

Word & Spirit Conference, Session 5

by David Ravenhill

David Ravenhill emphasizes the importance of understanding God's habitation and culture for spiritual longevity and growth in the Christian life.

Duration: 53:21

Scripture: Exodus 25:8, Psalm 139:23-24, Matthew 5:8, John 4:24, Romans 1:21, 1 Corinthians 10:1-5, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Hebrews 3:6, James 4:5, Revelation 4:8

Topics: "Christian Life", "Habitation of God", "Holiness and Worship"

Description

David Ravenhill emphasizes the importance of creating a habitation for God, drawing parallels between the physical tabernacle and our lives as temples for the Holy Spirit. He reflects on the necessity of holiness, obedience, and thanksgiving in our relationship with God, highlighting that while many may experience God's presence, few truly fulfill His purpose. Ravenhill warns against the dangers of complacency and the need for a culture that aligns with God's desires, urging believers to surrender their lives fully to Him. He illustrates that God desires to dwell among His people, but requires a clean and holy environment to do so. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a deeper understanding of God's ways and a commitment to worship Him in spirit and truth.

Transcript

Father, I just lift David to you right now in the name of Jesus. Father, I thank you for once again imparting to him a wisdom, Lord, and an understanding and insight into your Word, Lord, to help him to preach prophetically. Lord, we ask that you would anoint his words even at this moment.

Lord, and I would ask that those words would cut deep into our heart and help us to fall more in love with you. In Jesus's holy name, Amen. Let me just say how much I've enjoyed our time together over the last couple of days.

You guys are very fortunate to have the couple you do, Martha and Keith, as oversight, as pastors, I've just sensed the integrity and transparency and honesty of their lives and just the whole desire for God. What a wonderful gift and blessing they are to you, and I appreciate just a little bit of time we've spent together getting to know them. I want to share some thoughts tonight on the habitation of God.

I was in a church on Thursday night of this week in Sacramento, and I shared this word. Anybody here from that church? You'll hear it again if they are. Okay, good.

And I was sitting in the pastor's office just prior to the meeting trying to get a few minutes to pray. I'd been traveling all day from Carlsbad and three flights and just sort of sitting, and the thought of the river was going through my mind. I was thinking of the river of God, going back to Genesis where we have the first mention of the river coming out from the tabernacle.

If you've ever studied the Garden of Eden, it was a tabernacle. I won't go into all the details on that, but you can research it. And there was a place of God's presence, a place where man had access into the presence of God, and there was a river that flowed out, of course, brought life to the surrounding area.

And so this sort of rivers was going through my mind, and I found myself turning to 1 Corinthians chapter 10. You don't need to turn to it, because I'm just going to touch on it briefly. And I began saying to those people they were very much into what God is doing, very much into celebration and very similar to what we've seen tonight, and just a real sense of joy and appreciation of God's presence and pressing into God.

And I made this statement to them. I said, I don't think I can add to your intensity, but I do believe I can add to your longevity. I've lived long enough, over 30 years now of ministry, to see that things come and go, to see that there are tremendous moves of God that the church has experienced, and then you go back a few years later.

In fact, one of the tragedies I hear now is just in England a few weeks ago, and there was a time when there was something like 400 Anglican churches that were set on fire by the move of God in Toronto, and they said people were lining up to get into those churches and so on. And just a few weeks ago I was making inquiry, and they said there's hardly one of those churches doing anything anymore. I thought, what a tragedy.

What an incredible tragedy. There's only one or two that are still sort of pressing on into the things of God. And I was drawn to this verse of Scripture in 1 Corinthians 10, and it says, I don't want you to be unaware, brethren, that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea.

They were all baptized in the Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food, and they all drank from the river, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them, God was not pleased, for they were laid low in the wilderness.

Now these things happened to them as an example for us, and I was somewhat taken back. I'd ministered on this passage from a sort of different perspective before, just the discipline of Paul and wanting to finish the race and so on and so forth, and yet I realized there was something here, that there was a river, a supernatural river that came out of the rock. It wasn't just a normal river.

It was a supernatural river that followed the nation of Israel those 40 years, brought life to literally at least a million people, and possibly 10 or 12 million, if you add all the livestock and everything else that they had to exist on, and so on. I mean, it was a supernatural river. It talks about the depths of the river in Psalms.

So it was a major river, and they drank from that river knowing that that river was supernatural, and yet at the same time, two out of that original million people made it into the Promised Land. I thought, what a tragedy. What a tragedy that we can drink at the river day after day after day, and yet still not fulfill what God has, and so I said to them again, I believe that I can add to your longevity.

I may not be able to add to your intensity. I'm getting older. I can't dance like some of you young men, and so on, used to run the mile, have a little bit of better figure than I do now, but anyway, those days have long gone, and but I thank God for longevity, and I believe there are some principles that will get us through, because the ultimate goal of God, again, as the Old Testament says, don't brag about putting on the armor.

Brag about being able to take it off. Remember, one came to another. It says, one thing to sort of brag before the fight.

You know, you get in these boxing matches, old Muhammad Ali, and so on, and the opponent, you know, bragging about, oh yeah, fourth round, take care of him. You know, it's easy to do that before. It's when it's all over, and Paul says, run in such a way that you may win, and he says, I have one fear, and that is that lest I preach to others, I myself should be disqualified, and he says, I don't want you unaware, brethren, that all, it's interesting, and I'll end up preaching this if I'm not careful, but if you go back to 1 Corinthians 9, and underline the word all.

All begin the race, but not all win. I don't want you to be unaware, brethren, there's that terrible chapter division. My pet peeve is chapter divisions.

It's one thought. Don't want you to be unaware, brethren, that all our fathers were on the cloud. All drank the same spiritual food, or eight of the same spiritual food.

All drank the same spiritual food. In other words, when the gun was fired, so to speak, Paul's analogy of a race, a million people started off from Egypt, and two of them made it across the finishing line, and he says, these things happened as an example for us, and there's a lot in there. They fell with immorality, they fell with idolatry, they fell with complaining and murmuring, all sorts of things that we need to guard against, because the enemy is there with all the strategies and all the plans.

I understand in the original Olympic Games, where it says, laying aside every weight, that one of the strategists, they were so bent on winning in some of these towns, that they had a champion represented in the running, that was competing with another province, and so on. There were people on these long races, that would take balls of gold, and as the runner was rounding a bend, they would roll them across the road, and the runner would try and stoop, because here was a fortune, a literal fortune, that he could pick up, and if he picked that thing up, of course, the weight of it, eventually over the miles, would finally take its toll, and their winner would run, and it's easy, isn't it, to reach down and pick something up, that ultimately can disqualify us and make us lose a race. So I want to talk about the habitation of God.

I'm going to be using a number of words, sort of interchangeably, the word atmosphere, the word culture, the word environment, all of those words have a similar connotation. They talk about certain ingredients coming together, that are conducive for something. You know, we go into a restaurant, and we can create an atmosphere.

We can dim the lights, we can have soft music, beautiful tablecloth, and there's an atmosphere that is created. We have an atmosphere, if you like, in the animal kingdom, we call it the environment, where there are certain mixes of the right things, there's the right soil mix, there's the right temperature, humidity, and so on, and it's conducive for growth. And the word habitat, again, means the same thing, that you've got a certain type of tree in a certain temperature zone, and so on and so forth, and so that draws, you know, certain birds and butterflies, and all the other things, and so on.

And the other word is the word culture, the way of doing something. I've had the joy of traveling, and also the joy of living in a number of countries, and I realize, as you have, if you've traveled, that not everybody does things the way you do things, and the way you're used to doing things. I was horrified when my father, who was in the ministry for many, many years, 70 years, he was in the ministry, died at 87, started at 17, and he brought us to America when I was 14 years of age, because he was traveling in this country extensively, and we ended up in a Bible school, where we based ourselves, that was our home for seven years in Minneapolis, and I'd only been there a matter of weeks, and here were all these staff kids that I ended up being friends with, and I was horrified to find out that these Christian kids, staff kids, a school that was known for its holiness and sanctification, that these kids were swearing, and they were equally horrified to think that Leonard Ravenhill's son was also swearing, until we realized we had a clash of cultures, you see, swear words in English, or in England, where I was raised, were not necessarily swear words in American, and vice versa, and we soon discovered that even though we spoke the same language, in one sense, we had two different cultures that were represented there, and I was horrified as they swore in words that to me were swear words, not to them, and I was swearing in their language, if you like, at least their culture, and it's amazing, isn't it, that different cultures.

I was visiting my daughter, who was in university down in the South Island of New Zealand, the city of Dunedin, and went down there for some ministry one weekend, I was staying with a friend of mine, and picked up the morning newspaper that morning, waiting for breakfast, and I was reading an article that caught my interest, it was right on the front page of the Otago Daily Times, that's the region down there, and the article spoke about a museum exhibit that was touring New Zealand, and then going over to Australia, and it was a museum exhibit of Inca artifacts, from the Inca civilization, they had pieces of pottery, and jewellery, and clothing, and various agricultural implements that they had unearthed, and the article talked about the pride and joy of this particular museum exhibit

was the mummified remains of an Inca person, and then the article zeroed in on the fact that New Zealand was the only country on this particular tour that these mummified remains were not on display, and it explained why, it says because the Maori people who make up, I imagine my brother here would know better than I would, 15-20% of the population, they're the original inhabitants of New Zealand, that they are very superstitious when it comes to death, and anything to do with their death, and so the New Zealand government was sensitive to the culture of the Maori people, unless they offend the Maori people, they were not putting this particular display on exhibit, even though it was the ultimate sort of pride and joy of this particular exhibit, and they were sensitive again that you can

offend a brother, proverb says if you offend a brother, then it's harder to win that brother than it is to take a city, and some of you have had that experience where you've done something, it's caused a breach, and your relationship has been severed, and you've done everything within your power to try and heal that relationship, and you know how difficult it is once somebody has been offended, and we can offend somebody by not understanding their culture, and again different countries do things differently than we do, it's hard to believe that there's possibly more people that eat with chopsticks than there are with knives and forks, now we find that difficult because we have never been raised that way, we pick up our knife and fork and we're quite adept at using them, and yet you know

the vast majority of the world again would thrive more on chopsticks, hard to believe that English is not you know one of the major, well there's a major language but there's more people that would speak some other languages than English, and so there's different cultures, different ways of doing things, I've traveled quite a bit in Malaysia, and I remember on one occasion being up in a place called Penang, very beautiful

place, staying with a Chinese doctor, very wealthy man, drove a Mercedes Benz, we came up to his house, beautiful home, the gates opened automatically, and there was somebody at the door to sort of greet us, and I remember walking in, and I was just tapped and politely reminded to take off my shoes, because you never ever go into a home there without first of all

removing your shoes, and every house no matter how rich it is or poor it is, there is just dozens of shoes that are lined up there depending how many people are inside, and even though the most of the houses are not carpeted, they've got beautiful tile floors, but you would never ever cross that threshold with your shoes on, it's part of the culture, and so we get used to doing things, and we think it's the norm, when my wife and I were in New Guinea many years ago, I had a missionary tell me of a situation when he'd been in a very remote area of New Guinea translating the scriptures, and after he'd been there for a number of weeks, one of the nationals, don't like being called natives, but anyway one of the natives came up to him and asked him a question, he said I want to know

something, he said you people from America and England and so on, he said I've noticed that you carry in your pocket a white cloth, and he said when you blow your nose, you very carefully wrap that substance up, and you put it in your pocket, and we want to know, and I've been asked to ask you what you do with that, because we have wasted it for hundreds of years, thousands of years, and obviously this is a very valuable commodity, because you take out this very beautiful white cloth, and you open it up very carefully, and there's obviously something that we don't know, and you preserve that, and while that's rather humorous, it shows a clash of cultures doesn't it, that we would never think of sort of wasting it on the ground so to speak, but you know in a primitive culture like that,

you know their mind was what on earth do you do with it, the fact that you treasure it, so you know, and you wrap it up so carefully, and that cloth is always sparkling white, and you know, you put it in your pocket, you must do something, we want to know what the key is.

Again, different cultures. In the South Pacific, some of the islands there, it's very common to see men walking along hand in hand, and they may be 20, 30 years of age, and they just got their hands together, just you know, walking, of course in America we would have a cause of to be alarmed, but in that country again, it's just part, part of the culture.

In Thailand, Thailand has a culture that the foot, the lower the part of the body, the more despised it is, and the foot is the most despised part of the body, and it's a major insult to sit and to sort of point your foot at somebody, and especially to show the sole of your foot towards somebody, and I was just sharing this somewhere recently, and there was a lady who was raised in Thailand, her parents were missionaries with the Finnish mission, and she said, she said there was an occasion, she said, I remember when the king of Thailand went into a two-story building, and they made sure that everybody was evacuated from the second floor, because if the king walked in, he was ultimately under somebody's foot, and that is one of the most despised things, to think that the king, with all of his nobility, and his royalty, and so on, should be under somebody, and they made sure that everybody was cleared out. Again, we wouldn't think of that, but in that culture, it's very, very real, and you can offend somebody. I had a brother that I worked with in New Zealand, and he was there a year before I was, speaking to the missionary conference, and he was speaking about David and Goliath, he took his shoe off, and he threw it across the room to illustrate the stone striking Goliath, and I was there a year later, and they wanted to know.

I had a number of people, when they knew I was from New Zealand, they said, do you know so-and-so? They named him, I said yes, and they said, oh, you do, and there was still an offence there, because of what he'd done, simply taking a shoe, and again, throwing it, and them being under that very despised, in their culture, that very despised object, and so, culture is important. I watched the television programme, a number of years ago, that did a documentary on the White House chef, and initially, I was going to turn it off, and then I got caught up in the programme, and the interesting thing was, that not only did it talk about the culinary ability of that man, the ability to cook anything, and decorate cakes, and all the other goodies that he had to make, but not only did he have to be a good cook, he had to know who he was cooking for, which was equally as important, because you see, if the head of state, say Netanyahu, came to the White House to spend the night, and he comes down to breakfast, and the cook, he may have the most delicious ham and eggs, but you would have a problem on your hands, because it's not kosher, and you would offend a brother, not understanding the culture that he came from. I share all of that to say this, that I believe God has a culture.

God has a way of doing things, that we need to understand, and God can be offended, if you like, by not understanding, that's why the Bible says, teach me your ways, Lord, and your ways are not my ways, and your way of doing things is not my way of doing things, I'm so used to doing things my way, I think this is the only way, I think this is the normal way, the natural way, and it's only when you cross the sea, and you go to somebody else's country, that all of a sudden you're the foreign, and your ways are strange, and you realize, listen, these people are different, they don't operate the same way that I operate, and so on, and so you have all different ways of doing things, some cultures it's appropriate in the middle of your meal to belch, and the louder the belch, and the longer the belch, the more you are signifying to the cook that you're enjoying the meal, and that's a wonderful meal, and you're saying, give my thanks to the cook, now we would be horrified to think that, you know, that would happen in our culture, if the kid does it, you know, the mother looks at him across the table, and reminds him that we've got guests, so the father kicks him appropriately under the table, a brother nudges him, and you know, says quiet, you know, we don't, we don't do those things, and so there's one area of China that I was just told about recently, and that is in that particular part of China, in some of the remote areas, that they will grow their fingernail, an extended fingernail, for one simple reason, that they like to pick their nose, and there's nothing wrong with it, in that culture, they sit around, it's not an embarrassing thing to do, it's something that they just sit around in a circle, and of course they, you know, the better your fingernails is shaped, the more effective you can do the job, and again, we laugh, we're horrified, we cringe, we think, no, but you see, we do things that are just as offensive to them, as they would be offensive to us, because it's a cultural thing, and it's a way that they do, and they get used to it, and there's nothing wrong, Malaysia, you would never see people pick their teeth, they always go like this, before they pick their teeth, some Malaysians here, know that, and they sit around the table, they would think that this was highly offensive, I guess, to just take a toothpick and pick away, like we do, and so they always cover them out, and again, it is a cultural thing.

Now, the word habitation, in the dictionary, means the usual place that someone or something is found, let me say that again, the definition of the habitation in the dictionary, is the usual place that someone or something is found, it talks about an abode, a house, but it is the usual place, a zoo is a very poor habitat for a lot of animals, many, many years ago, when we lived in Southern California, we went down to the San Diego Zoo, that magnificent zoo, supposed to be one of the best zoos in the world, we looked around the various enclosures, lions, tigers, elephants, giraffes, and they were quite at home there, because the temperature, no doubt, is similar to that of Africa, and then we came to an enclosure with a polar bear in it, and San Diego is not a good habitat for polar bears, how many would you agree with that, because it was

designed to live about, say, you know, four or five thousand miles north, on a block of ice, in sub-zero temperature, not the heat of Southern California, and so the word habitation, again, the usual place that someone or something is found.

Now, the word habitation in the Bible, is an interesting word, you can look it up, if you like, in your strong's, when you get home, but it means a dwelling, it means a house, it means a tabernacle, it means to marry, to settle, to keep house, to rest, and all of that speaks about a permanent abode, a place where you marry, you keep house, you settle, you rest, you abide, and all of us have got our lodgings, if you like, our abiding places, most of us, you will go home to your home tonight, and it's a place where you feel at home, you can sit down, you can rest, you're married, you keep house, it's a place where you live, you dwell, and so, God has a dwelling place.

I want to begin just with some scriptures, first of all, in the book of Exodus, and then move on, but Exodus chapter 25, and verse 8, and this is God speaking to Moses, and he said, let them construct a sanctuary for me, that I may dwell among them, now this is God taking the initiative, this is God expressing to Moses his desire, and he says to Moses, Moses, I want to dwell with my people, this is not Moses at the end of 40 days of prayer and fasting, twisting the arm of God, and saying, God, it's about time you paid us a visit, after all, we're supposed to be your kids, this is God coming to Moses, and pleading with Moses, how many of you know, I am the Lord, and I change not, and God still has that longing to dwell with his people, he still has that deep desire, like any father, to be

with his family, and so he says to Moses, Moses, I want to dwell among you, and I want you to make me a home, I want you to make me a sanctuary, the word sanctuary means a clean place, and so, first of all, we have God expressing his desires, God expressing his desire, his desire is to dwell with his family, with his people, with you, with me, and he still wants to dwell with us, there's a beautiful verse in the book of James that says, the Spirit, capital S, James 4 verse 5, the Spirit that God has made to dwell in us, jealously desires us, isn't that a beautiful verse, we've got all sorts of expressions of the Father's love towards us, God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son, and so on, but here is a verse that talks about the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit's longing to

dwell with us, and so God expresses, first of all, his desire, but then notice in verse 9, he then goes on and he expresses his demands, and he says, according to all that I'm going to show you, as to the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it, you see God not only has a desire, but God has demands, he's got a standard, and he says to Moses, Moses, I long to come, I long to be with you, I want to dwell with you, I want to be your father, I want to be your God, I want to dwell where you dwell, and so on, but Moses, I won't live anywhere, I won't live anywhere, and I'm going to show you exactly what I want, I want you to make a home, I want you to make me a dwelling place, a place where I can rest and marry, keep house is the word, and

I want to come and I want to dwell amongst you, but I'm going to give you the exact details of where I'm going to dwell, and how I'm going to live, and I don't want you getting any ideas, Moses, about thinking, you know, well, this color scheme would suit him better, or this room should be a little bigger, a little wider, or whatever, just so you shall make it, I'm going to give you the furniture, I'm going to give you the color scheme, I'm going to give you the dimensions, everything about this home, I want according to my pattern, and so he takes Moses up into the mountain, and he shows him the heavenly tabernacle, and he says, Moses, here is a pattern, I want you to replicate, duplicate this on earth, I want to have the same habitat that I'm used to in heaven, I want the same

atmosphere, if you like, I want the same culture here on earth, I want to feel at home on earth as I do in heaven, and that really is the basis of all the, whatever it is, 30 odd chapters on the tabernacle, or maybe more than that, it's really all summarized there, God's longing to be with us, but God's demands again before he comes, and you know, you can learn a lot about a person by visiting their home, can't you?

I travel a lot, sometimes I'm in home, sometimes in a hotel, and you can walk into somebody's home, and immediately you know, even though those people may not be at home, they may have given you the key, somebody may have dropped you off, and say, make yourself at home, they'll be home in a few minutes, an hour or so, and when you walk into that home, you know something about the people, even before the people get there, you know if they're rich, by the wealth of that home, you know if they're educated many times by just looking at the book shelf, and seeing the sort of books that are there, you know about the person, there may be all sorts of books on, you know, golf, and you think this guy's really into golf, there may be all sorts of books on photography, you think this guy's into photography, there may be all sorts of medical books, and you think somebody here is a nurse or a doctor or something, maybe all sorts of books on law, and you think obviously somebody in the family studied law, and just looking at the books, I always look at the books, and you know, maybe travel books, and you think, boy, these people really travel a lot, you know, if there's cookbooks, you think this is going to be a great weekend, but you look at the furniture, and you know something about the person, you see, it may be all beautiful antique furniture, beautiful, you know, ornate carved furniture, you know, real furniture that had some sort of genius behind it at some stage, and or it may be modern, you know, plastic and chrome, and you know, whatever, and you know, and you think you know something about that person just by looking at the environment that they live in, the color scheme, you know, you know something about them, the way it's decorated, you look at the walls, and you see beautiful paintings on the wall, and you think, you know, this person appreciates art, and then you go in other times, and you see pictures that you could hang them upside down, and it doesn't make any difference, and they call that art too, but you know about that person, you understand, you know, there may be a piano there, a beautiful piano, and you think somebody here plays the piano, maybe a violin sitting there, and you think somebody here is refined, and you know, plays that instrument, and so just walking into a home tells you a lot about that person, doesn't it?

And walking into the house of God likewise tells us a lot about a person, and I want you to go with me into the book of Revelation, just a little while tonight into the fourth chapter of this book, and we're going into God's house, we're going to pay a visit here, and find out something about God, you see, again, when we go into his home, we learn some things, and verse one, it says, after these things, I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, so we know that God's got a door that goes into his house, and from inside, there was a voice that says, come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things, all verse one, and so John is invited in, he's in the spirit, he's on the Lord's day, and he sees a door that opens in heaven, there's a voice inside that

says, John, come on in, come up here, and immediately, he's caught up in the spiritual realm, and he walks in, if you like, into the house of God, and he says, immediately, I was in the spirit, and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and one sitting on the throne, and the first thing that John becomes aware of, when he steps into the house of God, the dwelling place of God, he becomes very, very conscious of the fact that there's a throne, in fact, that's all he sees initially, he's overwhelmed with the throne of God, and the throne of God, guess what, is occupied, and so we find that the usual place, the word habitation, is the usual place that someone or something is found, and the place that God is always found, is on the throne, he's always on the throne, swear not by heaven, it

is the throne of God, and time after time, Old Testament, New Testament, if we had time, we could look at dozens of scriptures, that talk about the fact that heaven is your throne, the earth is your footstool, and so on, there's numerous references to the throne of God, because our God reigns, he rules, he's a king, we talk about his majesty, his splendor, his dominion, his kingdom, now you see, God no longer dwells in temples made with hands, in the Old Testament, he did, we have the tabernacle of Moses, we've got Solomon's temple, and so on, and God came down, he resided in buildings, but the Bible says, in Acts 17, that God no longer dwells in temples made with hands, but now, he dwells in this temple, the Bible says, your body now, is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and Hebrews says,

that we are his house, Moses was faithful over his house, Jesus was faithful over his house, whose house we are, and again, the Holy Spirit longs to dwell within us, and so you see, God still longs, as he did in the Old Testament there, to come and dwell with his people, he wants to dwell in the midst of his people, and he wants to dwell in your house, but guess what, if he's going to dwell in this tabernacle, and if we are not going to offend God, and obviously, we don't want to offend God, the Bible says, if two walk together, they have to be in agreement, and you see, God says, I am the Lord, and I change not, and we do the changing, and you see, if God is going to reside in your house, and he's going to reside in my house, he demands the throne, it's just that simple, he demands the

throne, because that is the dwelling place of God, and what that means is this, that he demands the right to govern, the right to rule, the right to be in control of your life, he comes as Lord, he comes as Master, he comes as King, he rules the nations, he sits above the nations, and the Bible says, he sits above the circle of the earth, reduces rulers to nothing, and if he's going to feel at home, again, not a strange habitat, you see, the polar bear is in a strange environment, he doesn't really feel at home there, he's been forced to live in an environment that is not really conducive to him, it's not his nature, and you see, sometimes we're trying to ask God to come into an environment that is not conducive to the spiritual growth, some of you may wonder, why is it that I never seem

to make spiritual progress, why is it that I'm always sort of frustrated, I don't have the relationship with God that I want to have, and it's because we don't understand the culture of God, we don't understand the ways of God, and here, this gives us an understanding of God's ways, you see, He wants the throne, it's just that simple, and we need to come to the point, and I did it when I was 18 years of age, I surrendered my life to God, I battled for four years, accepting Christ as my Savior, I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that I was a sinner, raised in a Christian home, good, solid upbringing, never smoked a cigarette all my life, never slept with anybody other than my wife, never had a beer, never, you know, I should be in Guinness Book of Records, but haven't found me, but you

know, I knew I was a sinner, a good, self-righteous sinner, and I long for peace with God, I long for cleansing and so on, but my issue was the issue of the throne, you see, I had one goal in life, one thing that I wanted to do above everything else, I wanted to go into the field of graphics, I had the ability in the area of arts, and I wanted to pursue that, and I knew somehow maybe God was going to take me in another direction, and for four years I literally battled, I shook under conviction of sin, hundreds of times, couldn't even hold a hymn book, knowing that God was wanting to draw me to himself, and refusing to give up the throne, you see, it wasn't an issue of not wanting to go to heaven, I longed to go to heaven, I longed to have peace with God, but somehow over the years, I

guess, being raised in church, I understood something, even as a child, intuitively, I guess, that God wanted more, and finally, at the age of 18, it wasn't just a matter of surrendering my sin to God, it was a

matter of surrendering my life to God, and I made it forward in a meeting like this, and I said, God, I want you to cleanse me, I want you to wash me, but here I am, all that I have, I give to you, my life, and I surrender it to you, and I want you to take over, see, he wants the throne, if he's going to feel at home, if he's going to permanently reside, I said before, we can have moves of the spirit, and times when God in his graciousness visits the church, and so on, but unless we understand the ways of God, there won't be any longevity to it, it'll be an experience that we go

through for a matter of months, maybe six months, maybe six years, but you see, if we're going to have a lasting, abiding relationship with God, we've got to understand the ways of God, and he says, David, Joy, you know, Henry, whatever your name is, I want the throne, and then John sees something else, in verse 8, and it says, the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, full of eyes around and within, they do not cease day and night to say, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who is, who was, who is to come, and John then becomes aware that around that throne, there is an atmosphere of holiness, thrice holy, God's way of emphasizing again, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, you see, when Moses was taken up to the mountain, God gave him a plan of the

tabernacle, and he said, Moses, this is the way I want you to make it, and you see what it's like here in heaven, I dwell in the midst of a holy place, and when you make me a place on earth, it has to have a holy place in it, I'm going to dwell in the holy of holies, you see, it wasn't coincidental, it was Moses fulfilling in every detail and understanding God's desires, but also God's demands, and if God is going to dwell in your life and my life on a permanent basis, and that's my longing, that's my cry, not for just a visitation, not for a touch of God, as wonderful as those things are, but the abiding presence of God, you see, the Bible says, we will come and we will make our abode with him, make our abode with him, we have it here, don't we, that abide, yeah, abide in me, God wants

to abide, he doesn't want to just pay a visit, you see, he wants to dwell with us, he wants to feel at home, he wants to marry, he wants to keep house, he wants to settle, you see, and if he's going to abide, then he wants a holy place, and there's nothing worse than having a particular way of doing things, and then all of a sudden find yourself in the opposite of that, many years ago, my wife and I took the kids on a vacation in New Zealand, we'd heard about a particular home in a very beautiful valley, New Zealand is a nation of three million people, and between 50 and 70 million sheep, depending if it's lambing season or not, there's sheep everywhere, we'd heard about this beautiful place, mountains on either side, and many of those mountains, snow-capped, a river down in the bottom of

this valley, and there's a place in New Zealand you can call, and you can find out whether, what they call farm holidays, and what will happen is a farmer will have a prosperous year, or two or three years, and he'll buy up an adjacent property, when he buys up the adjacent property, all he's interested in, of course, is extending his land, his acreage, so he can have more sheep, and then he'll inherit a house, he can't have two houses, or he can't use two houses, and so if the house is in reasonable good condition, he'll fix it up a little bit, and he'll rent it out, and you can call a particular number, they'll tell you where these places are, where you can have a farm holiday, and so this was one of those places, we made our way there, after hearing about it, and picked up the key,

drove down this, again, magnificent valley, and mountains on either side, again, this gorgeous river, I wanted to get away pasturing at the time, wanted to do some fishing, and relax, and just go for some walks, and read, and got there, walked into the house, and it was totally different than we'd been told, it was filthy, absolutely filthy, threadbare carpet, springs sort of coming up through the, you know, the

furniture, went into the bedroom, I can't even begin to describe the condition of the mattress, my wife said I'm not sleeping there, that was that, and went into the kitchen, there were just bottles everywhere, and we realized this was nothing more than a sort of a hunting, fishing lodge, where men would come, no women, spend the night, just flop down, light a fire, you know,

drink, smoke, do whatever they wanted to do, go out during the day, I mean, it was everything that was foreign to us, you need to understand, my wife's from German background, although born in America, but parents, father was German, everything's precision, she's a perfectionist, you know, you get out of bed in the morning, if we make the bed together, you know, it's never quite good enough, I need a micrometer, you know, to make sure, it's just, and kids and I have tried to mellow over the years, it hasn't made too much difference, and so, you know, no matter how many times I arrange the cushions or the pillows on the bed, you know, it's just that they still get, you know, fixed up after I get through, and I'm a pretty neat fellow, I think, and anyway, so you can understand the

situation now, one culture clashing with another culture.

We finally put enough blankets on the mattress to be able to sleep, and we thought, well, at least in the morning we can get up and get outside, and I woke up in the morning, it was torrential rain, and for four days, it was just torrential rain, did not leave that house for four days, and finally, we just couldn't stand anymore, every time I sat down, I thought I was going to get the plague, and you know, and so we packed up our belongings, put them in the car, and explained to the lady, because of the weather, that we were cutting the vacation short, which was a sort of a half-truth, we didn't want to embarrass her about the house, but it really was the weather, and we drove home, I remember walking in the house, and just feeling at home, everything was the way I like it, the way my wife likes it, everything was neat, and tidy, and clean, and the sheets were clean, and the towel was clean, the bathroom was clean, and the kitchen was clean, and we enjoyed being at home.

You see, I think God's that way, you see, he's so used to a holy place, and some of us are trying to get him to come and dwell with his uncleanness, with his rebellion, with his other things, that, just as such a clash of cultures, and the job of the Holy Spirit, of course, is to come in and make us aware of those things that are not right, and begin to point out, and as long as we're cooperating, as long as we're dealing with those things, that's fine, but if there's areas where we're resisting, and we're not, then we grieve the Holy Spirit, we quench the Holy Spirit, and he withdraws, see, and God withdrew in the Old Testament, he says he left Shiloh, why?

Because of their rebellion, because of their sin, and it says he withdrew his presence from the very tabernacle that he created, the very dwelling place, because of the condition that had come in, and Ezekiel, he said to one of the elders, I want you to dig under the wall there, and he got inside, and he saw all the uncleanness that was going on, you see, and we have the glory of God lifting up the tabernacle, and over the city, and over the country, and so on, and so we need to make sure that, first of all, he has the throne, secondly, that we have a holy place, that everything is dealt with, it's amazing, isn't it?

I pastored long enough to know that nothing surprises me anymore, the uncleanness that's in the house of God, not before, not too long before giving up the pastorate, I had a young man came to married two kids, drove about 60 miles every time to come to church, hardly ever missed a meeting, came to prayer meetings, and so on, came to my office one day, and told me that for a number of years, he'd been involved in an incestuous relationship with his daughter.

You think, boy, you know, the uncleanness, I could tell you story, after story, after story, uncleanness is in the house of God, people hooked on pornography, bound with various things, and somehow the spouse doesn't know about it, and so on, they've hidden it, they've disguised it, they're bound by lust, and anger, and all sorts of things, and there's anything but a holy place, and you wonder why, why, Lord, am I not making progress, why am I not thriving, why is our relationship, something's wrong, you see, if two are going to walk together, they have to be in agreement, Enoch, walk with God, you see, they're on the same wavelength, they thought the same, you see, and so there has to be the cleaning up, and then it says, verse 9, and the living creatures give glory, and honor, and thanks to him that sits on the throne, you see, God demands the glory, and the Bible says, whatever you do, word or deed, do all to the glory of God, he's used to receiving the glory, and while God will share everything with us, his love, his compassion, his kindness, his forgiveness, his patience, his mercy, his grace, all of those things, the one thing he will not share, the Bible says, my glory I will not share with any man, and he demands the glory, and the honor, they honored him, they recognized his position, they recognized him as God, they bowed before him incessantly, you see, and we need to come to that place where we understand, again, the ways of God, you see, the culture, the environment that God dwells in, that he's used to, because if we can understand that, then we can get along with him, A.W.

Tozer put it so simply, he said that the key to spiritual progress and spiritual maturity is to find out what God loves, and love it, find out what God hates, and you hate it, and you can't reduce the Christian life to a more simple formula, although I hate the word formula, but you see, we find out what God, what you love, I'm going to love what you love, I love compassion, I love mercy, I love kindness, and so on, what do you hate, Lord, I hate the tongue that sows seeds of discord among the brethren, I hate this, and I hate that, and God's got lists of things that he hates, you see, and we learn to love what he loves, we learn to hate what he hates, and then he says, they give thanks, and John becomes aware of the fact that, again, not only is there an atmosphere of holiness, but there's an atmosphere of thanksgiving, and thanksgiving is so critical, we don't think that much of thanksgiving, oh, we do when we get together in times of celebration like this, and so on, but I'm asking you, when you're not celebrating like this, how thankful are you?

See, the Bible says, in everything, give thanks. The Bible says, because you did not serve the Lord your God with thankfulness in Deuteronomy, therefore you will serve your enemies, that seems like a stiff penalty, isn't it? But it shows the value that God places on thanksgiving, and even in the old covenant, what, you enter into his gates with thanksgiving, you see, because Moses had a picture of what it was like in heaven, the true tabernacle that Hebrews talks about, the real tabernacle, and in heaven, it's full of thanksgiving, so he says, Moses, see to it that you make it according to the same pattern, my will is to be done on earth as it is in heaven, and I'm used to thanksgiving constantly around the throne, this thanksgiving, we need to ask ourselves, listen, what about this temple?

Do we reserve the thanksgiving for Sunday morning? Do we reserve it for Wednesday night? Or, in everything, do we give thanks? Romans 1 says, when they knew God, they honored him not as God, and neither were they thankful, and therefore God gave him over, ultimately, to a reprobate mind, to practice all sorts of uncleanness among themselves, and so on. It all started with a lack of thanksgiving.

When they knew God, they didn't respect him, they didn't honor him as God, and they weren't thankful. See, God puts a premium on thanksgiving. We've got to learn, again, to cultivate that, we've got to learn, you see, why? Because God inhabits the praises of his people.

See, that's the habitation of God, that's the dwelling place of God, that's the environment that God is always found in, and we've learned that, obviously, collectively, when we get together, that, you know, God comes, and we know that we can create an atmosphere, and it's not a fake thing, we actually draw in the presence of God, because he inhabits that, you see, and we can do that individually, though. Paul and Silas in prison, here they are, you know, bound with chains, guards at the gates, and so on, and what they do one night before they fall asleep at midnight, Silas says to Paul, whatever, vice versa, why don't we just have a little time of praising God, and I don't know if they got the chains rattling, you know, in sink or whatever, but they start praising God, and what? God says, sounds like home, and God comes down, you see, the door is open, you see, why? Because God is drawn into certain atmospheres, you see, and if we understand the ways of God, then we're going to have longevity, we're going to say, God, now I can make it, I need to keep myself clean, I need to give you the throne, I need to be one that is full of thanksgiving, and so on, and finally it says, and they worshipped him, you know, close in just 13 to 15 years of age, the Bible says that Abraham rose early in the morning, what a morning to sleep in. God spoke to Abraham, Abraham take your only son, this child that contained all the promises of God, this child that was the embodiment of all that God was going to do, and he says, really, I'm going to test you to see if you love me more than you love everything that I've given you.

The Bible says he rose early in the morning, he didn't sleep in, he didn't forget to set the alarm, I would have. David, take one of your daughters, it says he saddled his donkey, he prepared the wood, and he went three days journey, and he said to his servants, stay here, I and the lad will go yonder, and we will worship. See, there was no music, it was just radical obedience.

See, worship in the book of Revelation is tied in so often with the word amen, in fact you have it there in this particular chapter, in chapter 5 anyway, at the end it says, the four living creatures kept saying amen, and the elders fell down and worshipped, and Kittel, who is the expert on Greek words, he says that the word amen means to be in concurrence with, to agree with, to be in harmony with, and you see what worship is, it's that response to the will of God, where whatever he asks you to do, no matter how difficult, no matter how radical it is, that there's no objection, there's no resistance, there's an amen in your spirit, I agree with you God. It's not the clay saying to the pot of no, or why, it's saying Lord, you are Lord, and everything that you ask me to do, I'm willing to do. No matter how difficult, no matter how painful, no matter how radical, it's a radical obedience to God, a radical abandonment to the will and the purpose of God, so that when God asks you to do something, even taking your Isaac, there's an amen that says amen Lord, and I'll get out of bed early and I'll do exactly what you want me to do.

The next act of worship we have in the book of Job, where this very wealthy man again is allowed to be placed under the hand of the enemy for a while, and he loses everything, loses his entire family, all of his sons are killed, everything is wiped out, he's devastated, his financial empire, everything crashes, his emotional empire, everything, his physical empire, he ends up there sitting in an ash heap, just scratching himself, just covered in sores, miserable from head to foot, and his wife comes along and says, if I were you, I'd curse God and die, and it says that Job fell on his face and he worshipped God. That's pretty severe, isn't it? There was an amen, God, I don't understand why I'm going through all this, but amen God, I know that you're God, I know that you're king, you're master, you're Lord, shall not the judge of all the earth do right, amen Lord. The next one is David, David who because of his sin with Bathsheba, out of that union there came a child, you recall that child was born, just lived a matter of days, maybe weeks, and then God judged that child, and the child was sick, and the Bible says that David disappeared into his room, and for seven days he sought God, fasting and praying, beseeching God for the life of that child,

just as we would, again a parent, that child so precious, waited those nine months, and here is this beautiful little baby, all of a sudden it's sick, and this man's heart is grieved, he's broken, he's begging God, then there's a knock on the door, and he's informed the child is dead, what does he do? Does he get angry at God? No, the Bible says he went, he washed himself, he clothed himself, he anointed himself, went back into that same room, and he worshipped, he said God you've done the right thing, I don't understand that, this pain, the sorrow, but God I'm not going to question, amen Lord, amen Lord, see that's worship.

The wise men that came, they brought their gold, their frankincense and myrrh, and they said we have come that we might worship him, there's no music, it's the presenting of the very best that they had to offer, they traveled maybe many many months, just to give him that which was of such incredible value, see there's a realm of worship that I certainly don't understand, it goes beyond praise, it goes beyond worship, it goes beyond you know just a celebration and so on, it's something that God works in your heart, where you can honestly in everything that you do, you can acknowledge him in all your ways, you can give him the glory, you say God I worship you, I don't understand why I've just been diagnosed with cancer, I don't understand why my son died, I don't understand why this happened, I don't understand why I've just lost my job, I don't understand that but God you're still worthy of worship, see and there's a something that responds in your spirit, there's an amen, there's a there's a resonance there with the heart of God, where you say Lord I agree with you, I concur with you, I'm in total harmony with you, it's no wonder the father seeks those that will worship him, see it's such a rare commodity isn't it, we're so occupied, so need conscious, so self-conscious, so worried about ourself and this is an abandonment to God, it's a casting everything to God, you see and that's the place that God dwells, where they take their crowns, all their achievement, their prestige, their recognition, all the rewards and they cast it down and they worship, worship literally means to bow down and kiss the hand of, it's to get in a lower posture and recognize that he is king, in Tonga, those little islands in the Pacific, it's the custom there that when you greet somebody who's an elder, a father, a mother or somebody of authority, that you always get in a lower position, why?

Because you're recognizing you are subservient to them, you're recognizing the authority that they have, see and worship means to kiss the hand, to bow down, you see, here's the Lord and worship thou him, the Bible says, bowing before him, Lord you are king, not me, it's your way that is right, not my way, you see, there we have again something of the habitation of God, he wants us to learn his ways, it's a process, I'm not here to condemn you tonight in any way, I'm here simply to say listen, if we're going to grow into the things of God, if we're going to have longevity, if we're going to make it and deepen our relationship with him, we have to come to that place of conformity, to his ways and understand these ways and say, Lord come, take the throne tonight, come Lord rid me of this thing that has so taken control of my life, the lust, the pride, the bitterness, the resentment, Lord the uncleanness that has come in, take it out, I want a holy place Lord, only by your grace can that happen, and Lord teach me to be grateful, let thanksgiving come up, in you every morning your mercies, great is your faithfulness, Lord I want to praise you, I want to magnify you, I want to exalt you, teach me Lord how to worship.

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