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WORSHIP CONTINUALLY



What's something you enjoy doing so much that you lose track of time?

QUESTION #1

Live your life as an act of worship.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

A common cry in our culture is: *"I don't have enough time!"* We do live busy lives, but have you ever noticed we find time for what we really want to do? Such as ...

- ▶ ... spending the afternoon leisurely shopping.
- ▶ ... enjoying an evening at the movies.
- ▶ ... going on a much-needed vacation.
- ▶ ... watching TV or surfing the Internet for hours.

Most Americans who "regularly" attend church actually do so only two to three times a month. Unfortunately, even for those who do attend church weekly, the tendency is to limit their worship to just a few hours a week. So, if how we use our time is a statement about what's important to us, what do our schedules say about the importance of worship?

We're called to live our lives as an act of worship each day. As we weigh that truth, let's see the role worship played in King Asa's life.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

2 Chronicles 15:10-15

¹⁰ They were gathered at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. ¹¹ They sacrificed to the LORD on that day from the spoil that they had brought 700 oxen and 7,000 sheep. ¹² And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul, ¹³ but that whoever would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman. ¹⁴ They swore an oath to the LORD with a loud voice and with shouting and with trumpets and with horns. ¹⁵ And all Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and had sought him with their whole desire, and he was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around.

In our previous session, King Asa “repaired the altar of the LORD that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the LORD” (15:8). Now Asa brought the people together for a great celebration. This occasion was likely the Feast of Weeks—also referred to as Pentecost—one of the three annual celebrations that required the people to return to Jerusalem.

The great number that had gathered was only matched by the offering they made to the Lord: “700 oxen and 7,000 sheep” were to be sacrificed. This offering came from the plunder King Asa and his army had taken in their victory over the Ethiopians (2 Chron. 14:14-15).

Following the sacrifices, the people “entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul” (v. 12). God had already established a covenant with Moses and the people when they were still in the wilderness (Ex. 19:5-6); frequently in their history, however, the Jewish people failed to keep this covenant of loyal love. Now King Asa and the people made a public declaration—“with a loud voice” (v. 14)—to return to and renew that covenant.

How would you describe what it means to worship God?

QUESTION #2

Our world today doesn't fully appreciate the importance of a covenant. We make tons of promises that we never keep or even have an intention of keeping, but God does not lie, nor will He abandon what He promises. No covenant has ever had greater significance than the one God has given us through Jesus Christ. Christ shed His blood to bring us into a relationship with the Father. It is truly an eternal covenant.

The people of Judah were not to enter into this covenant lightly. Their worship and celebration of God required them to commit all they had to Him. They were to seek God with all their heart and all their soul—and not just for one day a week or a few times of year. This was to be the way they lived on a daily basis.

King Asa certainly did not take this covenant lightly. He was determined for his people to fully seek the Lord their God, and whoever would not abide by this covenant "should be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman" (v. 13). While we may think that's harsh, the king's stance emphasized the great importance of living out a covenantal relationship with God.

It surely must have been a wondrous thing to hear the entire kingdom taking an oath together. The people of Judah declared their allegiance to worship God with their lives. While individuals may have renewed their own covenants with God as well, this is the first time Scripture records that the people as a nation renewed their covenant all together. The actions of King Asa and the people show us that authentic worship has two requirements.

- 1. Worship involves sacrifice.** Worship is more than "sacrificing" an hour or two at church on Sunday. While we don't need to bring hundreds and thousands of animals to the altar to sacrifice, we are to bring ourselves as a living sacrifice to the altar of God.
- 2. Worship involves obedience.** Speaking words of worship can be easy, but living them out requires action.

How do believers today demonstrate the seriousness of their commitment to Christ?

QUESTION #3

WORSHIP CONTINUALLY

Choose one of these common daily activities and answer the question with that activity in mind.

___ Working

___ Family Time

___ Driving

___ Eating

___ Leisure Activities

___ Other: _____

Since worship involves seeking the Lord sacrificially, list several ways you might worship Him in the activity you chose:

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

—ROMANS 12:1

2 Chronicles 15:16-19

¹⁶ Even Maacah, his mother, King Asa removed from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah. Asa cut down her image, crushed it, and burned it at the brook Kidron. ¹⁷ But the high places were not taken out of Israel. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was wholly true all his days. ¹⁸ And he brought into the house of God the sacred gifts of his father and his own sacred gifts, silver, and gold, and vessels. ¹⁹ And there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa.

Asa would not let anything keep him from acting on his renewed covenant to seek the Lord wholeheartedly. He continued to wipe out all forms of idolatry. His loyalty to God ran deeper than even his loyalty to family. He even removed his own grandmother, Maacah, from her position as queen mother because she had also fallen away from following the Lord. Maacah was in a position of great influence, and her pagan practices were encouraging others to do the same.

Scripture does not tell us what became of Maacah. We would hope that after Asa “demoted” his grandmother, she took the same oath the people did to renew their covenant with God. No mention is made of her death, which most likely would have been the course for her if she had not sworn to renew the covenant with God. Some may think this was a drastic way to treat his grandmother, but when dealing with idol worship, we can accept no compromise.

Since King Asa was being so thorough, why did he not remove the high places, the places where pagan worship occurred? He had “took out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the incense altars” earlier in his reign (2 Chron. 14:5), but their presence years later highlights the persistent pull of our fallen nature toward false worship. It’s possible that, in removing all the idolatry, Asa had repurposed these sites for better purposes. Other scholars note that

What obstacles distract you from worship?

QUESTION #4

verse 17 refers specifically to the high places in Israel. Asa was king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, not the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Although he had acquired some of Israel's land, he never took his reform further north into these lands.

In spite of this omission, "Asa was wholly true all his days" (v. 17). His commitment to seek after God in all things became his personal quest for the remainder of his life. Asa went to great lengths to restore the things that were taken from the temple during the time of Jeroboam; he committed the consecrated items from his own treasury and from his father's treasury.

When we look at the life of King Asa, we can't help but notice that his desire to remain focused on God was his top priority. We too cannot allow any distractions to pull us away from a lifestyle of worship. So how can we make Jesus Christ the top priority of our lives?

- ▶ **Identify the distractions.** We are sinners, constantly tempted to allow worldly things to distract us from where our focus needs to be. Honestly evaluate your life and identify those distractions that continually pop up as you go from day to day. Knowing where the distractions come from will help you avoid putting yourself in a position to be tempted by them.
- ▶ **Understand to whom you belong.** If you are a Christ-follower, you are a child of the living God. He has promised to meet your every need. Nothing that attempts to offer us satisfaction compares with the contentment we receive from God's provision.
- ▶ **Pursue godly living at all costs.** Seek to live a life that is pleasing to God in everything you do. It may be tough at times, but your ability to live out your life as an act of worship can be a reality when your focus is on Him and Him alone.



How can we improve the rhythm of worship in the life of our group?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

How will you live your life as an act of worship this week? Consider the following applications:

- ▶ **Memorize.** Commit to memory Psalm 105:4: “Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!” Let the challenge of that verse become second nature to you.
- ▶ **Take inventory.** During the coming week, take note of the things that distract you on a daily basis. Beside each item on your list, note practical steps you can take to avoid these distractions.
- ▶ **Share.** Talk with a trusted friend about the things that tend to pull you away from wholehearted worship. Ask this friend to hold you accountable to stay away from away distractions and to covenant with you to pray.

Most of us live very busy lives. Too busy. But if we’ll learn to live our lives as an act of worship, we’ll find the right things at the top of our list—and some of the other things falling off the list altogether.

My thoughts

