

# OUR LIFE TOGETHER

## Fellowship in Worship

### INTRODUCTION:

- I. In our series of lessons "Our Life Together" we've been focusing EXCLUSIVELY on the concept of TRUE FELLOWSHIP as it is revealed in the pages of Scripture.
  - A. Fellowship, which is often defined as "jointly participating together in some act or activity," or "associating with people of like minds or similar interests," or even "helping or giving assistance to another," is perhaps one of the most misunderstood concepts among Christians today.
    1. The word itself appears some 15 times in the New King James Translation of the New Testament, and is used in both a positive and negative way.
      - a. By this I mean the Scriptures tell us we ARE to have fellowship with God our Father, with Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, and with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.
      - b. But we are NOT to have fellowship with anything that is demonic, such as lawlessness or spiritual darkness, NOR are

we to have fellowship with a brother who walks disorderly or who persists in sin.

2. We're fairly familiar with THOSE concepts of fellowship.

B. But where we need an even BETTER grasp of true biblical fellowship is understanding WHY fellowship is so important and HOW we can ENRICH and ENHANCE our fellowship together as believers.

1. And so, we have been exploring the UNIQUENESS of our life together as members of the body of Christ, and we've been focusing on ways we can be brought EVEN CLOSER TOGETHER as a people than perhaps we've ever been before.

II. However, in THIS lesson and in the ones to follow, I want to turn our attention to our fellowship together in WORSHIP.

A. In fact, in this lesson and in the ones to follow there are THREE QUESTIONS I want to address.

1. First, it's important that we DEFINE worship. So we will attempt to address the question, what IS worship?

2. Second, we will attempt to answer the question, what are the various WAYS in which we fellowship together as believers in Christ in our WORSHIP?

3. And finally, we will address the question, how can we ENHANCE and ENRICH our worship together so that WE will be better EDIFIED, and so that CHRIST will be even MORE GLORIFIED.
4. So... let's turn our attention to DEFINING the word worship.

**BODY:**

- I. The word WORSHIP appears throughout the Bible – from Genesis to Revelation.
  - A. It is one of the most common words used in the Bible to describe the giving of praise and adoration, or in paying homage to someone or something.
    1. The HEBREW word is "shachah" (shaw-KAW) which is defined as to pay homage to, or give reverence to God by bowing down, stooping or falling down.
    2. The GREEK word is proskuneo (pros-koo-NAY-o) and means to adore, and literally or figuratively, to lay face down or level to the ground in reverence, or in homage to God.
    3. In both the HEBREW and the GREEK the word WORSHIP carries the idea of expressing DEEP LOVE and ADMIRATION to God, while at the same time showing DEEP REVERENCE and HUMILITY.

4. To put it simply, WORSHIP is NEVER something to be done CASUALLY or with a FLIPPANT or SUPERFICIAL ATTITUDE, but done with the GREATEST and DEEPEST sense of REVERENCE, AWE and ADORATION we can possibly muster.
- B. When Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for the SUPERFICIAL and HYPOCRITICAL manner in which they kept the Law of Moses, he also rebuked them for their SUPERFICIAL and HYPOCRITICAL WORSHIP.
1. **Matthew 15:7-9** – *Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."*
  2. Jesus was quoting an Old Testament prophecy of ISAIAH which the prophet gave to the people of JUDAH during a time when the Israelites were divided into two kingdoms – the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah.
- C. In ISAIAH'S day, the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel had turned from God and were eventually carried away into Assyrian captivity as punishment for their idolatry, wickedness and open rebellion against God and the Law of Moses.

1. Isaiah warned the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah that a SIMILIAR fate awaited them because of THEIR wickedness AND because of the EMPTINESS of their worship – they were merely going through the MOTIONS of worshipping Jehovah.
2. Why had their worship become EMPTY? Why were they simply going through the MOTIONS?
  - a. Simply because they had LOST most, if not all, of their REVERENCE, AWE and ADORATION for Jehovah God.
3. **Isaiah 29:13-16** – *Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men; Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work among this people, a marvelous work and a wonder; For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden. Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD, and their works are in the dark; They say, 'Who sees us?' and, 'Who knows us?' Surely you have things turned around! Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; For shall the thing made say of him who made it, 'He did not make me'? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, 'He has no understanding'?"*

- a. Their REVERENTIAL FEAR and RESPECT for Jehovah had all but EVAPORATED!
  - b. Their sin was NOT so much open REBELLION against Jehovah as it was INDIFFERENCE toward the God of heaven.
  - c. And this INDIFFERENCE was ESPECIALLY NOTICABLE in the absence of HEART-FELT and DEVOTED WORSHIP.
4. In fact, their WORSHIP of Jehovah had become nothing more than LIP-SERVICE: that's why God said, *"these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me..." (Isaiah 29:13a)*
5. But the REAL INDICTMENT came in the phrase: *"their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men."* What did Jehovah mean by this statement? What did it mean that *"their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men"?* **(Isaiah 29:13b)**
- a. The NIV reads: *"Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men."*
  - b. The NASB reads: *"And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote..."*
6. Their worship of Jehovah was NOT ONLY bound up by RULES and TRADITIONS developed by men, their worship of Jehovah

had ALSO become PREFUNCTIONARY – AUTOMATIC, done out of mere HABIT without any sense of AWE, REVERENCE or even PURPOSE.

a. They worshipped by ROTE: defined as "a process using routine or repetition, often without full attention or comprehension" (American Heritage Dictionary)

II. How many times have you heard preachers quote Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees in **Matthew chapter 15** (or **Mark 7**) and heard it applied to the denominational world which teaches "*as doctrines the commandments of men*"?

A. And yet Jesus wasn't speaking about DENOMINATIONAL error. He was addressing the worship of GOD'S PEOPLE.

1. He was speaking of a form of worship that had been AUGMENTED by the keeping of various MAN-MADE TRADITIONS.

2. AND WORSE YET, a form of worship that was done simply out of HABIT with no real sense of MEANING or PURPOSE! Their worship had become ROUTINE – COMMONPLACE!

B. When we assemble here to worship, and we allow our worship to be dictated by LONG-STANDING TRADITIONS, or allow ourselves as

worshippers to HIBITUALLY GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS without any sense of meaning or purpose, WE are JUST AS GUILTY of vain and empty worship as were the Pharisees of Jesus' day, and the people of Judah in Isaiah's day.

1. We're ALSO capable of drawing near to God with OUR mouths and honoring him with OUR lips, while OUR heart is far from Him!
  2. We're ALSO capable of giving PREFUNCTIONARY, HABITUAL worship to God with no heart-felt meaning or purpose!
- C. I can't think of ANYTHING that raises a GREATER STINCH in the nostrils of Jehovah God than HEART-LESS, MEANINGLESS, PERFUNCTIONARY WORSHIP.
1. This was not only a problem in ISAIAH'S day it was a problem THROUGHOUT the history of the nation of Israel.
  2. In fact, about 400 years BEFORE Jesus came into the world, the prophet MALACHI delivered one of Jehovah's most SCATHING rebukes of His people.
    - a. **Malachi 1:6-9** – Jehovah said, *"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence? says the LORD of hosts to you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?' 7 You*

*offer defiled food on My altar, but say, 'In what way have we defiled You?' By saying, 'The table of the LORD is contemptible.' 8 And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably? says the LORD of hosts. 9 But now entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us. While this is being done by your hands, will He accept you favorably? Says the LORD of hosts."*

3. Their worship had become COMMONPLACE (routine and trite).
  - a. In fact, their worship to Jehovah was SO empty and heartless it was as if they were bringing offerings to Jehovah that were actually BLIND, LAME and SICK.
  - b. The praise of their LIPS was blind, lame and sick.
  - c. The adoration of the HEARTS was blind, lame and sick.
4. Jehovah was so ENRAGED by their PROFANE and EMPTY worship that He would have preferred NO WORSHIP AT ALL!
  - a. **Malachi 1:10** – *"Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, so that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you, Says the LORD of hosts, Nor will I accept an offering from your hands."*

D. Brethren, this condemnation of God's people might ALSO be hitting **US**  
RIGHT BETWEEN THE EYES!

1. We need to examine our OWN hearts and SERIOUSLY ask ourselves whether WE'RE giving to God an offering of worship that is blind, lame and sick.
2. We need to be asking ourselves whether WE'RE giving Jehovah God and His Son Jesus Christ the AWE, RESPECT, REVERENCE, and ADORATION they DESERVE, or are WE are simply TOSSING on the alter of Jehovah a form of worship that is blind, lame and sick, and then expect Him to be pleased with what WE offer.

E. Brethren, it all comes down to the CONDITION of our heart, and the ATTITUDE of our heart, and the SINCERITY of our heart, when we enter this place and come together as God's family to WORSHIP, to PRAISE and to ADORE Him and His Son Jesus Christ.

1. In the **4<sup>th</sup> chapter** of the **gospel of John**, when Jesus was speaking to the woman at the well, he said this about worship:
  - a. **John 4:23-24** – *"...the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

b. According to Vincent (Vincent's Word Studies of the NT), to worship God in "*SPIRIT*" means to worship Him with: "the highest, deepest, noblest part of our humanity, the point of contact between God and man."

c. In fact, Jesus said, "*the Father is seeking such to worship Him.*" (v. 23)

2. When you enter this place to worship, do YOU worship the Father with "the highest, deepest, noblest part" of YOUR humanity?
3. Do YOUR LIPS praise God from a HEART that is drawn NEAR TO GOD, or do you simply go through the motions of worship with little or no thought to what you've done or why?
4. This is a question each and every one of us needs to be asking ourselves.
5. God will accept NOTHING LESS than TRUE WORSHIP from a DEVOTED HEART.

III. So, what should be our ATTITUDE toward worship?

- A. Growing up in the church, I always heard our worship described as "FIVE ACTS OF WORSHIP" – meaning, we SING, PRAY, observe the LORD'S SUPPER, STUDY our Bibles together, and CONTRIBUTE financially to support the work of the local church.

1. Although I understand what those who INITIALLY COINED the phrase "FIVE ACTS OF WORSHIP" were intending, and even though I believe those intentions were sincere, I ALSO believe the phrase "FIVE ACTS OF WORSHIP" has, perhaps, contributed to the problem.
2. Calling the various **WAYS** in which we offer praise and adoration to God our Father and to Jesus Christ our Savior as ACTS OF WORSHIP has PERHAPS caused MANY to misunderstand the PURPOSE of our worship.
  - a. The VERB form of word "ACT" means "to do something, to take action, or to perform or to play a role, or simply to discharge a duty."
3. Unfortunately, when we speak of our worship as various "ACTS," that word ALONE has become somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy.
  - a. To SOME, coming together to WORSHIP is done simply as an ACT to "discharge a duty."
  - b. It's seen more as a RESPONSIBILITY or a DUTY to PERFORM.
4. Therefore, SOME come together to worship out of a sense of OBLIGATION – not REALLY wanting to be here on every

occasion, but come ANYWAY because they feel it's EXPECTED of them to be here.

5. That WHOLE MINDSET is wrong! The Lord NEVER intended for worship to be seen as a DUTY or RESPONSIBILITY.
6. Coming together with our brothers and sisters in Christ to worship SHOULD be seen as a GREAT PRIVILEGE or HONOR to enter the Lord's presence with other believers, and TOGETHER offer OUR LORD the praise and adoration of our hearts.

B. Did you know that NOWHERE in the Bible are we actually commanded TO WORSHIP?

1. We are commanded to make Jehovah God the OBJECT of our worship.
  - a. **Matthew 4:10** – When Jesus was being tempted in the wilderness by Satan, he said: *"Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"*
  - b. Jesus was saying the LORD God is the ONLY ONE we should worship and serve.
2. In addition to making God the OBJECT of our worship, we are also commanded HOW to worship and what our ATTITUDE toward worship should be.

3. But we are never specifically commanded **TO** worship God. And I think there's a REASON for this.
  - a. I don't believe the Lord WANTS worship that is given **INVOLUNTARILY** or AGAINST our will, or GRUDGINGLY.
  - b. I don't think the Lord WANTS worship that is given simply because we feel OBLIGATED, COMPELLED or REQUIRED to come here and worship.
  - c. The kind of worship the Lord WANTS is worship that is GIVEN FREELY from a heart filled with devoted praise and thanksgiving.
  - d. The Lord seeks worshippers who will worship Him in SPIRIT – or with "the highest, deepest, noblest part" of our humanity.
  - e. Anything LESS is UNACCEPTABLE worship.
4. So, what should our ATTITUDE be toward worship?
  - a. A psalm of the sons of Korah shows THEIR attitude about coming before the Lord to worship: *How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! 2 My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. (Psalm 84:1-2)*

b. The psalmist David put it this way: *I was GLAD when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD."* (**Psalm 122:1**)

5. Unless your soul LONGS, yes, even FAINTS for the courts of the Lord; and unless your heart and your flesh CRY OUT for the Living God; and unless you were GLAD to have an opportunity to "go *into the house of the LORD,*" then your worship as a Christian is VAIN, EMPTY, LIFELESS and worst of all, USELESS.

IV. I want to close by saying a few things about WHY we come together to worship – about the IMPORTANCE of coming together as believers to worship our LORD.

A. And what I'm about to say here goes straight to the heart of FELLOWSHIP IN WORSHIP.

1. All my life I've heard people say, "I don't need to go to church to worship God. I can worship all by myself at home, or out in the beauty of God's creation."

a. Now before some of you dismiss that as totally false, there is SOME TRUTH to that statement: We CAN worship God in the privacy of our home or out in the beauty of His creation.

(1). Worship is ALWAYS meant to be a PERSONAL, one-to-one COMMUNION or time of FELLOWSHIP between ourselves and God.

(2). Therefore, we can worship the LORD ANYWHERE at ANY TIME.

b. But where this statement is WRONG is by implying we don't need to join with OTHERS to worship on various occasions.

c. Statements like this are usually made by someone who is trying to justify NOT having to assemble with believers to worship – such as assembling this morning on the Lord's Day, or at OTHER times we have set aside to assemble as a body of believers to worship.

B. Now, the real temptation here is to run to **Hebrews 10:25** and quote that verse as a "don't-miss-worship-services" passage of Scripture.

1. However, **Hebrews 10:25** isn't speaking about missing worship services at all.

a. The issue being discussed by the Hebrew writer isn't about missing worship services. It's a warning to those who are tempted to completely ABANDON Jesus Christ.

2. **Hebrews 10:25** – *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*
  - a. The word "FORSAKE" means to "ABANDON or DESERT or RENOUNCE."
  - b. The Hebrew writer is speaking of those who reached the point where they have completely ABANDONED and DESERTED the church – where by their actions, they have RENOUNCED the Lord.
  
3. This is why the writer goes on to say this about those who have abandoned the Lord: **Hebrews 10:26-31**— *For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge*

*His people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

- C. However, there IS something in **Hebrews chapter 10** about our need to assemble together.
1. **Hebrews 10:23-24** – *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works...*
  2. Let me ask you this. How can you hold fast to the confession of your hope without wavering, and how can you consider one another to stir up love and good works in others if you're not assembling with your brothers and sisters in Christ?
    - a. The reason we assemble is not JUST to offer our COLLECTIVE worship to God, it's ALSO to gain strength and encouragement from ONE ANOTHER.
- D. I've been preaching for a very long time, and I've worked with congregations large and small, all over the U.S. and even in Canada.
1. In all that time I have YET to see ONE SINGLE CHRISTIAN grow SPIRITUALLY, who has a habit of MISSING the assembly. NOT ONE grows SPIRITUALLY!
  2. If ANYTHING, they grow WEAKER and WEAKER until they finally ABANDON and completely FORSAKE the Lord and His people.

3. Why? Simply because the Lord designed the church (the body of Christ) as a source of MUTUAL strength and edification – where we draw STRENGTH and ENCOURAGEMENT from ONE ANOTHER.
4. We simply CANNOT SURVIVE ON OUR OWN! We WILL DIE SPIRITUALLY!
5. Or to put it another way, we will become LIKE those with whom we associate MOST – whether our brothers and sisters in Christ, or the world.

## **CONCLUSION:**

- I. I hope this lesson has touched the hearts of those whose worship is not what it should be.
  - A. If nothing else, I hope you've learned a couple things about worship.
    1. I hope you've seen that worship should be a deep, heart-felt expression of love, reverence, and appreciation for all that God has done for us through Jesus Christ.
    2. I also hope you've seen that we worship God because we WANT to worship Him – because our hearts are simply overflowing with praise, and we are so thrilled and deeply honored to be able to come into the presence of the Lord and offer our worship.

3. And I also hope you've seen that we worship together as a body of believers because we draw spiritual strength and encouragement from one another – and without the continual strength and encouragement from our brothers and sisters in Christ we will eventually wither and die spiritually.

B. What's YOUR attitude about worship?

1. Can you truthfully say, *I was GLAD when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD"*? (**Psalm 122:1**)
2. Do you look forward to every opportunity you have to gather together with your brothers and sisters in Christ to worship our God and to strengthen and encourage others, and be strengthened and encouraged in return?
3. Are you truly GLAD when you have an opportunity to enter the house of the LORD and bring your offering of praise?

- II. Those of us who truly appreciate all that God has done for us through Jesus Christ look forward to each and every opportunity to gather together to worship.

A. We're here because we were once lost in sin.

1. But we learned that Jesus came from heaven to freely offer himself on the cross to pay the debt of our sins, and to free us from the guilt of our sins.
  2. Therefore, we came to Christ out of a deep love, with a repentant heart, and in complete faith and trust in his promises, and were baptized into Christ for the remission of all our past sins.
  3. And since that time, when we occasionally fall into temptation and are overtaken, we humbly confess those sins to the Lord and are completely forgiven.
  4. Is it any wonder then why we find such JOY in offering our praise and thanksgiving to God and to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior?
  5. Is it any wonder why we find such JOY in coming together with our brothers and sisters in Christ to enjoy the fellowship of OTHERS who love the Lord as much as we do?
- B. If you want to experience that same JOY, then we invite you to come to the Lord this morning.
1. Come to him in faith, repenting of your past sins, and be buried with him in baptism and have every sin you've ever committed completely washed away.
  2. And if you're a child of God who is drifting away from the Lord and drifting further and further away from your brothers and sisters in

Christ, we want you to know the Lord stands ready to forgive you and restore you completely, and we stand ready to welcome you back home.