

How to Worship the Lord (Part 1)

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[0:00] The year 2015 was quite interesting for my family, primarily Diane's side of the family.

! And it really kind of started in November of 2014. She'd gone down to Texas to spend Thanksgiving with her parents.

And then that Thursday we gathered at the home of my wife's uncle, Kenneth Porterfield, who's actually been in this church. Kenneth and I had a lot in common.

We were both the same age, although I called him Uncle Kenneth for fun. Both spent our careers in law enforcement. And Kenneth was a retired Waco police sergeant.

But our real common ground was the fact that Kenneth was a very strong believer in the Lord Jesus. The women were inside getting all the food out and getting the table set and all that.

[1:09] And Kenneth and I were outside and talking about different things. And I told Kenneth that our families were getting older. And one of these things, giving, there was going to be some empty chairs around the table at Thanksgiving.

Kenneth told me that he'd been having exactly the same thoughts. So I suggested that one of us speak after the meal because we both knew this, that not everybody in that room was even saved.

Kenneth immediately agreed with me and elected me the spokesperson. He jumped in there real quick. In January of 2015, I guess about 45 days later, Kenneth lay dead of a heart attack.

Didn't plan on that happening. Didn't think it would be Kenneth. There is something kind of precious about that. He worked in the Iwanis at his Baptist church there in Waco.

And the pastor had to go tell these little boys that Kenneth had died. One of them said, Mr. Ken can't die. He's the only one strong enough to put our pins on through our vest.

[2:32] The women can't do that. You know, kids, they were glad he was in heaven, but they needed someone to put their pins on. The bottom line is we have some empty chairs around the Thanksgiving meal.

And because of all of this and other things, you know, I got to thinking about my own mortality. You guys know because you sang happy birthday to me.

I turned 68 last week. None of us knows the day or the hour of our death. And I thought about that.

I didn't think of it in any morbid sense at all. I thought of it in terms, what do I want to do with the rest of my life in the time I have left?

At the end of my thinking on the matter, I had assembled a list of a half a dozen or so goals or objectives. But there was one on that list that was by far number one.

[3:37] It was number one on my personal list, and that was to finish strong by offering God maximum scripturally based, heartfelt, spirit-led worship.

That far exceeded anything else on the list. I wanted to worship God in spirit and in truth, just as He had told the woman at the well of Sychar in John chapter 4.

The Father seeks those who want to do that. I want to worship God as did the apostles and the prophet. And dare I say, as the Lord Jesus did during His earthly sojourn, at least on my part, in some poor way, I'm sure, I began to read some key passages in Scripture.

I read a few books or excerpts of books on worship from men I trust. Some of these included men who had long ago passed from the scene.

I listened to some well-done sermons. I looked at some sermons' outlines and listened to it online. And I prayed. And after all, that is a form of worship, right?

[5:05] And I wanted worship to become my ultimate priority. 2016 started, and that's sort of two steps forward and one step back, which is better than two steps forward and three steps back.

But I wanted it to be my ultimate priority. And part of my thinking was this. First, as followers of Christ, we are not waiting to enter into eternal life.

We should never sit around and say, well, once I enter into eternal life, once I get to heaven, close the door behind me, I'll be okay. We entered into eternal life the moment the Lord Jesus saved us. That's when eternal life begins. And second, we are heading to a perfect place called heaven where we shall engage in worship for eternity.

We're going to be looking at some key passages on that, not tonight, but in the next few meetings and particularly in the book of Revelation. Worship is what we are going to do in heaven.

[6:19] So my thinking was, why not get an early start on it? Let's get a jump on it, you know. Now, some of you may be thinking, wait a minute, you taught on true worship a couple of years ago.

And I did. But my plans are to come at this great topic from maybe a little bit different perspective.

We sort of looked at what true worship was and my plans are to, and I've titled this, How to Worship the Lord. Kind of the practical part of engaging in true worship.

And I want to come at it as our ultimate and someday our eternal priority.

My goal in all of this is to improve my level, attitude, and priority of worship. And I hope along the way you can enjoy the same experience.

[7:26] I don't know how long we're going to be hanging out here on this particular topic. I don't know at this point if I'll do all the talking. I have found some great sermons online that we could benefit from.

So let's just let the Holy Spirit lead us and see where He takes us. And by the way, I think if we'll really apply ourselves to that, we'll see spiritual improvement in our lives and in the life of the church.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism begins with a question, What is the chief end of man? And the answer is, man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

When we glorify God, we are worshiping. So our chief end is to worship God and to enjoy Him forever. Glorifying is worship.

Therefore, the chief end is to worship. And in so doing, the Scriptures say, reminds us that we will enjoy God forever. I heard a minister not long ago say, if you will take your very best day ever experienced on earth, multiply it by a hundred million, that is every second in heaven with the Lord.

[8:52] And I thought about that, and I might add there, one hundred million times that might be too little a figure. During the Christmas break, I wanted to do some light reading, so I picked up The Glory of Christ by Dr. John Owen.

Anyone who's tried to read Dr. John Owen, know that's not light reading, although I got an abridged version. Dr. Owen lived in the 17th century, probably the most brilliant man to ever live since the Apostle Paul.

Everything he's ever written is now called a classic. And again, I was fortunate to have an abridged copy which gave me hope of understanding some of that great man's thoughts.

I want to read to you how that volume, The Glory of Christ, begins. And it's not my purpose here to read to you guys, but this really struck me as I read this sitting over in a room in Branson last Christmas with my wife.

I read this, and I said, I've got to read this to the guys. It's a little lengthy. This is Dr. Owen. When the high priest under the law was about to enter the holy place on the day of atonement, he took in his hands sweet incense from the golden table of incense.

[10:23] He also had a censer filled with fire taken from the altar of burnt offerings where atonement was made for sin with blood.

When he actually entered through the veil, he put the incense on the fire in the censer until the cloud of its smoke covered the ark and the mercy seat.

the reason why he did all this was to present to God on behalf of the people a sweet smell from the sacrifice of propitiation.

Corresponding to this mystical type, the great high priest of the church, our Lord Jesus Christ, prayed when he was about to enter the holy place not made with hands, his glorious prayer set alight by the blood of his sacrifice filled the heavens above the glorious place of God's residence with a cloud of incense that is, the sweet smell of his blessed intercession.

By the same eternal fire by which he offered himself a bloody sacrifice to make atonement for sin, he kindled in his most holy soul those desires that all the benefits of his sacrifice should be given abundantly to his church.

[11:59] The greatest desire that Christ expressed in his prayer, and by the way that's the high priestly prayer of John 17, the greatest desire that Christ expressed in his prayer was that his people might be with him to behold his glory.

It is clear that in this prayer the Lord Christ was referring to his own glory and the actual sight of it. He is not concerned that his disciples should merely see how glorious he was, but that the beholding of his glory might bring encouragement, strength, satisfaction, and blessedness to his disciples.

This was the whole reason why his mediatory glory was given to him. When Joseph had revealed himself to his brothers, he charged them that they should tell his father of all his glory in Egypt. He did not do this to boast of his own glory, but because he knew how happy and satisfied his father would be when he knew in what a glorious position his son was.

Similarly, the Lord Christ desired that his disciples should see his glory in order that they might be filled with joy and happiness forevermore.

[13:29] Only a sight of his glory and nothing else will truly satisfy God's people. The hearts of believers are like a magnetized needle which cannot rest until it is pointing north.

So also a believer magnetized by the love of Christ will always be restless until he or she comes to Christ and beholds his glory.

The soul which can be satisfied without beholding the glory of Christ and that cannot be eternally satisfied with beholding the glory of Christ is not a soul for whom Christ prays.

We can now lay down a great foundational truth. One of the greatest privileges a believer has both in this world and for eternity is to behold the glory of Christ so Christ prays that they may behold my glory.

But this glorious privilege is not limited to the heavenly state only. it includes the state of believers in this world now. That's worship.

[14:44] John Owen picked up ink and pen and in writing he was worshiping the Lord Jesus Christ. It has all to do with the glory of Christ.

Some might argue that in making this statement that I'm somehow slighting the Father but remember we can't even come to the Father except through Christ. He alone is the way the truth and the life.

We were created by Jesus Christ we were created and then recreated to one day be like Him to the extent that is possible. We are created by Christ that He might find pleasure in us but primarily we were created to worship Jesus Christ and through Him and by Him to worship His Father and our Father.

In other words we were created to worship the Lord as our ultimate priority in this life and in the life to come.

the Apostle Paul understood this and he believed it to be true. He made it clear in His Word and in deeds that His greatest desire was to know Christ to love Christ to serve Christ and have intimate fellowship with Christ.

[16:17] And Paul accomplished great things for God because Christ was the very center of His life. Now may I say at the very outset that true and acceptable worship demands a level of commitment that perhaps some of us have never as yet achieved.

True worship and by the way that's the only kind of worship God accepts, right? It's the only kind that He desires. True worship. is more than setting aside a few minutes each day to rush through some Bible reading and voice a 30 second prayer.

True worship requires absolute commitment of our emotions, our intellect, and our will. This is the kind of worship we will engage in when we reach heaven so why not start now?

you guys all remember Martha the sister of Lazarus you remember Mary Martha was a worrier the house had to be beautifully clean the food just right the seating arrangement was perfect she fussed about everything and Jesus came for a visit and if I may be as bold to offer a paraphrase Jesus told Martha you know you worry about a lot of stuff and there's really only one thing that is in the necessary column and that one thing was the priority of true worship which her sister understood so I ask you this evening mark this down in your mental file somewhere worship is that one essential activity that must take precedence over every other duty of life it all begins with worship now the problem

I think with the church in the 21st century is that there's a lot of people in churches that are like Martha we're preoccupied far too preoccupied and usually we're preoccupied with non-essentials we're distracted we are too busy serving instead of sitting at the feet of the master and listening I mean look at our lives today and I'm as bad as anybody it is full of calendars clocks deadlines appointments and schedules when we go to our to-do list we have very little room for worship of the living God I don't know if it even makes it on the list but the truth of the matter is this we cannot afford to keep worship from the top of the to-do list much less leave it off altogether if you've got your 2016 to-do list and worship's not the top rewrite it

[19:30] I've heard several men given credit for this next statement but my research indicates it may well have been the great reformer Martin Luther he said I have so much to do today that if I don't spend at least three hours in prayer I will never get it all done and worship and by the way prayer is worship must be our first and our ultimate priority there isn't anything more important busy schedules make worship that much more important because of our hectic daily pace worship of the Lord Jesus is elevated to new heights so how important is worship in our modern fast paced society great men that have gone before us knew the answer to this far better than we know it today let me give you some quotes believe it or not we're getting toward the end

C.S. Lewis it is in the process of being worshiped that God communicates his presence to me well that resonated with me God communicates to us he makes himself known to us during the process of worship the great A.W.

Tozer man was made to worship God God gave to man a harp that's figuratively speaking God gave to man a harp and said here above all the creatures that I've made and created I've given you the largest harp I put more strings on your instrument and I've given you a wider range than I've given to any other creature you can worship me in a manner that no other creature can and when he sinned man took that instrument and threw it down in the mud and there it was lain for centuries rusted broken unstrung and man instead of playing a harp like the angels and seeking to worship God in all of his activities is ego centered and turns in on himself and sulks and swears and laughs and sings but it's all without joy and without worship worship is the missing jewel in modern evangelicalism we're organized we work we have our agendas we have almost everything but there is one thing that the churches even the gospel churches do not have and that is the ability to worship we're not cultivating the art of worship it's the one shining gem that is lost to the modern church and I believe we ought to search for this until we find it

Dr. Tozer wrote that in the very early 1960s he's been gone from the scene for decades Warren Weersbeck should be a name you're familiar with worship is the believer's response of all that they are mind emotion will body to what God is and says and does the great John Bunyan in prayer it is better to have a heart without words than words without a heart he's talking about worship another name that may be familiar to and should be to all of us D.A.

Carson worship is the proper response of all moral sentiment beings to God ascribing all honor and worth to their creator God precisely because he is worthy and delightfully so I didn't want to leave out John Calvin those who set up a fictitious worship merely worship and adore their own delirious fancies indeed they would never dare so to trifle with God had they not previously fashioned him after their own childish conceits!

[24:16] r.c. sproul said this the real crisis of worship today is not that the preaching is paltry or that it's too drafty in the church it is that people have no sense of the presence of God guys focus on that comment that statement by dr.

sproul we don't get that sense of the presence of God that God is really with us in worship in the community of worship known as the church with you in your closet at home that he's really present how can they be moved to express the deepest feelings of their souls to honor reveal worship and glorify God if we don't realize he's present how are we going to pull that off one of my favorites is actually an unknown author when we worship as a community of believers that's what we're doing even at night we do not do so alone and I never thought of that we are worshiping with the community of believers that are already in heaven we're just joining them in worshiping the same Lord so when we worship Sunday morning Sunday night Monday night Wednesday night at home in our closets we are worshiping with the community of believers that are already in heaven and then a final quote by Dr.

Sproul the worship to which we are called in our renewed state is far too important to be left to personal preferences to whims or to marketing strategies it is the pleasing of God that is at the very

heart of worship mark that thought down in your mental file we worship God to please him therefore our worship must be informed at every point by the word of God as we seek God's own instructions for worship that is pleasing to him