

The Marks of True Worship - Individual
Selected Scriptures

Introduction

Last week I pointed out that our worship will have consequences both personally and nationally. God will bring blessing on those that truly worship Him and will bring curses on those that give worship to false gods or give false worship to Him. I traced this in the lives of individuals and in our own nation. The underlying reason for the decline for our nation morally, economically and politically is rooted in our nation's turning away from God. It began with a failure to give God the honor and thanks He deserves, so He gave this nation over to its lusts resulting in the sexual revolution. The nation continued to decline and exchanged the truth of God for a lie and has worshiped and served that which is created instead of the creator. God has therefore given the nation over to degrading passions resulting in the perversions that have become so pervasive. The nation continues to decline so that it no longer sees fit to acknowledge God. Therefore God is giving this nation over to the depraved minds of a celebrity culture in which the inane and insane ideas of entertainers, politicians, the social elite and business leaders dominate.

Since worship has consequences of either blessing or curses to the individual and to nations, it is extremely important that we worship God correctly. That is what I hope to explain and encourage you to do over the next couple of months. I have read many books on worship over the years. This morning I want to begin by giving you a few of the marks of true worship. Much of what I will be talking about this morning is taken from John MacArthur's book, *"The Ultimate Priority."* I highly recommend the book to those who want to do further study on their own.

Overview

The marks of true worship can be broken down into two major categories. The first are those which are related to the individual. These include: Fear of God, Confession of Sin, Faith in God, Confidence in prayer, the Fruit of Righteousness, Verbal Praise, Content Hearts, Suffering without Complaint and a Clear Witness. These marks are also foundational to the second major category which are those evidences which occur in the congregation. These include: God is Glorified, Believers are Purified, the Church is Edified and the Lost are Evangelized. What happens in the congregation is dependent upon what happens among the individuals that make it up. If the individuals within the congregation are not truly worshipping the Lord God, then the congregation as a whole cannot be truly worshipping Him. This morning we will be looking at the marks of true worship by the individual.

Let me start with a working definition of worship before we examine its evidences. Our word "worship" comes from the Old English "weorthscipe" or "worthship," and basically means to render worth to some object. The biblical concept rises from the Hebrew *h39v9* / shachah ("bow down," or "prostrate oneself") and the Greek *proskunevw* / proskuneo ("to kiss towards" or "to kiss the hand"). These are acts of homage or obeisance. Another Greek word, *latreuvw* / latreuo adds to our understanding of Biblical worship. It means "to render service" and is often translated as "service of worship. We get our word "liturgy" from it.

A simple definition would then be, *"Worship is reverence, honor, and adoration directed to the Lord God."* Our definition will gain additional meaning as we look deeper into this whole subject of the worship of God, but this definition is its essence. We ascribe to God His worth, or state and affirm His supreme value. If that is true in attitude, it will be demonstrated in action.

The more we understand what is true and real, who God is and what He is like, who we are and what

we are really like, and our great need for our Creator, then the deeper will be our worship of Him. Our reverence, honor and adoration of God will not be ritual observances done in fear because we must or because of peer pressure because of those around us. Instead, our worship will be acts rising from deep in our souls and rendered to the One we supremely love.

Fear of God

I believe the first step toward true worship is the fear of God. Proverbs 1:7 states clearly *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.”* Proverbs 9:10 adds, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”* You cannot begin to worship God properly without knowledge about Him and wisdom to apply that knowledge. It is that fear of God in recognition that you are a creature made by Him and accountable to Him that gives the first motivation to believe that He is and seek Him. Hebrews 11:6 states, *“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”*

A primary reason for the decline of our nation is this lack of fear of God. In the past you could easily rebuke an individual who was doing wrong things by asking the rhetorical question, *“Don’t you fear God?”* That simple reminder was enough warning to get them to straighten up. Now there is a large percentage of the population that would say they do not fear God either because they are atheists or agnostics, or they have a perverted understanding of God and do not think He will punish sinners. They do not fear God and therefore will not worship Him.

Confession of Sin

For those that take the first step toward worship and fear God, I believe that the first mark of true worship is the confession of sin. Confession is to agree with God that He is right, holy and just and that you are not and therefore He is right and you are wrong. Several scriptures have lead me to this conclusion. The first is John 16:8-11, *“⁸And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; ¹¹ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.”* Conviction of sin is the first evidence that the Holy Spirit is working on a person’s soul, and confession is the first evidence that they are responding to it.

For the unbeliever, confession is the key that opens the door to salvation. Remember from 1 Peter 5:5 that *“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”* Confession requires this humility which is given God’s grace. Without this humility and confession, God remains opposed and will not even hear such a person’s prayer according to Psalm 66:18, *“If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear.”* Without this humility of confession the individual will not seek, believe or follow the Lord Jesus Christ and therefore cannot receive the salvation He offers. Remember that Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:3). The word for “poor” there means to be poverty stricken, destitute. You have nothing to offer and nothing to bargain with and so you must beg. That is how we come to God. We beg for His mercy and then receive it by His grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The proud want to make a deal with God as if they have something He needs. Confession begins with both this recognition of your true status before God, the sovereign Creator of everything, and your absolute need of Him and the loving mercy He extends to His sinful creatures through Jesus Christ.

Since proper worship of God must be in “spirit and truth” as Jesus proclaimed in John 4:24, then in this age only those who are redeemed and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the way the truth and the life (John 14:6), can be true worshipers of God. It is through Jesus’ sacrifice of His life on your behalf as the atonement for your sin that you, as Hebrews 9:14 puts it, can have your conscience cleansed *“from dead works to serve the living God.”* The word “serve” there is *latreuvw / latreuo* which

I pointed out earlier is a New Testament word for “service of worship.”

You must also understand that for unbelievers and believers alike that Jesus will not cleanse those who will not confess their sins. 1 John 1:8-10 states clearly, *“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”* For the unbeliever, this means that without confession they remain at enmity with God and under His just condemnation. For the believer it means that without confession they remain estranged from Jesus so that their fellowship is hindered. Confession brings about the reconciliation of fellowship through forgiveness.

Confession is also primary because it is the response of worship by those who understand the nature, glory and holiness of God. We see this in the reaction of those who have been given a vision of God seated on His throne in heaven. In Isaiah 6:5, the prophet's response was, *“Then I said, ‘Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.’”* He confesses that he was not worthy to be in the Lord's presence, and God then arranged for Isaiah to be cleansed so that he could be there. 1 Peter 1:15-16 stresses this need for holiness too stating, *“but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all [your] behavior; 16 because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”* We are to be holy and God wants us to worship him in holiness as stated in Psalm 29:2, *“Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in holy array.”*

Confession itself is an act of worship as I pointed out before from the story of Achan in Joshua 7. At the battle of Jericho, Achan stole some things that were put under the ban. Israel was then defeated at the first battle of Ai because there was sin in the camp. Achan was found out, and in verse 19 Joshua said to Achan, *“My son, I implore you, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me.”* Achan then confessed his sin before everyone, and in doing so he gave glory to God's righteousness and justice which was then carried out in his execution.

Faith in God

The fear of the Lord is the first step needed to prod the humility and motivation to believe and seek God. Confession is the key that opens the door to reconciliation with Him. After that door is opened, faith must grow if true worship is to be developed. A person that seeks to give God supreme honor and reverence will also trust Him and His word. True worship prods faith and faith prods true worship.

Abraham is a good example of this. Romans 4:18-21 says of him, *“In hope against hope he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, ‘So shall your descendants be.’”¹⁹ And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; ²⁰ yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,²¹ and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.”*

To not believe God is the opposite of worship. It is irreverence. 1 John 5:10 states, *“The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son.”*

Another example of faith in God as an act of true worship is found in Daniel 3. If you recall the story, Hananiah, Mishael & Azariah (Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego) were told they must bow down and worship a golden idol or they would be thrown into a furnace of fire. They refused regardless of the consequences. In verses 17-18 they responded to the king's threat saying, *“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”* God did deliver them, and even this pagan king was

moved to worship the true God.

Confident Prayer

Where there is true faith in God resulting in the true worship of God there will also be confident prayer to God. Such prayers are for the purpose of the glory of God.

John 14:13, *“And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”*¹⁴ *“If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do [it.]”*¹⁵ *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.*

1 John 5:14-15,¹⁴ *And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.*¹⁵ *And if we know that He hears us [in] whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.*

Please note that prayer according to God's will and for His glory are the conditions to His promises to grant us what we ask Him in prayer. Confident prayer is based in true worship of God and not in trying to get one's own wish list filled according to one's own desires. James 4:3 is clear that the answers to your prayers will be “no” when you ask so that you might “*spend it on your pleasures.*”

The Fruit of Righteousness

The next mark of true worship is a broad category, but one that is easily seen. It is the “fruit of righteousness.” Jesus said in John 15:8 *“By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and [so] prove to be My disciples.”* The apostle Paul adds in Philippians 1:10-11, “. . . *approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; ¹¹ having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which [comes] through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*” God wants you to bear the fruit of righteousness, for by it He is glorified and it proves you are a true follower of Jesus Christ.

What is the fruit of righteousness? Paul explains in Colossians 1:10 that we are to “. . . *walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please [Him] in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*” Part of the fruit of righteousness is seen in the righteous deeds that you do and by them God is glorified. Jesus made that clear in Matthew 5:16 that you are to *“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”*

The fruit of righteousness is seen externally in our good works, but it comes from something that is internal, the fruit of the Spirit, which Paul describes in Galatians 5:22-23, *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”* These are the characteristics that God develops within you when you walk with Him.

Psalms 92:13-15 gives a wonderful description of those who walk with God for many years, *“Planted in the house of the Lord, They will flourish in the courts of our God. ¹⁴ They will still yield fruit in old age; They shall be full of sap and very green, ¹⁵ To declare that the Lord is upright; [He is] my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”* I don't know about you, but I would like that to be true of me. I want to continue to increase in declaring that the Lord is upright, righteous and my rock.

The fruit you bear also reveals what kind of plant you are. Jesus said in Matthew 7:16-20, *“You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn [bushes,] nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ “Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ “A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ “So then, you will know them by their fruits.”*

The German philosopher, Heine, said, *“You show me your redeemed life and I might believe in your redeemer.”*

Verbal Praise

Another outward manifestation of those who truly worship God is verbal praise. The heart set on truly worshipping God cannot contain itself, and when a person is filled with the spirit, Ephesians 5:19-20 states they will be *“speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.”* Such praise, whether sung or simply spoken, is worship of God. Psalm 50:23 states, *“He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me; And to him who orders his way aright I shall show the salvation of God.”*

The example of the ten lepers in Luke 17:12-19 shows the difference between those who worship God and those that do not and the results. ¹² *“And as He (Jesus) entered a certain village, ten leprosy men who stood at a distance met Him; ¹³ and they raised their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” ¹⁴ And when He saw them, He said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And it came about that as they were going, they were cleansed. ¹⁵ Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, ¹⁶ and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine - where are they? ¹⁸ “Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?” ¹⁹ And He said to him, “Rise, and go your way; your faith has made you well.”* From other passages where Jesus used this same phrase, we know Jesus is referring to spiritual well being in addition to physical healing.

I need to point out that this is praise which is given when things are tough, and not just when things are going well and it is convenient. Many people fool themselves into thinking they are true worshipers of God because they get very emotional at a worship service in their praise of God. However, true worship is a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise (Hebrews 13:14) that occurs even when emotions are negative and things are painful. An example of this is described in Psalm 69:29-30 in which David says, *“But I am afflicted and in pain; May Thy salvation, O God, set me securely on high. I will praise the name of God with songs, And shall magnify Him with thanksgiving.”*

Content Hearts

A more internal mark of a true worshiper of the Lord God is a content heart. We are not to be like the world around us that complains about most everything. Instead, we are to be people who rejoice in all circumstances. That is the theme of Philippians 4:10-20 which also explains how this can be done, ¹⁰ *“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned [before,] but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”* Paul expresses the reason for his joy in verse 17, *“Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.”* He rejoiced over what He knew God was doing in their lives and not just his own. It was out of a great confidence in God and his personal experience of learning to be content that Paul could encourage the Philippians in verses 19-20 saying, *“And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ Now to our God and Father [be] the glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

A mark of someone who truly knows God is their ability to trust Him in any situation and be content. One step above being simply content when life is tough is the willingness to suffer without complaint for righteousness sake.

Suffering Without Complaint

In 1 Peter 4:14-16 the Apostle explains the importance of this, ¹⁴ *“If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; ¹⁶ but if [anyone suffers] as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.”* If we suffer for righteousness without reviling, getting angry, etc., then we bring glory to God. All Christians should be prepared to suffer for God's kingdom. Jesus told us in John 16:33 that in this world we will have tribulation, but He also told that He has overcome the world and there is to be joy in suffering for His name's sake as He states in Matthew 5:10-12, ¹⁰ *“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ “Blessed are you when [men] cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. ¹² “Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* (See also 1 Timothy 3:12).

A Clear Witness

The last mark of true worship by the individual I want to bring up this morning is that they have a clear witness of who God is and what He has done. God is glorified when we bear witness of Him. Acts 13:48-49 records the response to Paul doing this in Pisidian Antioch, *“And when the Gentiles heard this, they [began] rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region.”*

Many of the psalms center on thanksgiving and praise to the Lord for who He is and all that He has done. Even those psalms that do not focus on praise and thanksgiving, like the Psalms of lament and the didactic Psalms, also usually included a vow to proclaim the Lord's goodness that He might be glorified.

Your own witness to others is an aspect of your true worship of the Lord.

Conclusion

This is not an exhaustive list of the marks of true worship, but it does give you the major evidences of a heart that truly seeks to worship God. They also give you much to think about in your personal worship of God. The true worship of the Lord God, creator of heaven and earth, is not something that occurs just on Sunday morning when we all get together. It is an active, all-consuming, never-ending pursuit. As the worshiper gives his life to the glory of God, he discovers a rich resource of joy and power and meaning not available to those that do not. The life that honors God is the only life God will honor. I encourage and challenge you to strive to make these marks a reality in your own life.

Sermon Notes: *The Marks of True Worship - Individual*
Selected Scriptures

Introduction

God blesses those who worship Him and _____ those who worship false gods or worship Him falsely
Worship has _____, so it is extremely important to properly worship the true God

Overview

We will look at both individual and congregational _____ of true worship

Worship = “weorthscipe” = worthship = render _____ to some object

h9v9 / shachah (bow down) and proskunevw / proskuneo (kiss toward) = acts of _____ or
obeisance

latreuvw / latreuo = _____ of worship

Worship is reverence, honor, and adoration _____ to the Lord God.

What is true in attitude will be demonstrated in _____ - true worship arises from the soul

Fear of God

Proverbs 1:7; 9:10 - the fear of God is the _____ of knowledge and wisdom - which fools despise

Recognizing you are a _____ who is accountable to your Creator gives motivation to seek Him - Heb. 11:6

A primary reason for the decline of our nation is this _____ of fear of God

Confession of Sin

The _____ mark of true worship is the confession of sin - a response to the Holy Spirit - John 16:8-11

Confession is _____ that opens the door to salvation for humility is required - 1 Pt. 5:5; Ps. 66:18; Mt. 5:3

True worship (John 4:24) requires following _____ (John 14:6) whose atonement cleanses (Heb. 9:14)

Both unbelievers and believers must confess _____ - 1 John 1:8-10

Confession and worship are the responses of those who understand God’s _____ - Isaiah 6:5

Confession is an _____ of worship - Joshua 7:19

Faith in God

True worship prods _____ and faith prods true worship

_____ example - Romans 4:18-21

To not believe God is _____ - the opposite of worship - J John 5:10

The example of Hananiah, Mishael & Azariah - _____

Confident Prayer

Prayers from true worship are for the purpose of the _____ and will of God - John 14:13; 1 John 5:14-15

Prayer based in true worship of God is _____ while praying for one’s own desires is not - James 4:3

The Fruit of Righteousness

John 15:8; Philippians 1:10 - God wants you to _____ the fruit of righteousness

The fruit of righteousness includes good _____ done for God's glory - Colossians 1:10; Matthew 5:16
The fruit of righteousness includes the _____ of the fruit of the Spirit - Galatians 5:21-22
Psalm 92:13-15 gives a wonderful description of those who _____ with God for many years
The fruit you bear also reveals what kind of _____ you are - Matthew 7:16-20

Verbal Praise

A person filled with the Spirit will _____ God - Eph. 5:19-20, Psalm 50:23
The example of the _____ - Luke 17:12-19
The praise of worship is given in both good times and ____ for it is a sacrifice - Heb. 13:14; Psalm 69:29-30

Content Hearts

Philippians 4:10-20 - _____ in God's provision and contentment go hand in hand
A mark of someone who truly knows God is their ability to _____ Him in any situation and be content

Suffering Without Complaint

1 Peter 4:14-16 - We bring glory to God when we suffer for righteousness without _____
Christians should be prepared to _____ for following Jesus - John 16:33; Matt. 5:10-12; 1 Tim. 3:12

A Clear Witness

God is glorified when we bear _____ of Him - Acts 13:48-19
Your own witness to others is an aspect of your true _____ of the Lord

Conclusion

The true worship of the Lord God is an _____, all-consuming, never-ending pursuit
The life that honors God is the only life _____ will honor

KIDS KORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help.

Young Children - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Write down all the verses mentioned in the sermon and look them up later. 2) Count how many times the word "worship" is said. Talk with your parents about the marks of worship you want to develop in your own life.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. What is worship? What are the blessings given to those who worship God properly? What are some of the curses upon those who worship a false god or worship the true God falsely? What is the relationship between worship and the decline in America? Why is the fear of the LORD the first step toward true worship? What is confession? Why is it the key that opens the door to redemption? What is the necessity of humility in becoming a Christian and living the Christian life? What is the normal response of those who get a glimpse of the glory, majesty and holiness of God? How is confession itself an act of worship? What is the relationship between faith in God and true worship? Give Biblical examples. What is the relationship between having confidence God will answer your prayers and prayer that is part of true worship? What is the fruit of righteousness? What is its relationship to true worship? What does the fruit in your life reveal? Why is verbal praise an important part of worship? Under what circumstances should verbal praise be given to God? Why does true worship of God result in contentment? How does suffering for the sake of

righteousness without complaint or being vindictive bring glory to God? Do your words and life honor God?