

# Acceptable Worship

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**John 4:23–24 (NKJV) “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”**

God has commanded us to worship Him in an acceptable way. Hebrews 12:28–29 (NKJV) says, “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.” Acceptable worship is the worship of the true God in the right way with the right attitude.

First, acceptable worship involves the worship of the true God. Rather than restate the principles in my previous articles on “Unacceptable Worship,” let me just say that if we do not worship God according to how He has revealed Himself in Scripture, we are worshiping a false god no matter what we claim. God will not accept worship that does not reflect His true image and likeness.

Second, acceptable worship involves worshiping God in the right way. This means worshiping God on His terms rather than ours. We are to worship God in Biblical ways. I believe our generation has become guilty of worshiping worship rather than God. Many “worship” services are more like concerts. Concert “worship” can gain the approval of men but it grieves the heart of God. If we seek the honor of man, we forfeit the honor of God. We are not called to be innovative. We are called to be faithful. Our worship will not be evaluated by our good intentions but by our obedience.

Third, acceptable worship involves the right attitude of the heart. We can worship the true God of the Bible, go through the motions of worshiping Him in Biblical ways, and still be wrong in our heart. King David was a true worshiper. He not only worshiped the true God in Biblical ways, He was a man after God’s own heart. This is clearly seen in his life and the many songs he wrote in the book of Psalms. In Psalm 24:3–6 (NKJV) “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. 6 This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face. Selah.” David understood that an upright heart was a prerequisite for approaching God in worship. Unfortunately, many wrongly equate worship with singing. We think that if we choose the right song accompanied by the right musicians and singers, then our worship will be “right.” Wrong. Our worship “presentation” may be acceptable to men, yet unacceptable to God. Before the song ever comes out of the worshiper’s mouth, God has already evaluated it by the heart from which it is offered.

What is God looking for in the heart of a true worshiper? One thing is our love for one another and whether we forgive. God says that our love for Him is not real when we hate and do not forgive one another (1 John 4:20-21). God wants us to get things right with one another before we come before Him in worship (Matthew 5:23-24).

Our love for our brother is also revealed in the treatment of our weaker brother in matters of conscience rather than of right and wrong. Paul says, “For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.” (Romans 14:18 NKJV) We are to consider how our liberties of conscience affect others. Worship is not about “me” but about “we.”

Acceptable worship involves the words we speak and the hidden thoughts in our heart. Psalm 19:14 (NKJV) “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your

sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.” Our worship is unacceptable if our words and our thoughts are defiled.

On a practical level, true worshipers are known by their life rather than their song. Here are a few Scriptural examples.

1. Winning the lost: Paul understood that every soul he won to Christ was an offering brought to Him in worship: “that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:16 NKJV)
2. Giving of our resources: Paul said, “Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.” (Philippians 4:18 NKJV) When we give with a good attitude, it is an acceptable sacrifice of worship to God.
3. Prayer: Prayer is like incense offered before the Lord. Revelation 5:8 (NKJV) “Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” Prayer for our leaders is acceptable to God also (1 Timothy 2:1-4 NKJV).
4. Honoring father and mother: 1 Timothy 5:4 (NKJV) says, “But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.” Worship begins in the home before it ever reaches the church!
5. Walking in the light: This means living a life consistent with the truth God has revealed in His Word. Ephesians 5:8–10 (NKJV) “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.”
6. Offering our bodies to God as a holy sacrifice: This involves keeping our bodies untainted by immorality and sin. Paul said in Romans 12:1 (NLT) “And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.”
7. Obedience to God’s will: Romans 12:2 (NKJV) “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Good intentions are not a substitute for obedience.
8. Doing what is right and just: Proverbs 21:3 (NKJV) “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.” When we do what is right and just, it is acceptable in the sight of God.

The Father is seeking true worshipers. True worshipers are those whose worship is acceptable to Him. Even now God is evaluating worship offered to Him. May He find in us the worshipers He seeks!

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