

Your Worship - Is Something Missing?

Christians have varying ideas of what worship is all about and if it is of any value. Some view worship as a way to enhance their social lives. Others regard it as a method of promoting their own piety. Still others, sincere in their devotion, desire to serve and help others. A number of people attend worship services sporadically, as they feel there is little spiritual enrichment to be gained in church. Yet, in spite of all these motives, interest in religion continues to be popular in the Western world, and even more so in many third world countries. The Western world, as a whole, professes Christianity, and many try to follow the Bible as much as they understand its teachings. But are they deriving the benefits God intended man to have? Could something be missing? Is there a spiritual dimension that is deficient?

On one occasion, Jesus was in the house of Martha. While there He was being served a meal.

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. (Luke 10:38-40)

Notice Jesus reply: "And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (vv. 41-42). While physical serving was necessary, Jesus emphasized the importance of the spiritual over the physical. When we consider worship, that principle is just as true today as it was when Jesus spoke those words. For the Christian the most important thing that can be gained in worship is coming to understand true spirituality, and internalizing this as an important part of our lives.

The Apostle Paul emphasized the advantage of the spiritual mind. He wrote: "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man" (1 Cor. 2:15). That is, the spiritually minded man is able to examine and comprehend far more than someone who is not spiritual. At the same time he cannot be truly examined or comprehended by the non-spiritual.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy [Spirit] teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. 2:12-14)

Jesus said the hour was coming when spiritual worship would be an absolute necessity. "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. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).

God revealed through Moses that man does not possess a true desire to serve Him. When He gave the Ten Commandments, He told Moses: "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" (Deut. 5:29). What God desires is His Truth within the mind and heart of man. David knew this when he wrote: "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom" (Ps. 51:6). Jesus said this truth and wisdom is acquired by means of the Holy Spirit. He told the

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disciples: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16-17). To acquire true spirituality, man must be willing to forsake the things of man and to fill the void with the things of God. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your [spiritual] service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2).

What, then, are some important indications by which one may know if he or she is truly spiritual? What are the telltale signs?

Understanding Spiritual Things

The religious leaders of Jesus’ day were very devout. While they understood the physical laws of God, they did not comprehend their spiritual intent and purpose. Paul said they had a misguided zeal.

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:1-3).

Jesus was quite blunt when He spoke to these Jews: “And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not” (John 5:38). “He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God” (John 8:47). The religious leaders had a form of the law (Rom. 2:20), but they had never understood or internalized it spiritually. Jesus said His sheep hear His voice (John 10:27). So, obviously there were those who could see beyond the physical law. The major reason His disciples were able to comprehend the Scriptures and to gain spiritual understanding was because it was revealed to them. Shortly before His ascension into the heavens, we read: “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:45).

Paul makes it clear that spiritual comprehension is given by revelation. “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:9-10). Jesus had promised this. He told the disciples: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy [Spirit], whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13).

Many things that Jesus said to the disciples during His ministry went over their heads. They simply could not understand. When they were given the Holy Spirit, understanding came, and with it spiritual comprehension. They now had spiritual understanding and could readily see how limited the Pharisees and Sadducees were in their perceptions. They could understand the meaning of the Scriptures-God’s word that had been inspired and preserved in a permanent record. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

One of the important keys to know if one is truly spiritual is if he or she has spiritual understanding. Reading the Scriptures alone will not give anyone spiritual insight. This comes by revelation only. It is a gift that is made available by means of the Holy Spirit. And who can receive the Holy Spirit? The answer: Those who obey Him (Acts 5:32).

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Love for God's Law

A second important key of true spirituality is a love for the Law of God. Many who accept Christ and regard themselves as Christians have little regard for God's Law. Some will argue that they observe the Law of Christ, not the Ten Commandments, so they do regard God's Law they say. But consider this: One of the most common teachings in modern Christianity is that the Law is "done away." There is no need, therefore, to be concerned about obedience to the Ten Commandments. Since Christ lived a righteous life in our stead, all we have to do is accept Him and love God. Most fail to observe one of Christ's most important instructions: ". . . It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Both the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures are the Word of God. Those who talk about love need to read 1 John 5:3. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."

Yet most human beings find God's Law to be onerous. Paul tells us why. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7-8). Thousand of professing ministers who preach that God's Law is done away fall into this category. While they may be deceived, the fact remains that they do not comprehend nor have spiritual insight as to the value of God's Law.

The book of Psalms tells us: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Ps. 1:1-2). "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119:97). "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (v. 165).

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. (Ps. 19:7-11)

Many have been led to believe that Paul taught against the Ten Commandments-the spiritual Law of God. Paul did no such thing. Paul explained the ineffectiveness of the Jewish sacrificial law and rituals, and said they were no longer in force. But he never preached against the Ten Commandments. He upheld them and spoke often of how they were violated (Rom. 1:29-32; 13:9-10, 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9-10; 7:39, Gal. 5:19-21, Col. 3:5, 8, Heb. 4:9 [rest in this last text should be translated, "a keeping of the Sabbath"]). In Romans 7:12, he wrote: "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." In spite of these texts, many refuse to believe the simple words of the Apostle John: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). For a clear explanation of the Ten Commandments see our website series entitled: What the Ten Commandments Really Mean.

The book of Revelation foretells the fate of those who refuse to keep God's Law. Two passages are quite sobering.

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:7-8).

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“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” (Rev. 22:14-15).

If the Law of God is done away, as is commonly believed, why is death in the Lake of Fire the penalty for violating the Commandments of God? The answer is clear: The Ten Commandments, both in their physical and spiritual applications, are not done away but remain in force forever. “The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness” (Ps. 111:7-8).

How do you respond to that law? Those who have a spiritual insight recognize its value and strive to obey the Ten Commandments. Those who have no spiritual comprehension will reject it. Some may be ambivalent about it, but indifference is a negative attitude. Those who love God will love all that He stands for, and paramount will be love, respect, and obedience to His law.

The Exercise of Self-Control

One may regard himself as a Christian, but if he is unable to live up to its requirements, it is of little value. The Bible often speaks of “overcoming.” Overcoming what? The primary problem with man is his nature. Contrary to popular thought, human nature is not plastic and changing, capable of unlimited improvement. The fact is: The Bible does not portray human nature in a good light. It is the cause of all the problems and heartaches found in the world today. For a clear explanation of human nature, please refer to our website article entitled: The Nature of Man.

A few Scriptures that may help us to see the struggle we are up against are found in the Old Testament, as well as the New. Here are some examples. “Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults” (Ps. 19:12). “O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments” (Ps. 119:5-6). “Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me” (v. 133). “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Eccl. 7:20).

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom. 7:18, 21-24)

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:17). “Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” (Jas 4:5).

How often do we face these problems? How often do we fall short of the spiritual intent of the Ten Commandments? The fact is: Man does not have the power nor the ability to control the impulses and lusts of the flesh without the help of God. In the spiritual sense, our most determined efforts fall short. “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6).

The power of self-control comes by means of the Holy Spirit, which produces the fruits of righteousness. Paul describes these fruits: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23). “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Rom. 6:22). If spiritual, we should be . . . filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus

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Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:11).

We must be renewed in mind. Paul instructed the Ephesians: “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Eph. 4:22-23). Upon acceptance of Christ, who paid the penalty for our sins, and repentance, we are recipients of God’s blessings. We are given the power to overcome the pulls and weaknesses of the flesh. “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:12-13). “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:16-17).

With the help of God, we can do His will. But we must meet the conditions He sets forth. These are repentance and baptism. ” . . . Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy [Spirit]” (Acts 2:38). What is the result? “The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Eph. 5:9). “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). Walking in the Spirit is one of the most important signs that identifies those who are truly spiritual.

Love For the Brethren

The last identifying sign to be covered in this article is love for the brethren. This important proof also identifies those who are truly spiritual. Some who profess Christianity and even attend church have ill will and dislike for fellow members.

Here is what the Apostle John wrote: “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” (1 John 4:20). Is it possible that some who profess Christ actually belong to Satan? John says so. “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (1 John 3:10). “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes” (1 John 2:9-11).

There are sins of commission as well as sins of omission. We are held accountable not only for what we do, but also for what we do not do. One who manifests hateful and destructive behavior toward his Christian brother, and anyone for that matter, commits a sin—a sin of commission. But one who neglects a brother in need commits a sin of omission. Jesus called this to the attention of a rich, young man. He told him: ” . . . If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me” (Matt. 19:21). The young man did not respond well. He simply could not give up his worldly possessions. “But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions” (Matt. 19:22).

The Apostle James gives us a good example of a sin of omission.

“If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (Jas. 2:15-16). James said this kind of response was a dead faith. “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (v.17). He added: “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O

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vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (vv. 18-20).

Christians are admonished to have love and consideration for all men, but especially for fellow Christians. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). The Apostle Peter admonished: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Pet. 1:22).

With these Scriptures in mind, it should not be difficult to see who is truly spiritual and practicing Christianity. Simply observe how people around you behave and act toward others. They are known by their fruits. Keep in mind this important truth: "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:8). ". . . If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12).

So, ask yourself: Is your worship missing something? If one is not aware of the keys that identify true spirituality, one needs to step back and evaluate what needs to be done in his or her life.