

## Appendix

### What is an Act of Worship?

When someone does something kind to his fellow man it can be referred to as an “Act of kindness.” Likewise we commonly refer to an “Act of love,” “Act of violence,” etc. We will be using “Act of worship” in the same sense, that is, any act on our part which shows or demonstrates worship to God. Since the phrase “act of worship” is found in only one verse, in only one translation (NIV Romans 12:1), we will only discuss the phrase in English.

Most words in any language have more than one meaning. Just open any dictionary to any page and try to find a word with only one meaning. Only the context can determine which meaning is to be used.

In this paper an effort has been made to use the word *worship* consistently as Webster defines it:

"1 **a**) reverence or devotion for a deity" **or**

[which can be shown by individuals, outside the assembly, Matthew 14:33, 28:9, Romans 12:1, etc. -cb]

"**b**) a church service or other rite showing this."

[as “in the assembly,” Luke 1:10 or in church, Acts 13:2, 20:7, 1 Corinthians 14, Hebrews 10:25 -cb]

Therefore any action or act, physical or mental, on our part which shows or displays reverence or devotion to God would be an “act” of worship. When we observe others it is often impossible to know if they are performing an act of worship, since we cannot know their heart and their motive. Therefore we should concentrate on our own actions and be certain that we are truly worshipping in our efforts to serve God.

Sometimes the word *worship* is used in the sense of **a**, that is, anytime an individual does something for God or in obedience to God or demonstrating Christian principles outside the assembly, it could be seen as demonstrating "reverence or devotion to God," therefore would be thought of as "an act of worship" even though it was done outside the assembly. The word *Worship* occurs over 70 times in the New Testament, usually denoting action outside the assembly.

Can any act of worship by an individual, **outside** the assembly, also be acceptable to God **in** the assembly?

Most people should think of our private prayers as an act of worship. If, while outside the assembly, we sincerely sing a religious song while thinking clearly of the meaning of the words, could this be an act of private worship? If a believer does physical exercise while at all times thanking God for the great human bodies we all have and doing the best we can to take care of it, could this be considered giving reverence or devotion to the God who created it, thereby worshipping Him? Debating with any false teacher is obeying God, as exemplified several times in the book of Acts. Would this generally be considered giving reverence or devotion to God, therefore an act of worship? But could all these private acts of worship be repeated in the assembly? Most Christians would agree that having a false teacher proclaim his doctrine in a church worship assembly, even in a debate, would not be acceptable to God. Having several people vocalizing personal prayers at the same time, especially if others were singing at the same time, would certainly violate most of the instructions in chapter 14, especially verse 40: “But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.” Thus God has **added restrictions to the public assembly** that are not applicable to the private (individual) acts of worship outside the assembly. Is God even more specific than this in His directions regarding our acts of worship in the assembly? When we say “Act of worship” in the assembly we mean any action planned for the entire Christian audience to perform together as a group which shows respect or devotion to God.

Can we find enough evidence to prove that any valid private act of worship, demonstrating respect/love for God, can only be acceptable **in** the public worship assembly **if** it is specified by scripture? Let us consider the following four points in our effort to answer that question.

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**First**, let us look at Leviticus 10:1-3,

*1 ¶ Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command ["which the Lord did not command them" - Septuagint, ASV, KJV, ESP -cb]. 2 So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. 3 ¶ Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke of when he said: "Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored."" Aaron remained silent.*

Other versions say "Strange fire, unholy fire or profane fire" in describing the fire actually used by Aaron's sons. The point is: God is very particular about how we worship Him in the assembly, if God did specificize we can't generalize! God specified the type of fire to use, Nadab and Abihu should not have generalized the type of fire to anything other than what God specified! We can't add anything at all to God's specifications for worship in the assembly, else we could do things like: physical exercise, have instrumental music and religious debates, etc., as we worship together in the assembly. In the above example Nadab and Abihu simply lit their incense burners with a strange or unauthorized fire, that is, a fire from a different source than what God specified. Today God has specified singing, He did not specify any particular songs nor any attribute of singing, such as speed, frequency, volume (except properly and orderly), etc. so we choose any spiritual song and can vary our singing in speed, volume, frequency, etc. But we can't generalize to a different type of music, such as instrumental. I am sure we all understand that anytime God specifies anything, for example in public worship, we have the privilege to choose any **sub** category of the thing specified. We do not have the authority to choose a different choice in the same category. This is true of anything God specifies. For example God specified that a man can marry any woman. Any female will qualify as a possible mate without further restrictions, **BUT** we can not generalize man's mate to be any human being! All males and young females were prohibited by God when His specified "**woman.**"

Given Paul's admonition in Romans 15:4 ("*For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope,*") what can we learn from this story of Nadab and Abihu? They were told to use a specific fire. They could not add another fire to the list of approved fires! I am sure they thought the new fire was "just as good" as the one specified and probably said something like "It's no big deal, no one will ever know!!" They were wrong! If God did specificize we can't generalize!

**Second**, what did Paul say in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34,

*17 ¶ In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. ... 20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. 22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!*

*23 ¶ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

*27 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. 31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. 32 When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world. 33 So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. 34 If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.*

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There are many, many lessons to be learned from this passage, but we will restrict our comments here to the point Paul is making about their eating a meal with the Lord's Supper. This practice by the Corinthians was condemned and eliminated from the worship, verses 33 and 34.

The Corinthians had generalized the eating of the Lord's Supper into eating anything they wanted? How serious was their practice of adding an unauthorized act of eating a common meal to the worship? Please read again verses 27-30.

**27 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.**

Taking the Lord's Supper "in an unworthy manner," for example eating a common meal at the same time, had caused spiritual weakness, sickness and some to fall asleep. The most severe consequences, even spiritual death, could result from adding anything to God's specifications for Lord's Supper. Could this concern of God's be only for the communion, or is He equally concerned about all aspects of the public worship service?

If God did specificize we can't generalize! Does this imply that only *authorized* acts of worship can be practiced in the assembly?

**Third** Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 14:34 that women are to keep silent in all the congregations of the saints. Paul brought the Gospel to Corinth and stayed there for a year and a half. Because Paul was inspired he taught them how to worship correctly, using men for all public speaking. Maybe Paul assumed they would only do what he had told them to do in the assembly. God specified that men are to speak in the assembly. We cannot generalize this to include women. The women speaking in the assemblies is another example of something unauthorized and is therefore eliminated, again emphasizing "if God did specificize we can't generalize!"

**Fourth** Marriage was originated by God for the benefit of mankind. When two Christians marry they are honoring God by following His instructions, thanking Him for this great blessing, and especially for the new lifelong mate who will help them face the difficulties of life and enjoy the many blessings of our existence on this earth. Referring to God through prayer and Bible reading are included procedures in most Christian weddings. And the process is usually ended with something like "What God has joined together let no man separate." What a great example of showing "reverence or devotion" to God, therefore it is an "act of worship." Although most Christian marriages occur in a church building, can we all agree there is no authority to have a marriage ceremony conducted in the worship service? But if it is acceptable to God to have **any** act of worship in the public worship assembly, then marriage ceremonies must also be considered acceptable! Since God specified certain actions for Christians to perform in the worship assembly and at the same time eliminated certain other actions (eating a meal and women speaking and any action which is not "done in a fitting and orderly way.") how then can anyone generalize God's plan for public worship by adding any "Act of worship" not specified by God?

All these restrictions to our public worship are clear and exemplify the strictness God applies to the public assemblies. Therefore we cannot even consider adding anything to the assembly worship beyond what God specifies in His **complete and holy** word?

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Of course the Lord's Supper is only observed under the b definition of worship, that is, in the assembly according to Acts 20:7, and 1 Corinthians 11:17 ff. Whereas our praying, singing, speaking/preaching can be done **in** the assembly (1 Corinthians 14) or outside the assembly as exemplified in several scriptures in the New Testament.

This implies an interesting question. God has only specificized that the Lord's Supper be taken in the assembly, would it be acceptable for us to generalize God's procedure by taking it anywhere outside the assembly? If God did specificize can we generalize? No. But God can. God specified praying, singing and speaking in the assembly, and He also generalized those actions outside the assembly; singing: Acts 5:13 and James 5:13, praying and speaking/preaching: scriptures to numerous to list. There are no scriptures to generalize taking the Lord's supper outside the assembly.

Therefore the assembly must be planned at a set time in such a way as to be readily understood by the whole congregation, else how would we know when to abstain from eating our Sunday meals, and when to have women be silent?

Also 1 Corinthians 14:40 says "*But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way*" in context, is talking about specific actions **in** the assembly, implying a recognizable time frame. We must have a practical why to determine the time *the assembly* starts and stops. The only **specified** reason for our assemblies is to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7) through which we show reverence or devotion to God. The other acts of worship; singing, praying and speaking, are all **necessarily** implied by 1 Corinthians 14.

Paul says in chapter 11:17 the Corinthian's assembly did more harm than good, therefore **our** assembly **could** do more harm than good. One way to ensure our assemblies will be "harmful" is to have planned congregational actions during the assembly which are not authorized by scriptures, like the Corinthians did when they added a common meal or even when they did the approved actions in a non-orderly fashion. Look closely at verses 11:17-34 and the entire chapter 14 (especially verse 40) to see the many things Paul is correcting because they are harmful to the congregational worship.

Therefore, would it be reasonable to consider that only those acts of worship specified by scripture are acceptable to God **in** the assembly?

Please give close attention to these two verses, 2 Timothy 3:16-17,

*"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

If these two verses do not require scriptural justification for any planned/scheduled actions for all members during the congregational worship time, please explain why they do not. Our group worship as a church family certainly qualifies as a *good work*, therefore the **scriptures** will **thoroughly equip** us to do this in a manor acceptable to God. Therefore any action that is planned and intended for participation by all members in attendance must be scripturally specified, else it is an action not acceptable to God and must be left out of our worship as we come together in the assembly.

**If God did specificize, only He can generalize!**

**If God did not specificize something for the assembly, neither can we!!**