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Don't Forget God

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Don't Forget God

Abstract

"All of life *is* worship, but can we draw a distinction between glorifying God through our lives and the intentional activity of practicing worship? My answer is yes."

Posting about worshipping God from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/dont-forget-god/>

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Don't Forget God

 [inallthings.org/dont-forget-god/](https://allthings.org/dont-forget-god/)

Jonathan De Groot

The practice of what I call “intentional worship” is ascribing worth to, paying homage to, and confessing the character of God. This activity is done through a myriad of mediums, most commonly found in song, prayer, silence, writing, litany, preaching, or any way that intentionally acknowledges the God of scripture. This practice also ought to be done through a commitment of our affections as expressed toward God in body and spirit. Yet, it is just as important to know *why* we participate in this activity we call worship as knowing *what* intentional worship is.

It seems weird, doesn't it? The holy, sovereign, all-powerful God of the universe in whose name we claim to receive salvation regularly gets cognitive and emotional dismissal in the everyday business of life. I forget about God all of the time! Obviously, we would consider the continuous, perceptive calling to mind or fixated imagination of God an absurd impossibility. But God knew this and that is why the scriptures implore the practice of *God recollection*, more commonly known as worship.¹ We are called to engage in the practice of what I now call “intentional” worship. I am not drawing a distinction between the sacred and secular, nor am I trying to establish some activities as holier than others. *Coram Deo*, I am Reformed. But I also don't believe that multitasking is possible. And while all of our activities can be considered worship, if we go too long without cognitive recollection of God's character or respond in emotive affection to God's promises, we forget.

All of life *is* worship, but can we draw a distinction between glorifying God through our lives and the intentional activity of practicing worship? My answer is yes.

I love my wife, and as her husband I am married 24 hours a day. I suppose you could say that “all of my life is married love.” I am not less married when I am at work. I want the work I do to represent my husbandry well because it is part of my role of loving our family. Nor am I less “in-love” when I am away from my wife. However, if I decide to live at my office and never come home, or only come home occasionally for sleep and a meal, I would quickly forget “why” I am married and what is good about married love. The longer I am away, the easier it will be for my time and energy to be drawn into other things (or people). It is through regularly engaging my wife and the development of our relationship that our “married love” is given any meaning.

But it is more than relationship. Let me take it one step further. I think the contemporary understanding of worship has become enmeshed with having a personal relationship with God. This also, I think, needs distinction. A relationship with God is imperative, both communally *and* individually. And I certainly believe there are different ways of relating to God—hearing God's voice and experiencing the Lord's presence. But I fear that this is often substituted for the intentional activity of worship. When we have a relationship with God but neglect the practice of intentional worship, we can fall prey into making God into our own image (or twisting him into the relatable God that we want).

I am convinced that even the intentional activity of gathering corporately each week in Jesus' name requires a distinction from the intentional activity of worship. If we gather to sing songs *about* God, hear a message *about* God and pray prayers of intercession *to* God, has the intentional activity of worship occurred? Not necessarily. I do think there is some vague element of worship in the sheer commitment of dutiful church attendance. But how often do we consider what actually happens when we gather?

The word worship is relatively broad. Even Webster's dictionary takes several angles and has etymologically shifted its meaning through the years. It has a far-reaching cultural interpretation, including exercising religious rituals something akin to “going to church.” *We are* the church – we don't *go* there. (I have even heard pastors ask each other: “How many people is your church worshipping on a Sunday morning?” What!?) I think a reexamining of

meaning and purpose might be in order here. Maybe we need to make up a new word.

But let's get back to the problem. We forget God. God: our Father in heaven, the Sovereign, All-Powerful, King of the Universe, Incarnate and Resurrected God-man who offers himself to us through his Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. One would think God hard to forget. Perhaps a more fitting response to a deity with the supremacy who we claim to worship ought to look like indefinite, face-first groveling on the ground, begging for mercy, crying out for one moment of his time.

Instead, God says: "Come to me... in fact, I'll come to you first."

How do we still forget?

We participate in worship as a spiritual discipline so we don't forget – or at least so that our forgetting lessens. If our personal lives and corporate gatherings do not include a substantial amount of intentional worship, we run the risk of forgetting God. Leslie Newbigin says of worship in the Christian community that: "It will be a community of praise. That is, perhaps, its most distinctive character. Praise is an activity which is almost totally absent from "modern" society." We worship God because he is worthy and good and because we are a forgetful people.

Footnotes

1. Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 8:11, I Chronicles 16:15, Isaiah 51:12, Jeremiah 20:9, Judges 8:33-34, Psalms 9:11, 27:4, 50:22, 95:6, John 4:23-24, Hebrews 13:15, Colossians 3:14-17, Revelation 2:4-5 ↩