

What To Do When We Worship

Introduction. George Hegel said, “Life has value only when it has something valuable as its object.” Worship has always been a main focal point of growing in faith. David wrote, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord’” (122:1). The “house of the Lord” is now our worship assemblies. Worship is a time when we honor and revere God. But worship is also a time where we need to reflect on what we are and what we think.

Because of the need for this reflection, we explore our obligations and motives when we assemble. Solomon said, “Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil” (Ecclesiastes 5:1).

The book of James has been called the “Ecclesiastes of the New Testament” and his letter has very edifying material from which we can benefit. Join with me to study from James 1:21-22 to learn what to do when we worship.

I. What To Do Before We Worship

- A. Sin has to be put away or renounced. The KJV says, “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness.” “Lay apart” was used as a metaphor for stripping off clothes. The NIV states, “Get rid of it.” This is an imperative command (Romans 13:12; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:8; Hebrews 12:1).
- B. “Filthiness” is also translated as dirtiness or moral defilement. Instead of “superfluity of naughtiness,” other versions say “overflow of wickedness” or “rampant wickedness.” “Wickedness” means malice, ill-will, a vicious disposition. The phrase calls attention to the fact that wickedness is an abnormal part of human character, not a normal part (Ecclesiastes 7:29).
- C. We should renounce sinful activities as though they were the most disgusting actions that we’ve ever been in contact with (cp. Genesis 39:12; 1 Corinthians 6:18). The pure heart will submit to this command (Psalm 24:3-4; Proverbs 15:26; 1 Peter 1:16). When we assemble before God, get in a frame of mind that promotes purity.
- D. When you assemble to worship, don’t be a hypocrite. It just eats and gnaws at you, and God will judge that unrighteousness (Job 27:8; Matthew 24:51).

II. What To Do While We Worship

- A. While worshiping God, Christians receive the word: “and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” “Receive” means to receive favorably, give an ear to, embrace, accept, or approve. The same word is used of the Bereans in Acts 17:11, and the concept is shown by Lydia in Acts 16:14-15. Paul commended the Thessalonians for receiving the word gladly (1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:13). Notice the action was always in the word, and not in a direct action of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:10).
- B. We are to receive it in humility, meekness, mildness, or gentleness. This is the attitude which expresses itself in a patient submissiveness to offense (Zephaniah 2:3; Galatians 5:22-23). Being meek means coming to terms with

our sinfulness and hearing our faults. It also means a desire to be molded and formed by the teachings of the gospel. Moses knew that honor is humility (Numbers 12:3; cp. Proverbs 18:12). This is the exact opposite of pride.

- C. “Implanted” does not signify something at birth, but rather later in life. It was used to mean “sent into a man to be a part of his nature.” The word of God is rooted or implanted into our hearts by teaching and hearing (Romans 10:17). This reflects the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31-34, where God promises His people, “I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts.” This results in people living by the word of God (Matthew 4:4).
- D. The primary design of the word of God is to save our souls. Anyone who attempts to change this purpose does a terrible injustice to the gospel. The gospel still has the power to change people’s hearts (Romans 1:16). It can fill the heart with joy, grace, peace, forgiveness, kindness, love, and perseverance — all the while replacing hate, fear, and discouragement. That’s power!

III. What To Do After We Worship

- A. Doing must fall in line with hearing: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (cp. Luke 6:46-49). A “doer” is one who performs an action or obeys. We practice what we hear.
- B. Being a “doer” means that it is not enough to remember what we hear and be able to repeat it, agree with it, commend it, write it, and preserve it. What finds the only acceptance by God is being a doer of His word (Luke 11:28).
 - 1. If we were to hear a sermon every day of the week from an angel in heaven, yet did not act on it, the words would never bring us to heaven.
 - 2. There has to be inward practice by prayer and meditation, and outward practice by obedience.
- C. The commandments of God are not beyond our ability to bear (1 John 5:3). In fact, those who really want to serve God will not criticize His commandments and despise those Christians who want to help weaker Christians (cp. 1 Thessalonians 5:14).
- D. Hearers content to “hear only” delude themselves. This means to deceive, misjudge, miscalculate, or reason falsely. Self deceit is the worst deceit of all (Galatians 6:3; 1 John 1:8). Those are the people who believe that they can be saved by “hearing only” or “faith only.” That is a grave mistake. Acceptance to God requires action, which is shown in Hebrews 11, and that in turn implies the process of God’s plan of salvation.

Conclusion. If your soul has no Sunday, it becomes an orphan. That’s how important what we do is; but how do you want God to view your worship? Pleasing worship will require more than dressing nicely, coming to a comfortable building, and spending a few hours a week. If you think you will get by with that, you are deceived.

Have the courage to make yourself pure, receive the word, and then go fulfill it. That’s what has to be done when you worship. When Jesus told the rich young ruler what he needed to do to inherit eternal life, the young man went away very sad (Matthew 19:22). Do you think that Jesus went running after him and said, “Wait a minute, maybe we can work something out ...” Jesus wouldn’t have caved just

because He saw someone unwilling to go the distance. We can't cave either. We've examined what has to be done and now it is up to you to decide if you want to do it.