



Right Questions, Wrong Answers:  
**A Study of World Religions**  
by Earle D. Treptow

- Lesson One—Where Do We Find God?
- Lesson Two—Who Is God?
- Lesson Three—What Is God Like?
- Lesson Four—Who Is Jesus?
- Lesson Five—What Must I Do to Be Saved?
- Lesson Six—Who Am I?
- **Lesson Seven—How Am I to Worship God?**
- Lesson Eight—What Will Happen to Us When We Die?

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**Adult Bible Study - World Religions**

**Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Class 9am)**

7305 208<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - [www.lhlc.org](http://www.lhlc.org), [pastortodd@lhlc.org](mailto:pastortodd@lhlc.org)



## Right Questions, Wrong Answers: A Study of World Religions

• Lesson Seven •

### How Am I to Worship God?

1. In spirit, not by formalistic ritual
2. In truth, confessing and praising to one true God

## Worship

A meditation based on various passages from Colossians and Psalm 51\*

**Leader:** As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

**Group:** Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

**Leader:** Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

**Group:** Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

**Leader:** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

**Group:** Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

**Leader:** And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

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**Group:** Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

**Leader:** You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

**Group:** The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

\*Psalm 51:1-3, 7-17; Colossians 3:12-17

**Prayer:** Gracious Lord God, our heavenly Father, you live in unapproachable light. Yet you graciously approach us and reveal yourself to us in your Holy Word. Help us know your great love for us and your vigilance for our souls that we might continually offer you the sacrifice of lips that praise your holy name. Preserve us from heartless formalism and mindless ritual, and enable us to offer you the worship you are worthy to receive. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Introduction

Suppose one Sunday you were to stand at the doors of your church, with clipboard in hand, to interview everyone who entered. And suppose that everyone gave an honest answer to this question: Why are you coming here today? What responses do you think you would find on your clipboard?

In today's study we will think about the reasons Christians worship and contrast that with the reasons why members of other religions worship.

## Studying God's Word

### In spirit, not by formalistic ritual

#### Read Colossians 2:13-23

1. We have good reason to worship God from the heart. What reasons can you find in verses 13-15?
2. What false attitude concerning worship does Paul address in verse 16?
3. In verse 18 Paul refers to people who delight in false humility and the worship of angels. Obviously these people were very spiritual, but also very misguided. To join in their worship would rob Christians of their faith (disqualify them for the prize). Why are false humility and the worship of angels dangerous to faith?

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4. What is the inevitable result of worship that is heavy on ritual and the observance of rules? (verse 19)
5. What separates spiritual worship from ritual and formalism? (verses 20-22)

## What is the goal of worship in other religions?

**Islam:** Individual and corporate worship is intended to praise Allah, to connect the individual to the community of the faithful, and to pile up enough good works so that the scales weigh in the individual's favor on the day of judgment.

**Judaism:** Individual and corporate worship is designed to glorify the Lord and to connect the individual with the community. It is also a means of gaining God's favor.

**Hinduism:** Worship is less corporate, more personal. The worship of a particular deity is but the means to an end. Worshipers hope, through it, to release themselves from the cycle of reincarnation.

**Buddhism:** Strict Buddhists meditate in order to detach themselves from the desires of the world and hopefully to extinguish those desires. In so doing, they hope to experience nirvana.

### His Word in My Life – Option 1

Your Muslim friend thinks Christians “do church” one day a week and forget about it the rest of the week. He prays five times a day in the direction of Mecca, “the holy city.” He prays when he gets up in the morning, at noon, in midafternoon, after sunset, and before going to bed. He even uses prescribed words and postures for each of those prayers. To fail to say those prayers at those times is to fail to please Allah.

1. How would you respond to your friend's charge against Christians? How might you use it as a point of contact to share the gospel of Jesus with him?
2. What would you say about his practice of prayer five times a day with set words and set postures?
3. List some ways in which we may fall prey to formalistic ritual worship.

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### His Word in My Life – Option 2

Because the Lord God himself established the Sabbath Day as a day of rest for his people, your Jewish coworker will not work on Saturday (except to go to the synagogue and read the Torah).

1. Why don't we gather for worship on Saturday and follow strict rules for rest like Jewish people do?
2. How might you use this as a means of sharing the gospel of Jesus with your Jewish coworker?

*So much that is called worship in our day is nothing more than following man-made rituals. God desires to be worshiped in spirit, not by means of formalistic ritual. Worship that arises from hearts filled with thanksgiving for all that he has done for us—that's the worship God desires.*

### In truth, confessing and praising the one true God

#### Read Acts 17:16-31

1. The apostle Paul explains that worship directed toward anything but the Lord of heaven and earth is false worship. How does he point that out? (verses 16-18)
2. Paul does not find it necessary to chastise the people of Athens for their heartless worship. What major omission does he find in their worship? (verses 22 and 23)
3. Early in his address, Paul reveals several things about the one true God. What does he say that makes it clear that the Lord is the only one worthy of worship? (verses 24-28)
4. How does Paul demonstrate the foolishness of thinking that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone? (verse 29)
5. What will happen to sincerely religious people who worship false gods with all their hearts? (verse 31)

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## What are some worship practices of non-Christian religions?

**Islam:** A Muslim's daily worship is marked by prayer at fixed hours. Prayers are spoken facing Mecca, five times each day, preceded by ritual washing: upon rising, at noon, mid-afternoon, after sunset, and before retiring. These prayers remind the Muslim of his status before Allah as a worshipful servant. Corporate worship takes place in a mosque (a place for prostration before God) and is led by a member of the congregation. On Friday the whole male community should be present for prayer. Near the end of the month of Ramadan, when Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset, on the Night of Power, Muslims commemorate the descent of the Koran from heaven and the beginning of Muhammad's ministry.

**Judaism:** Men wear phylacteries on their arms, in which passages of Scripture are placed. Services are held on Saturday in a synagogue or temple. (Reform Jews gather in a temple, Orthodox and Conservative Jews in a synagogue.) Conforming Jews abstain from work on this day. The most prominent feature of a synagogue is the "ark" set against the wall facing toward Jerusalem. The ark contains the scrolls of the Law. Male worshipers usually cover their heads. Festivals play a large role in the worship life of Judaism: The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) is the holiest day in the Jewish year. It is a day of prayer, fasting, and confession of sin, leading to a spiritual rebirth.

**Hinduism:** Worship is primarily individual rather than corporate, even in temples. Many people seldom visit a temple, worshipping instead in the home. Many set aside a room for worship, with a shrine containing an image of a favorite deity. Early morning worship begins with the mantra "Om" and continues with the naming of their god. Then the worshipers say, "Let us meditate upon the adorable light of the radiant sun; may he stimulate our intellects." They sit cross-legged on the ground, with their eyes looking at the tip of their noses, and they face the rising sun. They sip water and sprinkle water around their seats. They touch six parts of the body—an indication of the God within—meditate, and repeat the mantra. Some light incense and offer food to the deity. Many show respect for the cow by eating only vegetables.

**Buddhism:** The ideal way to practice Buddhism is to live a monastic life and to refrain from the worship of a god. The strict Buddhist is skeptical of the value of rites and ceremonies, thinking that the practices tie a person to this existence. The common Buddhist, though, makes sacrifices and presents gifts (food, flowers, money) to Buddha and says prayers before an altar. The goddess Tera is worshiped as the mother of Buddha. Worship tends to be primarily individual, even in temples. The practice of meditation is aided by the repetition of a mantra. A common object used in Buddhist worship is a prayer wheel, which sends prayer messages to Buddha when it is spun.

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### His Word in My Life – Option 1

Buddhism, with its rejection of much that we would label formalistic ritual and its emphasis on personal meditation, might seem to be truer worship than what we offer in our liturgical services.

If our liturgy may lead to mere rote repetition, why do we continue to use it?

### His Word in My Life – Option 2

If someone were to accuse you of formalistic ritual in worship because your church is liturgical, you would defend yourself. “How can you see into my heart?” you might say. A Muslim might make the same claim to you about his ritual prayers to Allah.

What larger problem remains with the Muslim’s worship?

***As children of God, we want nothing more than to please God with our worship. Rote worship doesn’t please him. We know that. Even heartfelt worship, if it is not based on the truth, fails to meet the mark. God-pleasing worship revolves around, and is anchored on, God’s revelation of himself in his Word. Praising the God of the Bible, the one who became man to redeem all people from the guilt of their sin, is true and God-pleasing worship.***

## Summary

Ultimately, worship is a matter of the heart. Only when the heart is right can the worship be right; only when the heart pleases God can the worship please God. So where can we get such hearts? The teachings of other religions cannot lead to true worship because they do not lead to the God of mercy in Christ. God himself, through the gospel of Jesus Christ, fills our hearts with praise and thanksgiving and leads us in spiritual worship. What a beautiful thing!

## Life with God

**Day 1:** Read through one of the liturgies used in the worship service. Ask yourself, “What are we doing at this point in the service?” and “Why are we doing it at this point?”

**Day 2:** Read Genesis 4:1-16. The Lord was pleased with Abel’s worship because it came from a thankful heart.

**Day 3:** Read Romans 12:1-8. Offering yourself to God in response to his grace is true spiritual worship.

**Day 4:** Read John 4:1-26. Jesus talks with the woman at the well about the worshipers God seeks.

**Day 5:** Read Malachi 1:6-14. The Lord is not interested in halfhearted worship; it is no worship at all.

**Day 6:** Read 1 Kings 18:16-45. Worship that is not directed toward the one true God, no matter how sincere, does not please God.

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## Lesson 7 Readings – How Am I to Worship God?

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### **Colossians 2:13-23 – In spirit, not by formalistic ritual**

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<sup>13</sup> When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, <sup>14</sup> having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. <sup>18</sup> Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. <sup>19</sup> He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

<sup>20</sup> Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: <sup>21</sup> "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? <sup>22</sup> These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. <sup>23</sup> Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

### **Acts 17:16-31 – In truth, confessing and praising the one true God**

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#### **In Athens**

<sup>16</sup> While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. <sup>17</sup> So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. <sup>18</sup> A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbling trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. <sup>19</sup> Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? <sup>20</sup> You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean." <sup>21</sup> (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

<sup>22</sup> Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup> For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

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<sup>24</sup> “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. <sup>25</sup> And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. <sup>26</sup> From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. <sup>27</sup> God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. <sup>28</sup> „For in him we live and move and have our being.“ As some of your own poets have said, „We are his offspring.“ <sup>29</sup> “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man’s design and skill. <sup>30</sup> In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup> For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

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