

THE TEN PLEASURES

PSALM 147:10,11

# THE PLEASURE OF WORSHIPPING GOD (IN THE RIGHT WAY)



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**FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

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# INTRODUCTION

The most common reason people leave a church is that they don't like the worship style. Some leave because they don't like the preaching; some leave because they don't like the people; some leave because they don't like the youth program; and there are a whole host of other reasons, both good and bad. But the most common reason people leave a church is because they don't like the worship style.

The weekly worship services are an extremely important area of church life and of the Christian life. It's the high point of our week, a time when the songs, readings, prayers, music, etc., raise us up from this earth and take us into the presence of God. It's a time when we want to know God near us and sense his power and love in our hearts. It's an opportunity to experience communion with God and with one another. It's massively important therefore that we get this right. That's why God devoted a whole commandment to worship.

If the first commandment says, "We maximize pleasure by worshipping the right God." The second pleasure (commandment) says, "We maximize pleasure by worshipping the right God *in the right way*." The first pleasure says we must get the 'who' right. The second pleasure says we must get the 'how' right. We therefore need to ask, **How do we worship the right God in the right way? What is the right way to worship God?**

The most common (and wrong) answer to this question is "Whatever makes *me* happy?" If I like it, if I enjoy it, if it gives me good feelings, then that's great worship. Regardless of what God thinks, what we do, or what we use to worship God, if it feels like worship to us, and it makes us feel good, then that is worship. Yet, the Bible makes clear that we can have great feelings in worship while God has bad feelings about our worship (Lev. 10:1-3). We can love it, but God can hate it. We therefore need to be sure that we enjoy what God enjoys, we love what God loves when it comes to worship. If there's anything worse than us not enjoying worship, it's enjoying worship that God hates. We do not want to do that. Our big question, therefore, is: **How do we worship the right God in the right way? What is the right way to worship God?**

## BACKGROUND

The second commandment assumes that God alone has the right to dictate how we worship him. We have no right to do what we please but must ask, "What pleases God?" When we ask that, the Bible answers by highlighting two areas we must get right to please God in worship: the outside and the inside.



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What's the first way to please God in worship?



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# 1. GOD ENJOYS WORSHIP THAT'S RIGHT ON THE OUTSIDE

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth..." (4).

## God has the right to right worship

God is not satisfied with simply being worshipped, but rather dictates how we worship. Here, in the second commandment, God forbids the use of idols or images to worship God. He does not forbid paintings, sculpture, and other kinds of artwork. He forbids the use of such things in worship. Why? Even if there was no answer to the 'Why?' question, God still has the right to dictate the terms of worship. But there are answers to the 'Why?' question:

- Because, although people may start off with the intention of using paintings, sculpture, to worship God better, they almost always end up being worshipped instead of God.
- Because the infinite, unlimited, and spiritual Creator is demeaned and diminished by being associated with a finite, limited, and physical creation.
- Because a focus on what is physical and visible in worship almost always ends up with ceremonial and ritualistic worship that is merely physical and visible.
- Because they tend to divert attention away from the only Mediator between God and people, the Lord Jesus Christ, and toward themselves.
- Because God is rightly jealous of our full and undivided attention (5).
- Because God knows what is good for us and what is really bad for us (5-6).

## God is right about right worship.

Having just come out of idolatrous Egypt, Israel's greatest temptation was to worship God through idols (Ex. 32:4-5). God therefore decisively clarifies his will for his people. In Jesus's day, God's right to right worship was in jeopardy again, not from the threat of idolatry, but from the addition of human traditions (Matt. 15:9). Like the use of man-made images, the addition of man-made laws obscured God, hid God, diminished God, diverted attention from God, displeased God, and was denounced by God. No matter how much effort they put into worshipping God, to God it was 'vain,' it was a complete waste of time .

### CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

**Give God his rights.** He alone has the right to determine what pleases him. If we make pleasing *God* our aim, we will get more pleasure in worship. We can be confident we're neither offering infuriating nor empty worship, but pleasing worship. God provided an 'image' to worship (John 14:9; Col. 1:15).

**Give God right worship.** While we're still vulnerable in the areas of idols and traditions, the primary danger we face is entertainment replacing worship. There's a place for Christian singers and even concerts, but there's a big difference between that and a church worship service. At the core of idols, traditions, and entertainment is putting human pleasure over God's pleasure (Lev. 19:1-3). But, to paraphrase a common saying, "If God ain't happy, ain't nobody gonna be happy!"

GET JOY IN WORSHIP BY  
GIVING GOD JOY IN WORSHIP



"So, if I get the outside right, I'm fine then?"



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## 2. GOD ENJOYS WORSHIP THAT'S RIGHT ON THE INSIDE

**You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments (5-6).**

### Inside worship

There are already hints in the second commandment that God's not only interested in the outside. It identifies those who love God and those who hate him, with God's steadfast love promised to the former and his judgment on the latter.

This emphasis expands throughout the Old Testament (Ps. 51:6, 17; 147:10-11; Isa. 1:11-15; 29:13; 57:15; Ezek. 33:31). Jesus picks up this theme early in his ministry and amplifies it (John 4:23-24; Matt. 15:8). He teaches someone who was worshipping the wrong God in the wrong way that she must get the outside right (truth) and the inside right (spirit). God is earnestly searching for such worshippers and when he finds them he deeply enjoys them and their worship.

Worship that's right on the inside has the right thoughts about God and the right feelings about God. We shouldn't be so much concerned about whether a church uses an organ or a praise band, but whether God hears the beautiful sounds of faith, repentance, love, hope, trust, adoration, and awe. Some churches think that if we can get the right mix of beautiful guitar, drum, piano, voice, etc., then God is pleased. Some churches think that if we have no instruments at all God is pleased. But the Bible tells us what sound he especially loves: **His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love** (Ps. 147:10-11). What pleases God is not usually what pleases people (and *vice versa*).

### Awe-full worship

The best word that combines this fear of God and hope in his steadfast love is 'awe.' It's a trembling joy, a reverent wonder, an overwhelming astonishment, resulting from knowing who God is and how God loves. The more we hope in God's steadfast love, the more we will be awe of God (and *vice versa*). God really enjoys us when we awe-full. He doesn't just notice this, nor accept this, but delights in it

### CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

**Awe is good for believers.** God has designed the worship that pleases him so that when we worship in a way that gives him pleasure, it gives us pleasure too. It gives us first-hand and second-hand pleasure. We get pleasure ourselves from our awe, and we get pleasure from our awe pleasing God. The recent book, *Brainwash*, recommends awe for mental and emotional health.

**Awe is good for unbelievers.** Some think that making the church more entertaining, relaxing, chatty, social, will draw unbelievers. That's not what worked in the New Testament (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Cor. 14:24-25).

OUR AWE-FULL GOD LOVES  
AWE-FULL WORSHIPPERS



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story > Change others' stories



# SUMMARY



## A NEW CHAPTER

- **Gospel:** Jesus who is the only legitimate image of God and the perfect worshipper of God, can *forgive* all breaches of this command and *give for* you his perfect life of worship.
- **Worship:** Ask God for the awe that gives both him and us maximum pleasure.
- **Old:** Don't get hung up on tradition and adding what God does not command to worship.
- **Young:** Be careful that you are not mistaking entertainment for worship.
- **Monday:** Look for opportunities to be in awe of God in creation, providence, and salvation.
- **Heaven:** This is perfectly obeyed in heaven giving perfect pleasure to God and his people
- **Prayer:** Write out a prayer that reflects this sermon, or use this one: "Awe-full God, fill us with awe so that we can please you with both outside worship and inside worship.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The 'regulative principle of worship' that was recovered at the Reformation states that "the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself and so limited by his own revealed will." What are more common principles of worship today?
2. What role should our feelings have in worship?
3. What's wrong with using images to worship God?
4. What's the best way to get joy in worship?
5. How much do you think about God's pleasure in your worship? How can you increase that?
6. Do a Google search for "awe and mental health"? What are the benefits of awe?

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