

S T U D Y G U I D E



# The God We Worship

THE OLD TESTAMENT NAMES OF GOD

by R.C. Sproul



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LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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# The God We Worship

## INTRODUCTION

Why do you go to your church? Is it because of *how* your church worships, or *who* your church worships? How well do you know the character of the God of the Bible? In this lesson, Dr. Sproul helps us understand the correlation between our knowledge of God and the degree to which we can worship Him rightly.

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To emphasize the importance of knowing the character of God
2. To recognize the necessity of worship and how it stimulates both the head and heart

## SCRIPTURE READING

*So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man."*

—Acts 17:22–24

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. According to a poll, when people stop attending church, it's usually because they think church is boring and irrelevant.
  1. The biggest single reason why worship has become boring and irrelevant to multitudes of people is their attitude toward theology.
    - a. Theology has become an obscene word in our day because people do not want to be bothered with studying it.
    - b. Theology itself means the doctrine of God.

2. Boredom during a worship service is a problem we all face.
  - a. It is difficult for us to maintain a spirit of continual, ongoing worship.
  - b. If we really knew anything about the character of God, we would not yawn and consider Him dull and uninteresting.
  - c. Being created in the image of God means in part that we have been created with a built-in capacity, desire, and need to worship God.
  
- B. Even in our depravity, we express a proclivity and penchant for worship.
  1. The basic sin of man is an idolatry that exchanges the glory of the immortal God for the perishable things of creation (Rom. 1:18–23).
  2. Everywhere you go, you find people worshiping, even if it is distorted, sinful, or corrupt worship.
    - a. It almost seems as though we find people worshiping everywhere but in church on Sunday morning.
    - b. Paul Tillich said, “God is that which concerns us ultimately.”
  
- C. The Apostle Paul went to Athens, the cultural center of the ancient world, in Acts 17.
  1. Paul engaged in dialogue and debate with the philosophers of Athens at the Aeropagus.
    - a. Paul’s spirit was provoked by the idolatrous practices of the Athenians.
    - b. Just like people today, residents of Athens enjoyed talking about new things because they were not considered boring nor irrelevant.
    - c. Paul addressed the superstitious nature of an altar dedicated to an unknown god, which became primarily used for socializing.
  2. There are consequences when God is not known intimately and remains ambiguous, amorphous, and undefined.
    - a. When all a society has left is an altar to an unknown God used for human social activity, it inevitably turns to idolatry.
    - b. People cannot worship God in a way that is exciting, passionate, and moving if they do not know anything about Him.
    - c. No one gets excited about singing praises to or pouring out one’s heart and soul in confession before an unknown god.
    - d. The reason why the church is perceived to be irrelevant is because the people are not hearing the message of the character of God.
  
- D. We are called to worship God in spirit and in truth.
  1. We need to make sure that our doctrine is sound and our teaching is right.
    - a. Sometimes our worship comes across as very dull and cold, leaving no room for the expression of the heart.
    - b. We are commanded to love God with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength.

- c. Worship that is of the heart but not the head as well as worship that is of the head but not the heart is a truncated form of worship.
- d. Both dimensions of our personality are to be engaged in worship.
2. Biblical worship is God's revealing Himself to us beyond intellectual doctrine.
  - a. Once you truly understand who God is in your head, then your heart will have a capacity to respond to Him in worship.
  - b. The reason to study the character of God is to have a deeper capacity to respond to Him in praise, love, adoration, reverence, and service.
  - c. If you understand who God is and what He is like, then the doctrine of Scripture, the doctrine of Christ, and everything else fall into place.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The biggest single reason that worship has become boring and irrelevant to multitudes of people is the problem of which of the following?
  - a. Hymns
  - b. Liturgy
  - c. Sermons
  - d. Theology
2. According to Romans 1, the basic sin of man is which of the following?
  - a. Adultery
  - b. Blasphemy
  - c. Covetousness
  - d. Idolatry
3. When the Apostle Paul visited Athens in Acts 17, he addressed the philosophers and their altar to which of the following?
  - a. A known god
  - b. An unknown god
  - c. The Greek gods
  - d. The Hebrew God
4. People cannot worship God in a way that is exciting, passionate, and moving if they do not know anything about Him.
  - a. True
  - b. False
5. We are called to worship God in spirit and which of the following?
  - a. Prayer
  - b. Song
  - c. Truth
  - d. Zeal

6. Dr. Sproul is convinced that the greatest issue in theology is today is which of the following?
  - a. The authority of Scripture
  - b. The character of God
  - c. The doctrine of Christ
  - d. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What would you say to someone who finds going to church to be boring or irrelevant? What have you personally done to overcome your own feelings about worship?
2. What did Paul Tillich mean by saying that “God is that which concerns us ultimately”? Are there things that compete with your worship or regular church attendance?
3. What are some consequences of knowing about God but not knowing Him intimately? What are some examples of doctrine’s becoming idolatrous?
4. Is it humanly possible to love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength? How can someone know if he is fully worshiping God as He expects?



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