

# HEBREWS

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## Lesson 5: Service in the Church w/Answers

Hebrews 13, 1 Peter 2

As we continue our study in Hebrews, we will continue to look at the two primary things that we as Christians are called to do: worship and service. As we learned in the previous lesson, Christ specifically pointed both of these out as key activities in the life of every follower.

In the previous lesson, we also observed from our examination of the Seraphs (or angels) in Isaiah's vision that the proper relationship between worship and service could be deduced from their wings. With four wings they worshipped (i.e., in humility before God as they covered their faces and their feet) and with two wings they served (flew). This perhaps indicates to us that worship can be inferred to be as twice as important as service, or should be done twice as much—or at a minimum that worshipping God is more important than service. This is something that flies in the face of many contemporary churches today, where worship is downplayed and service is elevated.

In this lesson, we will examine the priesthood—a perfect biblical example of worship and service—as we look to see what is meant by service, or serving the Lord. How can we do this? What does the Bible tell us? How can we both be a worshipper and serve God without upsetting the balance between the two? Better yet, how can we incorporate worship into our acts of service?

In both the tabernacle and the temple, we note that before the High Priest can approach God, he had to go through various steps to clean and purify himself, as well to offer an acceptable sacrifice before God.

In this lesson, we will examine some of the many duties, or acts of service, performed by the temple priests. These include, for example, lighting the lamps, keeping the sacred fire burning, covering furniture when the tabernacle was moved, burning incense, offering sacrifices, blessing the people, purifying the unclean, diagnosing leprosy, blowing the trumpets, carrying the ark, and teaching the law; these were ways that the priests served the Lord. And finally, consider this: they served both within the Temple, the inner court, and the outer court.

From this picture can you begin to see some parallels with our responsibilities in worship and service today? Can you see, for example, that when you worship God within your heart (just between you and God), you are essentially in the "inner court," and when you worship God with others, you are symbolically in the "outer court." Correspondingly then, in order to draw near to God—to enter the Holy of Holies—we must have Christ as our High Priest. This is necessary because he has already made the acceptable sacrifice and stands for you, interceding on your behalf, so that you may boldly approach God's throne. No wonder we should spend more time in worship. What a celebration! Our sins are forgiven, our debts are paid, and God is great and worthy to be praised.

Now, what is our reasonable act of service?

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*Let's see what we can learn in this lesson using the study questions below.*

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1. Read Numbers 18:7. What does it tell us about the service of a priest?
  - a. ANSWER: It is described as a gift from God—a gift. Have you ever thought of that, that the opportunity to serve is a gift from God? And what a marvelous gift at that! If we can begin to see it as a gift, we will appreciate all of the service opportunities that God places before us. We have the opportunity to represent God and His Son Jesus to both believers and non-believers alike. What a true blessing.

2. What does Peter tell us about our new role as a Christian in 1 Peter 2:5 and 2:9?
    - a. ANSWER: He indicates that we are "to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."
  3. In 1 Peter 2:5, what does Peter tell us that we are to do?
    - a. ANSWER: He instructs us that we are to "declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."
  4. How often are we to do it?
    - a. ANSWER: We are to do this continually, without interruption, always praising him and offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. Peter goes on to tell us that we are live our lives in this manner so that we are constant witnesses for Christ to the world around us: "...I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." (1 Peter 2:11-12, NIV).
  5. What are some examples of spiritual sacrifices evident in the verses below?
    - a. Hebrews 13:15-16
      - i. ANSWER: Praising God openly, and verbally professing the name of Jesus and praising him for all that he has done. We are also to "do good" and to "share with others." These are the sacrifices that please God.
    - b. Psalm 141:2
      - i. ANSWER: Our prayers are important to God and reflect our relationship with Him through Jesus.
    - c. Psalm 51:16-17
      - i. ANSWER: Coming before God, humble in spirit, with an open heart, keeping nothing from him, and with the realization that it is only through the shed blood of Christ that we are allowed in God's presence—nothing that that we ourselves have done enables this. This, too, is pleasing to God. (See also Ephesians 2:8.)
  6. As we are called to be a royal priesthood, how are we to live, i.e., to serve as priests? What specific instructions are we given? Read the following two passages: 1 Peter 2:11-17 and all of Hebrews Chapter 13 (v.1-17), and list the specific things that we are told either to do or to not do. Then note also those things that are repeated in both passages.
    - a. 1 Peter 2:11-17
      - i. ANSWER: In this passage, we are told to abstain from sinful desires, and live good lives among unbelievers, this testifying of the glory of God and Jesus who saved us. We are also instructed to follow the laws of the land and to submit to human authority. We are to live as "free people...to show proper respect to everyone...to love the family of believers, to fear God, and honor the emperor."
    - b. Hebrews 13:1-17
      - i. ANSWER: Hebrews 13 teaches us to love one another, to show hospitality to strangers, and to remember those in prison as well as those who are mistreated. We are to honor the institution of marriage, live sexually moral lives, and avoid immoral behavior. We are told to be content and avoid the love of money. We are also cautioned to avoid "strange teachings" and hold fast to sound doctrine, so as not to be misled by the world around us. We are to continually offer a sacrifice of praise and openly profess Jesus' name. We are to "do good," "to share with others," and to submit to authority.
    - c. Instructions Contained in Both Passages
      - i. ANSWER: We see several themes or instructions repeated in both passages. These are: Glorifying God in all that we do, living our lives as a constant witness to the lost world around us, openly professing and praising the name of Jesus our Savior, abstaining from immoral behavior, and submitting to human authorities.
  7. As you reflect on the verses referenced above and the instructions that they provide each of us, ask yourself this question: Am I doing these things? If so, can you see ways that you could both worship and serve God?
    - a. ANSWER: From our study of this lesson, we can see that God's Word is crystal clear on how we are to live our lives as a living sacrifice to Him. (See also Romans 12:1-2.) Furthermore, these responsibilities are to both the saved and the lost around us. As believers in Christ, we are to have an active faith that glorifies God and takes the Gospel, the Good News, to all—both in word and deed.
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I think that if we were honest with ourselves, we would admit that serving the Lord—as the Bible defines service—is not our first priority. It is easier to serve on church committees, deacon boards, and so on, than it is to visit the sick, help the needy, and obey the government and laws of the land that God has placed over us. It is easier to criticize than to serve, easier to watch than participate, easier to fellowship with those we know well than with strangers, easier to feed on the milk than chew on the meat of the Word, and easier to keep the status quo than risk the uncertainty of change. And yet, as I once heard Derek Prince say, when we become a Christian, the life that we are to live from that moment forward can be summed up in two words: follow me. This is the true act of worship and service, i.e., following Christ.

I pray that in the weeks ahead we will focus on worship and seeking out opportunities of true service. God desires that we fellowship with Him through worship, and He has so much for us to do as priests—but we must first humble ourselves before Him.

May you feel God's strong presence in your life this week as we study His Holy Word together.

In Christ,

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