



“There ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee” (Deuteronomy 12:7).

Fellowship in Worship

Central Truth: Christian fellowship expands the experience of worship.

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Topic: Fellowship: With God; Worship.

In what places have you met God in worship? Surely you have met Him in the church building. But where else? Have you worshiped God in the privacy of your home, in the beauty of the forest or beside still waters, in the wee hours of the night when sleep has fled? Where have you communed with God in the spirit of worship?

From personal experience we have learned that the church building is not the only place where we can worship God. But the church building is an important place to worship Him.

Some people excuse themselves from church attendance by the claim that they can worship God in nature while hunting in the woods or fishing in the lakes. Yes, one can meet God there. But that does not excuse one from attending the corporate worship services of a New Testament church.

Hebrews 10:25 gives two reasons why we should gather with our fellow Christians for worship. (1) God commands it: *“not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.”* (2) We need it: *“exhorting one another.”* Yes, we can worship God away from the church, but we cannot substitute private worship for meeting with God's people.

This is why this study is entitled "Fellowship in Worship." Fellowship is a part of worship. God wants His people to worship Him together. How faithful are you to participate in the public worship of God?

I. PLACE

“Unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose. . . , even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come” (Deuteronomy 12:5).

Here is what God says to us from that verse. (1) Worship is to be related to a specific place. (2) God chooses the place where worship is to be offered to Him. (3) God's people are to identify (seek out) the place He has chosen for them to worship Him. (4) God's people are to go to that place and offer their worship to Him.

Where is that place which God has chosen for you to offer your worship to Him? It is the place where your church meets. That might be a private home or a storefront building in a small and developing congregation. It might be a small wood frame building or a large masonry building, elaborately designed and appointed for an established church. But the place set apart for worship is the place to go to meet God with His people. God considers the place of worship to be important.

That is why we have a dedication service when we have erected a church building. We separate it from secular use and devote it to His glory. Attendance at the place of worship is an act of obedience and an expression of reverence to God.

II. PRESENTATION

“Thither ye shall bring your burnt-offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave-offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks” (Deuteronomy 12:6).

A significant part of worship is the presenting of our offerings to God. Seven offerings are mentioned in verse 6. (1) The burnt offering was a voluntary act of worship which included atonement for sin plus devotion and complete surrender to God. (2) Sacrifices is a general word which includes the whole scope of offerings to God. (3) The tithe is 10 percent of one's increase, which is offered to God as recognition of His ownership of all things and our thanks for His bounty. (4) A heave offering is a voluntary act of worship in expression of devotion to God because of His goodness and provision. (5) Freewill offerings is another inclusive term indicating every offering which is given just because one loves God. (6) Vows are offerings made to God, for they involve, discipline of life or a gift of substance. (7) Giving the firstlings of flock and herds is another freewill offering which expresses devotion to God; it also recognizes that the increase of the flocks

is by His grace. Those seven sacrifices indicate a grateful heart and a humble spirit in the worshipers.

Do Christians offer sacrifice in their worship? Yes, indeed! We give our tithes plus freewill offerings. We offer the sacrifice of praise. We make our pledges (vows) to God in commitment to His service. We recognize that we should not come before the Lord with empty hands, but should “*bring an offering, and come into his courts*” (Psalm 96:8).

III. PERSON

“Ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God . . . Thou must eat . . . before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose” (Deuteronomy 12:12, 18).

Where are God's people to rejoice? Where are they to eat? God says, “*before the LORD your God.*” The important issue is not the rejoicing and the eating; it is the presence of the Lord before whom we rejoice and eat.

How conscious are you of the presence of the Lord when you enter your church building to worship? You are very conscious of yourself, of course. You probably ask yourself, “Is my hair in place? Is my clothing appropriate? Do I make a good appearance?” And you are conscious of people around you. If you lead in public prayer, you are careful to offer petitions which relate to all the congregation, not just yourself. And you are aware of them as you sing, give your offerings, and respond to the appeal of God through the sermon. But how conscious are you of the presence of God himself?

God is the center of all true worship. We worship “before the Lord.” We worship Him. Acts of worship which are not directly related to God are not acts of true worship. Ritual without relationship is meaningless.

IV. PARTICIPATION

Be a part of what happens in worship. When the congregation sings, you sing. When the congregation bows in prayer to talk with God, you bow and talk with Him. When the congregation gives tithes and freewill offerings, you give 10 percent of your increase plus a love offering. When the congregation listens to the preaching/teaching of the Word, you listen and receive what God is saying.

Beware of a spectator spirit in worship. You can watch as others express their worship to God, but it is an insult to God if you do not participate. To observe but not participate would be to indicate that God is

not worthy of your involvement.

Joel 2:12-17 calls for a “solemn assembly” in which to seek God. He calls for a turning to God, a rending of the heart (repentance), blowing the trumpet, observing a fast, gathering the people, weeping before the Lord, and praying for His intervention. Who is to participate? Joel mentions the elders, the children, nursing infants, the bridegroom and his bride, as well as the priests. Everyone is to participate when we gather to seek the face of the Lord. Be a participant—not a spectator—in worship each Lord's Day.

V. PROMISE

“Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever” (Deuteronomy 12:28).

What is the benefit received from sincere worship and faithful obedience to God? God promises, “It will go well with you and all the generations that follow you.” What a promise!

Here is the secret (if it is a secret to any) of a stable society—homes where people worship and obey God. This is the key to personal happiness, family welfare, national security, and church growth.

The United States of America is, at the time of this writing, the only nation in the world where the Christian faith is not increasing. If we want God to bless America, we must be a people who worship and obey God.

Every person needs to participate in the public worship of God. That means more than simply showing up at the time and place where others worship. It means faithful and meaningful involvement. Get right with your fellow Christians (Matthew 5:23, 24) so you can worship God as He desires.