

[← Back to Home](#) · [Browse All Pieces](#)

We Are Not Doing Jesus a Favour When We Worship Him

Reflections [Prayer, Repentance and the Spiritual Life](#) 30 September 2014

[John 4:23](#)

[Psalm 51:6-12](#)

[Philippians 2:12](#)

The question that comes to my mind is, are we worshipping God in the right way? What does Jesus expect of us in worship?

Gideon ministry, of which I am part, takes me to churches belonging to different Christian denominations. I have sat through many worship services, some attended by fewer than ten believers, and others by more than three hundred, in the course of this ministry. The singing of hymns and spiritual songs seems to be a common thread running through the worship services of most Christian denominations. The order of service varies greatly from denomination to denomination, and even, to some extent, within the same denomination. Let us accept that corporate worship is structured with the character of the congregation in mind, on the one hand, and factors such as the availability of space and time on the other. In the midst of all this complexity, with believers speaking different languages and coming from diverse backgrounds, we try to fit Jesus in. When it comes to personal worship, the differences in form and content are so vast that it would be a futile exercise to catalogue them all. This gives rise to the fundamental question of what is the right way to worship Jesus.

The study of Holy Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, shows us many forms of worship adopted over time, which puts us in something of a quandary. To come anywhere near an answer to our question, we need to understand what worship entails. Our inner selves should be conditioned by an attitude of complete humility; Jesus wants us to worship Him with our hearts and minds, in humble and contrite submission to Him.

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." — John 4:23 (KJV)

The key elements here are 'in spirit' and 'in truth'. To worship Jesus in spirit, we need to still our hearts before Him; our hearts and minds, our inner selves, need to be focused upon Jesus alone, and we cannot allow our surroundings to distract us in any way — a difficult thing indeed, when we are in corporate worship. Jesus demands absolute truth as we approach Him; He wants us to bare our hearts before Him, and we should not try to invent excuses, or leave anything tucked away in some hidden corner of our hearts and minds.

David had difficulty in approaching God in spirit and in truth, and in Psalm 51 he says it all:

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit." — Psalm 51:6-12 (KJV)

When we are in corporate worship, we must contend with the exclamations of 'Hallelujah', 'praise the Lord', and other such utterances of praise, and yet still our hearts in spirit and in truth. Paul, perhaps understanding the difficulty faced by first-century believers because of the order of worship then followed — for the early Christians were Jewish converts, and the churches grew out of the synagogues — wrote, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). I love this statement, for it relieves me of my concern as to whether I am worshipping Jesus in the right way. Just as each believer will have his or her own theology, so we each need to find our own right way of approaching Jesus in worship. In this sense, worship becomes personal, and one must work out when, where and how to conduct it. Having said that, let me be clear on corporate worship: I am in no way discounting it, but I am sure that the 'salvation' we have each worked out for ourselves, with fear and trembling, may not fit neatly into the structured order of service our churches normally offer. Yet one can always find a way to bring what one has worked out within the framework of such services, if not wholly, then at least in part; for any true worship must contain certain basic elements — humility, submission, adoration, confession, affirmation and thanksgiving.

It is not, however, enough to have only one's own personalised method of worship. Having achieved that, the fulfilment of our worship comes

only when we submit in total obedience to His will. He has made plain, in no uncertain terms, that He wills that we should, first, live our lives according to His teaching, and, second — and more importantly — take the Gospel to the unreached. Unless we bring together all three aspects of worship, we shall fall short in our approach to Jesus. Amen.

[Download as PDF](#)

[← Back to Home](#) · [Browse All Pieces](#)

Logos Ministry Archive — a collection of sermons, studies and devotional writing.