

# DIVINE PREOCCUPATION

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Worship has always been a defining characteristic of people—whether they worshiped God or not, and which God they worshipped.

In our day, these two ideological battlegrounds remain.

In the first camp, some people suggest that there is no God to be worshipped, because they can conceive of no person greater or wiser than themselves, while others assert that God cannot be known with any certainty, therefore, worship is inappropriate or meaningless.

In the second camp, a common attempt is being made to suggest that *who* we worship, or by *what name*, is irrelevant. “Why can’t we all just coexist peacefully?” they ask, apparently oblivious to the fact that the stories that reveal these gods conflict, especially with respect to their identities, notable characteristics, activities, and objectives. In many cases it is their gods themselves who appear to orchestrate the conflict.

Biblical Christianity asserts that there is one God, who has created all that is, and He has done so with a thoughtful purpose. One aspect of that purpose is that He is to be uniquely worshipped by His creation. **For instance:**

*Genesis 4:26* **When Seth grew up, he had a son and named him Enosh. At that time *people first began to worship the Lord by name.***

*Psalms 102:18* **Let this be recorded for future generations, so that *a people not yet born will praise the LORD.***

*Isaiah 43:20* **...my people, my chosen, <sup>21</sup> the people I formed for myself *that they may proclaim my praise.***

*1 Peter 2:9* **But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.**

We have been created for this purpose—not because God is insecure and needs our flattery, **but because worship is the means of divine-human connection.**

*Isaiah 55:8* “My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.”<sup>9</sup> For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

We cannot reason on God’s level, therefore, logical argument and thoughtfulness (what some call meditation) alone cannot lead us to Him or maintain our connection with Him.

God’s perspective and purpose are also out of our reach, which is why religious rule-keeping alone cannot bring us to Him or maintain our connection with Him.

Worship is the one activity that brings us close to God. Worship is the means of connecting with God’s superior ways and thoughts.

When we speak about worship, we often focus on appropriate attitudes and expressions (physical, verbal, social). God Himself has spent a good deal of effort to acquaint us with and prescribe for His people certain forms of worship. But these are notably missing in the New Testament.

As the New Testament focuses on uniting people under Jesus Christ, the forms of worship become subservient to the objectives of worship—glorifying God through unity and demonstration of His character.

Therefore, whether we sing chorally or congregationally, with or without instruments, with or without dance (and so on), will be appropriate *if* it generates further unity and Christian character.

Thus, people of widely varying traditions can share their faith together, stretching one another and feasting together on the diversity of expressions of love and thanks and praise for God.

Today, I choose to “dive deeper” into the subject of worship. I will not be discussing the expressions of worship, so much as the motivation for worship.

Worship may be defined as “being preoccupied with God.” However I may be expressing my connection with Him—whether through my work or creativity or service or sacrifice—I will be, at the same time, **particularly aware of and engaged with His presence and His purpose**. This is what it means to be “preoccupied” with Him. (*Write this down!*)

Some people have been accused of being “so heavenly-minded that they are of no earthly good.” True worship will not produce this disparity, for God’s Heaven is all about “earthly good.” This description usually refers to people who use religion and its expressions for their own objectives—that is, to serve themselves, and most commonly as a means of escape instead of engagement.

If we separate work and religion as detached spheres of our lives, then we will cease to connect with God when we work, as if He has nothing to say or to do with how we spend our lives. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Occasional vacations from our work are also vital, to disconnect us from our direct responsibilities for the sake of replenishing our vision and fervor for what we can do. But there is no such thing as a proper disconnection from God (our faith and our worship).

Think about your vacations in this vein. Occasional retreat from service is necessary and potentially beneficial, but only so long as it strengthens (and does not diminish) our personal and social connection with God. Vacation is not a time to simply “cast off restraints,” but to replenish your connection with God and other people. Jesus only ever retreated to replenish His reserve.

Preoccupation with God may occur at work or at play. In fact, preoccupation with God can even happen during a night of sleep!

*Psalm 63:6 I lie awake thinking of You, meditating on You through the night. <sup>7</sup> Because You are my helper, I sing for joy in the shadow of Your wings.*

Now we should ask “How do we learn to become preoccupied with God?”

I suggest three things are needed:

- Cultivate intentionality.  
Without intentionality, opportunity will pass you by, and temptation will overtake you. No one becomes a Christian by accident. Be a Christian on purpose.
- Focus your mind on the person of Jesus Christ.  
Apart from Jesus, God’s glorious attributes become abstracted and depersonalized and ends in themselves instead of means to your destiny.
- Develop personal worship habits and practice them repeatedly.  
Your practices may be different than others’ but everyone needs to make faith habitual. Find what *connects* you to God’s presence and do it repeatedly.

Become preoccupied with God every day!