**Great Principles of Christianity, #11**

**We must worship in spirit and truth, John 4:24.**

The word “worship*”* comes to us in a strange way. In the Greek language of the New Testament, worship is *proskuneo* which is a compound composed of the two words, *pros* and *kuneo*. The first word, *pros*, provides a prefix meaning “to” or “toward.” The second word, *kuneo*, comes from the Greek word for dog. One wonders how we get any meaning akin to worship from these two words. Lexicographers tell us that the literal meaning of the word is “to kiss the hand toward,” and that the meaning comes from a dog’s habit of licking its master’s hand. An illustration that comes to mind is someone kneeling before a dignitary and kissing his ring.

Given the Greek composition of word for worship, we should realize that the character of proper worship involves appropriate direction. Worship is **from** **man** **toward** **God** and not the other way around. Since God is a spiritual being, and not flesh and bone, John 4:24 & Luke 24:39, He is not moved by the physical aspects of worship that impress men. I believe this is what Jesus intended when he said that our worship should be “in spirit.” That is, worship should be spiritual rather than physical. We should emphasize attitude, truth, and heart-felt participation as opposed to outward appearances. Such things as entertainment, beauty, grandeur and other inventions incorporated into worship in order to impress men should not be a part of our worship. Our worship toward God must please Him and not be molded so that it simply pleases ourselves. How God prioritizes physical and spiritual is revealed by Peter in 1Peter 3:3-4, “Do not let your adornment be merely outward––arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel–rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.”

Some seek to correct self-pleasing worship by establishing a deliberately austere and uncomfortable worship experience. For instance, they may insist that men and women sit in different sections of the sanctuary on uncomfortable strait backed pews. Some will not allow children to be present. Ushers may be obligated continually to assist worshipers with their attentiveness. Leaders may demand utter silence. They may restrict the color of clothing in which the congregation worships. Somewhere between impressing ourselves and depressing ourselves exists the proper way to approach God. Proper worship will be easier to identify and practice if we bear in mind that worship is more about pleasing God than satisfying ourselves.

Jesus also said that we must worship “in truth.” Since God’s word is truth, we can safely conclude that the New Testament should be the guide we use to determine the truth about the how, when and what of acceptable worship. We lack authority to change what the inspired apostles told the early church to practice; therefore, we must worship as they worshipped. The early church worshipped on the first day of the week and so must we. Since their Lord’s Day assembly was for the purpose of meeting around the Lord’s Table (Acts 20:7), we should also meet for communion. In similar fashion, the apostles who were inspired by Jesus two thousand years ago guide us today in all aspects of church worship. Our hope of worshipping acceptably is to practice with extreme care what we read in the New Testament. If we learn the truth about worship and we cultivate a spiritual mindset, we will both please God and reap the wonderful benefits that God intends for us to experience when we come before Him to kiss His hand.

**Great Principles of Christianity, #12**

Practice what you preach, 1Timothy 4:12.

“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ,” said Paul in 1Corinthians 11:1. When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a preacher, whether so titled or not. God expects Christians to accept and stand for the principles that Jesus taught. A Christian must do more than verbalize Christ’s teachings—he must live them or no one will ever believe what he says. According to Peter in 1Peter 5:3, Christian leaders must also be examples because the flock looks to them for guidance in what they do as well as what they say. Ministers are to be examples for the church as Paul told the young preacher, Titus, in Titus 2:7, “in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works.” James tells teachers that if they would be truly wise, they must live what they teach, for in not living the standard they teach, they lie against their teaching. He wrote, “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth…. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy,” James 3:13-14, 17.

**Great Principles of Christianity, #13**

**One must lose his life to gain it, John 12:25.**

This is one of the greatest of all biblical principles and yet it sounds like a contradiction. Jesus loved to teach through enigmatic sayings, probably because such language causes one to stop and think about what He really meant. Another such saying is, “The first shall be last and the last first,” Matthew 19:30. When Jesus said that one must lose his life to gain it, He did not mean that one has to die—necessarily. Losing one’s life simply means to dedicate it or to give it away to Christ’s cause. This may happen through a lifetime of service to Christ or it may come about suddenly when someone is killed because he was faithful to Christ. The life of which Jesus speaks is physical life comprised of the time, energy, abilities, possessions, etc. that one has at his disposal here in this world before passing into the next world.

The principle before us has to do with a trade. We are asked to have enough faith to trade what we have now for what we are promised later. We are being asked to trade a physical life of short duration for an eternal spiritual life in heaven. Opposed to this Christian principle is the old adage, “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” The “one bird adage” suggests that we would be wise to keep the single bird we already have rather than give it up for the chance of capturing two loose birds in the bushes because the two loose birds may escape our attempts to ensnare them. However, the promise Jesus makes to us more closely resembles one bird compared with a thousand birds, and because God does not lie, His promise makes the thousand birds a sure thing. Given these assurances, we should be willing to give up our one present day bird for the promise of the thousand birds of eternity.

What Christ says makes even more sense when we factor in our Christian experiences here in this world. Not only do we have eternity with God to look forward to, but when we live the Christian life here in this world, we find that true happiness and a deep sense of well being come to us because we give our lives in service to Christ and to others. He who tries to keep everything for himself soon finds that a life of selfishness and greed leads to misery. Such a one loses what his life could have been by clutching and grasping to keep everything for himself. Again, Jesus spoke of this when He said, “Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it,” Luke 17:33.

**Great Principles of Christianity, #14**

**We cannot love God without loving man, 1John 4:20**

More than likely, many have said in their hearts, “I love God, but I don’t have much affection for the human part of His creation.” Jesus does not agree with this sentiment. He said that all men would know His disciples by their love for each other, John 13:35. He commanded us to love one another, John 15:17, and said that if we love Him, we would keep His commandments, John 14:21. Since He told us to love each other, we cannot love Him without keeping this command to love each other.

Another reason we cannot love God without loving man is that God loves man, 1John 4:9. God made man in His own image and has paid a heavy price to keep man in fellowship with Himself. If we love God, we will value what He values, in the same way that our love for any other being causes us to be concerned about what is important to them. The way God feels about this matter is very well summed up in Matthew 25:40, “And the King [Jesus or God] will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”