

“Getting Worship Right” **Ecclesiastes 5:1-7**

First Date with Marsha: Let me take you back to January 2004. I was at Southeastern... taking Systematic Theology II in a J-Term, working, and just generally doing my thing.... My friend Rusty... Friday night (Later I found out that she thought “I looked like Mr. Rogers.” I didn’t want her to want me for my good looks. I wanted her to want me for me...), Sunday night... I went to work. I evaluated everything. I had to be prepared. I had to pick out the right clothes, right shoes. I need to bring the right game. You know what I’m saying? I ironed my khakis, put on my favorite blue button-up, extra layer of deodorant (never let em’ see you sweat), had the smell goods - multiple squirts of Curve. I was ready. Then, I wasn’t going to be late, which was big for me... so I had everything on lock down, and I was waiting downstairs at Bostwick Hall, putting my gameplan together (questions to ask, charm to work), getting prayed up and ready to roll. I had prepared well for the date, and let’s just say the results (by God’s grace) speak for themselves. We prepare for what we really care about. Whether it’s a staff meeting, class at school, your son or daughter’s birthday party, we prepare for what we care about.

What if we did that for worship each week? What if we prepared to meet with God like it’s was the first date with the girl of our dreams?

The Point: God desires for us to respond to his infinite worth in a way that honors him.

I. Worship God with reverence *and* confidence (5:1a)

(Read 1a) We have an exhortation in verse 1 regarding the worship of the people of God. Worship is so important for us as believers: It gives us an opportunity to express our devotion to God and meet with him together. As we encounter God and his Word, he brings spiritual renewal and transformation to our lives.

“The house of God” here probably refers to the temple. God had promised to be present in the temple where his people would go to meet with him to worship.

Worship comes from a Latin word that means “to ascribe worth to.” A short definition I’ve always liked says, “Worship is our response to what we value the most.” So we could say, Christian worship is our response of devotion and praise to God because of his infinite worth. We worship because God is great and greatly to be praised to quote Psalm 145. We worship because God is infinitely great, infinitely holy, infinitely glorious, and infinitely worthy. His worth drives our worship. Period. I love the picture we have of cosmic worship we have in book of Revelation.

If you want, put your thumb in Ecclesiastes 5 and flip to Revelation 5, the last book of the Bible. Listen to what John sees at the throne of God starting in verse 9: And they (the four living creatures & twenty four elders) sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped. (Rev 5:9-14)

His worth drives our worship. We should worship him, but we must worship him rightly. Verse 1 says “Guard your steps...” Approach God with reverence. How do you approach God? Like he’s our buddy? Listen, yes God is our friend in that we share intimacy with him and can have a beautiful relationship with him through Jesus, but God is also King. He is God. He is not like us!

- Dangers: Worship can become routine. We can become flippant or cavalier in our approach to God. We treat worship as if it's a casual affair. Listen, we will never be a church advertising casual church, and that has nothing to do with our dress. Come as you are in terms of how you dress. Dress up. Dress down. Just be dressed, but understand that God is interested in the fabric of our hearts more than the fabric of our clothes. And our hearts must see God for who he is and come with reverence and awe before him.
- Worship is an immense privilege that we should look forward to and not take lightly.
- Here are a few encouragements for how we prepare for worship each week.

Preparation for worship –

1. *Consistently grow in the knowledge of God.* Perhaps we don't approach God rightly because we do not know him well. God is holy. God is just. God is transcendent. God is imminent. God is unchanging. God is eternal. God is loving, merciful, gracious, kind, compassionate, forgiving, sovereign, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, just to name a few. God is God, and this is the God we worship. As you get to know him through your week, you will be more prepared to worship him when we meet.
2. *Prepare for worship physically.* Josh Harris, in his book *Stop Dating the Church*, says: "On far too many Sundays, I have woken up late, walked into church groggy, worshiped distractedly, listened occasionally, left early, and remembered very little." Give attention to Saturday night & Sunday morning. Get enough sleep the night before. If you want a night on the weekend to stay out late when you're hanging with your friends or on a date with your spouse, try to make it Friday night, not Saturday. Wake up in enough time to get your senses going & to get the nappy bed head fixed up for the rest of us.
3. *Confess and repent of sin.* This should be happening all the time. Jesus talks about this in the Sermon on the Mount in relation to one's worship of God. If our fellowship is disrupted with God before we arrive, it's not magically going to disappear when we walk through the doors of Springstep. Keep short accounts with God. Recognize that worship is a lifestyle. We show how we respect God by the way we're consistently living our life the other 167 hours of our week. That means your preparation for next Sunday, March 10 begins the moment you leave today. Got it?
4. *Come expectantly.* We pray when we are here. Do you ever pray before you arrive? The night before and/or the morning of? Pray for our worship time. Ask God to work in you. Ask God to reveal himself to us. Beg that God would open our eyes, enflame our hearts in worship to him, stir our affections, make our worship sincere & undistracted. We sing when we are here. Do you ever tune your heart (great way to pray) by singing before you come? We read the Word when we're here. Do we ever prepare for worship by getting in the Word, meditating on the Word? I hope you came this morning with a confident expectation that God is going to work in your heart today, that God was going to show up and change you and the rest of us today.
5. *Be ready to focus on the truth.* When we sing songs of worship, focus on the words of the song. Here's our philosophy of Worship in 3 words: substance over style. We pick songs that are loaded with God-centered, gospel-centered content. We look for songs with theological depth. That's why we still sing hymns around here. We try to mix up it: old songs, new songs, hymns and spiritual songs, fast songs, slow songs, and in all of that we want songs that communicate the truths of Scripture. Substance over style. Now, I'm not saying our style of music is unimportant.
6. *Be ready to engage in worship.* Worship is not a spectator sport. We don't come to watch worship happen. The band is not performing for us. They are leading us all to respond to God with all of who are. Our mind, our affections, our emotions, our will, our bodies should be engaged active. We are not the audience. God is the audience and we are going after him, telling him, showing him our response to his greatness and glory. Take a minute to think about all of the different expressions of praise in the Bible. I'm not trying to freak anyone out this morning, but God actually commands us to... clap, shout, raise our hands, and dance. Some of you are thinking: "Well, I'm clapping and shouting in my heart." You didn't see me? I was dancing (sway from side to side). OK. Go read 2 Samuel 6. King David and the Israelites are bringing back the ark of the Lord into Jerusalem. Huge moment as the ark represented the very presence of God among his people! David gets so jacked up in response to the glory and worth of God, that 6:14 says: "And David danced before the Lord with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod." Basically, we was doing in his thing in his underwear. Modest underwear, the linen ephod would have

been like a robe, but this was still an uncommon action for anyone in public, much less the king, so much so that his wife Michal chastises him for dishonoring himself before the people, but what does David say, "It was before the Lord that I have rejoiced and dance, and I will become even more undignified and contemptible than this in praise of my God." So, on the one hand, our worship should be unrestrained and expressive. On the other hand, we find commands to kneel, stand in awe, to be humble, contrite, quiet, still.

That's preparation, but let me add to that the we should also

7. *Follow up well*: So, this isn't necessarily preparing, but it flows from approaching God with reverence. This reveals our sincerity after we gather. Pray through what God has showed you. Review sermon passage and notes. Discuss it with someone over lunch after church or the next couple of days. Apply the word in CGs.

Trans: These are all ways we can prepare to worship well. So he says, "Guard your steps." Approach God, Come into God's presence prepared, with reverence, but still COME! We have an approachable God, a God who delights to know and engage with his people.

Gospel: We should come to God with reverence, but we should also come with confidence. How? Because the veil has been torn in two. We can approach God with confidence through Christ. Hebrews 10:19-25 says: **"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near"** (Hebrews 10:19-25).

App: If God is this great, and Jesus has made a way to approach God with confidence, let's prioritize worship as Hebrew 10:25, our medimemo verse said last week, says, "not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some." Listen, I understand that many of you have work responsibilities that prohibit you from worshipping every Sunday. I know that you may be sick or traveling on vacation occasionally, but it should be our desire to worship together every week. If everyone who was semi-consistently involved at Redemption Hill would come every week that they are able, we would have well over 100 people every Sunday. Let's prioritize meeting together, and added to that, let's bring our friends and invite our friends to church. Use our invite or "bringvite" cards. Dish those out consistently. Tell a friend you'll pick them up. We want to see more and more people worshipping with us on Sunday,

But, it's really not about worship attendance. Hear me! It's not about getting people to church, that's not the ultimate goal. It's about getting people to Jesus! We can get it so twisted and slip into the danger of trusting in this, trusting in a gathering, trusting in the form of worship, singing a few songs, hearing a Word. Listen, we can trust in this. We can think this is the deal, that this is really what pleases God, simply coming to the worship spot. Just because someone goes to church, does not make them a Christian.

The Israelites were guilty of this. Just read the book of Jeremiah. Check **Jeremiah 7:1-4**: **"The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD." They presumed upon God's presence and assumed their religious acts guaranteed the pleasure of God. They were wrong.**

Trans: Let's worship God with reverence and confidence when we come together. #2. Let's...

II. Worship God with humility *and* sincerity (5:1b-3)

- These first three verses address how we hear from God, how we pray, and our knowledge of God and our heart when we worship.
- **Verse 1b-3:** Here are a few encouragements from these verses...

a) Listen with humility.

- Listen when we sing. Listen when we pray. Listen when you hear the Word proclaimed. This is worship. Most people think worship is happening when we are singing, and then when the sermon begins, worship ends and we get a little more worship in after the sermon. no, no, no: Hearing the Word is worship!
- Receive the Word with humility as James 1:21 talks about.
- Theology of Preaching... people want to be entertained, we often want our ears to be tickled... oh, that feels good. Oh, I like that. Oh, I'll take some more of that stuff: pray this prayer and you'll get a check in the mail... Have enough faith and you won't suffer and will be driving a Jaguar in 6 mos.
- Expository approach to preaching... God has spoken...
- Expository listening... Bring your word, do work, live it. Ezra 7:10... If you need a Bible, please grab one from us. They are free on our resource table.

b) Sacrifice with sincerity.

- Explain sacrifices... Leviticus explains different offerings and sacrifices the people would bring to God to seek his devotion and forgiveness from their sin. Unfortunately, the people of Israel, like us,
- God is interested in our hearts!
 - What is God after? Our sacrifices? No, our heart!
 - Jesus quotes Isaiah in **Matthew 15:8-9** and says: **"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."**
 - Read the prophets. This is why I love the minor prophets (12 of them at the end of the OT). They took seriously a true, unadulterated pursuit of God...
 - **Hosea 6:6:** "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6).
 - **Joel 2:12-13:** "'Yet even now,' declares the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster."

c) Pray with intentionality.

The warning is against rambling, babbling, loquacious prayers. God is not impressed by the amount of our words. God is not impressed by the style and the flow of our prayers. God is impressed with our heart. He is down with raw, honest, heart exposing prayers. "God you are awesome. God I am not awesome. I blew it today. My pride led me to tear that person down. My lust led me to objectify that person made in your image. I see it. I don't like it. Help me to hate it. Change me. Lead me to a life of worship." How's that? If it's from the heart, that can be more beautiful to God than the most decorative prayers of the most godly saints.

But when we use words, let's use them well. Let's pray worshipful, frontline prayers. Prayers that are humble, sincere, earnest, and passionate. Thomas Watson, one of my favorite Puritans said: "It is not the stretching of the lungs, but the vehemency of the desire, that makes music in God's ears." (*Heaven Taken By Storm*, 20).

III. Worship with gravity and gladness (5:4-7)

- **Read 4-7**
- Let me summarize these verses with the quickness: Don't play games with God. Fear him. Come to him *and* live before him with a constant state of reverential awe. The Israelites had trouble with this.
- They would make vows, promise to perform a specific action if God would respond favorably to their particular request, but then never follow through on their commitment.
- Take your commitment to God with great seriousness and gravity. Our commitment to Christ must not be light or trivial. That's not what we hear in the Gospels. Our devotion to God and commitment to Christ must be wholehearted: Verse?
- While we should worship with gravity, we should also worship with gladness!
 - "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." (Psalm 2:11)
 - "be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!" (Psalm 32:11)

Conclusion:

- When we come to worship we should do so with reverence and confidence, with humility and sincerity, with gravity and gladness.
- We are actually still supposed to bring sacrifices to God each week. Did you know that??
 - "Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name" (Hebrews 13:15).
 - It is through Jesus that God transforms us to the point where all of our life is to be a sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2)
 -