

LifeWay Family Bible Series for Feb. 1: Genuine worship is crucial for spiritual growth_12604

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Genuine worship is crucial for spiritual growth

Psalm 95:1-7; Hebrews 10:19-25

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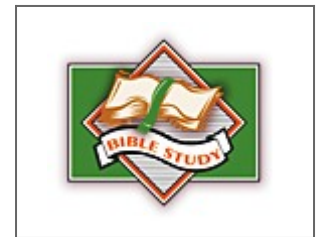
The lesson themes during February will deal with the matter of discipline in five vital areas of a Christian's life—worship, prayer, Bible study, giving and service. While these are “givens” in the spiritual growth pattern of a believer's walk with God, they require a consistent and determined personal discipline to be effective.

“Discipline” is one of the richest words in our vocabulary. One of several meanings the dictionary gives is training that develops self-control, character, orderliness and efficiency. Too often, however, we give the word a negative connotation, seeing it only as punishment for wrongdoing. As a

result of these five studies, we will come to see discipline as a vital tool for helping us grow both in the knowledge and the application of our faith.

A call to worship

The opening verses of Psalm 95 are a clear call to believers to come together to celebrate the power and presence of God. The object of this worship obviously is the Lord. The phrase, “the rock of our salvation,” describes the Lord as the divine warrior who defends and delivers his people. The reference to God as a “rock” occurs several times in the Old Testament (Psalms 18:31,46; 19:14; 28:1; Deuteronomy 32:4; 1 Samuel 2:2; 2 Samuel 22:30; Isaiah 32:2). In each of these instances, the protective and defensive care of God is emphasized.



Because we love, admire and reverence God, we should be eager to express our feelings to him in singing. Singing always has been an integral part of Christian worship. According to the psalmist, this singing is to be “unto the Lord” and not performed for the ears of those in the congregation.

True unaffected praise to God communicates genuine expressions of worship. However “unmusical” or unsophisticated it may appear to others, it is “joyful noise” and thus beautiful to our Lord. Furthermore, when we lift our hearts and voices in joyful worship, we always must do so with thanksgiving. Expressing genuine gratitude to God for his countless blessings showered upon us creates the ideal atmosphere for worship.

A recognition of God's greatness

In these verses, the psalmist explains why God is worthy of our praise and worship. The nations surrounding Israel had their own gods whose sovereignty was limited to their respective areas of rule. But the true God, “the great king above all gods,” rules over the whole world. There are no areas where his divine sovereignty is not supreme. Actually, the creative acts of God establish his undisputed kingship. Because God made all things, everything is under his dominion.

On the basis of this description of God's absolute greatness, the psalmist insists we kneel in worship before him. The bowing down and kneeling suggests our worship must always be with humility and submission. Bowing or kneeling indicates our sense of worthlessness within ourselves in the presence of God. We are to worship him with joy, but not with presumption. We are to approach him as children approach a loving father, yet with the reverence of those who realize they are the creatures and he is the Creator.

The primary reason for our worship is that “he is our God.” Through his Son, he has entered into covenant with us, making us his people. As “the people of his pasture,” we can be assured he will feed and protect us daily. Because the pastures are his and not ours, we receive our blessings from his storehouse. As his sheep, he not only owns us, but has the right to guide us in paths of his choosing. What more compelling reason to “worship and bow down” than to know that this great God is our shepherd and we are the sheep of his pasture and all that implies!

The believer's access to God

Because of the atoning work of Christ on the cross, Christians possess permission to approach God's presence without fear and to exercise a freedom of speech in communicating with him through prayer. Because Christ cleanses our consciences, we need harbor no guilt concerning past sin. Instead, we are filled with a joyful freedom and confidence to come into

the presence of God as a child runs without fear to his earthly father. We always must remember the basis of this “boldness” or freedom to approach God is the blood of Christ.

Because we are yet imprisoned in this human flesh, we are sometimes victims of disobedience toward God. The Holy Spirit indwelling us convicts us of our sins and prompts us to repent and regain fellowship with our Lord. But the Father always sees us through the blood of his sinless Son, who became our sacrifice for sin. On this basis, we are to “draw near” to God in worship and supplication. We are not to waver in our profession of faith, always realizing that God is faithful to keep his promises. Furthermore, we are to exhort one another lest we neglect the worship assemblies where we join together to exalt our Lord.

Question for discussion

- ◆ How does a dutiful, “going-through-the-motions” worship contrast with the kind of worship the psalmist described?

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.