

HEALTHY SHEEP

DOS & DON'TS



"IN FOR OUR
WELLNESS CHECK."



Section One: Healthy Sheep Worship

It is abundantly clear in the Bible that spiritually healthy people gather together to worship the LORD.

1. **DO:** Healthy sheep praise the LORD, 95:1-5.

- (Psalm 95:1–5 ESV) Oh come, **let us** sing to the LORD; **let us** make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! 2 **Let us** come into his presence with thanksgiving; **let us** make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! 3 **For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.** 4 In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. 5 The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.
- A. Those who profess to know the LORD are called to worship the LORD, sing to the LORD, make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.
 - B. Those who profess to know the LORD are to come into his presence with thanksgiving.
 - C. Those who profess to know the LORD are to make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise.
 - D. Worship is appropriate because he is a great God and a great King.
 - E. Worship is appropriate because he is the Creator, Sustainer and Possessor of all—from the depths of the earth to the heights of the mountains.

2. **DO:** Healthy sheep worship and bow down before the LORD, 95:6-7a.

- (Psalm 95:6–7a ESV) **Oh come, let us** worship and bow down; **let us** kneel before the LORD, our Maker! 7 **For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.**
- A. Those who profess to know the LORD are called to worship and bow down before the LORD our Maker.
 - B. Those who profess to know the LORD are called to kneel before him because he is our God and we are the people of his pasture.
 - C. Those who profess to know the LORD are called to kneel before him because he is our God and we are the sheep of his hand.

Section Two: Warnings regarding Worship

External worship is often a very poor indicator of the health of a sheep because it is abundantly clear in the Bible that lost and stray sheep—unhealthy sheep—also worship. And sometimes they are “better” at outward,

visible worship than healthy sheep. People may very well delight in worship in all the above while at the same time they greatly displease the LORD they presume to be worshipping because they worship in pride and insincerity.

1. **URGENT WARNING #1:** Do not worship for your own pleasure.

- (Isaiah 58:1–3 ESV) **Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins.** 2 **Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God;** they ask of me righteous judgments; **they delight to draw near to God.** 3 ‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’ **Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,** and oppress all your workers.

2. **URGENT WARNING #2:** Do not fall for outward, human-instigated worship that excels in the externals but keeps your heart far from God.

- (Isaiah 29:13–14 ESV) And the Lord said: **“Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me,** and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, 14 therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; **and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish,** and **the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden.”**

Section Three: On Hearing the LORD’s Voice

Some people draw near to God in their worship while others distance themselves from God in their worship. The difference has to do with the proximity of the heart. Do they worship from the heart or do they worship only in outward expressions? We must be aware that it is very possible to delight in outward expressions of worship while at the same time dishonoring God by keeping our innermost being away from the LORD. The determining factor is ... What do we do when we hear the LORD’s voice?

1. **DON’T:** Healthy sheep do not harden their hearts when they hear the LORD’s voice, 95:7b-11.

- (Psalm 95:7b–11 ESV) **Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts,** as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, 9 when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. 10 For forty years I loathed that generation and said, **“They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways.”** 11 Therefore I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my rest.”

A. “Today, if you hear his voice” is a plea for us to obey his voice when God speaks to us.

B. To **not hear** his voice is a willful, conscious decision to not obey.

2. We need to have a working understanding of what it means for a person to harden his heart if/when he hears the LORD’s voice to comprehend the grave danger before such a person.

A. To harden our heart means to cause to be hardened or make stubborn.

B. It is the opposite of loving submission to God.

C. We are warned—Today, if we hear the LORD’s voice to not harden our hearts as at Meribah and as on the day at Massah.

i. We are given the example from Meribah and Massah where they rejected God’s provision and presence.

ii. They complained because God was not caring for them as they thought they should be cared for.

iii. They put him to the test to prove himself to them by caring for them as they saw fit.

- (Exodus 17:7 ESV) And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, **because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD** by saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

3. Here is some of what goes into a person’s decision **to hear or not to hear** God’s voice.

A. For a person to harden his heart when he hears the LORD’s voice means that he attempts to block God from communicating with him in his heart.

B. He sets up defenses to keep God and his words away from his innermost being.

C. If the heart is the seat (the center) of who we are—our innermost being in regard to our emotions, our will

and our intellect—then hardening our heart is keeping God outside of our lives where it matters the most.

D. It seems it would be helpful to contrast and compare hardening our heart with obeying the great command—loving God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength.

4. The LORD stated that he loathed (*to loathe is to abhor; to find repugnant*) that generation.

5. He then describes the state of people who harden their hearts if/when they hear his voice.

A. They are a people who go astray in their heart.

i. They wander in sin and away from a proper belief or course of action.

ii. So God gave them over to their stubborn hearts.

- (Psalm 81:11–13 ESV) **But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me. 12 So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,** to follow their own counsels. 13 **Oh, that my people would listen to me,** that Israel **would walk in my ways!**

- (Romans 1:22–25 NLT) Claiming to be wise, **they instead became utter fools.** 23 And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles. 24 **So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired.** As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other’s bodies. 25 They traded the truth about God for a lie. **So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself,** who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.

B. They are a people who have not known his ways.

- (Isaiah 55:8–9 ESV) **For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,** declares the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

i. God first draws a sharp contrast between his ways and our ways—his ways are not our ways ... our ways are not his ways ... his ways are on a conceptual plane infinitely higher than ours.

ii. God has a purpose and plan for our good and for his glory according to his ways and thoughts.

iii. Allowing them to go thirsty in the wilderness was his way of teaching them (and us) to learn to trust him no matter what—no matter how bleak, how unknown or how desperate our circumstances may appear to us.

iv. They rejected and judged the plan that Almighty God had for their lives and in their arrogance demanded he do things their way.

C. They are a people who will not enter his rest.

D. The terrifying truth of those who will not enter God's rest—they are not of his sheep.

- (John 8:45–47 ESV) But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. 46 Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? 47 **Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.**

- (John 10:25–26 ESV) Jesus answered them, "**I told you, and you do not believe.** The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, 26 **but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.**"

i. They do not hear the words of God.

ii. They do not believe God

iii. They are not of God.

Section Four: Healthy Sheep Hear His Voice

For those who soften their hearts and lovingly submit to God and his words when they hear the LORD's voice—blessing beyond measure.

A. The LORD (YAHWEH) is their Shepherd and they know it because that is what they experience.

- (Psalm 23:1–3 ESV) **The LORD is my shepherd**; I shall not want. 2 **He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.** 3 **He restores my soul. He leads me** in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

B. The LORD knows his sheep.

- (John 10:14–16 ESV) I am the good shepherd. **I know my own and my own know me,** 15 **just as the Father knows me and I know the Father;** and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, **and they will listen to my voice.** So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

C. His sheep hear his voice and follow him.

- (John 10:27–28 ESV) **My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.** 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

