

Matt Carriker, excerpt from *Giving Christianity Back to Jesus* book

God is spirit, and so those who worship do so in spirit and in truth. *You are God's image. You are spirit.* Therefore, the only worship that will be meaningful to you is that worship grounded in your nature as *spirit*.

God has been conceived of in *physical* terms: as a white, male deity, sitting on a throne. In this way, worship has been modeled after the ancient patterns of king worship. God is a monarchy. *You* are to bow down to this king, and worship. *You* are to be subservient to the king. Obedience is the utmost virtue.

Thus is God conceived of in *physical* ways. Yet God has no gender, and neither does God sit on a physical throne as do kings ruling over their subjects. God cannot be confined to any of your ideas about God, for once an idea arises that God is *this*, the effect is to *put God into a box*.

Still, there are some ideas that are closer to reality than others. "God is love" will bring you closer to understanding reality than "God is fear."

Some people like the idea of God as a king, and have been moved by this image in their experience of worship. This is wonderful. *If it works*, keep it.

Some kings are greater examples of God's **Kingdom** than others. These kings do not rule with a mighty fist, but a gentle hand. They do not command obedience, but invite and inspire reverence and love.

What if we conceived of God as communion, rather than kingship? Then, our task would not be to bring in the Kingdom of God, but the Oneness of God. For God is *Oneness*, and that

Oneness includes all things. When all beings are expressing Oneness, then is the utmost expression of God's Kingdom made visible through human hands and hearts.

What we are really talking about here are the *meanings* people associate with words. For some, worship means bowing down in unworthiness before a demanding, unforgiving king. For others, worship is the supreme act of love- an expression of Oneness with God and with all Life. Which does worship mean *to you*? The meaning you assign will be the meaning it has for you.

Likewise with the word obedience. For some, obedience is a blind, unquestioning faith in the words of God, *words* usually meaning strings of letters written across a page. For others, obedience means listening to God with the faith that God speaks to everyone, all the time. Obedience in this sense is a faithful listening to hear the words God has to speak *now*.

Though God can be found in the words of a page, God can be found most fully in the words written on your heart. To listen deeply to God then, do not read books and scriptures only. Learn to read *your own heart*. This is the literacy that will lead to mastery. When you can read the language of the heart, then have you learned the language of God.