



The Wholistic Worship Model

All of life can be found in worship to God. The tendency to segregate or fragment life into component parts for analysis not only robs life, but destroys it. For example, pulling each petal off of a flower in order to compare them with one another might leave the examiner with the best petal, but no longer with a flower.

The Wholistic Worship Model envisions all of life as worship. This includes scheduled gatherings for corporate worship, serving others, eating and sleeping, conversing, observing life, cleaning toilets, and even dozing while meditating. God doesn't show up at church and leave us on our own during the week. An awareness of holy ground impacts how we treat others at all times and in all situations, and perceives God where others miss him. Integrity increases with integration, forming a model that can be understood as the opposite of hypocrisy.

Biblical Basis

Romans 12:1-2 presents the expected response to God's saving action described in the first 11 chapters of Romans. The word "therefore" alerts the reader to this. The expected response comes in the form of a life fully dedicated to God, which is our "reasonable service." In contemporary terms we would label this as living for God 24/7 (24 hours a day; 7 days a week—all the time!).

Humans tend to highlight certain elements and downplay others. Seventh-day Adventists

are guilty of this when they boast of worshiping God on the "right day" (the 7th day as prescribed in Scripture—Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11 and emulated by Jesus—Luke 4:16), but fail to worship him on the other six days. Isaiah 58:13-14 calls for proper Sabbath observance. But the context of the first 12 verses describes God's people who make a show of pious actions but fail to treat others well or even with decency. God promises to start listening when they start to care for others instead of merely going through the motions at church. The first chapter of Isaiah presents the same argument (Isaiah 1:11-20).

Jesus made a similar indictment of the religious leaders in his own day by quoting Isaiah 29:13 regarding lip service rather than heart commitment and action (Matthew 15:1-14). Matthew 23 records repeated denunciations by Jesus directed to the hypocritical religious leaders. In contrast, the instructions about how to live for God can be found in Christ's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Instead of limiting God to a place and time, we expect to see him at all

times and in all places, even when it might not seem obvious that he is present (Matthew 25:31-46).

What It Looks Like

You should expect identifiable gatherings for corporate worship, but this model expands beyond the limits of these events. Camp meeting counts, but so does the month after camp meeting. Sabbath counts, but so do Tuesday and Thursday. Time at church counts, as does time at home and time at school and time at work. How we treat God counts, in the same way that how we treat others counts.

Imagine what it would be like to have a meal with Jesus himself. This model presents all meals in this way. Grace before a meal moves from a formality to actually being thankful to God for what he has provided.

The question could be asked, "Where did you see Jesus today?" Participants begin to look for God and to see him in unexpected places, people, and activities.

Based on an understanding and acceptance that all we have and all that we are belongs to God, we set out to serve God on a daily basis rather than working for a boss, seeking one's personal advancement or agenda, or feeding the insatiable ego. Because of God's gift of salvation, we relate to God, to each other, to nature, and to society at large with a Godly devotion and personal sacrifice in all matters and in all situations. Expect this to be perceived as "over the top" or well beyond what one needs to do, or even a waste of resources.

Keys To Make It Work

The primary key to make this work is full acceptance of Christ's gift of salvation. The new creation of 2 Corinthians 5:17 often erodes back to "normal" instead of living a "new normal." A focus on God's gift and gifts

makes keeping score and pigeon-holing people into hierarchies a superfluous waste. Participants will need to renew this orientation or else they are apt to slide back into compartmentalized living common to most people.

The other key is to sacrifice repeatedly. The sacrifice on the altar of burnt offering was consumed. But a "living sacrifice" means offering it again and again and again! How many times? As long as God's gift continues. Such focused abandon to live for Jesus will seem odd and displaced by others, but it will provide constant communion with God for the ones in perpetual sacrifice who worship unceasingly!

Obstacles

Perhaps the biggest obstacle would be well-meaning religious people who recommend balance rather than abandonment to God. Ask yourself if God provided balance by emptying heaven in the gift of Jesus to this world. Your response comes from God's gift, not reasonable or measured doses of goodness.

The tendencies to conserve and compartmentalize pose persistent obstacles to this model. Being conservative is all about saving or conserving rather than giving or releasing. The words of Jesus on conserving money (Matthew 6:19-21; 31-33) and conserving one's life or soul (Matthew 16:24-26) illustrate how liberal God has been as a model for us.

Compartmentalization enables us to commit portions to God and still keep other parts for ourselves, even when done respectably (Mark 7:8-13). Those unable to see the big picture will naturally compartmentalize life. Those who can perceive a broader view will change, based on integrity and devotion.

Opportunities

The most positive thing about this model is to live in constant communion with God and to be about his business. It frees the follower of the traps and distractions the world has to offer. By living in full devotion to God, one's heart resides in heaven while one's body carries out the will of God on earth. Your heart will rejoice with the things that cause God to rejoice, and you will weep at the things that make God weep. You'll be out of this world, and yet in the world in ways that confuse and baffle those who fail to march to the drumbeat you keep hearing.

