

W O R S H I P

These are just a few thoughts on the subject of worship. It is not a subject which can be "taught", and there is certainly not a "right answer" to the question "What is worship?"

John chapter 4 is a good starting place, as the Lord Jesus talks about the sort of worshippers which the Father is looking for. See **verses 21 to 24**.

As far as I can see, there are three stages in the process of learning to worship, and the first is clearly stated by the Lord:-

KNOWING

Jesus says that the Samaritans worshipped what they did not know. If you want a bit more background, see **2 Kings 17**, which tells the story of how Samaria was colonised by immigrants who just added the worship of the God of the Jews to the idols they already worshipped. They worshipped God as a sort of insurance policy; if there was any personal response on their part, it was one of fear and duty.

By contrast, Jesus speaks of the Jews, who worshipped a God they knew, and of worshippers who would worship in spirit and in truth. The spirit is the most central part of us, deeper even than the mind, will and emotions. "In truth" means "in reality" and for our worship to be real we need to know the Lord right at the core of who we are. This is no place for religious phrases and pious hopes . . . either there is reality in our relationship with God or there is not.

APPRECIATING

It is almost pointless to talk of appreciating after seeing what true knowing is. Whenever the Lord becomes real to us in a fresh way, our appreciation of him is increased. Sometimes truths which we have known in theory become alive as a result of fresh revelation of the Lord Jesus into our lives. See **Ephesians 1: 15- 23**. Appreciation is knowledge made personal. If there is a "block" to our worship, it may be that we need to go back to basics, discover what we know of God in reality, and allow the Holy Spirit to do his work of revealing Jesus to us . . . appreciation will certainly follow! It is vital to our worship in spirit and truth that we do not attempt to move on to expressing worship unless there is some appreciation. On the other hand, the smallest and simplest appreciation of God is pure gold and precious to him as well as to us. We must start from where we are, however low down on the scale that may seem to be.

EXPRESSING

This is sometimes where we run into problems, either with others or (more often?) with ourselves. Perhaps we have an appreciation of the Lord which honestly springs from a real knowledge of him. How do we go about expressing it? We are talking here about private worship as well as in company with others. Words seem to be either inadequate or too flowery. Perhaps we feel embarrassed about talking to the Lord about what he means to us. In the end, we need to just get on with it, knowing that he looks on our hearts and knows what we are trying to express. Read **Romans 10:10&11**; this speaks of the value of expression as well as faith (knowledge and appreciation). We do not need to be shy about expressing our response to God in words in other believers' company - real heart-felt worship, however simple it may be, is a great source of encouragement to others.

ROMANS 12:1 & 2 shows the route to a whole life that is expressing a true appreciation of our knowledge of the Lord, in spirit and in truth.

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