

Beware of Vain Worship
Matthew 15:1-9

“Mission exists because worship doesn’t” (John Piper) The implication here is there are people worshipping the wrong thing or the wrong deity. Our job as missionaries in the culture is to get people into a relationship with the true God of the universe, so that they can worship and glorify him.

Last week we talked about worship; **Webster’s definition:** *The act of showing respect and love for a god; excessive admiration; reverence offered to a divine being.*

There is a right way to worship according to the words of Jesus. God expects people to worship him with authenticity, in spirit and truth. God is the one who determines how one should worship him. *Not everyone who attends a worship service truly worships God.* You may be going through the motions, but your heart may not be in it.

Jesus confronted the religious people of his day because their worship of God was empty, useless. **In the Beatitude Jesus condemned those who do things just to be noticed by others and he said, don’t be like them. (Matt.6:5-8)** When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the streets to be noticed, or they love to use meaningless repetitions thinking they will be heard because of their many words.

It is possible to have an image of being religious or spiritual, but actually be far from God. This was the case of the religious people of Jesus’ day.

Matt.15 tells us of another incident in which Jesus confronts the religious people and their way did things. **Matt.15:1-9 //Mark7**

The Pharisees came to Jesus and asked him why his disciples were breaking the traditions of the elders by eating without washing their hands. Let’s read **Mark 7:1-5** so that we have a better picture of these traditions.

These traditions are called **“The oral traditions”**

According to [Rabbinic Judaism](#), the **Oral Torah** or **Oral Law** ("Torah that is spoken") represents those laws, statutes, and legal interpretations that were not recorded in the Five Books of Moses.

The Mishna, "to study and review", also "secondary", is the first major written redaction of the Jewish oral traditions known as the "Oral Torah". It is also the first major work of Rabbinic literature.

The religious leaders were given their traditions more or equal importance than the commands of God.

Jesus responded the Pharisees with a question?

Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your traditions?

The example of how they were breaking the command to honor your father and mother.

By ignoring to take care of their parents with what they have. (v.4-5)

“Sorry, I can't help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.” NLT

They were nullifying God's command for the sake of their tradition. This is why Jesus had a problem with them and called them hypocrites.

Isaiah was right about you. These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." (v.8-9 // Isa.29:13

These religious people worship God with their lips but their hearts were far from God. They were far from God because they had abandoned God's command to teach their own interpretations, their own traditions.

Vain worship: focuses on the outside rather than the inside. They cared more about the outward appearance than the attitude of their heart.

Churches that place more emphasis on their rituals or traditions than God's word, you can be sure God doesn't even show up in their meetings.

When God's truth, his word is replaced by traditions, rituals and opinions, then Our worship becomes useless. These people were teaching their traditions as if they were God's own word. When you do things that are not according to God's standard then your worship is vain. There lots of people who want to interpret God's word according to their preference today, according to what they want it to say. ***This too is vain worship. Cancelling God's command for the sake of your preference or desires.***

It's possible to have an image of being religious or spiritual, but actually be far from God.

You may attend church, but your heart be far from the LORD

You may pray eloquently, but your heart be far from God.

You may contribute money to help others and your heart be far from God.

You may serve others and your heart be far from the LORD

You may read the Bible and even talk to others about Jesus and your heart still be far from God.

We must be aware that we don't worship God in vain. To worship the LORD in the right way, the way He asked, we must know what he laid out in Scripture and do it just as he prescribed. We don't have the right serve him or worship whichever way we like; we have to worship how he commands. Our worship must be in accordance to what God lays out in Scriptures otherwise it is useless.