

# The Practice of Worship Part I

a sermon in the series  
The Apprentice: An Analysis of What it Means to be a Disciple

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John 4:23-24

*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*

The one word that is to describe us, the one word that is to say it all, the one word that is to mark time and eternity is worship. We are worshippers. We were made to worship. It is our sacred duty, it is our holy calling, it is the reason for our existence. Worship.

You may not have thought of worship as a spiritual discipline, but it is. It is a life lived to the glory of God at whose name angels cover their faces and glorified spirits bow. It is even stated in Sacred Writ that Satan along with all his devilish hoard will bow their knees and with the tongue proclaim Jesus, "King of kings and Lord of lords."

One word. It conjures up great delight for one and great boredom for another. One is drawn to it another is repelled. All of this in the one word, worship.

Believe me, it is more than an action. It is more than a song sung to His name. It is greater than a moment shared in a religious service. Jesus said, before He uttered the words of our text, that worship is to drink from a water that banishes thirst and exiles unsatisfied longings, "whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

Yet, for all its importance, the Christian world is at a loss on how to define worship. Many associate the word *worship* with a building called the church, which isn't the church, but a place where the church comes together and does what people calls worship, which may or may not be worship.

Well, may God help us to clear the confusion about this word *worship*. There is one thing of which we can be certain: Jesus worshipped. It was normal for Jesus to worship and it was a very regular part of His life. It's what guided His life.

Is it a regular part of your life? Is worship something that characterizes your life? Is it the basis for your existence?

I had the privilege of talking with a teenager this week and he asked me this question, “What is the purpose of the soul?” I was all too delighted to answer. I said, “It’s to live for the glory of God by enjoying Him. The purpose of your soul is to worship God, to know Him and experience Him and find Him to be the greatest pleasure of all.” That’s worship.

Our text is one of the greatest and most definitive statements on worship that Jesus or anyone else made. It happened in a conversation with a lady who was living with a man who was not her husband. An interesting choice of a person to discuss the theology of worship with, isn’t it? That’s just the way Jesus did things. He would pick the most unlikely candidate for some of the deepest discussions ever recorded in Scripture. I hope that makes somebody here take courage and hope. If you feel like you’re the most unlikely candidate for God to ever speak to, beware; you’re the very kind of person God wants to talk to. You’re the very person He wants to reveal Himself to and show you how much He truly loves you. He wants to entrust to you deep truths that will change your life.

As He is discussing with this woman, worship becomes one of the subjects and in the course of the discussion of worship we find our text. Before we examine verses 23 and 24 we have to address one issue. It’s what happened preceding our text.

## **I. Worship Errors**

There was a great deal of errors in this conversation and it wasn’t coming from Jesus. This woman had certain philosophies and ideas about worship that Jesus had to deal with and correct. I suppose it’s no different today and perhaps no different than some of you in this room. There are probably false or wrong notions right here that must be addressed in order that you might worship rightly.

Let’s address some of the worship errors we see in the context of verses 23 and 24.

### **A. Unorthodox**

Unorthodox simply means that which is not doctrinally sound, that which is not commonly understood as being biblically right and in conformity to the Scriptures. This woman’s style and theology of worship was completely unorthodox. It was not based upon Scripture.

*“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.” (John 4:20)*

The Samaritans’ worship was a perversion of the truth. A little background for you if you don’t know who the Samaritans were. The Jewish people considered them an impure race. Hundreds

of years before this conversation ever took place in the Samaritan village beside this well, the Assyrian empire had invaded the 10 northern tribes of Israel and took them back and scattered them throughout their empire. The Jews that had been left married foreigners imported into the area in order to establish Assyrian rule. So, to a true Jew, these people were perverted in their genealogy. They were not the real people of God. And on top of that, to add insult to injury, they also did not accept the entire Old Testament, only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament, the law of Moses, and then only a modified version of it.

The woman said, “We worship on this mountain, you Jews say you ought to worship in Jerusalem.” She doesn’t state it as a question; she’s stating her theological position and views on worship. And sure enough, the Samaritans, in opposition to the Jews in Judea, had erected a temple on Mount Gerizim and that’s where they conducted their worship. That’s what she’s stating here. She’s making it clear that there is a difference in their ideas of true worship. The problem for was that she and her people were completely unorthodox in their worship.

It saddens my heart to always bring out errors and problems but there are so many floating around today in Christian circles. There is a great deal of unorthodox worship taking place in the name of Jesus. So much under the label of “worship” is not true biblical worship because it doesn’t conform to the truth of God. There are some ridiculous and downright sacrilegious and blasphemous things that are taking place in the name of worship.

If you haven’t seen the *History of the Modern Gospel* series, we did one episode where we talked about the circus atmosphere that is taking place in churches. We cited real instances with video—it’s not something we made up—where churches gathered together and transformed their auditoriums into rodeos or circuses, all under the banner of worship. This is unorthodox. It doesn’t even come close to the Scriptures. It’s amazing what is being allowed today in Christian circles in the name of worship. All sorts of things that must grieve the Holy Spirit and yet He’s the one it’s all attributed to. “You can’t criticize this,” they will say, “you know the Holy Spirit does new things you don’t even know about, maybe even things the Bible doesn’t discuss.”

Let me tell you very clearly for your own soul’s sake: if anything ever happens that’s not in accordance to the Scriptures or principles therein, it isn’t from the Holy Spirit. He’s the one that authored the Book. Holy men of God wrote as the Holy Spirit inspired them, He breathed out and into these men. He’s not going to contradict Himself.

To summarize, if it’s not in the Book and you can’t substantiate it with the Scriptures, then it’s not worship.

## **B. Orthodox but Dead.**

The Jews worshiped the true God according to the truth.

*“You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.” (John 4:22)*

Jesus says that the Jewish form of worship was orthodox. It’s was in accordance with the Word of God, in other words, it was Scriptural. They were following the law of God, so the worship practices and traditions of the Jewish people were gained from the Scriptures, Jesus sanctioned their worship as orthodox. But He also said something was missing.

*“Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me . . .’” (Matthew 15:7-9)*

Ah, they were very orthodox, very Scriptural, in the manner in which they worshipped but something was missing—their hearts. Therefore in vain they worshipped God. If there is one error of worship prevalent in the churches of our day and land it is this one. We may be sound theologically, we may know how to worship, and our songs and hymns may be doctrinally and theologically correct, we may be wise in the Scriptures enough to know when a song is not in alignment with the Bible and we can pick out false worship, but are we truly worshipping? Is the heart engaged or is it just an intellectual exercise?

We know the truth, we can check off the list, we’ve done everything correctly, but in vain we worship Him. This is what I fear every Sunday. Not always do you have the blessing of Gary and Kathy leading you with the praise team, sometimes you have to put up with me leading. I dread it. I say this in love, but I dread it because I have to look at some of your faces.

Please don’t misunderstand me, we’re going to bring all this in proper perspective in just a few moments; I’m not expecting you to run around dancing or running circles around the church. I’ve been in meetings where they did that. I’ve never been in a meeting where they swung from a chandelier though, I’ve yet to have that experience, but I’ve heard they do that at times in some places. We’re not saying a demonstrative and emotional worship is the answer, as you will see in a few moments, but we are saying it has to come from the heart.

How can the heart be engaged and the face not know it? It’s a mystery to me. How can all the emotion be drained out of our worship? The songs are wonderful, they’re theologically sound and if you sing them you’re singing truth and you know it’s truth but if the emotion, the passion, the affections are absent then in vain you worship. Your worship is orthodox but dead.

### **C. Externals Only.**

By externals, I mean the expression of worship, how we do it, which is what we’ve been talking about but we’re going in a different vein. This is a different problem altogether.

The woman's statement in verse 20 demonstrates a concern of rituals, traditions, and form. All she was concerned about was the expression of worship. I believe this is the single greatest problem afflicting churches in America and other places. It's the concept that worship is all about how you do it, the expression. Whether you use hymns or contemporary music, whether you have instrumentation or you don't, or what instruments are allowed or not, hands lifted or hands down, liturgical worship or no format whatsoever. These are the questions of the hour in most of our churches and the very definition of worship—the *heart*—is missed. This afternoon, get on your computer and do a search on “worship wars”. You will discover thousands of websites discussing this modern phenomenon. Can you imagine that worship is the very reason many Christians can't get along? How could this be? It happens because we're concerned with the external, how we express the worship. And when you become totally absorbed with how you worship, whether you should clap your hands or lift your hands or not, the emphasis is soon on either emotion or the absence of emotion. Let me explain.

Those who are concerned that we do not express emotion because it's irreverent are doing nothing but a liturgical exercise. There's no life. We've already dealt with that, your worship is orthodox but dead. But that's not our problem. For most the problem is that they have entered a downward slope into emotionalism. Most worship today is nothing but emotionalism, a frenzy frothing of emotions. Just the opposite of what I warned you of a moment ago.

I've been to some of those concerts and I've watched some online and I see that what goes on under the name “worship concert.” It's nothing like worship. I'm being very critical, but please hear me; there might be a shred of truth to what I'm saying. In order for us to get to the true definition of worship we cannot be deceived. I've watched a lot of these “worship” concerts and all I see are people being concerned with how good the music is and not how good God is. Sooner or later by the skill of the musicians the whole crowd is lathered up in a frenzy of excitement and emotion that would happen at any rock concert.

I will not with broad brushes say that everybody there is not worshipping. I wouldn't say that at all. What I would say is that we must be careful. If that's what we think worship is, people all excited and jumping and dancing to the beat of the music, then we've missed it. Many contemporary Christian worship leaders have left the contemporary Christian scene because of this very thing. They've come to see their own mistakes. I read of one this past week where a man said he had come to learn what he thought was worship and spiritual was nothing more than lust-driven emotions. He told of watching the young people dance and sway to the beat of the music in sometimes lewd and vulgar ways. He watched the way they dressed and soon discovered that the music actually motivated behavior that was totally contrary to Scriptures. He repented and left that scene.

When you're more concerned about the sound of the music and whether it pleases you or not, you have missed the very purpose of worship. The purpose of worship is not our emotional exhilaration or stimulation. We're after something greater than us.

This externalism has led to an overemphasis of emotionalism that is not worship. Worship is holy because we're worshipping a holy God. What we do and the way we express our worship must be fitting to His person and glory. There ought to be majesty and beauty in our worship. There are many expressions sanctioned by Scripture, singing is one, praying is another, others include corporate gatherings, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. There are many Bible sanctioned expressions of worship, we need to be careful that we don't substitute one of those things even with a sanctioned gift like music so that music becomes the predominate way we view worship.

In fact, I would say that when you hear this word *worship* your mind goes to this very building or where you regularly worship. You think of singing in a church or the entire liturgy of a "worship service." I've taught you otherwise, but your default position is to think of worship as music. You might even say we're not worshipping at this moment; we're just listening to a sermon. That is what I'm talking about. We have made the expression of worship more important than the God we're worshipping.

## **II. The Essence of New Covenant Worship**

What is worship according to Jesus?

### **A. Inside Out versus Outside In.**

Jesus said that worship should begin in the heart and move to the outside rather than on the outside and moving to the heart.

*"... worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him." (v. 23b)*

*"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (24)*

What is Jesus saying? He's telling this woman that He has come to change her theology of worship. "I've come to turn it upside down. It's not about Mount Gerizim or Mount Moriah in Jerusalem where the temple is. It's not about that. I'm freeing worship from location and the externals. I'm looking for worshippers who can worship anywhere, all the time, from the inside to the outside."

The Old Covenant worship was based upon doing external acts of worship for the purpose of helping the heart of God's people to worship. How many of you have tried to trek through Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers and read all the laws and rules about how you can worship God? You see the greatest of details down to the exact measurements of the sacrifices, the wheat and grain offering, the trespass offering and the burnt offerings. The rules regulating the animal sacrifices, all the steps the priests had to go through, all the different feasts, all the different externals, the things you did outside of the heart, in other words, what you did with your body. They were the things you could see and perceive and hear. All of those externals were for this purpose—to help God's people be motivated in the heart to worship God. It was outside moving in. God knew the hearts of the people and they needed these helps. They needed to see in types and shadows and

illustrations what true worship looked like so He devised a system of external acts of worship that was to help the heart come into communion with God. But now Jesus has changed that.

The New Covenant is the opposite. Worship issues from the heart and guides the external. The heart dictates how you express worship to God and not vice versa. That's why people today can sing beautifully, perform beautifully and it move your heart and emotions to the point that you think you've worshipped but you never exceeded the external and got to the heart.

Let me be very clear. I began the service this morning and said, "To prepare our hearts to worship let's read Revelation 5 together;" and we read the entire chapter. Do our hearts need preparation to worship? At times. I confess that not all the time my heart is leaping to praise, worship, and adore God. Sometimes it needs correction. We'll talk about that some today and more next week, but music itself is not the God-sanctioned external that helps the heart. It's not fellowship with one another either. Fellowship is wonderful, I'm not minimizing it, and it doesn't hurt, but it's not the prescribed way to worship.

Jesus said worship is to come from your heart and dictate the external.

The word worship comes from six different words in the New Testament. The two main words are *proskuneo*, meaning to kiss the hand or bow. It's what you would do to someone who was very important, who had high value; you would show worship and submission to. The second word is *latreuo*, which means to serve as a priest would. The English word worship evolved from the words, "worth" and "ship" or "worthship." Worship is for someone who is worthy of honor and adoration and who adds value to your life. Therefore, you direct admiration and adoration to that person. That's what worship is. That has to be a heart thing. Depending on how much that person or thing has your heart will determine your worship.

It must be an act of the affections of the heart and not just emotions. That's what Jesus is saying here. Worshipping God in spirit and truth has to start with the heart not just emotions. There is a difference between the affections of the heart and emotions. In our common language the two are the same but they're really not.

Affections mean something different than emotions. Let me try to explain. You need to know this if you're a child of God because it's easy to be caught up in your emotions. How many of you don't feel God sometimes? We all have had that experience. It's an emotional experience and what you do with it is extremely important.

*Emotions* are the natural result of thoughts or physical stimuli. If I have depressed thoughts, then I am most likely to feel depressed. My thoughts can affect my mood. Hormonal imbalances can cause the same state of depression. The emotion of happiness works the same way. If you tell me a funny story I am apt to feel so happy that I will break out in laughter.

If you smack me with your hand, I am liable to feel anger. But if you tell me there was a spider crawling on me and that is the reason you swatted me with your hand, I will probably feel gratitude. Emotions are fleeting and quite changeable. Even barometer pressure can affect them.

Affections are different.

*Affections* are deep-seated values that make you feel deeply about things. They have emotion but they are deeper than emotions. You value something or someone very much. It's the inclinations of your heart or soul. You're inclined to this person or thing because you value them so deeply. Another way to say it is, your loves and your hates, your likes and dislikes. It's more than just emotion, it's deep seated inclinations. Jesus is saying He is looking for somebody that will worship Him from the affections of the heart because their heart is firmly planted in loving and valuing Him for who He is.

So, when Jesus says that the heart must be involved in worship He is saying emotions are necessary but it's more than that. What I mean is that worship that doesn't feel is not worship. This morning if your heart was engaged and right with God, how could you sing what we sang and not feel something? I'm about to make a statement and I'm not apologizing for it, I just want to make sure you hear the heart from which it comes. If you can sing the songs we sang and literally feel nothing I would ask you to really, really, really question if you're a Christian. That's how serious this is. Really question it. I'm not saying Christians can't get into times and states where their hearts feel like stones. I lament the times it happens to me and they happen too often in my estimation. I'm saying that if you go week after week through this expression of worship called singing unto the Lord and you can't feel what you are singing, then it tells me the affections aren't there. That's why the emotions don't work and the face can't light up and the countenance cannot beam with joy. It's because the affections are not there.

## **B. The Nature of Worship.**

Jesus says three things about worship and its nature.

### **I. The nature of worship is spiritual.**

Those who worship God must worship in spirit. What is spirit?

Jesus is speaking of the human spirit, which is to distinguish between the outer man versus the inner man. While we express worship through the outer man, worship's origin is from inside of man.

But what is the spirit? It is the inner being, the control center of a person. That's the simplest way I know to put it. It's the inner being that exists even when the body dies. The Bible often calls it the heart. But Jesus uses the word *spirit* because it tells us something more than the word *heart*. He wants you to know you are spiritual beings. You don't just have a heart, talking about the in-



ner man, you are a spiritual being and this becomes very important. To worship by the spirit is to worship according to the inner man involving three things.

A will resolved to obey God.

A mind engaged. Meaning not wandering.

The affections believing God.

That's what it means to worship God in spirit.

*"God is Spirit" v. 24*

Jesus is showing that man can only connect with God on a spiritual level and realm.

This is deeper than emotions. In fact, when I woke up on Thursday morning, the Lord showed me something so powerful. As much as emotions are involved in this idea of worship, you cannot base your worship on emotions because emotions are in the physical realm. They are created by your thoughts or physical stimulus. You *feel* happy, you *feel* sad. You physically feel those emotions. You *feel* sorrowful or you can *feel* joyful. You can *feel* peace or you can *feel* anxiety. Do you ever feel anxious? Where do you feel it? Usually right here in the pit of your stomach. You feel those flutters and your stomach becomes upset all by an emotion.

If I wake up in the morning and I don't feel God I don't get alarmed because that's not the essence of worship it's a byproduct. I must get my mind, affections, and will engaged. I must worship Him in spirit not just based upon what I physically sense or don't sense. Our Lord wants us to love Him consistently and with something more substantial than the emotions.

Let me tell you how A.W. Tozer defined the spirit of a man.

*"Deep inside every man there is a private sanctum where dwells the mysterious essence of his being. This far-in reality is that in the man which is what it is of itself without reference to any other part of the man's complex nature. It is the man's "I Am," a gift from the I AM who created him."*

This is very complex. How do you define something you can't see, taste, touch, handle, or smell? It's very difficult. We're dealing with abstract things and you have to think. *God forbid. Here he goes again telling us we have to think.* Yes. And you might just think yourself into a blessing. It's possible.

Tozer is saying that the simplest way to understand your spirit is by self-awareness. The conscious that you're a person and the conscious of your surroundings is the work of your spirit. That's the gift of God because that's who God is—He is Spirit.—"I AM that I AM." When you leave this body you are still going to be conscious, you're going to be able to know and relate to your surroundings even though you don't have a body. This "far in reality," as Tozer calls it, is your self-awareness and the ability to be aware of things outside of you.

Tozer then quoted the Apostle Paul,

*“The deep-in human entity of which we speak is called in the Scriptures the spirit of man. “For what man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:11). As God’s self-knowledge lies in the eternal Spirit, so man’s self-knowledge is by his own spirit, and his knowledge of God is by the direct impression of the Spirit of God upon the spirit of man.”*

Because God is spiritual and you have a spirit, you can know God. He can talk to you and reveal Himself to you. That’s why God is seeking worshippers who worship in spirit and truth because that’s who He is, that’s the realm in which He dwells and that’s the realm in which we exist by the spirit.

It must be clarified that the spirit is not the mind. Jesus made a distinction between heart and mind:

*“Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” (Matthew 22:37)*

Paul told the Corinthians that one can speak in a language they’ve never learned by the Holy Spirit and their spirit prayed while the mind was unfruitful. Therefore, Paul makes the same distinction between spirit and mind.

*“For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.” (1 Corinthians 14:2)*

*“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.”*

The nature of worship is spiritual. It is in the realm of God who is Spirit.

## **2. The nature of worship is relational.**

*“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.” (v. 23)*

Why does He say *Father* and not *God*? Because worship is based on relationship. You cannot rightly worship God unless you are rightly related to God. If you’re not a Christian and you participated in the music this morning and sang the songs and maybe even got misty eyed, that does not mean you’ve worshipped. In fact, I say with all love and kindness, you cannot worship. It’s impossible. You’re not rightly related to the Father, you’re not in the same realm as the Father. You’re in the realm of darkness, sin, and Satan. The gap is too far for you to bridge. If you are to rightly worship you have to be rightly related to the Father.

This should tell us something else. If the Father is seeking such to worship Him, then worship is not about you and me. Worship is not about us coming here and feeling good. That's the problem with the worship concert mentality. We have a professional Christian artist and we get people together for the purpose of having a wonderful time. There is something wrong when having a good time becomes the focal point. God has to be the focal point because God is better than the best Christian artists. Do you see why the intention and motive of the heart is so crucial? That's where worship is determined.

Worship is about God. It is about blessing and exalting Him. He doesn't need your worship but He desires it, and because He is worthy of it we should offer it to Him the way He desires it.

### **3. The nature of worship requires the work of the Holy Spirit.**

As I just said, if you're not a Christian you cannot worship God. The Bible says your spirit is dead to God. It cannot relate to Him, it cannot know, experience, or understand God. One of the reasons why a person, who does not have the Spirit of God, does not understand a sermon is the absence of the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit you cannot comprehend the spiritual reality of the truth. You may be able to comprehend the truth but you will not be able to understand its spiritual reality and significance. Your spirit is like a corpse to spiritual realities. What is needed is the Holy Spirit to bring life to your spirit.

As I mentioned earlier, I talked with a teenager this week. I don't really consider myself a youth guy but it's amazing how God brings them into my life and lets me minister to them. You don't feel like you can relate to teenagers. I've heard many of you say that. "When they were little I understood my children and now that they're teenagers I just can't relate to them." It's like they're a different species. That's what we mean when we say your spirit is dead to God. You can't relate to Him. You don't get Him. He's not real to you.

So what has to happen? How can my spirit worship? The spirit of God has to come.

*"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6)*

When a man is regenerated, God makes him to know Him, and the man can say, "This is what you've been talking about! This is what you've been saying all these years! It's real!" What happened? His spirit was made alive to God.

But after conversion the Spirit must continue to work within our spirits.

*"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." (Romans 8:5)*

*"And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,<sup>19</sup> speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart*

to the Lord,<sup>20</sup> giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," (Ephesians 5:18-20)

What happens when you're filled with the Spirit? You worship. The Spirit moves upon your spirit. He plays the strings of the heart and out comes adoration.

### **C. The Fuel of Worship.**

The fuel of worship is the truth about God, "worship in spirit and truth." This is the only approved fuel for worship. The only proper stimulus is not music or fellowship; although those may stimulate worship, worship has to be in spirit and in truth, therefore it has to be driven by who God is.

*"Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom." (Psalms 51:6)*

This is not just intellectual; this is something from the Spirit. God desires truth to penetrate your spirit. How does that happen? It happens in the meditation on who God is and what God has done. It's to worship from the inside out, fueled by the truth of who God is and what He has done. When you wake up and you don't *feel* the emotion of praise and adoration, what do you do? You start to meditate on God and who He is, the truth about Him and what He has done. You get your mind engaged. That's the way. That's what Jesus did.

Isn't it amazing that we've yet to speak on the spiritual discipline of Bible study and yet in almost every one of these disciplines we have thus far spoken, the Bible has come up?

Worship is more than praise, prayers, and praise teams. It is to build your life on something because you deem it to be worthy. This is what the Father seeks. You build your life on something your affections say, "That's worth building on!" This is the whole heart of worship. Worship is not something we do only on Sunday mornings when we gather together; it's a way of life. It is to build your life on God because God is worthy. Thus, what you think and believe about God will determine your worship.

This last passage is fundamental in understanding the Gospel and our worship problems. And it has to do with how we understand the truth about God. Every worship problem can be resolved in this passage.

*"Professing to be wise, they became fools,<sup>23</sup> and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things."*

The Apostle Paul establishes the way of all men. When you think you know better than God, you will always turn from God to something He made. Always. I don't care if you're a Christian or not, when your heart is lifted up you will always move away from God and to something He

made whether it be you, another person, money, ambitions, dreams, material possessions, etc. You will turn to one of the million idols we manufacture. When you begin to be lifted up in your own estimation you will always move away from God and begin to worship created things.

What is God's response?

*"Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,<sup>25</sup> who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." (Romans 1:22-25)*

All worship issues reside right here. If you believe the truth about God you will worship and serve Him. If you believe it, and not just intellectually agree with the facts about God but believe with the heart. You're willing to give Him the control of your life because you've not seen giving Him control as loss but gain. The reason some people are not Christians today is because Jesus is a loss and not a gain to them. The heart is not engaged, they don't value God, and instead they believe the lie that God is not enough for them. So they must turn to other things—idols—to satisfy what only God made them to be satisfied with: Himself.

Notice what happens when you believe the lie about God. You always worship and serve the creature. Notice *worship* and *serve*. Remember the one of the two Greek words I spoke about earlier, the word *latreuo*? When you turn to something else because you believe a lie about God you begin to value something more than anything else and you pursue that more than anything else and that becomes your god. The apostle says that you will not only worship it but also serve. Serve is a keyword here. You do not worship that which you do not serve. You may admire it, you may like it, but you don't worship it. You can only worship what you serve because they go hand in hand. Worship is to build your life on something because you see that person or thing as credible and pleasing and valuable enough to base your entire life upon. That's why you give your entire life to it. That's what worship is.

This happens to Christians as well. When I begin to believe a lie about God I automatically begin to look to something else to bring me pleasure and satisfy my soul. I'm made to worship. I *have* to worship and serve so I worship my dreams, ambitions, success, spouse, children, job, vacations, drugs, sex, or other pleasures. They consume and control me because I'm worshipping and serving them. I'm building my life upon these other things. That's why you are to worship God in spirit *and* truth. When you believe the truth about God you understand that only God is worthy and sufficient to build your life on. Only God commands the value that demands worship and service.

I want to say something to the man or woman who is not yet saved. As hard as it is to hear these things please hear me. I'm preaching for your hope.

Paul says every one of us are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, which worship. It's worship language.

*"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1)*

This week when I talked to that young man, who is not a Christian, I told him I've tasted a lot of the world's pleasures in my lifetime. That's not a boastful statement it's an acknowledgement. In my life I've done enough that have brought many different pleasures to my soul. Good things and bad things. I've been blessed; I've got a wonderful wife, wonderful family, and wonderful church. God has really given me a lot of good things to delight in and worship Him as an expression of His love to me. But I told that young man that I've discovered that of all the pleasures I've ever tasted good or bad, worldly or otherworldly, none of them surpass the joy and the deep-seated satisfaction I have when God pours out His love on me. I've never experienced anything better. I hope nobody misunderstands me, I'm not trying to be vulgar, but it's better than sex, it's better than food, parties, or any pleasure you've ever experienced.

I can't explain what happens in my heart when those times happen, all I can tell you is that I've never been more satisfied. That happens because I believe the truth. There have been times in my Christian walk when I did not believe the truth of God; I believed a lie. And because I have to worship and build my life on something I turned to something else. For a while it satisfied, but then it could not do what God can, so I had to turn to something else and before I knew it my heart was filled with idols and none of them, not even all them put together, could equal what God did when I trust Him.

If you want to experience joy, you have to know the value of God and when you know how valuable God is then you're willing to place your life on His altar and say, "I'm Yours, because what You have to offer is gain not loss." That's what I'm asking God to do for you today because without the Holy Spirit bringing the truth to the spirit you will never understand that you're losing! You're losing, when you could have pleasure that exceeds all you've ever known. He's the One who made all those pleasures—He has to be better. Do you see that? He made them all therefore He's got to be better than all because all of those pleasures are nothing more than a reflection of Him and His love for you.

I could preach another hour on this but I won't. What I have told you is the essence of worship. If that doesn't have your heart, then I need to ask if you're sure you're a Christian. If you say, "Yes, because I know what you're talking about, I've had the pleasure and have experienced it, I'm just not there. I've believed a lie about God; I have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and I'm dabbling over here worshipping and serving an idol. Thank you, pastor, for sharing this with me because now I know what has happened to me."

What can you do? You can repent. But what does repentance look like? Believing the truth about God. It's that simple.

If you tell a man to believe, you're telling him to repent at the same time. If you're telling a man to repent you're telling him to believe. That's what repentance is. It's going back to the truth that

God is as good as He says He is. May God by His Spirit cause you to see how good He is. I pray He will do something to your spirit that you can even taste and see how good He is. Amen.