

LESSON 2

MEETING MAN'S NEEDS THROUGH WORSHIP

Introduction

Aim

To understand the psychological needs of the worshipper and how the elements of worship contribute to the meeting of those needs.

Thought questions

1. What are man's basic needs which can be met through worship?
2. How do music, prayer, scripture reading, and preaching meet those needs?
3. What attitudes are necessary for worship?

The Psychology of Worship

The meaning of psychology

The word psychology is derived from the two Greek words *psyche* (mind or soul) and *logia* (word, discourse). Psychology has reference to a study of the mind or soul. The psychology of worship is a study of how worship meets the needs of the mind or soul.

Basic purposes of worship

In the previous chapter, the relation of worship to finite man's dependence on a higher power was emphasized. In most cases, the primary purpose underlying primitive man's worship was to appease God in order to gain His favour and protection. Man's need of God's help continues to be basic to worship. Man normally cries out to God when his life is in danger. Sinful man, who is under conviction and who recognizes that he is helpless to solve his problems, is driven to reach out to a higher power who can rescue him.

In addition to need, the New Testament emphasizes gratitude as a purpose of worship. The righteous man turns to God not only when driven to do so by a crisis, but he worships to express his gratitude for the blessings which God has bestowed upon him.

Some psychologists define personality in terms of relationship. The Genesis account of man's creation implies that the characteristic which distinguishes man from the animals is his ability to relate to his Creator: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27). Man's creation in the image or likeness of God

A study of how worship meets the needs of the mind and soul is the _____ of _____.

(psychology, worship)

One of the basic purposes of worship is to meet man's need of God's _____.

(help)

Another purpose of worship is _____.

(gratitude)

means that he has been given characteristics which enable him to communicate with his Creator. God is Creator and perfect in holiness, but man is creature and sinful in nature; therefore, the relationship between God and man involves two distinct levels of being. Humility, reverence, and gratitude should characterize man's attitude in the relationship. Since the word worship means basically to bow before and to recognize the worth of God, it accurately describes man's approach in establishing a personal relationship with his Creator.

Man's seeking for God's help and his expressing gratitude for God's blessings remain impersonal if only rituals and ceremonies are employed. On the other hand, they can become parts of man's personal relationship to God.

Types of worship

There are basically two types of worship: ceremonial (ritualistic) and personal. *Ceremonial* worship may be described as man's engaging in rituals to express his obligation and gratitude to his Creator. It is primarily subjective in that the emphasis is on the activity of the worshipper. *Personal* worship, private or public, is objective in that the emphasis is on trying to establish an "I-thou" relationship rather than a ceremonial "I-it" relationship. When "thou" is used, personal response is expected; whereas this is not the case when addressing "it" (object or thing). The worshipper may engage in preliminary ceremonies to help him become aware of the spiritual presence of God as the prerequisite for reality in a personal relationship. Reality in personal worship is more difficult to achieve than that encountered in observance of the varied forms of ritualistic worship.

The differences between ritualistic worship and personal worship are seen in Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (see 1 Kings 18). The prophets of Baal sought to relate to their god ritualistically. They offered a bullock and then leapt upon the altar, cutting themselves with knives while crying out for Baal to hear them. Elijah combined ritualistic and personal worship. He too offered a sacrifice, but his simple prayer manifested a very personal element. He knew God was present, and he expected Him to hear and answer. The prophets of Baal shouted because they thought of their god as being far away and unconcerned about their needs. Elijah's prayer reflected his belief that God was very much involved in his daily activities. Personal worship recognizes God's presence; whereas ceremonial worship does not require God to be present. Ceremonial worship focuses on man's sinfulness and unworthiness to enter God's presence; it is characterized by sacrifices and acts. Personal worship focuses on God's grace and His

Relationship is also a basic purpose of
w _____.

(worship)

Ceremonial worship is man's engaging in
_____ to express his obligation and
gratitude to his _____.

Personal worship emphasizes relationship
rather than _____.

(rituals, Creator, ceremony)

Is this statement true or false?

Reality in ceremonial worship is more difficult to achieve than in personal worship.

(false)

Write personal and ceremonial in the blanks to make this a true statement.

_____ worship recognizes God's presence; _____ worship does not.

(Personal, ceremonial)

willingness to accept sinful man into fellowship with Himself. Since the presence of God dominates the consciousness of the worshipper, prayers are more conversational and less liturgical. The singing of hymns becomes the worshipper's personal expression of praise to God for His blessings. The preaching of the gospel is God's instruction to the worshipper (the Word of God) and the invitation is presented as God's call to salvation, dedication, and service.

The personal emphasis in worship can degenerate to an unwholesome familiarity without dignity and reverence; therefore, a degree of liturgy and formality is justified in order to recognize the transcendence or "wholly otherness" of God. Without ceremony and liturgy, personal worship can become subjective activism and profane familiarity. There is always the danger that prayer and other expressions of worship will be stated without the worshipper's awareness of God's presence. However, without the personal elements in worship, ceremonial worship becomes cold formalism and empty ritualism.

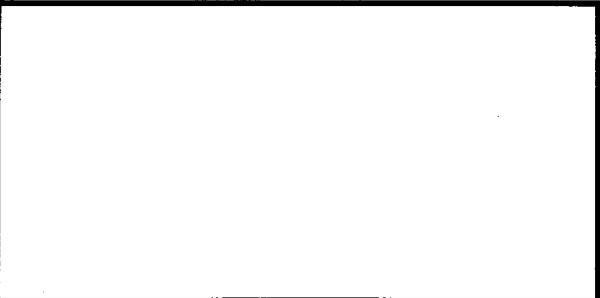
Steps leading to worship

Worship has been described as becoming aware of God and responding to Him with praise and dedication of life. There are four steps leading to this type of worship experience.

Awareness of the need to worship.—Awareness originates from need and interest. Need in the human experience arises from internal and external crises. A person becomes conscious of religious need when he faces experiences which are directly related to his existence and life. Events which threaten one's life make him aware that the higher values and purposes of life are not material but spiritual. That is why people turn to religion in times of crisis.

In addition to crises, the recognition that life is without meaning and purpose causes people to turn to religion. Those who feel a sense of failure and loneliness become sensitive to their need of God who loves them and who is willing to forgive them.

Seeking a solution.—Those who become aware of needs seek solutions. Some are deceived into thinking that spiritual needs can be met with material resources. Pleasure, wealth, and success become substitutes for the real solution to spiritual hunger. Those who have concluded that spiritual resources will offer answers to their needs come to the worship service expecting to have those needs met. When planning a worship service, the pastor should always keep in mind that people have come out of a sense of need and are seeking the personal presence of God and His power. Unfortunately, not all who come to the worship services become aware of God's judgement, love, and mercy.



Two dangers in personal worship are:

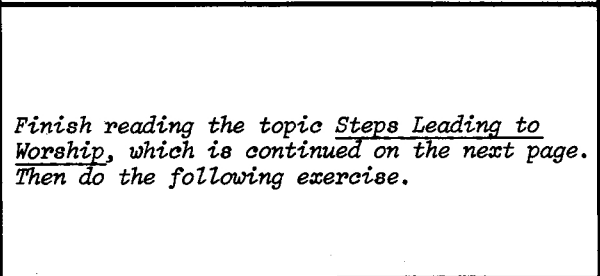
1. An unwholesome familiarity may develop with a lack of d _____ and r _____.
2. Prayer and other acts of worship may be observed without an awareness of God's p _____.

(1. dignity, reverence; 2. presence)



Awareness involves _____ and _____.

(need, interest)



Finish reading the topic Steps Leading to Worship, which is continued on the next page. Then do the following exercise.

