

WORSHIP

Alan Smedley - 21st September 2003

THE 7 LAWS OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS - NATURAL LAWS AND WORSHIP

Recently I was reading a book by Selwyn Hughes, the English writer, entitled the "7 Laws of Spiritual Success".

He begins by reminding us that there are NATURAL LAWS in the Universe which govern our lives. For example we have :

Newtons 1st Law of Motion, which explains **Inertia**. This tells us that objects resist changes in their motion. Consequently, they will remain stationary indefinitely.

However, Newtons 2nd Law of Motion, concerning **Forces**, informs us that if we apply some force to an object then there is an effect. There will be a change in its status. It will move !

Another fundamental natural law, is of course the law of **Gravity**. Gravity will ensure that if we throw an object into the air it will come down again.

And there are thousands of other natural laws at work in the universe.

The amazing thing about these laws is their certainty and reliability.

We can trust the fact that two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen produces water, and nothing will change that.

We also know that if we lived in a universe where everything happened by chance, randomly and not by law, human life as we know it would not exist and there would be chaos.

Imagine a situation where :

The golf ball would sometimes go in the direction that it was hit and sometimes curve around and come back and hit you in the face.

Or where the rotation of the earth might change direction from time to time;

Or where today fire would let off heat, and next time it would be cold;

No, the truth is that God the creator has made these Natural Laws which stretch like great lines through the Universe, like parallels of latitude, in order that you and I can experience human life on this planet and beyond.

Well, that the same creator God who created Natural Laws, has also created other laws. If He is a God of order and intelligence, then

What about moral and spiritual laws ?

If you think about it, it is perfectly logical that in Gods great design for human life He would have made these laws as well.

In fact many great scholars, philosophers and theologians and indeed scientists, would argue that the natural laws of science, and the moral and spiritual laws of human living, are equally dependable and equally authoritative and equally inescapable. In other words, these great lines that run through the universe giving intelligent order continue, into the moral and spiritual fabric of human existence.

The only difference, I suppose, is that the consequences of not upholding these moral and spiritual laws is maybe less apparent in the short term. However, in the long term, disobedience results in all kinds of suffering, brokenness, and destruction.

It seems to me that successful living in this universe, on this planet, is dependant on obeying these laws, just as much as it is a requirement to obey, for instance, the law of gravity.

Selwyn Hughes, in his book, suggests that if we are going to be whole, content, and fulfilled human beings then we need to ensure that at least 7 spiritual laws are at work in our lives.

This morning I would like to spend a few minutes briefly reminding us about the first one.

But, before I mention it, who can tell me what it is? What do you think this is? - The most important and first Spiritual Law for human beings in the universe? - What do you think we need to do?

It is **WORSHIP**.

The first responsibility of every human being is to WORSHIP God. This is the first law of the soul. Our primary purpose on this planet is to freely and intelligently worship our creator. And we have been designed this way – to do this.

The Westminster Catechism asks the question: “What is the chief end of man?” and answers in this way: “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever.” It is only when this truth is understood and practised that our souls will function in the way that they were designed.

And let’s note that we were not created to worship God because He is a God who needs His ego stroked. Not at all. Selwyn Hughes puts it well when he says that :

“It is when we open in our hearts the door of worship that God comes through that door and gives Himself to us. We are the beneficiaries of worship, not Him.”

WELL, WHAT IS WORSHIP ?

Let us remember that there is a difference between the words “worship” and “praise”.

Praise is appreciating God for what he does.

Worship, on the other hand, is adoring Him **for who He is**. It is being in awe of Him, adoring Him – not for what He gives but for **who He is**. That He is God!

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that:

“Acceptable worship touches eternity” - Why?

Because we have come into the presence of the eternal God. We have come to “Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem”.

Lets pause for a moment and consider WHO He actually is. Christians believe that He is both the almighty, awesome creator of the universe – so big – whilst simultaneously also being our loving heavenly Father, who knows us intimately and whom we can love and relate to.

God is both transcendent and immanent. He is far greater and more powerful than the universe which he created, and yet he is here with you and me in this building today.

Nicky Gumbel in his book “Questions of Life”, tells the following little story which I find helpful to remind me of how great He really is, as the Creator of the universe.

“On the 20th August 1977, Voyager 2, the inter-planetary probe launched to observe and transmit to earth data about the outer planetary system, set off from earth travelling faster than the speed of a bullet (90 thousand miles per hour).

On the 28th August 1989 (12 years later) it reached planet Neptune, two thousand seven hundred (2,700) million miles from the earth.

Voyager 2 then left our solar system. It will not come within one light year of any star for 958,000 years. Scientists calculate that in our galaxy there are over 100,000 million stars, like our sun, - and our galaxy is just one of over 100,000 million galaxies.”

I don't know what effect this has on you, but whenever I think of these awesome truths I realise that I have no alternative but to fall down and adore Him and surrender my life to Him - simply because of who He is.

So, again, what is worship ? Try and grasp this :

One writer said:
“It is the awe of God being constantly celebrated in our hearts. It is developing an attitude of the soul, the atmosphere of ones spirit, a sense of holy awe that one lives and moves and has ones being in God.”

William Temple said :

“Worship is the submission of all our nature to God.

It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness;

The nourishment of mind with His truth;

The purifying of imagination by His beauty;

The opening of the heart to His love;

The surrender of will to His purpose - and all of this gathered up in ADORATION, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and therefore the chief remedy for that self-centredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin.”

Worship speaks of surrender and submission. Of raising our eyes and looking upwards at God, so to speak, and letting go of all selfishness, of all life’s worries and distractions and giving ourselves to Him.

And you know it is wonderful how when we worship in this way, so we get life into perspective. The problems of life which have become like “mountains” resume the proportion of the “mole hills” that they really are.

HOW DO WE WORSHIP ?

The most familiar way is through singing Hymns and spiritual songs, in which we acknowledge God for who He is.

Another way is by reading the psalms in the Bible and using the words to help us focus on Him.

I have found that sometimes when I am alone looking at a beautiful view, or a sunset, or the vastness of the sea, I find myself speaking to God about His greatness and as I do so, I just give myself to Him.

Remember that beautiful Psalm 121 “I lift up my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth.”

Also the Psalm we read this morning : Psalm 145

However, probably the most important way in which we can worship God, is by giving ourselves to Him as we go about our daily lives, so that all that we are and all that we do, becomes an act of worship !

David Prior writes of worship and says:

“Such deep satisfaction is available nowhere else on earth, precisely because in it we touch eternity. And paradoxically but as we might expect, this touch of eternity, this taste of heaven, sends us back into the world ready to press forward as committed citizens of the Kingdom of God.”

There is a story of an old Welsh miner who used to tell people how grateful he was for what God had done for him in his life, and he would frequently say “I worship God almost every moment I am awake. I live in the presence of worship. I carry a constant thought in my heart that is there when I awake in the morning and still there when I go to sleep at night. And that thought is this: Jesus my Lord and my God, you have given me life, gladly I give my life back to you.”

You see it is acknowledging God for who He is, that should then be the launch-pad for everything we are, and everything we do, in the rest of our lives.

And so to WORSHIP God becomes the primary purpose of human life and it is the First Law of Spiritual Success.

Finally, to repeat what I said earlier, I would suggest that successful living in this universe, on this planet, is dependant on obeying this law, just as much as it is a requirement to obey, for instance, the law of gravity.

And the question is: To what extent do you do it ? Do I do it ?