

Worship

by David Ravenhill

Worship is the unreserved giving of everything that we have to God in recognition of who he is and his worth.

Duration: 1:06:14

Scripture: Matthew 4:10, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 22:14, John 4:23, Romans 12:1, 2 Corinthians 3:6, Ephesians 4:11-12

Topics: "Worship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of worship and its often neglected teachings in the Word of God. The sermon focuses on eight aspects of worship: the priority, person, provision, picture, price, posture, purity, and power of worship. The speaker highlights that worship is not limited to specific methods or actions, but rather an attitude of life and constant consciousness of God. The sermon encourages believers to imitate Jesus in doing only what pleases the Father, as this is true worship.

Transcript

Again, the Lord it would go beyond the letter that kills, but the spirit that gives life. And so Lord, minister life to us, change us we pray, in Jesus' name, Amen. I want to focus our attention this afternoon on what I am convinced is one of the most neglected teachings in the Word of God, one of the most misunderstood themes of the Word of God, and that is worship.

And I realize, because I sat in the back room there just a little while ago, that Lendl was ministering a little bit along the lines of worship. I wasn't here to hear all that he had to say, and I trust that this in no ways will contradict, but rather complement, and it will bring us into a new and a fuller and a deeper understanding and revelation. Again, I'm convinced after 30 years of ministry that this is one of the most misunderstood of all teachings in the Word of God, and as a result of that I believe that we're impoverished.

The church is impoverished, I believe the individual believer is impoverished, because he does not understand the calling of what it means to be called into the realm of worship. This is a calling, again, that surpasses the calling of the apostle, the prophet, the evangelist, the pastor, the teacher. It's a calling that is open to everybody, but is chosen by only a few.

I should say it is a calling that is demanded of everybody, but is chosen only by a few. That would be more accurate, I'm being a little kind on you this afternoon. I want to look at eight aspects of worship.

And by no means are these the full, you know, it won't give you a full understanding, but I trust that at least it will put some of the things into place as we look at this very meaningful and this very vital topic. I'm going to be teaching more this afternoon than preaching. I would love in the natural just to pull out an old message that I've preached before, and impress you again with some sort of eloquence and so on, but I've felt for a number of weeks now, and I've been on the road extremely busy, that this has been the message that God has consistently laid on my heart.

And so I'm going to revert more to that of a teacher. I will not be running the aisles and, you know, wearing out my shoe leather. I'm a little too Irish or Scottish or something for that.

And nor do I believe that the priest is allowed to sweat, and so, you know, I'm not going to be running up and down. But let me give you, first of all, the eight facets that we're going to be looking at. Number one, the priority of worship.

And I'll be repeating these if you're taking notes. Number two, the person of worship. Number three, the provision of worship.

Number four, the picture of worship. Number five, the price of worship. Number six, the posture of worship.

Number seven, the purity of worship. And number eight, the power of worship. That's where we're going.

Don't get worried. We will be through in ample time for you to vacate the premises by 4.30, I can assure you. Let me begin by number one, the priority of worship.

A.W. Tozer makes this statement concerning worship, God wants worshippers before workers. Indeed, he says, the only acceptable workers are those that have learned the art of worship. The only acceptable workers are those that have learned, again, the art of worship.

A.P. Gibbs, in his book on worship, says this, the quality of worship which does not result in service, and that service which does not flow from worship, both come short of a divine ideal. Tozer goes on to say this, we are called, he says, to an everlasting preoccupation with God. Man was made to worship God.

Man was given a harp, and God said, here above all the creatures that I have made, I have given you the largest harp. You can worship me in a manner that no other creature can. And when he sinned, man took that instrument and threw it down in the mud.

Let me say right off the bat, please do not be led astray by the use of Tozer's word harp. As though worship was confined to the realm of music alone. The greatest acts of worship throughout the word of God do not have music in association with them.

Now I say that not to be mean music, I say that not to in any way take away or distract from anything else that is being said, but simply I am saying this, that this is why we do not understand this theme. Because invariably we link worship and praise as being synonymous. And the greatest acts of worship, and we will deal with a couple of those at least this afternoon, do not have worship or do not have music with them in any way at all.

Now worship is far more encompassing than just music alone. It is the unreserved giving of everything that we have to God in recognition of who he is and his worth. Let me say that again, it is the unreserved giving of everything that we have to God in recognition of who he is and his worth.

T. Austin Sparks says this, the beginning of everything in relationship to God is worship. That is, he says, God having the central and supreme place of recognition, of acknowledgement, of government. God having the supreme right in our complete obedience and surrender in every part and phase of our being.

Worship begins there. It is a relationship, not an exercise. It is not something that we do in specified ways and methods.

It is an attitude of life, a place that God has in the entire consciousness. That is worship. I wish I had time again to repeat that.

But it is an attitude of life. It is a place that God has in the entire consciousness of a person. Jesus said, I do only do the things that please the Father.

That's worship. Entirely conscious, constantly conscious of the Father, God conscious in everything that he did. I do only do the things, whether it's singing, whether it's preaching, whether it's work, whatever it is, I am conscious constantly of the Father.

The scriptures, of course, abound. There are dozens and dozens and dozens of verses that admonish us in the area of worship. Luke 4 and verse 8 there, where Jesus said, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

John 4 and verse 23, Jesus said, The hour cometh, and now is when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, because the Father seeketh those that will worship him. Please notice again, the Father seeks worshipers. It is a rare commodity.

It is something that God seeks after, God longs for. The psalmist says in Psalm 95 and verse 6, Come let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our God, our maker.

Psalm 29 and verse 2, Ascribe unto the Lord the glory that is due to his name. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Psalm 99 and verse 5, Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his footstool.

Exodus 20 verses 3 to 5, You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not bow down nor worship them. And so we could go on and on.

Again, there is a priority. God is looking for worshipers. He is seeking worshipers.

And the word of God again is just full of admonitions that you and I are to come to that place of bowing down before him, acknowledging him for who he is and having him as the total preoccupation of our lives. The second thing is the person of worship. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, You worship that which you do not know.

We worship that which we know. You see, the woman's focus was on a place. She said to the Lord, Lord, you know, this mountain is where our fathers worshipped.

Our fathers worshipped right here in this mountain. She was caught up again in the religious sort of symbolism, the excitement, again, the traditions that were associated with that particular place. Again, one of the great tragedies, I think, even in the realm of worship, when it does tie in with music, is that so often there is a danger that the means of worship eclipses the object of worship.

Let me say that again. There is a tremendous danger that the means of worship eclipses so often the object of worship. Somebody can strike a note on the piano and suddenly the whole place goes into a frenzy.

Why? Because it's the music that excites them. It has nothing to do with the object. There's something about that song that they enjoy.

There's something about the beat. There's something about the way in which it's put together, and so on and so forth. And long before God is ever thought of, in one sense, their excitement is already around.

I carry in my Bible, I've had it there, I guess, many, many years, over in 1 Samuel chapter 4, a little quote taken out of an old devotional book. And it's when the children of Israel are restoring the Ark of God back to its rightful... No, sorry, it's when the children of Israel bring the Ark of God into the battle. They're fighting against the Philistines.

The Philistines are overpowering them. They want some sort of a trump card, and they think to themselves, the only way that we're going to gain an advantage is to go into the house of God, bring the Ark of God into battle, and then nothing will be able to stand before us. And, of course, at that particular time, God gave up His strength into captivity.

But this is what the writer says. They were making more of the Ark than of the Lord. Their religion, he says, was degenerating into superstition.

I become superstitious, he says, whenever the means of worship are permitted to eclipse the object of worship. It can be so with prayer. I may use prayer as a magic minister to protect me from the invasive ills.

I do not pray because I desire fellowship with the Father, but because I do not feel safe without it. The Ark is more than the Lord. It can be so with a crucifix.

A crucifix may become a mere talisman, and so supplant the Lord. I may wear the thing and have no fellowship with the person. And so I may be with the Lord's supper.

I may come to regard it as a magic feast, which makes me immune from punishment, but not immune from sin. And so on and so forth. And so we need to guard again against the means eclipsing the object of worship.

Again, in the back of my Bible I have a statement taken from an old book by Goodlestone. Synonyms of the Old Testament still available. And he says this concerning idolatry.

Man is essentially an image maker. He says his best works in art and mechanics are imitations of nature. His music, he says, is an attempt to present, not indeed to the eye, but to the ear, what may be called a picture of the varied feelings that occupy his heart.

This tendency also shows itself in his religious worship, which he is inclined to make as symbolic as possible. Nay, he seeks to make a sensible representation, even of God himself, and gradually to transfer to the work of his own hands that reverence and dependence which properly belongs to the one living and through God. There is a strange fascination, he says, in exaggerated religious symbolism.

It engrosses and excites the mind, but is by no means of a healthy character. It tends little by little to supplant the simplicity of spiritual worship and turn man into an idolater. Idolatry in its first stage is a sort of

symbolism.

Some object is selected to represent the unseen deity or to set forth one of his attributes. Little by little the material image takes the place of the spiritual reality for which it stands, and idolatry ensues, bringing in its train that sensuality, which is a sure attendant of every form of materialism. The highest function of human natures are thus abdicated and human life is debased, and so on.

You see, there is a tendency again to get excited with religious symbolism. We can do it with our banners and our streamers and our dancers, and so on and so forth, and I know I'm not very popular when I say, you know, I have tremendous concern about what people refer to as the restoration of the arts. Because I have to ask myself, if you restore something, where was it originally? You see, you can't restore a 1900 Cadillac, or let me back up, maybe there was one at that time.

You can't restore an 1850 Cadillac, they didn't make them in 1850. And where is the, where do we find the arts, apart from a couple of men that were chosen for a brief period of time to put together the tabernacle? Apart from that, you've got David feigning madness before the king in order to, you know, save his head, and he starts drooling, and apart from that, I don't see any arts in the Word of God. And I've been in conferences, again, where in the midst of worship, the troupe came down, you know, the dance troupe, and all of them having waists about 20 inches at the most, and beautiful figures, and long hair, and gorgeous, you know, looking girls, and prancing around on the stage, and so on and so forth, and all of that was deemed worship.

And I saw every man, again, with his eyes fixated on these beautiful figures. And again, the means of worship eclipse the object of worship. And that's idolatry.

And God warns us against it, time after time after time. So we need to guard, again, against it. You know, it's like going into a birthday party, and you walk into that birthday party, and the stream is there, and balloons, and there's music playing, there's cake, there's ice cream, there's all the goodies laid out, and you get caught up in the festivity of that particular situation.

Then you realize on the way home that you never even spent a moment speaking to the guest of honor. It was his birthday. There he was.

And so often it's like that, isn't it, that we get caught up again in the atmosphere of what is going on, and our focus is not really on the guest of honor. We need to make sure, again, that our worship has a focus. There is one that is worthy, and only one.

The Father seeks those that will worship Him. Again, this is the one that created the heavens and the earth. This is the one that put the stars in place.

This is the one that flung them in space. He leads forth the hosts, He says, by number. Not one of them is missing.

This is the God, again, that created the heavens and the earth just by a single word of His mouth. The one that sits above the vault of the earth, reducing rulers to nothing. Again, the one that sets up kings and kingdoms.

The one that says, is there anything too hard for me? The one that Isaiah saw as he went into the house of God, and suddenly, again, he had a revelation of God. High, lifted up, sitting there upon His throne. The

train of His robe filling the temple.

The seraphim crying out, veiling their faces and crying out, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is filled with His glory. Again, the Alpha, the Omega.

The one whose throne is established in the heavens, whose kingdom rules over all. We need to constantly maintain, again, our focus on God Himself. We've got to be so careful that somehow we don't end up worshipping our own worship.

Somehow we don't get so excited about the gifting of this person or that person or the dancing of this one or the ability of one to, you know, play with a banner or have a streamer and so on and so forth and somehow distract, God forbid, that I would be guilty of taking away the honor that is due God because of my ability, because of my talent. You see, things need to go to the cross first. And there's so little of the cross in the whole realm of the arts.

It's man displaying his talent. It's woman displaying her talents, her abilities, her techniques, her, you know, her beautiful body, her gorgeous looks and so on. You'll notice they're never willing to do it at the back of the church.

They always want the front of the church to do it. Somehow we've got to judge, we've got to ask ourselves, Lord, is this taking away from you? And I'm not in any way denouncing the banners. These banners are used that we had on Tuesday night.

They're used for an entirely different reason, but I've been in churches where in the midst of worship all of a sudden banners come down the size of these screens over here. And all of a sudden you're caught up in the intricacies of the artwork and the colors and everything else and at least I happen to be an artist by background and I look and I begin to marvel again at all the beautiful handiwork and the elaborate nature of those things and so on. And I find myself totally distracted from worshiping God and worshiping the work of somebody's hand.

And it doesn't enhance worship. It's actually a distraction to it. The provision of worship number three.

Charles Spurgeon says this concerning worship. He says it is the work of the Spirit in the soul returning to its author. Let me say that again.

It is the work of the Spirit in the soul of man returning to its author. Ecclesiastes puts it this way. There in Ecclesiastes, I believe it's chapter one, he says all the streams flow into the sea and yet the sea is never full.

So the place from which they flow, the streams flow back again. What is he talking about? He's talking about precipitation and evaporation. That there is a precipitation, that there is a rain that comes down from the heavens.

The rain comes into the earth. The earth eventually siphons it up into a river. The river flows down into the sea.

Then there is the evaporation and it goes back again. The sea is never full. Why? Because it returns from whence it came.

And that is worship. It is giving back to God that which is due Him, that which came from Him. So again, Spurgeon says it is the work of the Spirit in the soul of man returning to its author.

It's man's response, in other words, to God's love, to His mercy, to His kindness, to His goodness. See, to know Him is to worship Him. Paul puts it another way, writing to the Romans, Romans chapter 11, and he says this, he says, For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

And then we've got a chapter division that should never be there. He says, Therefore I beseech you brethren by the mercies of God, that you give back to God that which is from Him, through Him, and therefore belongs to Him. And we have again this constant cycle.

Lord, I recognize that I'm only here because of your creation. I'm only here because of your salvation. I'm only here because of your goodness towards me.

It's in you I live, I move, I have my very being. You're the author, you're the finisher. Everything originated from you.

Everything is held together by the word of your power. Therefore, everything belongs back to you. And Paul says from Him, through Him.

And then to Him are all things. I beseech you brethren, give back. Which one? It's your reasonable worship.

Oh, he doesn't say, listen, sing a few songs. He says, listen, it is the unreserved giving of everything back to God. That's what worship is.

Again, the songwriter puts it this way, I love thee because thou hast first loved me. Purchase my pardon on Calvary Street. I love thee for wearing the thorns on thy brow.

If ever I loved thee, my Jesus tis now. I love thee because you first loved me. I'm giving back, Lord, that which you've given to me.

I recognize, Lord, again, your sovereignty over my life. And I give back the worship that belongs to you. Paul puts it another way, writing to the Galatians.

He says, the Son of God loved me and gave himself for me. Then, writing to the Corinthians, he says, I have as my ambition to be pleasing to the Lord. No wonder.

Lord, you loved me and you gave yourself for me. And now in return, Lord, I want to please you in everything that I do. Now we come to the picture of worship.

And it's here that I want to dwell for a little while. Some of the great expositors, some of the great teachers of the bygone generations refer to something called the law of first mention. And the law of first mention is this, that when something is found in the Word of God for the very first time, it establishes a precedent as to how that word is used throughout the Word of God.

We don't hear a great deal about it anymore, but certainly there is value to it. And the very first time that worship is ever mentioned in the Word of God, it is mentioned in association with the life of Abraham. Abraham, as you know, is called the father of all those that believe.

He's an interesting character. He's the father of the Jew, he's the father of the Gentile. Why? Because he was a Gentile.

And he became a Jew. How did he become a Jew? By faith. How do you become a Jew? By faith.

He's not a Jew that he's one that is circumcised of the flesh, but circumcised of the heart. But he establishes a precedent. He is the father of all of us.

Fathers are the role model. They're the prototype, if you like. They are the--Abraham really is the patent believer for all of us.

And again, he establishes this role model. Fathers establish behavioral patterns in our life. Don't they? Values and beliefs and so on.

We learn so much in the formative years by observing our father or our mother. And spiritually speaking, God exhibits Abraham as the patent believer. And no wonder then that we find worship in association with Abraham right at the very beginning because God is looking for something in this man's life.

And I want to look now at what it was that God desired in the life of Abraham and what it is that He desires in your life and my life. There's something about this man, again, that I get so much out of. There's so many parallels.

If you study the life of Abraham in your own life and you realize some of the principles that God deals with this man over and how many times there is a parallel again in our own lives, certainly in my life anyway. God was after something in Abraham's life and the thing that He was after, He was after Abraham's heart. He was after the heart of this man.

Proverbs says, Son, give me your heart. Don't give me, it's not your money that I'm after. It's not this or that or the other thing.

Son, the one thing I want, the supreme thing that I want in your life and my life, in the life of Abraham, the life of every other great man or woman of God, I want the heart of that individual. Deuteronomy chapter 6 says, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all of your heart. 2 Chronicles 16 verse 9, The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is His.

What does God mean by the heart? What does the Bible refer to when it speaks of the heart? Well, we need to do a little bit of study. Again, referring to the law of first mention. Let me explain again how this works.

When something is mentioned for the very first time, it establishes an understanding as to how that word, then, is used throughout the word of God. And the very first mention of the word heart is in Genesis chapter 6 and verse 5. And it says this, The Lord saw the wickedness of man, that it was great on the earth, and that the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually. Notice, the thoughts of his heart.

This is the first time that the heart is mentioned. And it deals with the mind. It deals with the reasoning capacity, the intellect.

The mind of man. God says, listen, I want your mind. I want your intellect.

I want the thinking process to be handed over to me. In Genesis 6 and verse 6, the next verse, And the Lord was sorry that he had made man, and it grieved him in his heart. Here we see a second phase now, that the heart deals with the affections.

It deals with the emotions. God is grieved in his heart. He's wounded.

He's sorry that he's ever created man. And so, not only does the heart refer to the mind, the heart refers also to the emotions, the feelings, our affections. And then Genesis 8 and verse 21, And the Lord said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground on account of man.

And so here now the heart refers to the will. I will. God said in his heart, I will.

God is grieved in his heart, his emotions, but also it's the place of his will. I will never again. And those are the three first mentions of the word heart in the word of God.

The mind, the emotions, and the will. You see, what God is after in your life and my life, He's after those three areas coming into a place of total yieldedness to himself, where he's got total and complete control over our affections, over our thinking, over our volition, our will. And that's easier said than done, isn't it? But you see, this gets to the very crux, if you like, of what worship, of what true worship is all about.

God is looking again for worshippers that will worship him from the heart. Abraham, again, is this man that we first see worship in association with. And God tests repeatedly the area of Abraham's heart.

We see him on numerous occasions coming to Abraham, and it's right on these various issues that he begins to examine the life of Abraham. Abraham, are you willing to give me your heart? The first test, of course, is in Genesis 12 and verse 1. And each one deals with something of value, something that was significant in the life of Abraham. Isn't that interesting? God never tests us on anything that we don't love.

It's on the things that we do love. You see, God's never had to test me on the area of golf, because I've never played golf in my life, maybe five games. So it's no big deal.

You know, I wish he would test me on that. I could, you know, I passed with flying colors. He's never tested me on the area of hunting, because I've never been a hunter.

God always tests us in the areas of our affections. And he comes to Abraham, Genesis 12 and verse 1, and he tests him again on his willingness to forsake his family and his friends and his country. Abraham, get out of your father's house.

Can you imagine, again, the conflict that goes on in the heart of Abraham, in his mind, in his emotions, in his will? If God said to you in a sovereign way tonight, I want you to leave wherever you are, Tennessee, you know, and I want you to go to Africa, all of a sudden, the things that would come to mind, Lord, how am I going to get supported? What's going to happen to the family? What about my mother who's in a, you know, an old folks home? Who's going to look at, you know, your mind, all of a sudden, kicks into gear. Lord, this doesn't make sense. Not at this time in my life.

I've got two kids ready to go on to college. I've got another one graduating this year from high school and so on. And our mind begins to go in conflict with the mind of God.

And then our emotions come into play. And we think, God, I could never, you know, go to Africa. I don't understand the culture.

I don't like the heat. I don't like this and the food and so on and so forth. Lord, I love my air conditioning.

I love my car and, you know, all those things. And God says to Abraham, listen, Abraham, are you willing to get out of your comfort zone? That's quite a test. His willingness to surrender a lot.

Genesis 13, again, the only remaining member of his family. He's finally got to give him up. Genesis 17, his willingness to yield up his plans for Ishmael.

Remember when God said, listen, Abraham, there's another son coming. This is going to be the real child of promise. And what does Abraham do? Oh, that Ishmael might live before me.

God, you don't understand. I'm an old man. Ishmael's a good kid.

Oh, that Ishmael. Isn't it interesting that he had more problems giving up Ishmael than he did Isaac? He never says that when God says give up Isaac. Oh, we love our Ishmaels, don't we? The things that we create.

You know, this new building program, this new ministry, this new album that I'm putting out, or whatever it is. You know, the Ishmaels of our life. Lord, let it live, please.

Of course, Genesis 22, his willingness to offer up again his beloved son Isaac. Each of these you can see if you take time to muse on them. There were conflicts again in his heart, his mind, his emotions, his will.

You see, a true worshipper can have no unsundered area of his life. A genuine worshipper, there is no unsundered area. In other words, your heart is completely his.

The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth, looking for those whose heart is what? Completely his. Not partially his. Oh, I'll give you my mind, Lord, but not my emotions.

Oh, I'll give you my emotions, but not my mind. Oh, I'll give you my will, but not this. And God tests Abraham, and he says there in Genesis 22, take now your son, your only son, whom you love, and offer him as a burnt offering again.

It's the thing that we love that God tests the son. Take that thing that is so precious. That thing that has got so much value to you.

That thing that your life is revolving around. That's the thing I want to know. Listen, do you love that thing more than you love me? Are you willing to surrender it? Are you willing to prove that that thing is not something that you worship more than you worship me? Abraham, I've got to know, do I honestly have your heart? This is the last test, Abraham.

I've tested you. You got out of your country. You left your family.

You left this. You got rid of Lot. You finally offered up Ishmael.

But now, there's one final thing. You've learned to love this child. Oh, this is after Ishmael now.

This beautiful child that embodies all the promises of God. Again, this is that he's born of the Spirit. We heard a wonderful message last night on birthing.

You know, we need to be careful who the father is. Because there's a lot of Ishmaels running around. And even when the child is born, sometimes God will ask for it back.

When the father is right. When it's the Spirit of God. Again, Isaac, born of the Spirit.

And yet God says, listen, nothing is going to rival me. Abraham, are you willing to give it up? And this is the first time that worship is ever mentioned. Because Abraham responds to God.

And he makes a journey of three days. When he gets to that place that God indicates as a place. He says to his servants who have come with him.

He says, listen, stay here. I and the lad will go yonder and we will worship. And there is the first mention of worship in the word of God.

There's no band. There's no music. There's not a single note that is played anywhere.

And yet we establish, again as a precedent, this is what worship is all about. Right here in the life of Abraham. I and the lad will go yonder, we will worship.

Oh, would to God we had this sort of worship service. Where everything is laid on the altar. Where everything is placed before him.

And say, Lord, I take my hands off it. It's yours. And so worship again involved the surrender of Abraham's heart.

His mind, his will, his emotions. Let me deal with that for a moment. First of all, he surrendered his mind.

There's no questioning. Again, the clay can't say to the pot of wine. It doesn't say, Lord, let's come.

Let's reason together. God says that to us. We never say that to God.

We don't find, again, Abraham digging in and saying, God, this does not make sense. Look at my body. I'm too old.

This was a sovereign visitation as it was that brought Isaac to life. And now you're asking me to give him up. Are you sure, God, that you know what you're doing? I've waited so many years.

There's none of that. Again, there is the surrender of his mind. And, you see, God is looking for our hearts.

So often, again, when it comes to your life and my life, we begin to reason, don't we? And the Bible says the carnal mind is enmity against God. But, God, if I embrace this revival, I'm going to lose people in my congregation if I do this, if I do that. And we begin to get into this mindset with God.

God, I can't. I can't trust you in this area. God says, listen, until I have your heart, I can't do anything.

I was just musing the other day on the life of Elisha, or Elijah, rather, and thinking of that spectacular beginning of his ministry. When he stands before the nation and before Ahab, and he says, according to my word, from this moment on there will be no more rain. And I would like to think, and I don't know, obviously if we can substantiate with the word of God, I'd like to think that they've had three or four days of rain.

And right in the middle of the storm, if you like, as the rain's coming down, he stands there before Ahab and he announces, and suddenly again, just like a faucet is turned off, it stops. And here is a man that right now sort of blossoms onto the scene. Again, he's got national publicity.

And all of a sudden, as soon as he has this incredible beginning to his ministry, God says, listen, I want you to go now. I want you to hide yourself. Imagine what's going on in his mind, because the Bible says he's a man subject to like passions as we are.

Can you imagine if God gave you a word to go to the president to announce something? CNN is there, NBC, everybody else. You make a spectacular, you know, announcement to the nation. Here you are, you've come out of obscurity.

All of a sudden you're on national television, and suddenly what you say comes to pass. And then all of a sudden God says, now listen, I want you to go hide yourself. But God, you know, I mean, I've got interviews.

You know, 2020 is after me. Find time, want some interview. But I'm just now beginning to make it.

Obviously, you're wrong. But I've lived for this day all my life, my prophetic ministry. I finally got my ad in Charisma Magazine.

I'm going to be speaking at a conference. And you're telling me to go overseas. You're going to tell me to hide myself.

You're telling me to just drop out of the public limelight altogether. You see, God had his heart. All is no objection.

My father used to say the hardest thing is to hide yourself. Go hide yourself. But Lord, I like the recognition that I get.

You see, this matter of worship touches every fiber of our being. Am I prepared again to give God the way that I think? You say, God, ask for God his way is perfect. Lord, I surrender everything to you.

Obviously, after surrender is will. The Bible says Abraham rose early in the morning. I love that little phrase.

Can you imagine God speaks to you? My wife and I have three daughters that are grown up now. But I love them just as much as when they were small. And if God said to me, David, I want you to take Lisa, and I want you to put her on the altar.

If there was ever a morning to sleep in, that was the morning. If there was ever a night not to set the alarm clock, that was the night. And yet somehow we see Abraham bounding out of bed.

He arose early in the morning. He saddles his donkey. He splits the wood.

And you see this total obedience to the will of God. Radical obedience. You see, this is what worship is about.

It's radical obedience. It's giving God everything. There's no resistance.

There's no reasoning that goes on. There's no stubbornness that sets in and says, God, I'm not going to do that thing right now. Again, the songwriter puts it this way, All to Jesus I surrender, all to him I freely give.

I will ever love and serve him. Again, in his presence daily live. I surrender, not some things, but I surrender all.

Lord, everything I give to you. And of course then there was the surrender of his emotions and his affections. See, God was touching the very love of his life.

In fact, God says to him, Abraham, I want you to take your son, your only son, whom thou lovest. Oh, would to God that he had tests on things we don't love. But the tests are always on the things that we love, our ministry, our reputation.

It's those things, again, that we have, again, as an Ishmael or an Isaac or whatever it may be. God says, listen, are you willing to put it to death? Are you willing to die to that particular area of your life? Take this one that you love so much. Again, God was touching the very love of his life and everything within this man, no doubt, wanted to protect his child.

He loved this child. Again, he was tearing at the very heartstrings of this man. And he says, Abraham, I want you to place him on the altar.

Remember Jesus challenged Peter. He says, Peter, do you love these more than you love me? It's always what we love that God's after. Because he wants the supreme love.

Lovest thou me more than these, Peter? Jesus said, if any man loves father or mother more than me, he's not worthy of me. If any man loves son or daughter more than me, he's not worthy of me. Are you willing to give up father, mother, brother, sister, your own life also? Otherwise you cannot be my disciple.

Again, here is the test that comes to this man of God. Because, you see, the object of your love is the object of your worship. The object of your love is the object of your worship.

Again, whether it's ministry or reputation or whatever it may be, maybe family, maybe some other thing. And Abraham is willing to give God his heart, his mind, his will, his emotions are all laid on that altar. See, that's what the Bible calls a united heart.

You ever wonder why the psalmist says, Lord, unite my heart to hear thy name? Lord, bring together my mind, my will, my emotions, unite my heart so that I can feel your name. Because so often we have a divided heart, don't we? It's like the person that's had a problem with smoking. And his mind tells him that he should give it up.

Because he's read all the ads, he's read all the research that's been done, he's convinced that smoking is dangerous, it's a hazard to his life, he may end up with, you know, some incurable disease, emphysema, some other thing, cancer. And his mind agrees that he should not be smoking. But you see, he's got a divided heart because his emotions, he loves it.

And his will says, I don't want to give it up. You see, that's why God is looking for a united heart. Mind, will, emotions.

And if you take out one part of that, God does not have your heart. You see, it's so easy, isn't it, to agree with what we heard last night about films and videos and so on and so forth and say, well, that makes sense. I believe that.

I know it's that sort of old-fashioned preaching on holiness and so on. I haven't heard it for a long time and so on. But, you know, I can't dispute it.

That really is what the Word of God says. And our mind says, I'm in agreement with that. But my emotion says, you know, I'd love to kick back on a Friday night, have some popcorn and go down to the video place and get a few films.

And I'm not sure if I can give that up. Because I love it. It's just something that's a part of us as a family.

Love to do it with my wife and I and so on and so forth, you see. And so the Bible says we've got to have a united heart. Mind, will, emotions.

It's not just one thing. Number five, the price of worship. True worship, and I'll come back to Abraham in a moment, but true worship is going to require everything of us.

We've already seen that, established it in the life of Abraham. But the true worshipper never thinks in terms of what he is given. He thinks in terms of what he's gained.

The true worshipper never thinks in terms of what he is given, but in terms of what he's gained. When a man falls in love, he may go out and spend \$1,000, \$2,000, \$3,000 on an engagement ring. And it's cost him a tremendous amount.

He has given up maybe three or four months of savings. And the night comes when he takes out his fiancée to that beautiful restaurant and the lights are dim and the music's playing and he gets down on his knee and he opens that little box and all of a sudden he bursts into tears and he says, You'll never know what it's cost me. You see, the object of his love surpasses the price that he had to pay.

The object of his love surpasses the price that he had to pay. And what he really should be saying is, Listen, if I had another five grand, I'd have blown the whole thing on you, honey. I love you so much.

That's why the hymn writer says, Love is so amazing. So divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. Love is so amazing.

Lord, it demands more than I even have to offer you. But Lord, I'll give you everything. My soul, my life, my all.

Lord, here's my heart. Take it. I give you everything.

My mind, my affections, my will. I place it on the altar. It's yours.

Two of the other greatest acts of worship, maybe three. One in the life of David. Of course, David was a great worship player, worship leader in the sense of the musical realm.

But I think one of the highest realms that we ever see David touching in worship is when, after he sinned with Bathsheba, out of that union there comes a child. And that child lives for just a matter of days, maybe a matter of weeks. And suddenly God strikes that child with a sickness.

And David disappears for seven days. He's fasting. He's praying.

He's waiting on God. He's crying out to God, beseeching God for the life of that child like any father would. This beautiful little child.

Again, he loves this child. And there he is pleading with God. And suddenly, after seven days, there is a knock on the door and David's told the child is dead.

What does he do? Goes into his room. He washes. He presents himself properly before God.

And he falls on his face and he worships. No music. Not a single note.

But a heart that is totally gone. Oh, not the reasoning. God, why? That's not right.

I was the one that sinned. Not this child. God, you said you want to pass the iniquity of the father onto the sons or daughters and so on and so forth.

And all of a sudden he begins to argue with God. No. You don't think there were emotions involved? David bows down and puts his face down on the carpet before God.

And he worships God. God, who am I? The clay to say to the pot of wine, You're right, Lord. You're just and true in all of your ways.

Then we have Job. Word came to this man, this multimillionaire, this man that made Bill Gates look like a pauper. And all of a sudden again, the life of this man is devastated.

Seven sons. Three daughters. Plus all the servants.

I don't know how many that was. But there was at least ten funerals that day. Can you imagine? Honestly, can you imagine? Losing your entire family.

All your possessions, everything else. Your wife nagging you and saying, If I was you, Job, I'd curse God and die. What does he do? He falls on his face in worship.

No music. No music. You see, worship transcends music.

It's the heart of an individual that recognizes God's sovereignty, that bows in submission and says, God, you're right in all of your ways. Who am I to question you? Lord, I give you my heart. I don't understand it, but Lord, I know that you're right.

You're never wrong. I can never question you. You have the woman with the alabaster box, and while the word worship is not used, obviously it's there.

And she gives the equivalent of a year's wages, if you study that. A denarii was one day's wage, and it's 300 denarii worth. You take out the various feasts and the sabbaths and so on.

You've got one year's salary. Obviously a woman of means, so let's say that if we translate it into days, pay scale, we're talking about at least \$40,000. And she takes \$40,000 worth of perfume, and she breaks it again, and she doesn't weep over the fact that it's cost her so much, as much as what she's gained.

She's in love. She wants to express her gratitude. The essence of worship is summed up in one word.

That word in the word of God is the word amen. You find it as you read the greatest book on worship, which is the book of Revelation, and there in the book of Revelation we have the 24 elders and the others, and they fall down, and it says they worshiped and they said amen. And the essence, the real essence of worship, is found in that one single word, amen.

And Kittel says this. Kittel, who is the one that gives us the greatest understanding of biblical words, says this. It means to concur with, to be in agreement with, to be committed to.

In other words, it's a heart that resonates with the heart of God. God, I'm in agreement with you. I am totally committed to what you're doing.

I concur with everything that you say. You see, in each of these cases, we've got an amen coming out of the heart of David, an amen coming out of the heart of Job. Job says amen, Lord, in his spirit.

Lord, I agree with you. I don't understand it, but I agree with you. David says, I don't understand it, Lord, but I agree with you.

Amen. There's an amen that resonates. God's looking for an amen in the life of these people that never questions, that never resists, that's willing to lay aside their own feelings and affections and emotions and say, God, I will do it, even though it's going to cost me everything in that sense.

I'll do it because I love you. I will serve you because I love you. See, I don't really think, and I include myself in this, I don't think we understand the magnitude of what worship is.

It deals with the very root of our being, of who we are. And it's God wanting to have total and complete control of our lives, every single facet of our lives, without any reserved area. Abraham, offer up your son, your only son, whom you love.

The posture number six of worship. Worship is invariably expressed by falling down to prostrate yourself, to bow, to kneel, to stoop. Psalm 95, come let us worship and bow down.

Let us kneel before the Lord our God, our maker. Matthew 2, verse 11, you've got that beautiful picture again of the Magi, those wise men. Again, a beautiful act of worship.

As they come, we've seen a star in the east that costs them everything. We've come to worship Him. And when they enter the house, the Bible says, they fell down and they worshiped Him.

No music. But what did they do? They opened up their treasures. Gold and frankincense and myrrh.

And they gave of the very best that they had, again as they stooped down before Him and worshiped Him. We see there a picture of what God is after. The Father seeks worshipers.

That there's no treasure that you and I hold on to, that we're not willing to yield up, we're not willing to forfeit, because we have a love that surpasses the love of everything else. The love of family, the love of friends, the love of country, the love of ministry, the love of reputation, whatever it may be. They say, Lord, there's no sacrifice that I'm not prepared to give.

Again, the bowing, the kneeling, the stooping again is suggestive of showing respect, acknowledgement to a person who is a superior one of both in person, position, and power. It speaks of surrender. It speaks of submission.

It speaks of servitude. Some of you are here from different cultures. And I've traveled a reasonable amount.

And you go into some cultures and you rub and shaking hands. Again, the way in which they acknowledge you is to bow or is to get down. I remember being in Korea a number of years ago and as I was making my way down some stairs into an area where I was teaching and people were coming up and some young ladies were coming up the stairs and every time they came beside me, they would just go like this and walk by.

And the next one would go like this. What are they doing? They're acknowledging again that you're more important than they are. They're bowing down.

We get so used to just shaking hands. I've worked a number of times in the little islands of Tonga down in the South Pacific. And there when you greet an elder, when a son or a daughter greets a father or speaks to a father, they always have to be in a lower position than the father is.

They have to bow down, acknowledging again that He is the One who is greater in authority, greater in might, greater in power. God's looking for that. Oh, not that it's just the bending again of our physical frame, but it's the Spirit within us that is willing to bow down.

It's so easy, isn't it, to bow the knee. It's another thing to bow the will, to bow the emotions, to bow the mind and say, I take a lesser place. You're right.

You're the final authority, and I yield to you. I surrender to you. I give myself to you unreservedly.

Number seven, the purity of worship. And we need to... We've got some time, I guess. But in John 4 and verse 24, Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, God is the Spirit, and those that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

What does Jesus mean by spirit? He's talking about the internal, not the external. This woman was caught up in the externals. This woman seemingly had a little bit of a religious air about her.

She spoke to, talked to Jesus about, you understand where this well originated? Abraham gave us this well. You understand that this mountain is where our fathers worshipped? And she's got this sort of spiritual aspect to her, if you like. But Jesus said, listen, the Father's looking for worshipers that worship in spirit and in truth.

It's an internal thing. It's not external. Man looks on the outward appearance.

God looks at the heart. Jesus said, you honor me with your lips. Your heart is far from me.

Oh, it's one thing to memorize songs. It's one thing to get caught up in the dance and all of those things as good as they are. But so often, again, you can honor Him with your lips and your heart is not there.

Your will's not there. Your emotions are not there. You're thinking of something else.

You're thinking of somebody else. And then Jesus said, not only do you worship me in spirit, but you worship me in truth. See, this woman was not really being truthful.

This woman was concealing who she really was. You see, this woman had never really given God her heart. And that's very obvious.

We can prove that. Because again, the heart, the mind, the will, the emotions. Oh, her emotions are being given to five men.

And now she's already involved with another one. You see, her mind may say, you know what you're saying is right. I agree with you.

But my affections are, I still love this man. See, that's why it's so important that we understand this word, unite my heart. Unite my heart.

Because we can be in agreement, again, in our mind. Intellectually, something may make sense. And we are in total agreement.

There's no way we can deny it. We see it in the Word of God. We hear it.

And there's no argument in that sense. But when it comes to putting our emotions behind it, look, I don't want to do it. For my will, Lord, I'm not going to do that thing.

And God says, listen, I want to tell you something, lady. You've got to worship in spirit and in truth. It's the heart that I'm looking for.

A heart that's yielded to me. Your mind's given to me. Your will's given to me.

Your emotions are given over to me. That's why the psalmist, again, understood that principle. Let the words of my mouth and what? The meditations of my heart be acceptable.

Thou desirest truth in the inward parts. Lady, you're not being honest. You've got this religious air.

You're caught up again in the traditions of the area. And so on. And you can talk about history.

You can talk about tradition. You can talk about all these things. But listen, your heart is being given to five men.

They're the ones that have got your heart. God doesn't have your heart. Number eight, the power of worship.

And really this sort of brings everything to a climax, if you like, because the true worshiper is no longer self-centered. The true worshiper is God-centered. Again, God has got his heart, and therefore he's God-conscious.

Again, as A.W. Tolson said, it is the preoccupation of a worshiper to be preoccupied with God himself. Preoccupied with God himself. My father used to tell the story how he had the privilege on any occasion when he was visiting Chicago to go into the home or go into the office of A.W. Tolson.

And he says on one occasion he knocked on the door in the afternoon. I think it was one or two o'clock in the afternoon. And Tolson got up off a mat that he had.

And my father said it was just a very plain, almost threadbare mat that was maybe three feet long and maybe 18 inches wide or two feet wide at the most. And he said as they began to talk and they ended up

talking again about the things of the Lord and Tolson said, you know Len, when I came into the office this morning I had so much that I had to do. And he said, I knew I wouldn't get it done unless I spent some time in prayer before the Lord.

And he said, I came in here, I think it was 8.30 or 9 o'clock in the morning. This was at least one or two in the afternoon. And he said, you know, when you knocked on the door, he said, I haven't even started to pray yet.

All I've done is worship. Again, just a preoccupation with God, his beauty. Again, the manifold wisdom of God.

The manifold nature of God. As Jack Hayford said some years ago that in Revelation where you have the, again, the four, 20 elders are bowing down, or the cherubim is bowing down. And every time they come up, he said, it's not a mechanical thing where they just say, holy, holy, holy, sort of like they're being pre-programmed.

But he said, every time they lift their head and they gaze upon the Lord, they see another facet of his being. He's so vast. And it causes them to go down again, holy.

And then they come up and they see again something they've never seen before and they go down again. And you see, there's so much about God that we don't understand. Why? Because we don't spend time in his presence.

And we're so caught up again in other things. And he doesn't really have our hearts. And the father seeks again worship.

Again, the worshiper is dead to self and alive to God. His heart is fully yielded to God. Again, he no longer regards reputation, position, attainment as important.

It's rather, how can I please you, Lord? And once that becomes a reality, and once we genuinely understand that, once it becomes concrete, if you like, in our own lives, our own understanding, it is then, it is then, that God has something in store for us. Notice, he says to Abraham, if I can go back to the story, Abraham, Genesis 22, verse 16, I think it is, or 11. Let me give you the right reference, 16.

He says, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, and there's no reservation whatsoever, there's no love that surpasses your love for me, then in turn I will give everything that I have to you. I can entrust you now. You're not going to run off and make a great big ministry with your name on it.

You're not going to do this. You're not going to do that. Why? Because I've got your heart.

And your affections have been dealt with. Your affections have gone to the cross. Your mind, in that sense, has gone to the cross.

Your will has gone to the cross. I know I can trust you. I've proved to you over and over and over again that I'm going to be glorified, that you look to me as the supreme love of your life, the supreme delight of your life.

There's nothing that you're not prepared to give up for me. And therefore, there's nothing I'm not prepared to give up to you. And I will bless you, and I will multiply you, and I will increase you.

But Abraham, I can't do that until I see that you are truly yielded in all these areas. You see, I believe that God's power is released through true worshipers, genuine worshipers, those who have not withheld anything. And God says to them, because you have not withheld yourself, you read it, because you have not withheld.

You see, we withhold a lot, don't we? And God knows what we're withholding. It may be financial. It may be reputation.

It may be ministry. It may be some other thing. It may be a girlfriend or a boyfriend.

It may be a country. It may be a culture. And we're holding on to it.

And Lord, don't test me on this thing. And God says, Listen, when I know I've got your heart, I'll give you everything. Worship.

What an incredible thing. The Father seeks worship. Seemingly, it's a rare commodity.

Seemingly, it's something that God has to seek after again, like the one seeking goodly pearls. The one seeking to seek and save that which is lost. The shepherd that's out there seeking, he's seeking.

Why? Because there aren't too many. But are prepared to say, Lord, all that I am, all that I have, is yours, unreservedly. This is my own prayer.

Father, right now, in the stillness of this moment, Lord, we ask that you would begin to test us. Lord, that little thing that kept welling up within us, Lord, even during the course of this past hour, that Lord was resisting, that was opposing. Lord, that's the thing that you're after.

Maybe giving up a ministry and going overseas. Again, giving up some other area of affection. Father, we give you our heart this time.

Lord, we say again, with a full understanding of what it means to join that songwriter and say, Lord, all to Jesus I'll surrender. All to him I feel again. We say, Lord, search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts. See if there's any unreserved area, Lord. Any area that I'm still keeping, I've still got a reservation sign on it.

Lord, don't touch that. You can have everything else, but Lord, don't touch that. Father, we long again for a great, mighty outpouring of your Spirit.

We long, Lord, for the blessing of God that makes rich and adds no song. Father, not in the material sense, but Lord, in the spiritual realm. Father, we ask that, Lord, you would raise up, even out of this congregation this afternoon, men and women, that, Lord, you can look upon and say, Lord, there is a person whose heart is mine.

There is a ministry whose heart is mine. Everything about that individual is surrendered to me. Father, take this word, your word.

Father, seal it this afternoon.

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