

Swept off your Feet

Beyond Worship-as-Usual

Connecting with God for a Strong Finish

CHAPTER 26

On To Maturity

God doesn't need worship to validate His divine nature. He's really good at being God—all by Himself. Attentive worshipers understand this fact. With nothing to prove and no one to impress, they convey reverence without ulterior motives.

Our Heavenly Father welcomes intercession and petition but worship is not an avenue for asking favors. He welcomes repentance and contrition but worship is not a method for penance. True worshipers refrain from venerating God as a means to an end—their worship is as an end in itself. Worship is neither the pregame show for teaching and preaching nor a technique for gaining revelation or direction.

For one devoted instant, informed worshipers stop trying to improve their world or themselves. Without pursuing hidden agendas or promoting pet programs, they honor God with an unmistakable priority. Self-serving rituals, ceremonies, and programs may be useful, edifying, and God-ordained but they are not worship.

In “The Message”, Eugene Peterson conveys God's reaction when individuals say and do religion to conceal their sins, ostensibly as an act of worship. The Prophet Isaiah derides their behavior as an unwelcomed charade in God's sight.

“When you come before me, whoever gave you the idea of acting like this, Running here and there, doing this and that—all this sheer commotion in the place provided for worship? Quit your worship charades. I can't stand your trivial religious games: Monthly conferences, weekly Sabbaths, special meetings—meetings, meetings, meetings—I can't stand one more! Meetings for this, meetings for that. I hate them! You've worn me out! I'm sick of your religion, religion, religion, while you go right on sinning.” (Isaiah 1:12-14 MSG)

Faith Oriented Worship

Strong emotions may or may not accompany gestures of worship. Regardless of how we feel, faith validates our response. Worshipers on earth bow low because they are *“sure of what [they] hope for and certain of what [they] do not see”*.¹ Faith guides their response based on an accurate revelation, with or without manifestations. The truth about God may appear veiled, detached, or distorted but it remains true nonetheless. Simply put, we worship God to venerate Him—not to experience goose bumps. Spiritual euphoria may be exhilarating, perhaps even life changing, but bliss is not vital for showing reverence.

We worship God because He deserves it—He is worthy. Though special blessings may occur during moments of homage, worship does not exist for the sake of blessing us. It is not a provision for fixing our broken condition or augmenting our anointing. True worshipers avoid performing acts of reverence to improve their quality of life, to increase their spiritual collateral, or to assuage their guilt. They certainly refrain from using worship to prime an audience for giving money or hearing a message.

After worshipping God, perhaps it is natural to desire something in return. We are in fact needy people—and God has so much to offer this wounded and broken world. Nonetheless, true worshipers avoid attaching terms, conditions, or stipulations to their worship. They focus

¹ Hebrews 11:1 NIV

on the Giver by admiring how much He has already given. Rather than seeking an additional advantage, worshipers recognize and appreciate the benefits derived from knowing their gracious Benefactor.

Bowing down states the obvious—we are not God. True worship suppresses arrogant promotion and subdues egocentric ambition. Assuming an extreme facedown position exalts God far above us. Bowing low reminds us that God deserves special treatment. He holds an elite credential, behaving like Creator of the universe, Author of life, and Savior of the world. By abstaining from ordinary activities, we embrace our mortal status beneath His exalted eminence. With humble gratitude, we accept the truth about ourselves. With deferential respect, we affirm the truth about God.

Whether in private or in public, bowing offers practical benefits. This horizontal stance reduces external distractions so internal priorities can receive the attention they deserve. Though awkward at times, a facedown carriage encourages a dedicated focus. It diverts our attention away from fleeting material interests and concentrates it on permanent spiritual realities. As the head levels off with the heart, worries disintegrate under God's exclusive authority. Superfluous concerns and anxious worries settle beneath the feet of Jesus where they belong. He attends to our needs with competent care and sovereign concern.

True Revelation Begets True Worship

Our Heavenly Father seeks worshipers regardless of their IQ or EQ (intelligence quotient or emotional quotient). Falling facedown is a no-brainer when Almighty God reveals Himself. He seeks worshipers regardless of their strengths or weaknesses. Faithless sinners qualify as a desirable target along with faithful angels. Jesus welcomes penitent saints and prostrate demoniacs. Our Heavenly Father seeks worshipers because He wants them to find Him.

God knows the heart of each worshiper. He understands how tentative their faith may be, especially when defective thoughts skew their opinions and flawed attitudes temper their feelings. Our Heavenly Fa-

ther appreciates their struggle against deception as they strain to comprehend eternal truths and overcome cultural inhibitions.

Wisdom and Revelation

God rarely shows His presence to people on earth. Instead, He offers *“the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that [they] may know him better.”*² This combination of wisdom and revelation sustains the heart and informs the mind with spiritual understanding. Without hearing His audible voice, we learn to recognize His divine attributes and appreciate His eternal promises. Without seeing His physical appearance, we observe His supernatural accomplishments and grasp the purpose behind His passion. Though God’s presence on earth remains spiritual, He communicates well enough for us to draw accurate conclusions.

As the gold standard for truth, the Bible validates the wisdom and revelation that we perceive from the Holy Spirit. Divinely inspired messages provide a secure frame of reference for interpreting supernatural encounters and revelatory epiphanies. Properly understood, the wisdom and revelation conveyed in the Bible affirms reality and inspires faith. Together they transform self-centered mortals into eternal worshipers.

“faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ”. (Romans 10:17 NIV)

Anyone can become a Worshiper

Our Heavenly Father uses a wide embrace to accommodate worshipers. He welcomes saints and sinners to bow right alongside angels and demons. He operates with a generous inclusion criterion. The God of all grace sent His Son to remove every barrier that separates us from Him.³ Jesus sacrificed His life on the cross alleviating our need to measure up to unattainable standards and legalistic rules. He performed a

² Ephesians 1:17 NIV

³ 1 Peter 5:10 NKJ

redemptive miracle that emancipated us to worship Him in spirit and truth.

Christ died to redeem sinners, and then rose from the dead to seal their eternal destiny. Accomplishing this feat entitles Him to more than a casual response wrapped in obligatory religion. Our Heavenly Father redeemed our soul from Hell and filled us with the Holy Spirit so we could extend passionate sentiments beyond rote compliance and devotional duty. Jesus expects an informed response without superficial formalities. He deserves radical reverence, wholehearted homage, and exceptional veneration.

From heaven and earth, vast multitudes of angels and humans will eventually generate a bold and daring response. From facedown worship to a lifestyle that radiates reverence, worshipers will honor their Heavenly Father with the respect that He deserves. As the truth about God becomes more evident, worshipers will become more proactive and audacious in their response.

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