

## **Study 4 – worship and faith**

What, above any other activity is true worship, or to use Rick Warren's definition, what brings about God's pleasure the most? The answer comes to us from Hebrews. Here, the writer is talking about Enoch. Enoch, for those that don't know who he was, did not experience a physical death, as he was taken by God. **(see Gen5:21-24)** We are told:

*“For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased (worshipped) God. And without faith, it is impossible to please God...”*

**(Heb 11:5c, 6a)**

Enoch worshipped God through faith. His faith in who God is, what God had done and in His faithfulness made his whole life a worship song to the Lord, and he *pleased* God! Enoch is the only person in the roll call in Genesis 5 (genealogy of Adam to Noah) of whom we are told that he *“walked with God.”* **(Gen 5:22, 23)** In fact, it is not said of him once, but twice!

Similarly, Abel brought an offering (or worshipped) God through faith. Like Enoch, Abel knew what kind of worship was required of him by God, because that knowledge was gained through a relationship with his Lord. He too 'walked' with God, and there was no ambiguity as to how to please his Lord, and his worship was accepted.

Cain on the other hand, probably worked far harder than his brother, tilling the ground, weeding and tending his crop. However, for all his effort, his offering was not accepted, because he was either too proud to trade with his brother so that he could offer an acceptable form of worship, or his hard work had been a barrier to the development of a close relationship with God. Either way, God said to Cain, *“If you do what is right (what is asked of you) will you not be accepted?”* **(see Genesis 4)**

You see serving our own agenda or desire doesn't lead to acceptable worship. Worshipping to be noticed doesn't please God. Serving because we are scared about what people or leaders think, doesn't please God. Worship leading so that people say how great we are, or because we get a kick out of the attention, doesn't please God. Doing things to be thanked or thought of well by man or because we might get a title or position in the church does not please God.

Only service done out of faith and love for God pleases Him and passes as true worship test. Only walking with God, and serving because of our faith in Him,

love for Him, and subsequent genuine love for others is true worship. And we can only know what God wants us to do, when we foster a close relationship, when we walk with Him, living by faith and not by sight. **(see 2Cor 5:7)**

Jesus was referring to this when he was talking to the crowds on the mountain. On prayer he said, do it privately and simply. When you fast, do not let everyone know, or go around acting miserable. When you do acts of service or charity, you should not intentionally do them for all to see, or announce them to the world. He says that if we do, then there is no reward and those that receive honour for their service from men have already got what they deserve. They will not receive any further reward in heaven. Such acts are not worship, they do not please God! **(see Matt 6:1-24)**

But acts done by faith, these are pleasing to God, these are worship. James wrote to the church that his faith will be known by what he does – faith will produce something. True faith will produce true worship – a surrendered life – a Living Sacrifice. He goes on to say:

*“As the body without the spirit is dead,  
so faith without deeds is dead!”*

**(James 2:26)**

So, true worship that pleases God is our life sacrificed to His call, doing acts of service because of the faith and love we have for Him. Faith that doesn't produce good deeds (or fruit) is not true faith, and therefore doesn't please God and is not worship! In short *“without faith it is impossible to please (or worship) God in Spirit or in Truth!”*

Our priority must always be to try to walk with God, and following his will for our lives, but it is easy to get this wrong. A well-known television evangelist once produced a program entitled *“What Do You Want God to Do in Your Life?”* That's really the wrong question. The question is *“What does God want me to do with the life he has given me?”*

This is not to say in any way, that everything we do should be a service to the church or a charity, but that everything we do should be done charitably. What I mean by that is that unless we are called specifically into full-time ministry (and that includes working for a charity etc.), we will most likely spend large amounts of our time driving to and living our lives at work, school etc. And that's OK, but whilst there, we can worship God by our actions within the workplace / classroom.

This kind of worship comes by way of how we respond to people, being charitable with our time, courteous with our replies, helpful to our fellow man. If we do these things, as if 'doing them unto the Lord,' then we worship Him there. If we are driving to work and have the opportunity to let someone in during a traffic jam, then that too can be worship if we do it out of love. If we shout and scream at the other idiots on the road, (or worse), then we most probably won't please God, and for a moment we fall short of worshipping Him in all our lives.

A.W. Tozer worked in a tyre factory when he was saved. He once wrote that he had such moments of true worship at work that he would have tears welling up in his eyes as God's favour came upon him. He tells his readers that we cannot truly worship God in our lives, whilst our lives are departmentalised from God. It is one life – one God – one worship!

Likewise, I rarely have any music on in my car – it happens to be one of the only places I can meet God one-on-one in peace. I pray, sing, meditate on God and before I seem to have started worshipping, I am at work (or wherever else I am going). It is a fantastic way to begin a day! (or end it for that matter). It prepares me for a day of worship, living for Him, even as I seem to be doing things that otherwise might seem quite 'unspiritual'.

A couple of years ago, I found myself in an overgrown garden, helping an older family member by tidying his yard. Although it was hard work, I spent the time praying, and I could sense God's favour on me. Somehow, the day went by quickly, the yard looked fantastic, and strangely I was not tired or particularly fed up at the day's end. As I was finishing the last garden bed, I felt the Holy Spirit say simply, "This is your spiritual act of worship." (**see Romans 12:1**) I was pulling weeds in the garden bed of a family member who does not know the Lord Jesus. I was sweaty and dirty, my throat dry and unable to sing a note, but I was God told me I was worshipping. Paul writes:

*Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy,  
to offer your bodies as living sacrifices...  
- this is your spiritual act of worship.*

**(Romans 12:1)**

Writing more than one hundred years ago, Alexander Paterson Smith gave this definition of worship: "To worship God is to make Him the supreme object of our esteem and delight, both in public, private, and secret."

A life of sacrifice – of putting Him where he belongs – first 24/7!

1. Enoch was clearly unique in all history. What do you think his life 'looked' like? How can we imitate his life?  
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2. We often hear people say, "I just want to know God's will for my life!" Abel shows us that this comes from a relationship with Him. Comment on what you think is the differences between his relationship with God and that of Cain.  
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3. How can we guard ourselves from serving our own desires or dreams, and truly worshipping God with our lives?  
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4. If we are honest, all of us at times have felt good about the accolades that we sometimes receive as part of the worship team. What signs should we look for in our hearts that should warn us against getting 'puffed up with pride'?  
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5. **Read Matt 6:1-24.** Jesus says that we should do our service unannounced, or in private. As a music team, that is difficult physically, but how can we serve 'in secret'?  
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6. How can we approach each day with the attitude that we will worship God, no matter what we are actually doing??  
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7. **Read the Doxology in Romans 11:33-36.** This is the therefore that Romans 12:1 is there for! What is Paul saying as to why we should offer our lives as Living Sacrifices?  
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