

**October 15, 2020**

Today's words of challenge and hope!

Worship is to be sincere, passionate, and experiential. However, often we go through the motions of worship mechanically without ever genuinely experiencing God in worship. This is not how worship should be. Worship occurs this way because we have erected many idols in our lives; even within the church. It also occurs because of incorrect teachings received from false teachers. Read with me from 2 Peter 2:1-10.

*1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. 4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; 5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter; 7 and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men 8 (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds), 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, 10 and*

*especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority.*

Worship is to be a time we experience God both individually and communally. Worship is to be alive, engaging, and passionate. Yet, worship is often described as stale, repetitive, and boring. There are numerous reasons why worship is perceived in this way. Among these reasons are lack of personal preparation and inclusion of false teachings in the church. Let's look at the problem of false teaching today and develop a plan to overcome this problem.

Peter warns and cautions us regarding the coming end of the age and the beginning of the new age to come as he instructs us regarding mockers and scoffers trying to sow seeds of doubt among Believers regarding the return of Christ Jesus.

Jude also writes of these people, "But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit" (Jude 17-19). We must be on guard and prepared for these things are already happening.

In the same way there were false prophets in Israel and Judah so too are there false teachers today. Jeremiah the prophet warns, "An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it?" (Jeremiah 5:30-31). Jesus warns His followers regarding false teachers as He declares to the Pharisees and Jews, "But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men" (Matthew 15:9).

Paul also warns the Church about the coming of false teachers when writing to Timothy he asserts, “If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction (...)” (1 Timothy 6:3-5).

Paul also warns of “[A time] when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

The rise of false teachers, in the same way false prophets caused people to turn away from God, will have the same effect upon churches and their worship practices today. We must be vigilant against incorporating things into our lives and worship just because it is popular or everyone else is doing it, or because that’s the way it used to be.

So, what can we do? How can we make sure that we are genuinely worshipping God and not merely going through the motions of worship? I worry about this greatly especially now that there is online worship being conducted widely. I think online worship is important but, how do we maintain the experience of worship for those who participate online? I have four suggestions for you today I believe can SAVE your worship experience.

Study: Without the committed and sincere study of God’s word we will never be able to know what is genuine and what is counterfeit; we will not be able to discern truth from lie. Paul encourages the faithful, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does

not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). In order to determine what an appropriate use of God’s word is, you must know God’s word. Vibrant worship requires that we know God’s word.

Apply: Study of God’s word without praxis or application is pointless. Jesus commands His disciples, you and me, to “Teach them to observe all that He commanded us” (Matthew 28:20). Joshua was also commanded by God “(...) Be careful to do according to all that is written in [the book of the Law]; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success” (Joshua 1:8). If our worship is to be experiential then there should be a challenge for us to put God’s word to use in our lives.

Validate: Verify the instruction that you receive to be certain that it is from Jesus/God. The Christians in Berea, after hearing Paul and his companions “Received the words with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Whatever we hear we should be able to verify it in Scripture. This will keep you engaged fully in worship.

Encourage: We should be encouragers to each other. Living for Jesus every day is a joy and a blessing. Nevertheless, the world seeks to wear us down so that we will quit speaking and living for Jesus. If our worship is to be sincere and genuine then encouraging each other is a must. The author of Hebrews instructs, “Encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called, ‘Today,’ lest anyone of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end” (Hebrews 3:13-14).

For worship to be alive, vibrant, passionate, and experiential everyone must be involved in worship. There are things you should do while you

are at home worshipping online that will enhance your worship experience. Let us pray.

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the technology by which people may still worship as a gathered community even though they be separated by distance. Help each of us gracious Lord to worship You faithfully in spirit and in truth through Jesus our Savior, amen.*

Always prepare for worship through devoted prayer and diligent study.

Until the nets are full