

Is Worship an experience or a sacrifice?

These days wherever I turn I hear people say that the worship experience in that particular church was awesome or it was a great experience etc.. Somehow the word worship has become so synonymous to the word experience, that we address it so unconsciously as the worship experience.

Let us go down to the root of the matter. It is always good to compare our contemporary religious practices and fashions with the Word of God. Mass opinion about worship may not necessarily be biblical opinion.

Why do I object the word experience?

I have nothing against the word experience. In fact without a personal experience with God, I could never believe Him as real. Experience forms the core of anybody's relationship with Jesus Christ. But the question is whether worship is all about my own experience or is there something more to it.

Do I worship so that I come out with that good feeling/ experience or is my worship God directed?

This is where I would like to draw the line of difference. When I speak about worship experience, it has to do with me, what I experience, how I feel etc, etc.. This kind of worship experience is me-directed. It culminates in how I felt or what it did to my emotions. It is not wrong altogether, but it is not the end of worship either. Worship should begin with God and end with God. Worship is all about the Most Holy God and how God receives my worship. I hope you are familiar with the story behind the song, "The heart of worship." In the Soul Survivor church in England, when music almost replaced worship, the Pastor suspended music during worship time. It was incredulous, worship with no music. But it worked, people started worshipping from the heart and there was such a soul cleansing and the result was this song written by Matt Redman the worship leader of the Church. Truly the most meaningful worship song.

When the music fades, all is stripped away/ and I simply come, longing just to bring/ Something that's of worth/I'll give you more than a song, for a song in itself is not what you have required/ You search much deeper within for the way things appear/ You are looking into my heart. I'm coming back to the heart of worship and its all about you/All about you Jesus, Am sorry Lord for the thing I've made it when its all bout you, all about you Jesus.

This is worship. It's all about God, it's all about Jesus.... It's about whether God has accepted my worship, my sacrifice of lips and is His heart happy...

Sadly today worship has come to mean good music, slow songs fully laden with pathos making one cry or laugh. But the real question is whether God has accepted my worship? Worship is foremost an offering, a sacrifice. It is all about God and that I worship Him with something that is of value in my life. True worship ends with the approval of God. God rejected the offering of Cain, for the attitude of his heart was not as right as Abel's.

Early worship always began with an altar.

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹And when the LORD smelled the pleasing odor, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done. Genesis 5,20-21.

This is a beautiful verse where God smelt the pleasant odour and promised Noah that He will not destroy the earth again by water. Worship is exactly this that our God smells the incense of our worship and is happy.

My friend, my question to you is this, "What does God think about your worship?" He expects that every person worships Him in Spirit and Truth. This morning I was again thinking about this verse where Jesus, says that the time has come where everyone will worship God in Spirit and Truth. The context where Jesus said these most crucial word about worship is very interesting. It was told to a woman, who was married five times and yet the one she lives with is not her husband. And Jesus reveals to herself the kind of life she lives, but He goes on to speak about worship. God demands we worship with a true heart, abandoning the sinful, lives of our past. The Samaritan woman became an evangelist and her life was totally transformed.

What about the truth of our hearts? Do we dare to lift up our hands and sing praises to the Lord and yet persist in the double life of continuing sin? Time and again I am surprised at people who lead worship on the stage and yet keep living on such decayed lifestyles of porn watching. Will such worship ever go over the roof? I know this is a very sensitive issue, but from the word of God we should know clearly that God abhors sinful living. Yes we are washed by the precious Blood of the Lamb, but that does not give us the licence to go on living in daring sinfulness.

Jesus made it very clear that we cannot enter heaven if we continue to live in sin. He even goes to the extent of asking us to cut off the body part which makes us sin. My brother, my sister if computer or the beauty parlour is your source of sin, cut it off mercilessly. It is better to reach heaven without a computer than to sit in hell with one.

If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. ⁹And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell⁹ of fire.
Mathew 18 : 8-9.

The very words of Jesus has to sober us. Jesus speaks about a real and literal hell, the eternal fire. Worship is not fun and feel-good-exercise. It has to do with the Most Holy God and we cannot mock God. God is not to be mocked. These days I hear personally about worship leaders also addicted to pornography. But my friends if you

worship God and lead others in worship when you yourself live in despicable conditions, this worship may work for other people. But my question to you is this, “What will God think about your worship?” The very same Eyes which look at your worship has also seen your continuing addictions. Be warned of your lifestyle. God is not respecter of persons neither can God be mocked or taken too lightly. The Lord is zealous for His Holiness. Read Ezekiel.

Please read the following passage carefully. Yes this is from the Word of God, written by Amos the prophet.

I hate, I despise your festivals,

and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

²² Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them;

and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals

I will not look upon.

²³ **Take away from me the noise of your songs;**

I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

²⁴ **But let justice roll down like waters,**

and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (5 : 21-24)

Though I end with a not so good verse, I pray that we all get to our knees and check the motives of our heart when we come into the sanctuary of God's presence to worship. May God help us to live straight lives.

Dear Lord, thank you for the privilege of having been adopted into Your family. Lord as we worship you, help us to really worship in spirit and truth. Let our worship be matter of our hearts. Lord look at our lives and receive our worship with gladness. Lord I pray that Your heart is made glad by our lives and our worship. In Jesus name . Amen. Amen.