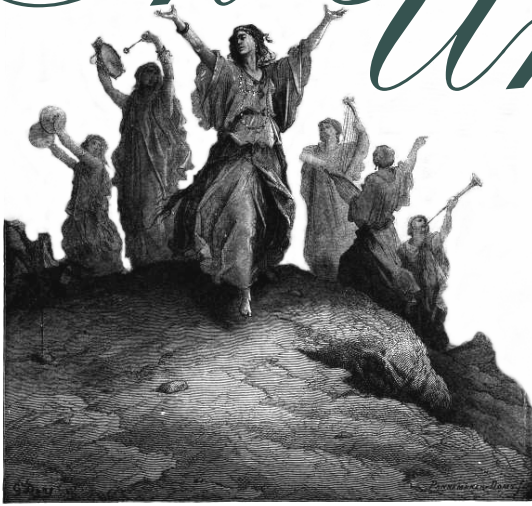


In Unison



The trumpeters and
singers joined in unison,
as with one voice, to
give praise and thanks
to the Lord.
2 Chronicles 5:13

Sincerity

*Going to church' is not
worship. Sipping coffee and
saying "Hi, how are you?" to some-
one you haven't seen in seven days
is not worship.*

Attending Sunday School when
you would rather have slept in is not
worship. Swapping recipes or chatting
about the weather while the offertory
plays is not worship.

True Worship

Worship is a deep, rich concept;
to define it and describe its practice is
almost to cheapen it. Worship can take
place just about anywhere, and can in-
volve activities and words that are rarely
used on a Sunday morning. But no mat-
ter the time or location, true worship
must always—always—involve at least
this: Worship is adoration directed to
God.

More than that, according to Jesus
real worship must be conducted spiritu-
ally and truthfully. If not, it is simply pre-
tend, play-acting.

"Yet a time is coming and has now
come when the true worshipers will
worship the Father in spirit and truth,
for they are the kind of worshipers
the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his
worshipers must worship in spirit and
in truth." John 4:23-24

Honesty

How did we become so casual with
God? Where did we pick up the idea that
He really doesn't mind that our worship
services are filled with insincerity, inac-
curacies, glaring omissions, and a disor-
derliness better suited to the cheap seats
at a baseball game?

The Lord asks little of us; it's re-
ally not difficult to worship Him prop-
erly. All He asks is honesty, sincerity,
truth. All He asks is that we mean what
we say and sing.

Therefore let us keep the Festival, not
with the old yeast, the yeast of malice
and wickedness, but with bread with-
out yeast, the bread of sincerity and
truth. 1 Cor. 5:8

"Whatever we are in our religion, let us resolve never to wear
a cloak. Let us by all means be honest and real." J.C. Ryle

“Without the heart it is no worship; it is a stage play; an acting a part without being that person really which is acted by us: a hypocrite, in the notion of the word, is a stage-player... We may be truly said to worship God, though we [lack] perfection; but we cannot be said to worship Him, if we [lack] sincerity.” Stephen Charnock

W

orship and praise are often associated with music. That connection is not necessary, but it is helpful.

Anything that smoothes the way for heart-felt adoration of God—anything that facilitates our expression of holy love—is a welcome component to the service.

Yet nowhere do we see any more flagrant examples of insincerity in worship than in the singing of our hymns and choruses.

Faces in a Crowd

From years ago, when every Sunday morning found me smack in the middle of the front row of the choir loft, I can easily recall the menu of faces arranged before me in the pews. As the congregation would stand to sing the hymn introduced by eight bars from the organist, there would be

- the older gentleman glowering with lips snapped shut, vise-like, irritated that “we never sing the old songs anymore”;

- the woman sluggishly mouthing the words almost a beat behind the rest, eyes glazed over, as if in a state of utter catatonia;

- the teenage girl trying to keep her attention on the singing, while next to her, her visiting boyfriend keeps his attention on her;

- the studious gentleman in the front row, carefully weighing every word printed in the stanzas printed in the book before him;

- the young mother in the back row not even trying to sing, while struggling with the unruly child at her side;

- the venerable saint, face uplifted and nodding in rhythm, singing at full volume in a key two steps lower than the one being played.

All God’s saints, but only some being truthful in their worship.

In Spirit and Truth

It is the responsibility of the song leader to choose songs Biblically sound; but it is the responsibility of each member of the congregation and choir to agree with the words being sung.

Every word an individual speaks or sings during a worship service should be uttered as if that person were standing in a court of law with one hand resting atop the Bible. After all, in a worship

service, God, the righteous Judge, is the audience, and what good does it do to lie to Him?

When the words being sung are “I give my all to Him,” is it true? Have you really turned it all over to Him?

When the line is “Jesus is Lord!” is He? Is Jesus *really* the Lord of your life?

Our goal should be one of honesty before the Lord. When we sing to Him our worship and praise, or when we stand and testify in song to His goodness and grace, we should make every effort to mean, to understand, and to check against the authority of Scripture every word spoken or sung.



Scripture

But to the wicked, God says: "What right have you to recite my laws or take my covenant on your lips? You hate my instruction and cast my words behind you." Psalm 50:16-17

Whenever God slew them, they would seek him; they eagerly turned to him again. They remembered that God was their Rock, that God Most High was their Redeemer. But then they would flatter him with their mouths, lying to him with their tongues; their hearts were not loyal to him, they were not faithful to his covenant. Psalm 78:34-37

The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful. Proverbs 12:22

The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men." Isaiah 29:13

"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the Lord Almighty. "It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name.

"But you ask, 'How have we shown contempt for your name?'

"You place defiled food on my altar.

"But you ask, 'How have we defiled you?'

"By saying that the Lord's table is contemptible. When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the Lord Almighty.

"Now implore God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?"—says the Lord Almighty.

"Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you," says the Lord Almighty, "and I will accept no offering from your hands. My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every

place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations," says the Lord Almighty.

"But you profane it by saying of the Lord's table, 'It is defiled,' and of its food, 'It is contemptible.' And you say, 'What a burden!' and you sniff at it contemptuously," says the Lord Almighty.

"When you bring injured, crippled or diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from your hands?" says the Lord. "Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For I am a great king," says the Lord Almighty, "and my name is to be feared among the nations." Malachi 1:6-14

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Cor. 10:31

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:8

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." Jesus Christ (Matthew 22:37)

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Hymns and Choruses

Come, Thou Fount (Robinson)

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.

O for a Heart to Praise My God (Wesley)

A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
My great Redeemer's throne...

Draw me Nearer (Crosby)

Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord,
By the power of grace divine;
Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope,
And my will be lost in Thine.

Take Time to Be Holy (Longstaff)

Take time to be holy,
Be calm in thy soul;
Each thought and each motive
Beneath His control;
Thus led by the Spirit
To fountains of love,
Thou soon shall be fitted
For service above.

In Unison

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