

# Are We Rushing Through Worship?

John 4:24

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Someone observed that worship has become “entertainment” but don’t detain me.”

Jesus said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). When we worship we must not be more occupied with the visible than the invisible, with the temporal rather than the eternal, and with the outward and formal rather than the inward and spiritual. We must avoid making worship man-centered instead of God-centered.

Christians sometimes assume they have worshiped God simply because they have been in a church service. This is no more true than being in a store means you bought something. We do not worship simply by showing up where worship is taking place. “Worship God” (Revelation 22:9) is one of the shortest commands in the Bible, yet is perhaps the hardest to obey.

## **WORSHIP IS WAITING.**

“I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning” (Psalm 130:5-6). Church members miss out when they get to the assembly one minute before time to start, and fly off like a flushed covey of quail when it is over. If we rush as if a starter’s gun had sounded and the hundred yard dash for the cars had started, we were probably not in a worshipful state of mind. True worship is done by one who is reverent and glad to be involved.

**Illustration:** A European explorer in Africa, anxious to reach his destination, paid his porters extra for a series of forced marches. Almost within reach of camp, they refused to go farther. No amount money would persuade them. They said they had “to wait for their souls to catch up.” Many Americans left their souls behind somewhere in college or about the time the first child arrived and haven’t seen them since.

Most of us hate to wait. Doctors’ offices frustrate us by asking us to arrive a half hour before they even begin to see us. If a store makes us wait in line to pay, we’ll likely find another next time. We fill our stomachs at “express lunches” and change our oil at “express lubes.” Hurry is our mantra. Busy is our creed. Wait is anathema.

That’s why many of us are not good when it comes to worship. We arrive one minute after it starts. We have difficulty finding a seat and strain to see the song number from the person sitting in front of us. We wonder why the song leader picked four songs today instead of the usual three and why they called on Brother so-and-so to lead the prayer—everybody knows he leads the I-o-n-g-e-s-t prayers. And that preacher, he had better not go over again. Oh no! Somebody is responding to the invitation now we’ll have to wait for a baptism (or at least another prayer for restoration). Then we comment on the way home, “I just didn’t get much out of the service today.”

We cannot hurry through worship and expect to get much out of it. The Bible says, “Blessed are those who dwell in Your house: they will be praising You . . .” (**Psalm 84:4**); and, “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord” (**Psalm 27:14**).

## **HOW DO WE WAIT IN WORSHIP?**

## **1. HOW DO WE WAIT IN WORSHIP? BY PREPARING TO GET THE MOST BENEFIT FROM THE SERVICE**

If a good sermon needs time to develop and drive home a point, so does authentic worship. Howard Stevenson may be right when he says that “worship needs at least fifteen to twenty minutes to build.” If that is so, then we need to we anticipate public worship beginning. Worship is much improved by several things that happen before it ever starts:

- Get a good night’s sleep the night before.
- Get up early enough so that rushing is not required.
- Eat breakfast to avoid a growling stomach and slowed senses.
- Avoid disagreements with spouses or children, or anything that leaves the nerves on edge.
- Fill out the contribution check or count out the cash offering before arriving.
- Bring your own Bible and notebook instead of counting on one being in the pew. Leave early enough to arrive in time to get settled in and focused before the service begins.
- Sit in a place where you are least likely to be diverted by babies, heating/cooling vents, or any other distraction (obviously) closer to the front one sits, the fewer diversions/distractions).

## **2. HOW DO WE WAIT IN WORSHIP? BY SLOWING DOWN TO MEDITATE ON GOD’S GREATNESS**

A Frenchman once commented that Americans have three idols: size, noise, and speed. True worship cuts across the grain of each. Dr. James Dobson seems to think commitment, or the lack of it, isn’t the real issue. ragged edge, holding down multiple jobs and running full tilt from morning to night.

Surviving another day takes priority . . . In a Time/CNN poll of 500 adults, 69 percent said they would “like to slow down and live a more relaxed life.”

Worship is designed to help us de-stress. It reminds us of God’s greatness (Psalm 104:l), and of our smallness (Psalm 8:4). Worship is being still and knowing God (Psalm 46:10). The psalmist wrote, “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah” (**Psalm 4:4**). Philip Schaff said, “American Christianity is more like busy Martha than like pensive Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus. It expands more in breadth than in depth . . .” A study at Harvard University on the effect of meditation on older people discovered that it (1) lowered blood pressure, (2) improved mental function, and (3) extended the life span. The Bible has always commanded meditation (Genesis 24:63; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2; 1 Timothy 4:15), and Christians have learned that it makes life deeper, richer, and fuller (Psalm 27:4; Luke 10:38-42).

### **3. HOW DO WE WAIT IN WORSHIP? HOW DO WE WAIT IN WORSHIP? BY GIVING FULL ATTENTION FOR A FULL HOUR**

A consumer article once warned about buying meat in large quantities because considerable shrinkage occurs in the cutting and packaging process. The person who buys a hundred-pound side of beef will not have a hundred pounds when he gets it to his freezer.

Worship shrinks like that. One may be in an hour service and only worship thirty-five minutes—or much less. Few worship for the full hour. Many arrive late or leave early, so that time must be deducted. Those who come on time and stay are distracted by the late arrivals and early departures, so the time must be deducted for them as well. It may take

several minutes to find a seat. Then there is the time taken to look around and see who is there—and who is not there.

Time is lost chuckling over a misprint in the bulletin, thinking about the preacher's ill-chosen tie, and estimating the cost of his wife's new dress. We must deduct the time lost when the mind wanders during the sermon or the prayers. Many might not worship fifteen minutes during the entire service.

Jesus may be saying to us what He said to the Galilean storm: "Peace, be still." He is doubtless looking for the same effect: "And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm" (**Mark 4:39**).

Jesus wants us to have a joyful spirit. The let's hurry up and get this over with" attitude must be replaced with "I'm thankful to my God for saving me and I can't wait to show Him." **It's time to restore joy in our assemblies.**

Someone suggested that we often come in dragging our chains. We look as if we are there to mourn a defeat rather than celebrate a victory. Worship is not the dreary reading of Scripture or a boring response from the audience. It is responding with reverence . . . amens . . . joy . . . and sometimes tears (1 Corinthians 14:15-16, 23-25). Some preachers sound as if they are selling boiled okra rather than proclaiming the good news of Christ! Bro. James Watkins wrote . . . "Someone says, 'Well, how can I get excited when I've sung all the songs before and when I've heard this subject preached before?' Have you ever eaten fried chicken, grilled steak, or a garden-fresh dinner? If so, you surely have not done so more than once because you would have objected, 'Oh, I've eaten that before.' Is it possible that such an objection arises only with the serving of spiritual food?" Batsell Barrett Baxter observed that "worship is the most important thing, yet at the same time, the most difficult experience in the Christian's life."

Let's give God what He deserves . . . Our very best!

**Psalm 122:1** – “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD.’”

## **God's Plan for Man's Salvation**

Sermon Idea from Allen Webster