disclosure should be repentance, obedience, thanksgiving, praise, and adoration.

Many evangelical churches have redesigned their worship services to be seeker-friendly to bring more people through their doors. They multiply by offering worldly allurements to attract the multitudes; they will do whatever is necessary to “reach the lost.” When the lost come to these churches, there is hardly any repentance or profound transformation. The problem with the seeker-friendly movement regarding worship is that genuine worship of God is compromised to satisfy the desires of unchurched people; the worship becomes man-focused rather than focused on God. The priesthood of true believers is undermined, and authentic discipleship and worship are extremely hard to find in some churches. At Dream and Imagine, we aim to worship God in Spirit and truth; we are not a seeker-friendly church trying to give people an “attractional” worship experience; we want people to encounter the Living God and be changed forever.

A wide-angle photograph of a sunset or sunrise over a calm ocean. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds in shades of blue, orange, and yellow. The horizon line is visible in the lower third of the frame, with the dark water of the ocean below it. The text 'ILLEGITIMATE WORSHIP' is centered in the upper half of the image in a white, serif font.

ILLEGITIMATE WORSHIP

Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. 3 In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, 4 and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And **the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, 5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.** So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. 6 The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? **7 If you do well, will you not be accepted?** And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to[c] you, but you must rule over it.”

Genesis 4:2-7, ESV

Evangelical Christianity is too focused on soteriology. The ultimate goal of the gospel is not salvation but the worship of God; salvation should result in the worship of God, first by his people Israel, then by the nations; Worship is “the appropriate human response to God.” But worship that does not arise from a renewed spirit is illegitimate.

— Marcus P. Robinson



AN “ATTRACTIVE” WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

What we are not trying to create

- An “Attractive” worship experience is just another word for seeker-friendly.
- Attractive churches have to be attractive to unchurched people.
- The goal is to get as many new people into the church's door as possible.
- Sermons in attractive services are watered down so that unchurched people feel more comfortable.
- Sermons are focused on things that unchurched people can relate to: movies, films, pop culture, not the Bible.

A wide-angle photograph of a calm ocean under a vast, cloudy sky during a sunset or sunrise. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds in shades of blue, grey, and orange. The horizon line is low, and the water's surface is still, reflecting the light from the sky. The text 'AUTHENTIC WORSHIP' is centered in the upper half of the image in a white, serif font.

AUTHENTIC WORSHIP

Abraham Worships God (Genesis 22:1-8)

Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 2 Then He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.” 3 So Abraham got up early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and his son Isaac; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. 5 Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the boy will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.” 6 And Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. 7 Isaac spoke to his father Abraham and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” 8 Abraham said, “God will [a]provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.



WORSHIP IS A WHOLE PERSON RESPONSE TO GOD

4 “Hear, Israel! The Lord is our God,
the Lord is one! 5 And you shall love
the Lord your God with all your heart and
with all your soul and with all your strength.

— Deuteronomy 6:4-5, NIV



WORSHIP IS A WHOLE PERSON RESPONSE TO GOD

Come, let's sing for joy to the Lord,
Let's shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. 2

Let's come before His presence with a song of
thanksgiving,
Let's shout joyfully to Him in songs with instruments.3

For the Lord is a great God
And a great King above all gods, 4

In whose hand are the depths of the earth,
The peaks of the mountains are also His. 5

The sea is His, for it was He who made it,
And His hands formed the dry land.6

Come, let's worship and bow down,
Let's kneel before the Lord our Maker.

— Psalm 95:1-6, NASB



DEFINING WORSHIP

- Worship is reverent devotion and allegiance pledged to God and the rituals or ceremonies by which this reverence is expressed (Youngblood, 2014).
- The English word “worship” comes from the Old English word “worthship,” which denotes the worthiness of the one receiving the special honor or devotion (Youngblood, 2014).
- Worship is the human response to divine self-disclosure (Williams, 2021).
- Worship is the God revealed liturgical form by which reverent awe might be appropriately expressed (Williams, 2021).
- Worship is a whole-person response to God (Deut. 6:4-5; 11:13), a lifestyle of loving obedience and loyal service in gratitude for God’s mercies: this is true worship (Rom. 12:1-2 NIV)(Williams, 2021).



WORSHIP & CREATIVITY

- The book of Genesis portrays humanity in an intimate relationship with God as Creator. This ongoing sense of God's presence reveals worship as a form of intimate fellowship with the Creator (Gen. 3:8). Worship is also a service to God in priestly management of His creation (Gen. 2:15). Our propensity for worship is rooted in the fact that humans are created in God's image (Williams et al., 2021, p. 56). So, how do creativity and art fit into worship?



WORSHIP & CREATIVITY

- In modern Westernized Evangelical culture, worship is often confused with music, a specific style of music, Contemporary Christian Music.
- 'Worship' is first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 22:3-10 in the story of Abraham and Isaac. Interestingly enough, in this narrative, no instruments are mentioned, which suggests that our Westernized understanding of worship differs significantly from the ancient Hebrew understanding of worship. When we think of worship as Contemporary Christian Music, the (ancient Hebrews) thought worship was obedience, devotion, service, and sacrifice.



WORSHIP & CREATIVITY

- In Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, worship is defined as reverent devotion and allegiance pledged to God and the rituals or ceremonies by which this reverence is expressed (Youngblood, 2014, p. 6186). The English word "worship" comes from the Old English word "worthship," which denotes the worthiness of the one receiving the special honor or devotion (Youngblood, 2014, p. 6186).
- Worship is the human response to divine self-disclosure (Williams, 2021). Worship is the God-revealed liturgical form by which reverent awe might be appropriately expressed (Williams, 2021). Worship is a whole-person response to God (Deut. 6:4-5; 11:13), a lifestyle of loving obedience and loyal service in gratitude for God's mercies: this is true worship (Rom. 12:1-2 NIV)(Williams, 2021).

GIVING

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-7, ESV: 6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.





WORSHIP & CREATIVITY

- When we think of creativity and the arts, one might assume that guidelines and boundaries limit creative expression or that creativity is a free, do-as-you-will endeavor. Two worship accounts in Genesis inform us otherwise. Cain and Abel gave tribute offerings of worship to God; Abel's offering was accepted, while Able's was rejected. (Genesis 4:1–5), this story emphasizes that the worshiper's heart and attitude are important to God and that some previous guidelines of what kind of offering was acceptable to God were given to Cain and Abel. Cain and Able were given the freedom of creative expression within God's instructions.