

Authentic Worship

Introduction

- Merriam-Webster declared their 2023 “Word of the Year” to be *authentic*.
 - It’s rise in popularity is attributed to “stories and conversations about AI, celebrity culture, identity, and social media.”
- Today there are three basic meanings of *authentic*:
 - Real or actual, not false or fake.
 - e.g., “an authentic Van Gogh painting” vs. a reproduction.
 - Conforming to an established fact or standard.
 - e.g., “authentic Mexican food” vs. Taco Bell.
 - True to one’s own identity, personality, spirit, or character.
 - e.g., “cowboy boots and jeans are his authentic look” vs. an old farmer wearing a tuxedo.
- *Authentic* is even a buzzword in Christianity right now, especially in regard to worship or personal faith.
- In this lesson, we will look at what “authentic worship” looks like according to Scripture.
 - “Worship is man’s proper reaction to God’s revelation of Himself, whereby we exalt God through the expression of honoring God and humbling of self.”
 - I am applying this concept of worship broadly, up to the ultimate expression of worship which is a consecrated life – Romans 12:1-2

“Real” Worship

- This type of authentic worship can be seen as *true worship vs. fake worship*.
- The Scripture is clear that worship is more than just an act, it is an expression of faith and honor toward God.
 - God refuses external acts of worship that lack the necessary internal element – Isaiah 29:13
 - It is necessary that both the external and internal elements be present – James 2:14-26
 - Side note – This is an example of the genius of baptism in the local church. We cannot physically see if someone’s faith or if they truly accept Christ. I think that if a person is truly born again then there should not be reluctance to follow the Scriptural mandate to be baptized. Internal faith and external baptism intrinsically linked. It is largely unreasonable to submit to baptism for any other purpose.

“Standard” Worship

- This type of authentic worship can be seen as *God-made standard of worship vs. man-made standard of worship*.
- The ultimate question here: “Who sets the standard?”
 - Do we worship according to what we or others think is proper, or do we worship according to God’s prescribed manner?
- God has always set a standard for man to interact with Him.
 - See God’s instructions in Eden (Genesis 2:15-17), Post-Fall (Genesis 3:8-24), Post-Flood (Genesis 9:1-17), Sinai (Exodus 19-31), etc.
- The best measure for the determining this standard is Scripture – II Timothy 3:16
 - History and orthodoxy may be appealed to, but these are not as reliable as the Word.

“Personal” Worship

- This type of authentic worship can be seen as *God-centered worship vs. self-centered worship*.
- There is a popular idea today that true worship is attained through “authentic” expression of self.
 - The problem is that “authentic” human expression is often sinful – Genesis 6:5, Ephesians 4:17-19, Jeremiah 17:9, Psalm 53:1-3, Proverbs 28:2, Matthew 15:18-20
 - Even Christians are not immune to our own sinfulness – Hebrews 12:28-29
- The Scripture is clear that God is glorified when we are transformed and molded into His image and our own is diminished – Romans 12:1-2, Psalm 51:10, II Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:22-24, Colossians 1:21-22, Romans 8:29
- Note - The usual rebuttal to this is that we are not to judge someone’s heart or actions. While we are not to be judgmental (Matthew 7:1), we are to be discerning (Matthew 7:15-20). The standard for Christian conduct is the Scripture and we should weigh all things by its commandments and principles. I cannot judge another’s heart, but I can compare their actions and my own to the Word to discern if they are acceptable to God.
- Scott Aniol has a great article on this topic: <https://g3min.org/should-worship-be-authentic-it-depends-on-what-you-mean/>