

The Importance of Worship

by Danny Bond

Worship is the ultimate purpose of redemption or salvation, and it is the way we give our lives to God.

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Scripture: Psalm 95:6, Matthew 6:33, John 4:23, Acts 20:7, Hebrews 10:25, Revelation 1:10, Revelation 14:6

Topics: "Worship", "Eschatology"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of worship in the context of the end times and the imminent return of Jesus Christ. He states that worship is the ultimate purpose of redemption and the ultimate focus of the Bible. The speaker also highlights that worship is the ultimate destiny of believers and should be the ultimate priority for all who know God. He concludes by discussing the practice of God-centered worship, emphasizing the need for both truth and spirit in worship and cautioning against extremes that deviate from genuine worship.

Transcript

Father, we love you so much. You are so worthy of our worship, our praise, our adoration. We are so often so self-centered and preoccupied with ourselves that we fail to give you the glory and the honor that you deserve.

Lord, we pray that through our time together, looking into your Word today, that you would retune our thinking, Father, that you would once again place within the center of our minds and hearts the ultimate priority that you have for us, which is to give our lives to you and to worship you. Father, bless this time. Bless us with a good, alert attention span to you, Holy Spirit.

Work the truth we're going to look at deep down within us that we might go on to grow in our worship and exaltation of God the Father. And we ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen. We are going to talk about worship now, which is the ultimate priority in the Christian life.

We have been called actually as God's people to an everlasting preoccupation with the Lord. And I want you to see in the Bible today that worship, worshipping God is the ultimate priority for us as God's people. If you could turn in your Bible actually to John, the Gospel of John 4-20, I'd like to read down through verse 24 and use that as a starting point, a launching point.

Here Jesus Christ is standing at the well in Samaria with a Samaritan woman. The Samaritans were half-breeds, part Jewish, part other nationalities, and they were a half-breed in their worship as well. You could say that their worship was a hybrid of Judaism and pagan worship, and they worshipped down there in that area of the country rather than Jerusalem.

So Jesus enters into this discussion with this woman about worship. And He very masterfully shows the priority that worship has with God the Father. And in verse 20, the woman is saying to Him, Our fathers, the Samaritan fathers, worshipped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.

Jesus said to her, Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the Father. You worship what you do not know. We know what we worship for salvation is of the Jews, but the hour is coming and now is.

When true worshipers... See, in Jesus' mind, there's such a thing as a true worshiper and a false worshiper. He says the hour is coming when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. For the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Now, as we go on from here, and we'll refer to this section again and again throughout the message, I want you to know this is not meant to be a final word on worship, but rather a word to raise in our thinking a few main important thoughts about worshipping God. And I want to give you a threefold outline for where we're going.

First of all, we're going to talk about the perversion that we are dealing with today in terms of God-centered worship in the church. Secondly then, we will talk about the priority in the Bible of God-centered worship. And then we will talk about just briefly the practice of God-centered worship.

And at that time, we'll talk about worship here in the church, coming to church, and what that is to be all about in the Christian life. So let's begin with the first main point in our outline which is the perversion of God-centered worship. The perversion around us today is basically that worship is for me.

That is the perversion today. There is a very prevalent mindset today that we come to church to worship for what we can get out of it. Worship is for me.

It is a, if you will, me-istic mindset. There is much in the church that has contributed to this. I think one main contributing factor is of course the Word-Faith Movement with Kenneth Hagen, Kenneth Copeland, Charles Capps, Marilyn Hickey, Fred Price, people like this.

And they have spread around the church such a selfish, me-istic mindset that I'm into Christianity for what I can get out of it. And that's what they talk about. All the prosperity, all the stuff that God wants to give you if you have the magic formulas that you can only get from them.

These people are of course mainline heretics. They're false teachers. They are wolves in sheep's clothing.

They need to be avoided at all costs. And certainly the attitude that they propagate should be avoided. I would recommend to you Hank Hanegraaff, president of Christian Research Institute, has a brand new book.

It's called Christianity in Crisis. And he really rips the mask off that whole movement and exposes it for what it's really all about. And I would recommend that you get that book.

We have it in our bookstore. It is a very, very important book for our time. But these people have certainly contributed to this me-centered kind of Christianity and then me-centered worship.

Another thing that has contributed today to that is the pragmatic mindset that is very prevalent today in the church. And that is the whole thing of all these programs and these pastors obsessed with having big churches, pastors obsessed with being seen among their peers as being successful men in the ministry. And thus one program, one formula, one technique after the next has been spawned to get people into church, get bodies into buildings.

It's pragmatism. The whole thing then becomes, will it work for me? If I try this, will it work for me? And that has fostered a pragmatic mindset in God's people. Will it work for me? What's in it for me? Will it make me feel good? Will I like it? And we have come to a very pragmatic time in the church.

And just think for example, there are in America over 350,000 churches. Collectively, these churches own 800 billion dollars worth of real estate. Never has the church been so programmed collectively.

Never has it been so informed, so well planned, so quote influential or busy or aggressive or clever or all these other things. Motivated, you can go on and on. But never has the church been so carnal.

Never has the church been so self-centered as it is today. And never has true God-centered worship been so lacking in the church in America. A distinguished explorer spent a couple of years among savages in the upper Amazon.

He attempted to force a trek through the jungle at an extraordinary speed driving the native carriers to the limit physically. Everything went along okay for about two days. And on the third morning all the natives just sat down and wouldn't go any farther.

Finally, he went over to the chief and he said, what in the world are they doing? Why won't they march on? And he said, because they're waiting for their souls to catch up with their bodies. Well, so is the church. God's people in America have been driven and driven and driven with one program after the next, one pragmatic formula after the next to get people into the church to make it bigger.

And in the meantime, their souls are lagging way behind. They're suffering and people are not understanding and being taught how to worship God. They're being taught how to build an empire for some man's massive ego.

It's a tragedy and it's perverting the worship of God in the church. John MacArthur, by the way, is coming out next month in just a couple of weeks with a brand new book called Ashamed of the Gospel. And it deals with this whole business of pragmatism in the church and how the gospel's been thrown out for programs for building big empires.

Okay, there's another thing. Not only has pragmatism contributed to this, but the love affair with psychology in the church has fostered this selfish mindset. You get into psychology enough and it will make you selfish, self-centered.

Psychology, there's so much we could say about it, but know this, it came from the fallen minds of fallen men sealed in the darkness without the light of God. When men tried to figure out their problems that can only be solved by the Spirit of God and the light of His Word and the truth of His Word, you have the blind leading the blind. And there is so much psychology in the church today that everybody's running around wondering how they feel.

Wondering how they feel about what happened to them way back when. And becoming irresponsible and selfish and wanting to blame their problems on somebody else and want to live in the past 25 years ago and be mad about it every day until they get some kind of a magical inner healing. Listen, the church needs to worship God.

When they worship God and make Him central, they will find God. In finding God, they will find the solution to their problems. We could go on and on as to the contributions to this perversion and worship, but I think that those are enough things to get you understanding why we have the problem we have today.

The perversion, again, is that worship is primarily for me. In contrast to all of that, let's talk about what worship is really to be all about. Worship is to be for who? God.

That's right. In John 4.23, Jesus said it, the hour is coming. Now is when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

You find throughout these verses the word worship again and again and again and again and again. You find it throughout the New Testament. In the Greek, the main word you find again and again is the word proskuneo.

It means basically to bow down, to kiss toward, to prostrate oneself. It is a word that describes what you would often see in the biblical society where a man would come before his king, his sovereign, and he would bow down until his forehead actually touched the ground. Kneeling with his forehead on the ground as a sign of his profound reverence for his sovereign and his king.

Well, you take that word, you put it into the Bible, you use it in reference to God, and it's exalted to its highest dimension. And it speaks of what we are to do with our God. The modern word English, the modern English word that we use, worship, that we see in our English translation actually comes from an old English word worth-ship.

Worth-ship. And that old English word denoted a worthiness of the individual in receiving special honor. So when we talk about worship being for God, we're talking about the fact that worship then is essentially giving rather than receiving.

That is not to say that when we are worshiping God, we don't receive wonderful blessings from Him because we do. But know this, we don't come to God to get the blessing. We come to God to worship Him and we get blessed in the process.

And there's a big difference. Do you understand that? As subtle as it may seem to you, it is a major difference. It is the difference that makes all the difference.

Essentially then, worship is giving to God. You could say worship is a blessed act of blessing God. Now, we're going to move through the Bible and look at a number of different things.

You find, for example, in the book of Exodus that God takes Moses aside and He talks to him about how to make the incense that they burnt in the tabernacle and later in the temple. Before the Lord, perpetually. And the incense would rise up to God as a sweet fragrance, as a picture of their worship offered up to God.

You come to the New Testament if you turn to John. If you're in John 4, just turn to the right to John 12. And you see a wonderful picture of worship.

The fragrance rising up to God. The worshiper at the feet of God. So, John 12.

Here in John 12, beginning with verse 1, Jesus has come to have dinner at the house of Lazarus who had been raised from the dead. And He is there with Martha and Mary, His sisters. It says, Then six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead.

There they made Him a supper, and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard. Remember who it was that sat at the feet of Jesus when her sister was busy with many things? Who was it? Mary.

Here is Mary again. She is obviously a worshiper, a true worshiper to use Jesus' terminology. Mary comes, and here is the picture.

She bows down at His feet. She would have to get on her knees to do this because she ends up wiping His feet with His hair. It says, Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

Just a beautiful picture of what worship is all about. Giving to Jesus, worshiping Jesus, and the beautiful fragrance filling the entire house. Well, that is how our worship is to be.

And so worship is to rise then up to God from His people. We come and we give our worship to Him. In the New Testament in Romans 12, after 11 solid chapters of doctrine, Paul the Apostle brings the first practical word to the Romans, and he says, I beseech you by the mercies of God, in light of all the grace that you have learned, that you now present your bodies as a living sacrifice which is your reasonable, what? Service.

The English says, the Greek is *latruo*. It is a word for worship, a worshipful service. And so he says, in light of everything you've learned about God, the most reasonable thing you can do is worship God.

Give your life to Him and serve Him. That's what he's saying. We are to worship God.

We are to give our very lives to Him. So let's be very specific then. In reference to the church meeting, when we come to church to give our worship to God, it should be just that.

You should be in your car on the way to church with a gift for God. It should be a gift in your heart that you can't wait to give the Lord, and that is the gift of your worship. You see, when you look at the term *proskuneo* in the Greek or *latruo* in the Greek, you do not find a word that says, where you get the definition of *proskuneo*, it means to gas up, to fill up, to receive.

No, it doesn't mean that. It means to bow down and give out. That's what it means, you see.

We need to understand that. So when we come to church, put it this way, if you come to church primarily just to see what you can get, if that's your primary thing, then know this, you don't truly worship God. If you come to church just to get the blessing, then you don't truly worship God.

You see, one of the things I think is wrong with the extremes that you find in the charismatic movement in the area of worship is that there's such an emphasis on the experience, such an emphasis on getting the quote anointing, on feeling the feeling, on catching the lightning bolt, getting the zap that's going to change your life. As a result, it cultivates this me-centered zap syndrome where all you think about in going to church is that you can get your zap for the day. And you grade the service on a scale of 1 to 10 by whether you got the zap or not.

And so much then goes on in the service to whip up and guarantee a zap for the day. Then you get about 10 minutes of the Bible, right? Which is watered down because the pastor's so into getting the zap, he didn't have time to study that week. Or then you have the pastor say, oh, we're so into worshipping now, let's just go on.

That is just to say, I was too lazy to study this week and get you a message, so let's just let the band do the rest. You see? Might as well call it for what it is. Anyway, all of that cultivates the wrong attitude.

We come to God to give our worship to Him. And that is not to say our worship shouldn't be lively. And I think certainly many of the circles in the charismatic camp bring to us an enthusiasm for God that's genuine and real.

And we should be encouraged by that. But there are extremes that take you all the way out into something that is not even real worship. And we need to be aware of that.

There is a balance. We come to church to give our worship to God. Psalm 45, verse 1, the psalmist says, my heart is overflowing with a good theme.

The word overflowing literally means to bubble up and to spill over and to boil. He was saying, God, as I contemplate You, my heart begins to burn within me begins to bubble up, it begins to boil within me with adoration and praise for You. Thus, Lord, I'm going to come and give You all the honor that is due to Your name.

It is a thing of giving. How long has it been since you knew that kind of worship? How long has it been since you came to church along the way saying, Oh God, I long to come and give to You. I can't wait till I have an opportunity to express my giving to You in the time of singing.

How long has it been since you've known that kind of God-centered worship? And so we see the perversion of God-centered worship and we see what worship is to be all about. Let's move on then to the second main thought in our outline today, the priority of God-centered worship. And I want to give you a couple of thoughts here, a few main thoughts, basically three in this section.

First of all, I want you to see that worship, when you talk about salvation, when you talk about salvation, if it is rightly presented, you must understand that worship is the ultimate purpose of redemption or salvation. When God saves a man, the ultimate purpose is to turn that man or that woman into a worshiper. I mean, this is exactly what Jesus was saying to the woman at the well.

You see, men on their own do not worship God. In fact, when man fell in the garden, what was effectively lost was the God-centered worship. Man became the center of the whole thing.

Turn in your Bible, could you, to Romans 1-20, where we see this in some detail. Paul is kind of giving a summary of fallen man and his state and the greatest sin of the whole thing is that man has ceased to be a worshiper of God and has become a worshiper of himself. Romans 1.20 Here we read, for since the creation of the world speaking of God, His invisible attributes are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made even as eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God. Neither were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God.

Watch this massive step down. Into an image made like unto who? Corruptible man. And then he goes down even further.

And birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. And so here, Paul says that man fell from his worship of God and instead began to worship himself. Changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man and further got even worse and more perverted and then began to worship images of beasts and four-footed things, creeping things.

He could have actually said creepy things, but he said creeping things. At any rate, it is important to see that man's big problem is he doesn't worship God, he worships himself. That's the problem with the world today.

Jesus came in response to all of that and He said, I came to seek and to save that which was what? Lost. And what was lost? True God-centered worship. And so He says in John 4.23, But the hour is coming, and now is, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

That is the only place in all the Bible that says God is actually seeking something from us. Then you find in terms of the fact that God redeems men to make them true worshipers in Revelation. Why don't you turn to Revelation 14.6. Here we come down to the end of the Bible.

Revelation 14.6. You find in the beginning of the Bible, man falls. And the big temptation he gives into is to become a god so he can basically be worshipped instead of worshiping God. So the beginning of the Bible, worship is lost.

God calls for God-centered worship as the ultimate priority all through the Bible. You come down to the very end of the Bible, and you see that God is still wanting to redeem men for the purpose of becoming worshipers. Revelation 14.6. Then I saw, John says, another angel flying in the midst of heaven and having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.

This is at the end of the human history. Jesus Christ is about to come back at any time. And this is God still calling for men to come and worship Him.

Verse 7. Here's His message. Saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him for the hour of His judgment has come. And what? Worship Him.

Come to God and worship Him. And so I say again, worship is the ultimate purpose of redemption. If God saves you and gives you forgiveness in eternal life, it's to turn you into a worshipper of Him.

Let me take you to another thought. Worship is the ultimate focus of the Bible. You take your Bible, read through it cover to cover, and you'll find out that the ultimate focus here is worship.

This is a book about worshiping God. We can follow this theme all the way through, really. If you just go back to the beginning.

Adam and Eve were created by God to worship God. They fell into sin when they refused to do so and wanted to be worshiped themselves and become God. Cain and Abel.

You look at that. Cain killed Abel, didn't he? Over the matter of what? Worship. You go on and you look at the patriarchs as we have been on Sunday night in Genesis and you find that when they properly worshiped God, they were blessed.

When they didn't, God punished them. You continue to move through the Bible and you find that Israel was doomed in the desert because of failure to properly worship God. You find that Moses could not enter the promised land because he failed to properly worship God obediently at the incident with the rock and the water.

You find that when God gave them the law to govern them as a people, the first thing He did was give them a call to worship. Turn in your Bible to the book of Exodus. Let me show you this.

In chapter 20, beginning at verse 1. Exodus 20 verse 1. And God spoke all these words saying, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. Here it is. You shall have no other gods before me.

I am to be the one you worship. I am to be the very center of your adoration and your praise. See, anything that occupies your thinking and your energy and your time and your effort continually will become a God to you, an idol to you.

It will draw off, quote, your worship. God is saying you shall have no other gods before me. Then just turn to the right.

In Exodus to chapter 34 verse 14. He makes it very clear. And he sums it up.

God has made it very clear. You shall worship no other God. Jesus summed all of that up in Matthew 22 when he said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.

This is the first and great commandment. This is what God has been after from the beginning. It is the ultimate focus of the Bible.

As you continue along the Bible in Exodus, if you read it carefully, you will discover that about 25 chapters are devoted in the book of Exodus to the building of the tabernacle. And there is a reason for that. The tabernacle had one function and that was worship.

Even the geographical location of the tabernacle is crucial. Because if you've studied your Bible, you know that when they built the tabernacle, the tent that you find it all covered in the 25 chapters, when they finally put it out there geographically, it was right in the center of the people. They lived around the tabernacle.

Everything in their life revolved around the worship that went on in the tabernacle. You had the tabernacle and the priests living here and the Levites living here. And out a little farther came the rest of the 12 tribes of Israel.

They lived literally around the tabernacle. There was a purpose for that. The purpose was this.

They were to know every day of their life, when they came out the door of their tent to start their day, the very first thing they saw was what? The tabernacle. The glory of God was there, often manifesting above the tabernacle. All the worship went on there.

So every day of their life, they were given the message, the center of your life is to be worshiped. That your life revolves around what goes on in this tabernacle right here. And so even the geographic location of the tabernacle sent out the message that worship is the priority of your life.

To be the center of your life. Your life is literally to revolve around the worship. It takes place there in the tabernacle.

You continue on in the Bible and you find that God takes worship seriously. So that when you have the violation of principles of worship, God acts swiftly and seriously. Take for example, when they came out of Egypt and Moses was on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments.

Remember what they were doing at the bottom of the mountain? What did they do? They built a golden calf, didn't they? They were down there and somebody says, let's make a calf. And we'll put it together. We've got all this jewelry we brought out of Egypt.

Let's throw it in the fire and melt it down and we'll build golden calves. We'll bow down. We'll say these are the gods that brought us out of Egypt.

Moses comes down from receiving the Ten Commandments, hearing God talk to him personally, watching God write personally on a rock with his finger the laws for his people. He comes down the mountain and they're down there dancing around, having a pagan worship orgy type situation and worshipping these golden calves. How did God respond to that? He slew thousands of them.

He took it very seriously when they violated the principles of worship. Leviticus 10, you find the sons of Aaron, they come in to be ordained on their ordination day. And the Bible says they offered strange fire before the Lord.

We don't know what that was. All we know is they didn't come the way God said they should come. God took it seriously.

He would not tolerate their impudence and their flippancy. And He killed them, Nadab and Abihu, slain by God. 1 Samuel 13, you find Saul the king and he's waiting for Samuel to come down to the battle and give an offering and lead them in worship so they can have victory in the battle.

Samuel delays. He doesn't show up. Saul takes matters into his own hands.

He says, ah, anybody can worship God. Anybody can give an offering. He goes and he gives the offering.

Samuel shows up right after he's done it. He gets Saul and he says, you know what, Saul? You have a big problem. You're disobedient to God.

You presume to take the office of the priest. God will not tolerate that. Saul, I have to tell you that because of all your rebellion, all your disobedience, and now this ultimate act of self-styled worship, you are removed from being king of Israel as of now and you will be replaced by a man after what? God's own heart who will worship God the way He is to be worshipped.

The Lord took it very seriously. And then you have, of course, the account later in 2 Samuel 6 of Uzzah. The Ark of the Covenant had been captured by the enemies of Israel.

And they were so glad to get it back and they built a new cart. And they put the Ark on there. And they got Uzzah who was a Kohathite, one of the men who was trained by God to handle the Ark of the Covenant.

And they're riding down the road and David is singing in the road. It's a great celebration. Hundreds of thousands of people singing and dancing and shouting and rejoicing that the Ark is coming back to the nation.

All of a sudden, the cart hits a bump in the road and it kind of flies up a little bit. The Ark wobbles a little bit. Uzzah reaches out to steady the Ark.

Boom! He falls over dead on the street. David stops. Instant silence.

The rejoicing turns to mourning. Everybody says, what is going on? David goes back and for months he seeks God and he figures out from the Word of God that Uzzah as a Kohathite was never to touch the Ark. There were rings on the side of the Ark that you slid poles through.

And the Kohathites would then lift the Ark by the poles without touching it and move it in that way. All as a part of a great reverence in worshiping God His way. Uzzah in a very flippant manner reaches out and says, I'll just steady this cart.

First of all, it shouldn't have been on a cart. It should have been on the poles on the shoulders of the Kohathites. Secondly, he should have never touched it.

And that's why God killed him. So when there were violations of the principles of worship in the Bible, God takes it seriously. Then you come down to the time of Jesus Christ.

We could go on and on seeing how this is the focus of the Bible, but Jesus says that the hour is coming and now is when worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. And He goes on to say the same message. Then you find out that not only is worship the ultimate purpose of redemption, not only is worship the ultimate focus of the Bible, but worship is the ultimate destiny of believers.

This is what we're going to do forever. We should learn to do it now. Get in the flow with what God's going to do with us forever.

In Revelation, for example, chapter 4, you have the 24 elders who are falling down before Him who sits on the throne and they worship Him who lives forever, casting their crowns, symbolizing all that they are and have received and worship before God on His throne. We are told in Revelation 15.4 that all nations will come and worship the Lord. And then this.

Turn to chapter 22 to verse 8. We find out that even the angels who live in the presence of God understand worship very clearly. They understand that God-centered worship is the priority. Nothing else is to be tolerated.

And here is John receiving the revelations from the Lord, the angels ministering to him. And we read this in Revelation 22.8, Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of who? The angel who showed me these things.

Now just imagine, this angel was around when Satan wanted to take over heaven and receive all the worship. And this angel saw Satan and one-third of the angels thrown out of heaven to take their place eventually in an eternal burning hell, right? This angel knows about that. This angel was around when the golden calf incident took place and God slew thousands.

This angel was around when Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire and God killed them. This angel was around when the worship was perverted, when Uzzah touched the Ark of the Covenant and died. This angel has seen people pervert worship and offer it in the wrong direction and die or be punished and judged.

John falls at his feet. Can't you see the angel panic? Get up! Get up! Get up! Quickly! And so he says in verse 9, he said to me, Don't do that! Get up! I am your fellow servant. He's looking around thinking, God is going to do something to me if I look like I like this.

He says, For I am your fellow servant of your brethren the prophets and those who keep the words of this book. Then what does he say? Worship God. Worship is the ultimate destiny of believers.

It is the ultimate priority for all of us that know God. So we've seen the perversion. We've seen the priority of worship.

Finally, let's come to the practice of God-centered worship. I just want to take a couple of minutes to deal with this. Let's talk about the basic elements of Christian worship.

What should it involve? Two things. Truth and Spirit. Jesus said, You must worship the Father in truth.

How can I do that? There is only one way. By learning what is in the book of truth, right? By learning what God has revealed about Himself. That is why I am committed to verse-by-verse expository preaching.

That is why the pulpit can never be a place for ongoing constant hammering of social issues and trying to get you into this cause and that cause and everything else. The pulpit must be a place of the Word of God where you learn the truth so that you can worship in truth. You see? You learn the truth about God.

And then you worship in Spirit. That means from your Spirit you're to worship in truth from the very depths of your being now that you know about God, you can intelligently worship Him from the very center of your being in Spirit and in truth. And so that is how we're to worship.

Psalms 133 says, Sing ye praises with understanding, bringing it all together. So these are the basic elements of Christian worship. And then the second thought I want to give you here as we wind down is the basic elements of a corporate worship.

By that I mean, when we come together in church. First of all, we should understand the place of corporate worship in our lives. You remember the tabernacle in the Old Testament? Where was it? In the center.

We have here a church building where we gather together. This is the local, quote, tabernacle for us where we come to meet with God. What place should the church have in our lives? It should be at the

center with God in the center of that.

You see, in the tabernacle of old, around the tabernacle of old revolved their lives. They lived near it. They saw God manifest His presence there.

They worshiped Him there. And they arranged their schedules around what main events were happening at the tabernacle. We are to do the same.

I believe that we need to order our lives around the main event in our church. And if you don't go to this church, if you're visiting, you should do it around your own church. In other words, we have on Sunday our main services here.

We meet in the morning. We have two services. Same message, just two services to get everybody in.

And then we come back together in the evening. It seems to me that if we're going to properly, corporately worship God in light of all that we've seen in the Bible, then we need to structure our lives around that time of meeting with God. Any man who calls himself a Christian must understand that worship is to be the ultimate priority of his life for any woman.

Now, how do you demonstrate that? You demonstrate that by ordering your life in such a way as to reflect this. Thus, church is not an option of the week. Coming to worship God corporately with God's people is at the center of your week.

It isn't the kind of thing where you wake up on Sunday morning and wonder. You know, sort of test the air to see what God might be saying and which way the wind's blowing. If the surf might be good.

Or, you know, maybe it's a good day for tennis or this or that or the other thing. Or maybe even church. No.

I believe that we should place corporate worship at the center of our lives and order our life around what we do in our church. And there should be preparation for that. You understand the place of it, you should then make preparation for corporate worship in your life.

I think you should do that. I strongly challenge you on this. To make a conscious decision that Sunday will be the Lord's day in your life.

Sunday. A day to worship God. If you don't think you need that, if I don't think I need that in this day and age in which we live, then something's wrong.

If you think that you can get on without all that happens when we come to worship God here together and have a good week walking with God, I don't think you understand how all this works. You neglect the fellowship of the saints and the worship of God corporately and you will be editing God out of your life. No one can live wholly all alone.

I encourage you to make a conscious decision that Sunday will be the day you worship God. In this church, we come together twice, Sunday morning, Sunday night. I want to challenge you to make Sunday the Lord's day and come to both meetings.

These are the main meetings where we meet with God. This is what God has done in this church. Furthermore, I would encourage you to just make it your plan to come to church in the morning, then

leave, go and eat, go and sleep, get up and eat some more, and then come back and worship God some more.

Because that's what God has done here and that's a good way then to make Sunday the Lord's day. Know this, look in the book of Acts. They met on the first day of the week.

Go to the book of Revelation. John says, I was in the Spirit on what? The Lord's day. What is that? It means he had a day in his week that was for the Lord.

A day in his week where he worshiped God. And on that day, that is what happened. And the rest of the week, he did all the other things that he did.

Make a conscious decision to make Sunday the Lord's day in your life and then let your schedule reflect that you have done that. Let me give you a second thought on preparation. And this is vital and most Christians don't do it.

Once you have made the decision Sunday will be the Lord's day, then you need to prepare on Saturday evening for the Lord's day. I venture to say that if you would do this, there would be a lot less arguments on Sunday morning. I read this week some research that showed, a survey that showed that the average Christian married couples argue most of any time during the week yes, Sunday morning.

You know why? Everybody gets up. One spouse is wondering if God is leading to go to church this morning. Another spouse is wondering what they're going to wear this morning.

The kids are wondering what they're going to eat this morning. The two parents can't agree on what the kids will wear this morning. And the next thing you know, you have chaos in the home and a bunch of carnal people getting into the car to come to church, right? Glassy eyed and glaring at each other from all the arguments.

I encourage you to prepare for the Lord's Day on Saturday night. Decide what the meal will be on Sunday morning and get it ready. Decide what you're going to wear on Sunday morning and get it ready for yourself, your spouse, and the kids as well.

Then you'll find that Sunday morning you're ready. Get all set up. prepare your heart on Saturday night for Sunday morning.

I don't know about you, but the times we have here together are so precious to me. The success spiritually of my week depends much on what happens here when we're together on Sunday. And if you just come in unprepared, if you stay up late Saturday night watching TV until you pass out on the couch, the remote drops on the floor and wakes you up and you're, oh, where am I? Is it Sunday morning? Did I sleep all night on the couch? If you go every Saturday night like that and wake up groggy and tired and cranky on Sunday morning, guess how you're going to be in church? Groggy and tired and cranky.

And that's why many of you are regular sleepers Sunday morning in church. We've designed a t-shirt for you. And it's a special color.

We're putting together your own support group for you sleepers. Want to know who you are so we can minister to you? I'm just kidding. But the reason many of you sleep regularly on Sunday morning in church is because you don't prepare at all Saturday night.

It's like, ah, I'll be all right when I get to church on Sunday. Then you wonder why you leave and nothing has happened in your life. Listen to the words of George Swinock, that great Puritan.

He's talking about Saturday night preparing for the Lord's Day. This is from Packer's book *Quest for Godliness*. He says, Prepare to meet with your God, O Christian.

Take yourself to your prayer closet on Saturday night. Confess and bewail your unfaithfulness under the ordinances of God. And approach Him in deep reverence for your sins.

Entreat God to prepare your heart for and assist it in your religious performances. Spend some time in consideration of the infinite majesty and holiness and jealousy and goodness of that God with whom you are to have to do in sacred duties. Ponder the weight and the importance of His holy ordinances.

Meditate on the shortness of the time that you will have to enjoy the Lord's Day in. And continue musing until the fire burns within your heart. It would be hard to imagine how much good you will gain by such forethoughts.

How pleasant and profitable a Lord's Day will be to you after such preparation. The oven of your heart, thus baked in as it were overnight, would be easily heated the next morning. The fire so well raked up within you when you went to bed on Saturday night will then be quickly kindled when you arise on Lord's Day morning.

If you would thus leave your heart with God on Saturday night, you will find it with Him in the morning on Sunday. Boy, those are good words. I venture to say if we all began to live like that, it would revolutionize our church.

And what happens when we gather here together on the Lord's Day? Augustine, that great saint, years ago said, Thou hast formed us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until we come to find our rest in Thee. And we find that rest when we worship Him. Years ago, the shorter catechism was put together and it asked the ancient questions of what and why of man's existence and then answers them in one short statement that is hardly matched anywhere outside of Scripture.

Here's the question. What is the chief end of man? And here is the answer. Man's chief end is to worship God and enjoy Him forever.

Worship is to be the ultimate priority in our lives. And everything we do in our life should reflect that great reality. Let's bow for a word of prayer, shall we? Father, we love You so much, Lord.

We have missed out on so much communion with You, worshiping other things, giving ourselves to other things so that when the time comes to worship You, there is nothing left. Holy Spirit, we ask that You would so work within each one of us that we would be molded and shaped into what the Lord Jesus Christ calls true worshipers. May we approach You, Father, in spirit and in truth.

May we be the worshipers that You are seeking to find. And together, Lord, as we come and make You our great priority, as we come to give to You our gift of worship and praise, may we go on to experience Your great and wondrous design of holy communion together in which we can find the fulfillment that is ours in Christ as Your children. Lord, we bless You and we praise You.

And we ask that we could grow in our worship of You as a people and as individuals. And we ask these things in Jesus' precious name, amen.

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