

God does not need rituals.

He does not need us to do symbolic things or repeat rote phrases to please Him, but rather to love Him and thankfully, worshipfully receive His love given in His Son's sacrifice.

So why does ritual exist?

I think God allows and in the past sometimes instigated rituals for His people because we need them at times. They can be a way to put structure into our understanding of God and His holiness. To teach us in a way we can understand - how far above, how special, how infinitely holy and loving God is.

Rituals can be something to do with our bodies and voices to help us make more concrete and relatable who God is; to make our understanding of God and our relationship with Him more real to us and not just head knowledge; to help us form godly habits; and reinforce good ways of thinking about God.

So what does this mean for us today? Should we have rituals in our faith practice?

My answer:

If it is something that helps make my / your experience of God more real and personal, more worshipful - then yes

But if it is something done out of legalism, thinking that the ritual itself is needed to please or appease God - an obligation that God requires perhaps, then we need to think again.

We ought not let rituals be our master and rule us.

We must not let them inhibit us from seeking to know God personally, or keep us from loving and holding Him in our hearts.

Rituals must not be used to keep God at a distance from us.

Remember God does not need ritual in order for us to relate to Him. All that was needed for us to relate to Him has already been accomplished on the cross and nothing can add to that.

Some of us may be thinking "I am part of a modern church, I don't have any rituals"

Beware though, humans make rituals of many things and they can be hiding in our lives:

The ritual of the quiet time,

The ritual of saying grace at meals.

Do we do these things to help us to form the habit of talking to God regularly and to build the habit of thankfulness, then they serve their purpose well.

But keep your eyes on these little rituals that they don't become a substitute for your relationship with God. That they don't become an onerous chore that brings guilt when missed and subtly undermine your relationship with God and can in extreme even leave us resenting Him for the chore.