

Seeking God

Lesson 3: What It Means To Seek God



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

Seeking God

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Learn about seven things that are involved in truly seeking God

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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About the author: My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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Lesson 3:

What It Means To Seek God

You see, since God is the one we should be seeking, He is the one who can tell us exactly what is involved in seeking Him. So, we seek after God by giving Him exactly what He desires from our lives. In this lesson, I want to understand what this looks like in a general way. We'll be observing some of the essential elements that must be in the lives of those who desire to seek God – because these are the things He tells us are involved in seeking Him.

Have Faith In God

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Seeking God is central to living a life that is pleasing to God. But, what exactly does it mean to seek God? Perhaps Deuteronomy 10:12-13 is a good place to begin. “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?”

Although this instruction was given to the Israelites during the time the Law of Moses was in effect and is not the law that we live under today, it is a good place to begin. This passage still helps us to learn about how the God we have studied about has desired to be sought in the past by those who would be His people. And, as we will be observing during the course of this lesson, He still desires to be sought in these ways.

God wants those who seek Him to have faith in Him. In fact, there is no possible way to please this God without faith. Again, Hebrews 11:6 says, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Specifically, this passage identifies two essential ingredients in a faith that pleases God: Believing that He exists and believing that He will reward those who seek Him.

Believe that He exists

In fact, faith is all the evidence an individual needs to devote his/her life to seeking after God. Verse 1 of Hebrews 11 says that faith “is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Faith is the proper trust that we place in God’s reality and in the reality of His promises.

In lesson 1, we spent time examining the reality of this God’s existence. Particularly, Romans 1:19-22 helped us to see that we can be assured of God’s reality by observing the things God has created. In fact, this verse says that we can know about His “eternal power” and His Divine nature (“Godhead”) through the things He has made. So, God’s creation (i.e. the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the trees, the oceans, the rivers, the birds, the fish, the livestock, mankind, etc.) all present evidence of the fact that there is a God who possesses limitless power behind it all!

Reason demands that all of the things that exist around us must have had an origin. And, it is simply unreasonable to conclude that all of the order

that exists throughout this world happened by chance or accident. Psalm 14:1 says that it is only a fool who would draw such a conclusion about the existence of this universe and all the order in it. Instead of drawing such a foolish conclusion about the origin of the world, Psalm 19:1 says that the “heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.” So, as you observe everything in this universe, you can see marks of God’s handiwork throughout and be absolutely convinced that there is a God!

Then, not only must you believe that God exists; but, you must also believe that God is who He claims to be. Recognize that you are not given the liberty to make the great and awesome God who is Lord of heaven and earth into whatever you desire for Him to be. Instead, you must listen to what He has revealed about His nature.

For instance, there are some who want to make this great God into something they want Him to be rather than who He has declared Himself to be. So, they put their “faith” in a God who is all love and who overlooks all of the bad things people do. They fool themselves into thinking that this awesome God will not punish those who sin against Him. However, God has revealed that He is both a good and a severe God (see Romans 11:22). Yes, He has revealed that He is a God of love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness. But, He has also revealed that He will punish those who do not obey Him (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Therefore, you must put your trust in God – and trust that He is exactly who He claims to be!

Believe that He will reward those who seek Him

The kind of faith God requires of those who seek Him is more than just mentally accepting His reality. Hebrews 11:6 demonstrates that the second element to acceptable faith is to believe that He will reward those who diligently seek Him. So, acceptable faith involves the correct *response* to the reality of God. It is trust in God that leads us to *something*.

And, that *something* is obedience! Hebrews 11 contains many examples of this kind of true faith in God. Consider just a few of these examples with

me. By faith Abel offered a sacrifice that was pleasing to God (verse 4). By faith Noah moved with godly fear in order to prepare an ark for the saving of his household (verse 7). By faith Abraham obeyed God whenever God instructed Him to leave His homeland and go to the land God would give to Abraham’s descendants (verses 8-10). By faith Abraham offered Isaac on the altar whenever God tested him (verses 17-19). By faith Moses chose to suffer with God’s people rather than enjoy the temporary pleasures of sin in Egypt (verses 24-28). By faith the Israelites encircled the walls of Jericho so that they would collapse (verse 30).

Observe a key similarity in all of these examples of faith that are given in Hebrews 11. All of these demonstrate the two essential elements of true faith that pleases God identified in verse 6. They all were convinced in the reality of God *and* they acted upon the things God had instructed of them, knowing that there was a reward for seeking God! Surely, these individuals would not be commended as examples of faith if they had only believed in God’s existence. Just imagine. What if Abel believed in God but did not offer an acceptable sacrifice to God (i.e. like Cain did)? What if Noah believed in God but did not build an ark? What if Abraham believed in God but did not leave his homeland or sacrifice Isaac on the altar? What if Moses believed in God but chose to stay in Egypt and enjoy the pleasures of sin? What if the Israelites believed in God but chose not to march around the city of Jericho?

Instead of viewing faith as only being a mental acceptance of God’s reality, we must have the faith that these individuals actually had in Hebrews 11. Yes, they were absolutely convinced of God’s reality. But, they did not stop there. Instead, because they were convinced of God’s reality and had full trust in what God had said, they obeyed.

You see, acceptable faith clearly is a full conviction in God that acts in obedience to God. This is the faith of the one who is seeking God. Without this kind of faith that is put into action, an individual simply cannot please God! Note that we will talk more about faith only in lesson 6.

Fear God

God wants those who seek Him to fear Him. In fact, not only is fearing God a *part* of seeking God, it is a core part of living according to our God-given purpose on earth. In Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, the writer of the book of Ecclesiastes concluded the following about the true purpose of mankind on this earth: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.”

Two elements involved in fearing God

Think back to lesson 1. Certainly, the God we studied about is a God we should fear. After all, He is the Almighty, All-Knowing, Ever-Present God who will judge us some day. Yes, as revealed by Ecclesiastes 12, this God wants you to fear Him. But, what exactly does it mean to fear God? Let’s consider two essential elements involved in properly fearing God.

First, you must possess a reverential respect for this God. Indeed, you should stand in awe of the one true and living God. There is none more powerful or more authoritative than the Lord of heaven and earth! So, in recognition of the true greatness of this God, you should live your life with respect and honor for Him. You should recognize that He has complete authority in every aspect of life. And, you should fully submit yourself to His authority.

Second, you must possess a terror of this God. You should consider what it means to violate the laws and commandments this God has established by His authority, recognizing that He will judge you one Day for how you have lived in comparison with His law. Therefore, the Hebrew writer warned, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31). You see, this God (as we considered in lesson 2) has said that there will be consequences for those who fail to live their lives according to His authority. Therefore, after considering the fact that all mankind will stand before Jesus Christ in judgment, the apostle Paul

wrote, “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences” (2 Corinthians 5:11).

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling

Just as we observed with regard to faith, God does not want you to fear Him – and do nothing with this fear! Instead, a true fear of God will lead you to living your life in the way God desires you to live. The apostle Paul instructed the Philippian Christians to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).

Like the Philippians, God expects each of us to work out our own salvations with fear and trembling. This implies that we do not just seek God for salvation in any way we *feel* is right. Instead, we make the appropriate applications of respecting God and His ultimate authority by living our lives in full submission to the things He has instructed. And, a terror of rebelling against the authority of this great God ought to continuously motivate us to do everything we can do to keep His commandments!

Throughout the pages of the Bible, we can observe numerous examples of both those who feared God and those who did not fear God. Those who feared Him respected Him and the authority that He had. Knowing the consequences of violating His instructions, they obeyed Him. However, those who did not fear Him did not demonstrate respect for God’s authority and were not afraid of the consequences God promised for disobedience. Therefore, they would not listen to God.

Love God

God wants those who seek Him to love Him. In fact, whenever Jesus was asked which commandment was the greatest commandment in the law, Jesus responded, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment” (Matthew 22:37-38). Today, loving

God is no less important than loving God was at that time.

We love God because He first loved us

In fact, we should even be driven to greater love for God today because we can know the great love God has shown for mankind. Though God has demonstrated His love for mankind in many ways throughout the years, there has been no greater demonstration of love than in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. In this sacrifice, God willingly sent His only begotten Son to this earth to be despised by the world, falsely accused, arrested, beaten, spat on, mocked, and nailed to a cross in execution so that those who had failed to seek Him could be forgiven of their sins, saved from the eternal punishment they deserved to experience, and have everlasting life with Him in Heaven (see John 3:16)!

Therefore, 1 John 4:19 says, “We love Him because He first loved us.” By the love God has shown for us, we learn about what it means to truly love God. We learn that the love of God was not just a love that was shown in word – but a love that was demonstrated in sacrificial action! It was a love that put others ahead of oneself. Think about it. It cost God dearly to send His only Son to earth and watch Him suffer and die. But, He was willing to sacrifice in this way because He knew mankind desperately needed a Savior – and would not have any way to be saved without this kind of sacrifice. So, God sacrificially put the needs of mankind before His own desires.

Two essential elements to loving God

Certainly, we should respond in love toward this one who demonstrated such great love for us. But, how can we love God? Since God’s love for mankind was not just a verbal pronouncement, our love for God must go further than that also! In fact, we are taught that God’s love ought to control our actions, resulting in giving our lives entirely to the one who gave His life for us (see 2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Consider two essential elements, then, to having a love that pleases God.

First, we must keep His commandments. After all, what good would claiming to love God be

if we did not do the things that He said? In John 14:15, Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Notice that keeping God’s commandments is a test to see if we truly love God or not. In fact, it is unreasonable to believe that we truly love God if we are willing to put our own desires above God’s desires! Instead, true love for God is seen whenever we are willing to put the desires of God above our own.

Second, we must not view the commandments of God to be burdensome. 1 John 5:3 says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” So, it is not enough to merely go through the motions of keeping God’s commandments. For, it is not true love if you are grumbling and complaining about God’s commandments while you are trying to keep them! Instead, just as it was “according to the good pleasure” of God’s will to provide Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for the world (Ephesians 1:5), you must willingly and joyfully accomplish the will of God in your life.

Sacrifice To God

God wants those who seek Him to sacrifice to Him. In fact, even a casual observance of the Bible should be able to conclude that God’s people frequently offered sacrifices to God. In the Old Testament, this primarily included sacrifices involving animals and crops. But, even though the nature of the sacrifice has changed in the New Testament, the principle of sacrifice remains the same. The sacrifice of the one who is seeking God today involves presenting your body as a “living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

What it means to sacrifice to God

What are the principles involved in sacrificing to the God who is Lord of Heaven and earth? Certainly, such a God is worthy of much more than we could ever offer Him in a sacrifice!

Therefore, God has always required the best of what mankind can offer Him.

Recognize that God has always demanded the best and the “firsts” of what mankind has to sacrifice. Under the Law of Moses, the Israelites were told to offer animal sacrifices that were without blemish/ flaw. That is, they were not to make sacrifices of their sickly or deformed animals. Instead, God wanted them to offer Him the best of their flocks. In addition, the Israelites were also required to make an offering from the first crops of their fields.

Therefore, sacrifices that are made to God are expected to cost mankind something. We must not give God the “leftovers” of our lives after we have spent the best and firsts on things that please ourselves. Instead, we must put God absolutely first in our lives.

Consider the example of David in 2 Samuel 24. After David had sinned and determined that he needed to make a sacrifice to God, David sought to buy the provisions necessary for the sacrifice. However, the individual David sought to buy these from offered to simply give the provisions for the sacrifice to the king. Yet, consider David’s response in verse 24: “No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing.”

What our sacrifice to God must look like

Yes, God is worthy of much more than sacrifices that cost us little or nothing. In fact, a number of New Testament passages help us to understand that God requires much more than that from our sacrifices. Again, consider Romans 12:1. The nature of the sacrifice God wants from each one of those who seek Him is the sacrifice of our entire lives. Yes, our bodies are to be presented to God as living sacrifices that are according to His desires and expectations.

Other passages help us to understand the same thing. Matthew 6:33 instructs that we seek God absolutely first in our lives. Luke 9:23-26 instructs that we deny ourselves and follow Jesus Christ to the point that we are even willing to suffer and die for Him. Luke 14:25-27 and 33 instructs that Jesus

Christ be put absolutely first in our lives (even ahead of our physical possessions, family members, and our lives). And, Luke 9:57-62 teaches that once we begin to sacrifice our lives to God we must not turn away from Him.

So, this is a complete sacrifice of our lives to God. In seeking the God who is Lord of Heaven and earth, we give the best our lives have to offer Him and put Him absolutely first. And, everything that is involved in our lives is included in this sacrifice. Our time must be sacrificed to God according to these principles of acceptable sacrifice – as well as our money, our energy, our relationships, our possessions, etc. We give it all to the one who created us and sacrificed His only begotten Son for us so that we could live eternally with Him!

Obey God

God wants those who seek Him to obey Him. This has been an essential principle to so many of the things we have already been discussing. The following statement made about Ezra should be helpful in seeking after God ourselves. Ezra 7:10 says, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.” Yes, people who have sought God throughout history have always been required to obey the things God instructed of them.

Without obedience, we cannot please God

Although it is true that we cannot seek God by trying to earn our way to Him through our meritorious works (see Ephesians 2:8-9), God *does* still demand our obedient works. Recall that Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 said that fearing God and keeping His commandments are included in the whole duty of mankind. Also, Hebrews 5:9 states that Jesus Christ has become “the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.”

God, in His great authority, has given mankind a law to live by that perfectly directs mankind into the ways He desires us to live (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17). How, then, could we expect to seek this God’s favor if we are unwilling to obey His

instructions? We simply cannot! Therefore, James instructed, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22). Quite simply, we do deceive ourselves into thinking that we are seeking God whenever we know the right things but do not make the appropriate applications of them to our lives.

We must submit ourselves to God

The issue of obedience is the issue of submission. To “submit” is to yield oneself to the desires of another. Specifically, this is what God commands of those who seek Him. James 4:7 says, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

Submitting to God requires that we recognize His ways as best. For, in order to yield our own desires to the desires of God, we will necessarily be denying ourselves of our own pleasures and desires. So, Proverbs 3:5-6 teaches us to trust in God with all of our hearts, refuse to lean on our own understandings, and acknowledge Him in all our ways so that He will direct our paths.

All of this means that we must recognize the need to place more emphasis on obeying God’s instructions during the course of our lives than we do on our own selfish physical desires and ambitions. Whatever God tells us to do, we must obey! Then, as we have already discussed, our obedience to God’s commandments must not be viewed as a burdensome thing (1 John 5:3).

Serve God

God wants those who seek Him to serve Him. In a continuation of the previous point, God wants us to make a clear decision in our lives as to whom we will serve. Like Joshua, God wants those who seek Him to declare that “we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). You see, Joshua recognized that people will serve something/someone in their lives. The question is simply: “Who/what will you serve?” Certainly, those who desire to seek God must make the decision to serve Him – and Him only.

From a servant of sin to servant of righteousness

Romans 6 describes the transformation that those who have become Christians have experienced. At one time in their lives, they were servants of sin and unrighteousness (i.e. things that were contrary to God’s holy ways). At this time, they were using their bodies to serve their own ungodly desires rather than accomplishing the will of God in their lives. However, this kind of service was only going to result in spiritual death (see verses 21 and 23).

However, while they were slaves of sin, they obeyed the teachings (doctrines) of God and were “set free from sin” to become “slaves of righteousness.” And, rather than serving a master that would result in spiritual death, serving God would result in holiness and everlasting life (see verses 22-23). Then, while serving this new master of God’s righteousness, consider what verses 12-13 conclude about how we must use our physical bodies. “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

Must serve God only

As Romans 6:12-13 helps us to see, the lives that we live (if we desire to seek God) must be entirely devoted to the service of God by accomplishing the things that are right in His sight. We must consider ourselves His servants/slaves to be used in whatever way He desires. We must not consider our bodies to be our own to use to fulfill our own desires. Instead, we must recognize that we have been purchased with the precious blood of Jesus Christ and we should dedicate our entire lives in the service of the one who loved us and gave Himself to die for us (see 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)!

Yet, there are many times folks try to serve God while they also attempt to serve their own selfish desires. They try to use their bodies to accomplish both. But, Jesus said that it is an impossibility to serve God and serve another master. Matthew 6:24 records, “No one can serve two

masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

It is the same principle as we observed regarding the kind of sacrifice we must make to God. We must recognize that God’s service comes first – because He has sacrificed His only Son to ransom us from slavery to sin. Therefore, our bodies must always be prepared to carry out the things He requires of us in His service. Anytime we know how He wants us to serve Him and we choose to do something else, we fail to honor Him as our Master! Instead, we choose to serve a different master in our lives.

Worship God

God wants those who seek Him to worship Him. To worship God is the idea of bowing your heart in an expression of reverence before God. Consider what Jesus said in John 4:23-24: “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” So, not only do we learn from this passage that God is seeking those who will worship Him; but, we learn that there are two essential elements involved in worshiping God in the way He desires to be worshiped – worshiping Him in spirit and in truth.

Worship God in spirit

The expression of our worship to God requires that we recognize God is Spirit. Jesus plainly stated that “God is Spirit” in John 4:24. The conclusion is that we must worship Him in spirit. Though individuals could physically bow before and express their worship to Jesus while He lived on this earth (Matthew 28:11 says that two women held Jesus by His feet and worshiped Him), God does not exist in human form to worship Him in that way now.

Now, it requires the spiritual element of man to be engaged in worship. You see, as we discussed in lesson 2, God created mankind in His own image (see Genesis 1:26-27). Numerous Bible passages

help us to understand that this means mankind has been created with a spiritual existence (a soul). Therefore, of all God’s earthly creation, it is only mankind who is able to express worship to God. In fact, man (as a spiritual being) longs to worship. Unfortunately, mankind has often worshiped the wrong object or has failed to worship God acceptably.

The necessary element of worshiping God in spirit, then, requires that we be fully engaged in our expressions of worship. Since God does not exist in the flesh, we must bow our hearts before the awesome God. We must not just be going through the motions of an external act of worship – while allowing our hearts to be far away from God (as condemned in Matthew 15:8-9). Instead, we must be focused on whatever we are doing. For instance, when we sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in worship to God, we must be focused on the words and meanings of those songs and not focused on the melody or some other thing!

Worship God in truth

The expression of our worship to God also requires us to recognize that God has revealed an objective standard of truth. We cannot express our worship to God in just any way or corrupt the true nature of God. Instead, John 17:17 says that God’s word is truth. And, John 8:32 says that it is God’s truth that will set us free from sin. Yes, God has revealed His word of truth in the pages of the Bible.

Then, consider what Paul stated in Colossians 3:17. “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” God’s word reveals the standard for all things in our lives. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says that the Scriptures (which have been given by inspiration of God) are profitable “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Everything God wants us to be doing that pleases Him can be found within the pages of the Bible (His word of truth). Therefore, in everything that we do, we must have Bible authority! This is the only way to know that what we are doing pleases God.

Furthermore, this general truth must be applied specifically to our worship. We can only please God in our worship if what we are doing has Bible authority behind it! Otherwise, it is self-imposed worship (worship we are trying to force God to accept). Again, recognize that God has told us (in His word of truth) exactly what pleases Him in worship. If we decide to offer Him something He does not want, how can we please Him through our worship? We simply cannot. As an example of this principle, God has authorized singing as an expression of worship to Him. Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." However, in addition to the authorized action of singing, many people have attempted to worship God by using a mechanical instrument of music. Yet, God has not authorized the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship anywhere in the pages of the New Testament (which governs God's people today). Simply put: Anything that is according to God's standard of truth for worship is acceptable to Him. But, anything that He has not authorized is not acceptable to Him for worship!

Conclusion

Seeking God involves a complete commitment to God. Hopefully, you have been impressed by the simple fact that we cannot seek God without fully committing ourselves to and trusting in Him. He does not ask more of us than we are able to give to Him. But, He also will not accept any less from us than we are capable of giving Him!

So, will you commit yourself to seeking God in this complete way? Will you choose to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33)? Or, will you choose to only partially seek after Him? If you choose the latter, please recognize that God will not accept your service – because it is not God you are really seeking in your life!

Study Questions

How does Deuteronomy 10:12-13 help you learn about seeking God?

1. Have Faith In God

How can we believe that He exists?

How does acceptable faith include the proper response to the reality of God?

2. Fear God

What two elements are essential to fearing God?

How will the fear of God motivate us to the proper action?

3. Love God

Why should we love God?

What does it mean to love God?

4. Sacrifice To God

What does it mean to sacrifice to God?

What should our sacrifice look like?

5. Obey God

Why will you fail to please God if you do not obey Him?

What does it mean to submit to God?

6. Serve God

What transformation is explained in Romans 6?

Does God accept our service if we also attempt to serve someone/something other than Him?

7. Worship God

What does it mean to worship God in spirit?

What does it mean to worship God in truth?