



I Am He

Text: John 18:1-11

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1. Think back 5 years.
 - a. How would you describe your spiritual life 5 years ago?
 - b. Compare that to your spiritual life today. What part of your walk with Jesus has grown the most?
 - c. What do you think caused that growth?
 - d. Are there any parts of your spiritual walk that have grown stale or declined? Why do you think that is?

2. Think forward 5 years.
 - a. Describe how you want your relationship with Jesus to look in 5 years.
 - b. What area of your spiritual walk do you hope to grow the most?
 - c. What steps do you think you need to take to make that growth happen?

3. Read John 18:1-11. Timothy Ateek argued that the disciples view of Jesus was too small.
 - a. How would you describe your view of Jesus?
 - b. What role does Jesus play in your everyday life?
 - c. If your view of Jesus is too small, or if the role of Jesus in your life is too small, what do you think needs to change?

4. Timothy Ateek argues that worship is the right response to Jesus.
 - a. What is your daily response to Jesus?
 - b. It's important to know that worship can take many forms. What do you consider to be worship? How do you worship Jesus?
 - c. When you do worship Jesus, how would you describe the experience?

5. Does worship connect you with Jesus or does it feel like a chore?

6. As a group, discuss your most impactful worship experience and why it was so powerful.

Challenge: Complete this group exercise. Take 3 minutes to have everyone write down a prayer of adoration. Don't move to other elements of prayer such as confession or petition, stay with adoration. Then, take turns reading your prayers out loud to the group. Pay attention to the various ways that other people adore God and allow this to become a powerful moment of worship.

Prayer: Father, thank you for Jesus, thank you that the limitlessness of Jesus in the scriptures are true. Jesus is redeemer, savior, counselor, perfect example, joy, chief shepherd and everything we could ever need. And yet, we choose differently, Father, forgive us that we have settled for a Jesus that we think is too weak to carry the burdens we take on ourselves. Father, change our small view of Jesus into reverent glory, that causes us to fall on our knees in humility and to recognize our need for the one true Jesus of Nazareth.

STUDY DEEPER

What is true worship?

As a child growing up at the Midway Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A. in Folsom, LA, under the then leadership of my father and pastor, Bishop Vernon E. Kennebrew, I was introduced to the term worship. My father regularly read Psalm 96:9 in our evening services: "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth" (KJV). The Book of Psalms is filled with hundreds of poetic anthems used in the religious celebrations of the children of Israel that clearly instructed them (and us) how to worship God. Yet, even though I heard the word worship in conversation, testimonies, songs, and Scripture, I didn't completely understand what it meant.

The Priority of Worship

Worship is not the slow song that the choir sings. Worship is not the amount you place in the offering basket. Worship is not volunteering in children's church. Yes, these may be acts or expressions of worship, but they do not define what true worship really is. There are numerous definitions of the word worship. Yet, one in particular encapsulates the priority we should give to worship as a spiritual discipline: Worship is to honor with extravagant love and extreme submission (Webster's Dictionary, 1828).

True worship, in other words, is defined by the priority we place on who God is in our lives and where God is on our list of priorities. True worship is a matter of the heart expressed through a lifestyle of holiness. Thus, if your lifestyle does not express the beauty of holiness through an extravagant or exaggerated love for God, and you do not live in extreme or excessive submission to God, then I invite you to make worship a non-negotiable priority in your life.

We worship God because he is God. Period. Our extravagant love and extreme submission to the Holy One flows out of the reality that God loved us first. It is highly appropriate to thank God for all the things he has done for us. However, true worship is shallow if it is solely an acknowledgement of God's wealth. Psalm 96:5-6 says, "For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary." In other words, our worship must be toward the one who is worthy simply because of his identity as the Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent One, and not just because God is

wealthy and able to meet our needs and answer our prayers. We must focus our practice of worship on the worthiness of God and not his wealthiness.

The Person We Worship

Think about this: Would you continue to worship God if, from this day forward, God's miraculous signs and wonders were not so profoundly evident in your life? Would God still be worthy of your worship? Or is your worship completely dependent upon the abundance of God's blessings upon your life? Do you only worship God for what he can do for you?

The Promise of Worship

Because of our God's unimaginable generosity toward us, God, in all of his glory, chooses to respond to us through our worship. This is the promise—that when we worship God with extravagant love and extreme submission, God will come and commune with us. The promise is not that we will feel great or that our heavy load will be lifted, but that God will come. And when God comes in his own time as a response to our worship, Psalm 96:13 declares, "Let all creation rejoice before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness."

In other words, when we worship our God, he will inspect our hearts first; the other benefits that we tend to expect because we lift up our feeble hands and shout with our weak voices are worthless if our hearts are not right with God. My sisters and brothers, when we offer God our true worship, we are inviting him to inspect our hearts for anything that is not like him. This is the promise of worship—we can be transformed into God's likeness because he will reveal the truth about the condition of our hearts as we worship him.

Worship is having an extravagant or exaggerated love for God, and if your life is not lived in extreme or excessive submission to him, then I invite you to make worship a non-negotiable priority in your life. Evaluate your expressions of worship so that through singing, declaring, and giving, you will "give to the LORD the glory he deserves ..." (Ps. 96:8). The promise is that when we worship God in this way, he will come and commune with us. And above all, God will respond to your worship by making your heart more like his.

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