

What Does the Bible Say About Worship?

Worship is the heart of a Christian's life with God, and it is one of the easiest things to get wrong. Men have always been tempted to worship as they please rather than as God directs, offering Him what seems good to them and assuming He will be pleased. But worship is not for us to design. The God who is worshipped has the right to say how He will be worshipped, and He has said. Let us learn what He asks.

God Seeks True Worshippers

Worship matters to God. Jesus said, *"the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him"* ([John 4:23](#)). He is seeking worshippers, but a certain kind, those who worship *"in spirit and in truth"* ([John 4:24](#)). In spirit means from the heart, with the mind engaged and not the body only. In truth means according to His word, and not according to our own ideas. Both must be present. A warm heart offering what God never asked is no more acceptable than a correct form offered with a cold heart.

God Will Not Accept Worship He Did Not Authorize

This is where men stumble most. We tend to think any sincere act of devotion must please God. The Bible says otherwise. Jesus warned, *"in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"* ([Matthew 15:9](#)). Vain worship is worship offered in earnest that God still does not accept, because it follows men's rules instead of His. Nadab and Abihu learned this at the cost of their lives when they *"offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not"* ([Leviticus 10:1](#)). It was fire, and it was offered to God, but He had not asked for it, and He would not have it. Paul called such invented devotion *"will worship"* ([Colossians 2:23](#)). The question in worship is never what we find meaningful. It is what God has appointed.

What God Has Appointed

God's people are to gather, for we are warned not to forsake *"the assembling of ourselves together"* ([Hebrews 10:25](#)). And when the church comes together, God has not left it to guess what to do. The first Christians show us, for they *"continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers"* ([Acts 2:42](#)). They taught and preached the word. They ate the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, for *"upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread"* ([Acts 20:7](#)). They gave, as Paul directed,

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (1 Corinthians 16:2). They prayed together. And they praised God in song.

The Praise of Song

When the church lifts its praise in music, the New Testament tells it to sing. *"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19), and again, "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). The instrument God named is the heart, and the praise He asked for is the voice, "the fruit of our lips" (Hebrews 13:15). The church sings because God said to sing, and it is content to offer Him exactly what He asked for, no less and no more.*

We May Not Add to It or Take From It

Once we see that worship is God's to appoint, one thing more follows. We are not free to add to what He gave, nor to take away from it. This is an old rule, running through the whole Bible. God told Israel, *"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it" (Deuteronomy 4:2), and again, "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deuteronomy 12:32). The Bible closes with that same warning against adding to or taking from the word of God (Revelation 22:18-19). When men bring into worship what God never asked for, however lovely it seems to them, they have added to His word. When they leave off what He commanded, they have taken away. Either way they have set their own judgment above His, and the worship is vain. The safe and reverent path is to do what He said, all of it, and nothing besides.*

Offered His Way, From the Heart

So put the two halves together and hold them both. Worship must be in truth, offered the way God appointed, not the way we prefer or find moving. And it must be in spirit, offered from a heart that means it, not gone through by habit while the mind wanders. God is not honored by sincere worship He never asked for, nor by correct worship offered carelessly. He seeks worshippers who will give Him both, His way and with their whole heart. Will you be one?

Every Scripture reference in this study links to the King James Version. Open it and read for yourself.