



Because of our celebration service, my message this morning is more of a brief devotional on the topic of worship. Is it possible to enter into a time of worship with too much seriousness? Worship can be celebratory but it must never be cavalier. It can be exciting and powerful but should not be flippant. We should not think that just because we walk through those doors and start raising our voices in song that it automatically becomes acceptable worship. Listen to how God condemned the worship in Isaiah's day.

¹¹ *"The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?" says the LORD. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. ¹² When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? ¹³ Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies. ¹⁴ Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. ¹⁵ When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen.*

When I read this, I think—Ouch! We call this slice of time on Sunday mornings a "worship" service, but how many times do you think God is hiding his eyes from us while we gather together? How many times does he not hear us? How many times have we burdened him with our meaningless prayers, our noisy gongs and our detestable offerings? These are strong words, but since we are sharing an extended time of worship together this morning, I think it is worth our time to consider all of these warnings. Scripture has many more such warnings.

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. James 4:6

If there is any sense of flippancy, pride or self-seeking in our worship, God will directly oppose our efforts. Understand that this is not merely a defensive or passive position. Our pride does not cause God to build a wall or even just hide his eyes from us—he actively opposes us. He squares up against us and resists us. Guess who is going to win that confrontation? And he has to do this, because he loves us.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Ephesians 4:30-31

If one of the primary work's of the Holy Spirit is to unify believers, then it makes sense that he would be grieved when we manifest all of these forms of severe disunity. We all know what grief feels like. Many of us have experienced severe periods of grief. The Bible tells us that the Holy

Spirit also feels grief, and I would expect that his level of grief is quite severe, especially when you consider how much he cares for us and much he wants us to obey and follow him.

Quench not the Spirit. 1 Thes. 5:19

Not only can the Holy Spirit be grieved, he can also be quenched. The NIV translates this verse as “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire.” Same word as Ephesians 6 where we are told to hold up the shield of faith by which we can extinguish the flaming arrows of the enemy. We are to put out Satan’s fire but the let Spirit’s fire burn like a wildfire, but often we do just the opposite—we put out the Spirit’s fire and add fuel to the enemies’.

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

This has to be one of the most frequent worship killers. Prayer is a primary form of worship, but men, your prayers will hit this invisible barrier when we don’t treat our wives as we should.

While there are any ways to kill worship and cause the Lord to be grieved and hide his face, thankfully there is a simple solution to all of this—good old-fashioned repentance. If you are unreconciled with a fellow brother or sister in Christ, you need to go that person as soon as possible and attempt to reconcile. Pride is one of those sins that sneaks in undetected. Karen and I were talking about this yesterday. I do use humor as part of my messages, but do I do this so that you will listen better, do I do it for good illustrations, OR do I do it so that you all think I am a funny guy? The last one is a form of pride that I may not even be aware of. Anyone who leads worship up front can fall into this temptation. If we do not guard our hearts, leading worship can quickly denigrate into a show. I am not saying that anyone up here is guilty of this, but it is a constant temptation.

Even though as a whole, we are not guilty of the same kinds of sins as those Isaiah addressed in this first chapter (i.e. we aren’t literally bowing down to false idols and sacrificing our children to false gods), we do have idols of our heart that no one can see but you.

In a moment the worship team is going to be singing the song, *Lord, Have Mercy*. Let’s make that our collective prayer—Lord, have mercy. Lord, forgive us our pride, our self-seeking, our selfishness, or detestable incense, our false worship of anything other than you.

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