



# The Voice of Truth

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HILLCREST CHURCH OF CHRIST

1621 Hillcrest Drive  
Green Bay, WI 54313

(920)499-5677 E-mail: [Hillcrestcofc@live.com](mailto:Hillcrestcofc@live.com)  
[www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com](http://www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com)

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## **Acceptable Worship** By Jimmy Pettigrew

There are at least four kinds of worship alluded to in the New Testament: (1) ignorant worship (**Acts 17:23**); (2) vain worship (**Matthew 15:9**); (3) will worship (**Colossians 2:23**); and (4) spiritual and true worship (**Romans 12:2; John 4:23-24**). In **Hebrews 12:28**, it says that worship must be done “acceptably.” One reason the Lord’s church exists is so Christians can come together and worship God (**1 Corinthians 11:18, 20, 33-34; Hebrews 10:25**). God demands that we worship Him and Him alone (**Matthew 4:10**). In **Revelation 22:9**, the angel admonished John to “worship God.”

But what does the Bible say regarding acceptable worship? What is God’s will on the matter? Worship is either right or wrong depending upon God’s will. The only right worship is that which is authorized by God! “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (**John 4:23-24**). Notice the word “must.” What does this say about how we worship? We are to worship God “acceptably with reverence and godly fear (awe)” (**Hebrews 12:28**). Worship must be “in spirit,” that is, the worshiper must genuinely engage his spirit in the worship activity. He must be mentally and emotionally involved. “I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord” (**Psalms 122:1**).

Also, worship must be “in truth.” God has always required that man approach Him “in truth,” according to the divine commands which he revealed to man. In **Genesis 4:3-7**, we have the account of the worship of Cain and Abel. God accepted Abel’s worship but rejected Cain’s. Why? Because one did the will of the Lord while the other chose to disobey God’s instructions. We know that God told them what to offer as sacrifice from the reading found in **Hebrews 11:4**: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” “By faith” is the key. That simply means that Abel was told what to do, believed and obeyed the instructions. Furthermore, Cain was also told what to do, but for some reason chose not to fully obey the instructions of the Lord. As a consequence of his conduct, God rejected his worship. God plainly told him, “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him” (**Gen. 4:7**). Partial obedience is not obedience, but disobedience!

In **Leviticus 10:1-2**, we read of another example of not worshipping God in truth. We can learn the importance of worshipping just as God instructs from the example of Nadab and Abihu (**Leviticus 10:1-2**). What was wrong with their worship? They “offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them.” What happened to them? “There came forth fire from before Jehovah and, devoured them, and they died before Jehovah.” Paul wrote, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that

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through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope" (**Romans 15:4**). So, what does **Leviticus 10:1-2** teach us? We must not add to or take away from God's word (**Revelation 22:18-19**). We must abide in the doctrine of Christ (**2 John 9**). We do not have the authority to decide how we are going to worship God. We **MUST** worship as He instructs! (**Colossians 3:17**).

Unfortunately, the current atmosphere in the church tends to treat worship as a time for entertaining the worshiper and catering to the worshiper's wants. People have lost the deep, reverent mind-set that approaches the worship assembly with a strong sense of respect and careful meaning to please God. Worship is important! It is not intended to be entertainment, but it is the act of paying reverence to God. To worship as one desires, without regard for the Lord's will, is to be guilty of "will worship" (**Colossians 2:20-23**). Instead of attempting to entertain people in our worship, we need to develop our appetites for pure, New Testament worship!

What ways do men worship God acceptably? When the church came together for worship, "Paul preached unto them" (**Acts 20:7**). Preaching and teaching God's truth is involved in worshipping God acceptably (**Acts 2:42; 2 Timothy 4:2**). The lessons and sermons are designed to teach God's word so as to encourage obedience by those who listen.

What ways do men worship God acceptably? Paul said, "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (**Philippians 4:6**). We pray, not only to praise and thank God, but also to ask for our needs and the needs of others (**1 Timothy 2:1-4**). The early church continued steadfastly "in prayers" (**Acts 2:42**). We are to pray to God, in the name of Jesus (**Luke 11:1-4; John 14:13**).

What ways do men worship God acceptably? Again Paul said, "speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (**Ephesians 5:19**). The entire assembly joins in singing gospel songs. There is no choir or special groups, but simple congregational singing.

What ways do men worship God acceptably? The Lord's Supper is to be observed every first day of the week (**Acts 20:7**). The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ, (**1 Corinthians 11:23-29**), prior to His death on the cross and was observed by the Lord's church. The supper consists of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine as memorials of the body and blood of Jesus (**1 Corinthians 11:20-36**).

What ways do men worship God acceptably? By giving to the cause of Christ! "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come" (**1 Corinthians 16:1-2**). The work of the church is wholly supported by Christians freely giving on every Sunday. These are the five items which are to be done in worshipping God. These are acceptable to Him when we do them in "spirit and truth" (**John 4:23-24**).

Brethren, all worship problems share at least two traits in common: one, rejection of the principle of God's authority, and two, a desire to feel one's religion through manmade attractions. May God help us to be strong and committed to His ways and have a "Thus saith the Lord" for all we say and do; "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour" (**1 Timothy 2:3**). "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (**1 Peter 2:5**).

## The Foundation of Spirituality – Honesty

By Larry Rouse

Why does the preaching of the gospel seem not to be effective in our society today? We know that God's word has not changed, nor has its power (**Rom. 1:16**). We are assured by God that His word will never return to Him void, but it will always accomplish the purpose for which He sent it (**Isa. 55:11**). Today, with this present generation, as it has in past generations, the word of God is able to expose hearts and allow men to choose light or darkness (**John 3:19-21**). This choice depends upon the kind of heart a man possesses.

When Jesus described the kind of heart in which the word of God would be received and would prosper, He described it as "good and honest" (**Luke 8:15 – KJV**). Will a man choose light or darkness, honesty or dishonesty? If a man decides that he "hates the light" then God will let him "believe a lie" and will not do anything further other than the presentation of His word (**2 Thess. 2:10-11**).

### We must fight the temptation to be dishonest

The battle for honesty lasts a lifetime. God emphatically warns the Christian to guard his heart and to keep it pure. "Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds" (**Col. 3:9**). God has plainly told us: "He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house; He who tells lies shall not continue in my presence" (**Psa 101:7**).

The nature of man has not changed. Without continual exposure to the word of God, men's hearts will be pulled back to self-justification and blindness (**Prov. 16:2; Jer. 17:10-11**). Why do men prefer dishonesty? Psychologists suggest that men tend to make up the reasons for their behaviors after they do them, and that their "reasons" and behavior usually have nothing to do with each other.

King Saul was a prime example of a good man who gave in to dishonesty to his own destruction. Do you remember the various explanations that he made to Samuel when he was confronted about his direct disobedience to God's command (**1 Sam. 15:3, 15, 20-21**)? "I was going to sacrifice them! No, wait, it was the people that did it!" Finally, after a spiritual wrestling match, Saul admits his sin, but without true repentance! Saul thought that his outward confession without a changed heart would put him right with God. In this he had deceived himself! This pattern would remain throughout Saul's life.

### We must recognize dishonesty

God's love will lead us to look to the good in others. Indeed, we want to believe the best about others and not be quick to judge another's actions without sufficient evidence. Nonetheless, the Bible is filled with warnings concerning those who would deliberately mislead us and the kind of tactics they will use to accomplish this task. "That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (**Eph. 4:14**). "These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage" (**Jude 16**).

It is a difficult thing for good and honest Christians to see the deceit and manipulation from those who have a hidden agenda to pull others into their circle. Flattery is first used to gain a closer association and trust. Then lies are told in secret to inflame emotions and close minds (**Prov. 18:19**). Finally, these men succeed in having their new disciples cut off association with their former brethren without so much as talking about these newly discovered "differences" over an open Bible (**Gal. 4:16-17**).

A commitment to honesty will keep us from these "closed door decisions" that result in

one “cutting and running.” Instead we will openly discuss and test those who have beliefs that they say are of God (**1 John 4:1**). Also, we will not accept testimony about the personal actions of another without first giving that person a chance to defend himself (**Prov. 18:17; Matt. 18:15-17**)!

### **Pride always leads to dishonesty**

Those who do not know God cannot stand to look at themselves honestly. The driving force behind pride is the desire to be recognized and have praise because we wish to appear to be something that we are not. “For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself” (**Gal 6:3**). Those that follow this path must wear a mask. They must fight to “keep up appearances” and work to tear others down so that they can receive this vain and temporary recognition of men. There is a better way to live your life!

### **God's forgiveness allows us to be honest**

God sees me as I am, and, in spite of that, He loves me and seeks my best. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (**Rom. 5:8**). God sees the darkness of my sin and has provided a sacrifice that will wash away my sins and restore my relationship with Him (**Rom. 3:23; 6:23**). What do I need to do? I need to be honest! I must see my own sin and make no excuses. The love of God must move me to change my heart in repentance that will result in a changed life. I then will take the final step in water baptism, yielding my body to a burial and resurrection like the Lord's (**Rom. 6:3-5**). I now am the Lord's, not because I am perfect, but because I am forgiven and have yielded my heart to Him (**Acts 2:38-39**).

The Christian life is characterized by the forgiveness of God. Rather than run from my shortcomings, I can now run to God for a greater sight and to seek His help in growing to be something more in His service. I come to love the truth, to love bold and honest preaching because it allows me to see what God already sees and what I need to know. Most of all, I am thankful that God's word is able to penetrate my heart when it drifts into dishonesty and point me back to Him. “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (**Heb. 4:12-13**).

Be honest. Are you genuinely serving the Lord with all of your heart (**2 Cor. 13:5**)?

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (**Prov. 28:13**).

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### **What Must I Do To Be Saved?**

**Hear and Learn** - **Rom. 10:17** m. **10:9-10** ; **1 Pet. 3:21** ; **John 6:45; 17:3**

**Believe** - **Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24**

**Repent** - **Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30**

**Confess the Lord** - **Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21**

**Be Baptized** - **Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27**

**Continue in the Apostles' Teaching** - **Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17**