

How to Ignite a Heart of Worship

by Shane Idleman

To truly worship God, you must ignite a heart of worship by prioritizing worship, engaging your heart, and fighting against the flesh.

Duration: 52:08

Scripture: John 1:14, John 4:23-24, John 8:32, John 14:6, John 18:37, Ephesians 4:15, 1 Timothy 3:15, 2 Timothy 4:3-4, 1 John 1:6

Topics: "True Worship", "Spiritual Surrender"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of igniting a heart of worship by embracing both the spirit and truth. It highlights the struggle against the flesh to worship authentically and the necessity of surrendering to God's truth. The speaker delves into the significance of living in alignment with God's character and the essential nature of the cross and resurrection in true worship.

Transcript

It was interesting last night, I spoke at GraceFest at the Friday evening worship service there and it was just a quick message. It was entitled Igniting a Heart of Worship and getting our hearts ready for worship. And I just felt compelled to share the whole message tonight at Westside.

Not that it's easier to prepare a sermon, you know, which that's true, but I already have Sin in the Camp Part 3 pretty much done. So it wasn't really a matter of that, it was a matter of, okay Lord, what have you put on my heart for this church and for this service? And igniting a heart of worship is one of the best things you can do, to ignite that heart of worship. Now here's the interesting thing, it does not come naturally.

You will not have a heart of worship naturally. Your flesh will do everything it can to fight against igniting a heart of worship. And if you have your Bibles, you can turn to John 4, John chapter 4 verse 24, but I'm going to read a little bit more than just that.

But it's that famous verse where Jesus says, those who worship him must worship God in spirit and in truth. And it's interesting, you'll see a lot of churches thinking they're worshiping God, but they're not worshiping God. Or a lot of people who say they have faith or religion, they say, yeah, I'm worshiping God.

But if they're not worshiping God in spirit and in truth, spirit and in truth, they're not worshiping God. Jesus said that. And I'm going to look at John chapter 4 verse 13, actually I'd probably start at verse 11 to fill you

in a little bit.

This is that famous passage where Jesus comes to the well and there's a woman there. He said, I need, must go to Samaria, I have to go to Samaria. On his way, he stops at this well and there's a woman there getting water and Jesus says, can I have a drink? She's like, why are you asking me for a drink? You know, number one, you're a Jew, I'm a woman, I'm a Samaritan and you're a male, I'm a female.

And this whole cultural dynamic going on where she's pretty much shocked. So I'll pick up at verse 11, the woman said to him, sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where then did you get that living water? And I want to explain that too real quick.

Jesus said, if you drink of this water I give you, you will never thirst again. It's living water. And so she doesn't understand where's this water coming from? You have nothing to draw.

And we just turn on a faucet now. Do you know how they used to get it? 40, 50 feet down. By then, if you had some money, you could have the crank and it would roll up.

But a lot of times, you're just pulling that water up. But sir, you have nothing to draw that water with. Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us this well? Yes, he is.

And he drank from it himself as well as his sons and his livestock. Jesus answered and said to her, whosoever drinks of this water that he's giving will never thirst again. And I don't know why, but sometimes that scripture chokes me up and just really makes me stop and think, those who truly drink of Christ, and I'm using a metaphor here, but those who truly experience him, they never thirst again.

They never thirst again. Now there's challenges. There's some people with, if you talk about drugs or alcohol or different things, they'll say man, Christ delivered me.

I've never had that desire again. Then there's other people who have that desire again and it's a lifelong struggle. But there's something when you partake and when you receive Christ and when you experience him, you never thirst again for the truth.

You never, like I wonder if there's anything out there better than Jesus Christ. You just don't say that because you know there's nothing that can compare to that. So he's saying whoever drinks of this water will never thirst again.

But whoever drinks of the water, I'm sorry, whoever drinks of this water will thirst again. Talking about the water that they're pulling from the well. But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.

But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life. And it kind of parallels that verse where Jesus says, if you believe on me, as the scriptures say, out of your belly will flow rivers of living water. And this is really, isn't this interesting? This verse, it begs the question in the church today, where are these rivers of living water? People either seem like they're dead and in a cemetery or they think like they're dying and they have no passion for the things of God.

So I want to say, where does that verse apply? Why is it not applying more? He who believes on me, out of their belly will flow rivers of living water. Where is it at? The reason is it's many times it's being stifled. It's being plugged up.

That's why we have to ignite a heart of worship. Jesus said, I will become in him a fountain of water springing up in everlasting life. The woman said, sir, give me this water that I may not thirst nor come here to draw.

Jesus said to her, you go call your husband and come here. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, you have said, you have said, well, you have no husband for you have had five husbands and the one who you have is not your husband and that you spoke truly.

Now this is just the item and paraphrase here, commentary. But I find it interesting that Jesus, and I'll talk about this a little bit later, when she wants this living water, he's dealing with the sin issue. I don't know if you caught that, he's dealing with the sin issue.

Well go grab your husband and he's walking her into fornication. Probably premarital sex, maybe adultery if she's not yet released from that fifth husband. And he's dealing with the sin issue.

And that's a little bit what I spoke about last night too, is this sin's a big issue. When it comes to worshipping God, if you don't deal with this sin issue, you cannot worship God. Now this interesting as well, there's so much to this text, it almost made my mind explode this week because you could just take this in many different directions.

But this idea of igniting the heart and worshipping God in spirit and in truth has a dual application. Because that applies to unbelievers as well. I believe Jesus is saying, listen, if you truly wanna worship God, if you truly wanna worship him, Samaritan, you're not gonna worship him unless you worship him in spirit, receiving of the spirit, being baptized into the body of Christ, being a Christian, and then embracing that truth.

He is the only way, the only life, the only truth. Nobody comes to the Father except through him. So that has an application to unbelievers.

Can we say that the Samaritan woman was a child of Abraham, was on the right path? Or do we see Jesus here lovingly showing her she cannot worship God unless she's in right relationship with him? Now, it also has another application that those Christians, believers, who are truly going to worship him, I'm not talking about playing church. I'm talking about truly worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. And many churches can miss those two elements as well.

So I wanna make sure I clarify that, that there is a dual application here for unbelievers and believers that we'll get to in a little bit. The woman said to him, sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that Jerusalem is a place where we ought to worship.

Jesus said to her, woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will neither worship him on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Verse 22, you worship what you do not know.

We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is when true worshipers, here's the key, true worshipers, this is when you cut through all the garbage, you cut through all the play, you cut through all the playing church, but true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. For the Father is seeking such as to worship him.

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. And it's interesting here, he says God is spirit. God was not a man like the Mormon religion believes, that God was once a man like us, and that through a process he evolved and will develop into God someday too.

That's blasphemy. It says God was never a human, he was never a person, God is spirit. And those who worship him must worship him according to his nature, according to his character, in spirit and in truth.

So that's the context of that scripture. And when I talk about igniting a heart of worship, let's define the word ignite real quick. Have you seen all these fires going on? Did something ignite those? 80% of the time I believe it's a lightning that causes a lot of these, but when you're close to where man lives, a lot of it can be caused by men and women, by cigarette butts and leaving flames exposed and little fires not completely out and different things.

But something is igniting these fires. Something is causing that. So the same thing with igniting a heart of worship.

You have to do, something has to cause that. It won't come naturally. Tomorrow morning I'm gonna have to ignite a heart of worship.

It's not gonna come naturally. Tonight after the service you're gonna have to ignite a heart of worship because it's not gonna come naturally. The flesh does everything it can to bore you, to have you just fall asleep and to not ignite that heart of worship.

So igniting, something causes that flame. So let's talk about that. First though, let's take a quick test.

Are y'all into tests? I feel like I'm still in Texas or something. Take the test. Here is a good test if you aren't sure if you need to ignite a heart of worship or not.

Do you have regular extended times of worship? Yes or no? That's the question, right? Yes or no? Do we have extended times of worship? And I can always often, I won't say always, I can often go back to this being the problem in the case of many lives. In the case of many believers who are struggling to know God, struggling in their walk, they're being led of the flesh, they're falling back into this, they're making wrong choices. Tell me about your extended times of worship.

Yeah, I need to do that, I think. Yeah, I think you need to do that. That's because that's where the whole heart changes.

That's where you get direction from God. That's where you hear that still small voice of the Father speaking through His word and through worship. That's where the heart's transformed and changed.

Without that, you're just saying, here enemy, hit me with your best shot. That's why everybody's too busy. Isn't that the number one excuse? I'm too busy.

So if there's no regular extended time of worship, there's a good indication you need to ignite a heart of worship. Here's another test. Do you look forward to sitting quietly and waiting on God? Or does that just sound boring? I'd rather go to the dentist or the DMV.

That's right. Well, that's a good indication that the heart needs to be ignited. Think about this, because when the heart is ignited, igniting a heart of worship, when my heart is ignited, it's on fire, right? For God, there's a, yeah, I look forward to those times of worship.

It's on fire already. Lord, for here, Saturday night, I came out of a two. Fortunately, one good thing for me is I get to go to both services.

I get to hear 10 songs of worship. And by the time we get to the second service, at the end of the service, that's sometimes when it finally breaks through. So we're so in a hurry to get out and get going.

But that quiet time when the heart's on fire, I'm like, I can't wait to get home and get to bed so I can get up at 4.30 in the morning and worship God again. Why? Because I already ignited it. You started the fire.

You can't put it out now. So see, sometimes it's not boring. Now, do I feel this way all the time? No.

When the heart's not ignited. When the flesh comes in and the cares of this world. Oh, that's a verse there.

The cares of this world come in. They creep in and they pull us away from that time. How many people wanted to go home and create a war room when they saw the movie? Or how many people said, I'm going to pray tonight or tomorrow? What happened? You ignited a heart of prayer.

Something did it. You ignited a heart of worship. If you haven't seen the movie, I'd really encourage you to do so.

That better ignite something. That's why. See, something has to ignite.

So when we put on CNN and Fox and all this stuff, watching the debates, watching Shimada, I can't even pronounce it, the four blood moons and the world's coming to an end. The stock market's going to crash and we better have 30 days worth of food and everything's falling apart. Oh, Lord, it's me worried.

And that's what we're filling our mind with? You're not going to ignite a heart of worship. You're going to ignite a heart of fear and anxiety and panic. Especially as men, I believe, leading your family, your family will follow your tempo.

They'll follow what you're feeling. My kids say, Shane, there's a guy in Iran that wants to blow us off the planet. Yeah, wait, we'll just get to see God quicker.

Don't worry about it. God sets up one king, he pulls another down. Hey, that's one way to go.

Nuclear bomb hits here, or do I want to sit and die of cancer for three months? But I'm way off track here. My point was I can ignite a heart of fear or I can ignite a heart of worship. And I get the emails weekly.

How much food should we save up? How much water should I have? If it gets to that point, where am I going to put a 1,000-gallon water tank in my backyard? Now, there's a point where you should be prepared. I truly believe that we should be prepared. You have enough things.

You have water. You have food. But you don't sit and focus and concentrate on those things.

Because when we do that, we're igniting a heart of fear. And here's how I know. It takes you away from a heart of worship.

I have never seen a heart of fear and a heart of watching all this stuff and doing all this stuff and then have a heart of worship at the same time. Because a heart of worship goes against those things. So are you looking forward to sitting quietly and waiting on God? What about this? During worship, are you engaged or are you bored? Maybe you should call this the truth test.

Because is a person engaged in worship or are they bored? Now, this is interesting, too, because your flesh doesn't want to be engaged. Your flesh doesn't want to eat. I want to yawn.

I'm hungry. I want to get up. I want to do all that.

So to develop a heart of worship, you have to fight against those things. You have to engage your heart. The Scripture's full of exhortations on putting on this, taking off that, the armor of God, putting on this, let this mind be in you, which is also Christ Jesus.

Do not be conformed to this world. Flee these things. Make no provision for the flesh.

And it's a battle, and sometimes we forget that. But once the battle lines are drawn and God begins to press through, worship is not boring. You're engaged.

You want it to continue. And the final test, do you prioritize worship? Have you ever thought about that? Many times we'll fit it in if we get around to it. I mean, Saturday church is a perfect example.

So many times it's like, well, if it fits, you know, if the ball game's over and the football game's over and we can get out of that birthday party early and we don't have this going on, I don't feel moody, and I'm not in a bad mood, and the kids are already dressed, and we didn't go swimming, and all these things, then I'll go. Then I'll worship. But to engage that heart of worship, to ignite, I'm talking, now, I know I'm not talking to everybody, but I'm talking to those who truly want to ignite a heart of worship.

Not those who just say, well, that's a good idea, but I don't really want to do that. I'm talking to those who want to do that. You have to prioritize it.

You have to, because what is prioritizing? You're putting first things first. That's prioritizing. We'll put everything else first, but when it comes to worshiping God, we have a hard time prioritizing it.

So that's a good way to take a test and say, okay, well, I'm way off track here. I do need to ignite a heart of worship. But let's talk about the first point.

Those who worship Him in spirit. So those who are truly worshiping God have to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Now, let's talk about what this is not.

Worship is heart engagement. That's really what it is. When I'm talking about worship, I'm talking about the heart is engaged.

I'm not talking about jumping up and down, running down the aisles, doing all kinds of stuff, but I'm also not talking about sitting cold stone face. What's that wrestler's name? Stone Cold Austin. We're sitting in churches stone cold like a statue.

I'm not talking about that in any way because sometimes if you talk to Baptists, they have one idea of worship. If you talk to Pentecostals, they have a much different idea of worship. And then there's groups in between.

But what I'm talking about with worship is the heart is engaged. It's about being filled with the Spirit, really. True worshipers will worship God in spirit and in truth.

They are filled with the Spirit. They are walking in the Spirit. That's how you worship God in spirit.

Walk in the Spirit, and you will not carry out the deeds of the flesh. Because we can act like we are worshiping and not really be worshiping. People act like they are worshiping and not really be worshiping.

Especially with young adults. They can come to church, but they are already planning their next party. I've had people come and they are worshiping and somehow the sermon convicts them and they break down and they are on their way to their heroin dealer after this or pick up an 8-ball or a dime of marijuana.

They are already planning their next... You realize you are not worshiping? You are excited and yet God is moving and there is energy and this, but that's not worshiping. That's not a heart of worship. Remember what the lady said, talk to Jesus, our fathers worship on this mountain.

Our fathers worship on this mountain. Then Jesus said, you worship what you don't even know. These people think they were worshiping.

Throughout the Old Testament, they thought they were worshiping God as they sacrificed their children, as they bowed their knee to Baal. Remember when Elijah was about ready, he feared for his life and he said, Lord, just take me. God says, I have 7,000 people still, Elijah, who have not bowed their knee to Baal nor kissed his image, which means the idolatry that was taking place.

They thought they were worshiping God. So many people think that they are worshiping God. I drive by churches.

If you go through Palm Springs or East Coast or different things, they've got a nice big rainbow and they'll tell you that they are LGBT friendly and this and welcoming. They're not worshiping God. That you cannot reject His truth, reject the inerrancy of the Word, glory in sin, and say you're worshiping God.

It doesn't happen. Now that statement is going to get me emails, I already know. But that's the truth.

That's the truth. You can see how they're worshiping God and they'll wear big robes. Well, if you're rejecting what He's clearly revealed in His Word and you're actually glorying in it and there's pride about that, that's not worshiping God.

You're just going through the motions. Now on this area, I felt it relevant to talk about the two camps again that I talk about sometimes when I talk about the Holy Spirit. On one side, when you're talking about worship, people say, brother, the Spirit's moving.

And then excuse all kinds of things that are just weird and bizarre and emotional. There's emotional people, right? And some are conservative, some are emotional. I know God's created us differently.

But that's not really worshiping God. Because it's not in the fanaticism, it's in the fruit. A person who's truly worshiping God, they might get excited, and that's good.

But it's really in the fruit. What is the fruit of that lifestyle? Walking in the Spirit. And then the other side, of course, we know we call the cemetery, right? They rarely talk about the Spirit.

They're void of emotion and they're void of engagement. You really don't know if they're alive until the service is over. Until they get up out of the chair and leave.

Okay, they're alive, okay. But you do have the two extremes because I've talked to people on this side and they think that is worship. Reverence and respect.

And just nothing. And that's not worship either. I believe the heart has to be engaged to some degree.

Try having a lively conversation with somebody and doing either extreme. That won't go over very well. This side will say, can you just calm down and sit down so I can talk to you? And this side, do you hear anything I'm saying? Are you engaged at all? So the heart of worship.

God has created us, and that's one thing I think on this topic of worship. That's why, even though I poke fun at both sides, I'm really trying not to be too critical about it because God has designed people differently. I mean, there's worshipers who can just worship God in their chair, and when amazing grace comes on, there's tears flowing down their face, and they're just worshipping.

And then there's other people who've just been delivered from a difficult, abusive marriage, or they just got their kids back from the Department of Social Services, and they're excited and they're happy and they're joy. And that's how God has created different people. So there's differences there.

Those things are not bad things. That's what we call character. That's who we are.

That's how God has made us. But you can't gauge worship by that alone. Now, that can come out at some point, but that's not what I'm talking about when I talk about worship.

Because I'll go to some services, and they'll say, man, the Spirit was really there. You know, where that was, they were really worshipping. And you go to another service, and they were really worshipping.

Well, they look different. They really look different. But there is a heart engagement there.

I know that for sure. The heart has to be engaged. Because if we're in a hurry, and we're not, you know, we're just kind of bored, and we're just in a hurry, I don't think that's worshipping.

I think there's a kink in the hose, so to speak. And that rivers of living water is not flowing freely. Now, everybody's gonna be a little bit different in that, but there should be some engagement.

Again, it doesn't come naturally. It doesn't come naturally. So what I would encourage you to do on this first step of in spirit, worship Him in spirit and truth, say, Lord, I want a heart of worship.

I want what Shane's talking about. I want to reignite my passion for You. And this can happen in a lot of different ways.

Some people, they remember. They remember when they used to worship God 20 years ago, and tears would come to their eyes. You talk to them six months later, I remember, and six months later, I remember.

They never get to a point. They're always living in, I remember 20 years ago. And then it becomes 22 years ago.

And then it becomes 23 years ago. And you want to say, hey, you can, you know, don't live in the past. You can have that heart of worship again.

So it's reigniting a heart of worship. And then there's other people who've never experienced this. And a lot of times, it's because we're coming to God on our terms.

He's in this little box, and we'll keep Him right here. Don't get too crazy, God. I like you in your little box.

But really, God wants full surrender. That's why I talk about it often, and I'll continue to talk about it until the day I die. Because that is how one of the big ways you ignite a heart of worship is through full surrender.

Saying, Lord, my life is yours. Give me that heart of worship. If a person truly comes to Him, not here or anywhere, they're on their knees, they're in a chair, whatever, they're crying out to God saying, Lord, give me a heart of worship.

My life is yours. I've been fighting you in this area. I've been arguing about this area.

I let this unforgiveness go. I let this bitterness go. This anger.

Lord, this addiction. All these things are taking me down. I fully surrender everything.

I give you my life. There's no way you're going to leave that unchanged. If you're sincere.

If you're sincere. There's no way. That's how you ignite a heart of worship.

That's what I alluded to earlier. This is why sin is a big deal. Sin hinders worship.

It quenches the spirit. It grieves the heart of God, and it sidetracks us from our mission to walk in the Spirit. He who does not live well does not worship well.

So worship is often a byproduct of our lifestyle choices. How a person lives affects their worship. How a person lives affects their worship.

Think about this. Grab somebody tonight who's leaving the services or Grace Fest, and grab somebody tonight who's leaving Schooners. And ask them tomorrow morning if they feel like worshipping God.

What's the difference? Our lifestyle often compliments worship, or it encourages it, or it draws us away from worship. He who does not live well does not worship well. I was springboarding off of what E.M. Bound said, and I can't remember the quote exactly, but he said, he who does not live well does not pray well.

Our prayer life is directly related to how we live our life, our lifestyle. They complement each other. And the same applies with worship.

It's interesting on this note, I've found that we often avoid the sins of the heart. Because when I talk about sin as a big deal, many people are saying, yeah, Shane, you go get them. You go get those adulterers and those fornicators and those other sins.

You go get all those guys. You tell them. But we forget about sins of the heart.

And I came across a good book I wanted to recommend some time ago, and I pulled it out again and went through the highlights. It's called Wounded by God's People by Anne Graham Lotz. And her story on being wounded, Billy Graham's daughter being wounded by God's people.

And a lot of times, I didn't realize in her case, and I've noticed in my own life, our wounds can prevent worship. It's a cycle of pain. It's rejection.

There's deep wounds. There's extreme hurt. And I can't worship very good when I'm hurt.

Because I'm carrying bitterness and resentment and everything in. And I see that person over there, that person, this, and we're wounded. And a wounded heart cannot worship God.

A wounded heart cannot worship God. But, I'm gonna throw that back on you, a wounded heart, a wounded heart can be the catalyst towards worshipping God. It has everything to do with what you do with that hurt.

Because some of the best worshipers I've ever met are people who've been hurt deeply. And it's through that pain. That pain draws them to Christ.

That pain draws them to the prayer closet. Being wounded and gossiped about and slandered and backbiting and people saying mean and awful things, it draws you to the cross. It draws you to the point of, Lord, I'm so hurt, can you rebuild me? Can you comfort me? But if you don't do that, it'll turn to something very ugly, very ugly, and it will prevent worship every single time.

And I often tell people, if you want to get hurt, plan a church. It's unbelievable. People have called me and my wife, everything from this is a cult to slander and backbiting and saying things that just aren't even, I don't even know where they came up with this stuff.

And they're hurting. But they're also hurting, so they're wanting to hurt you. They're wanting to hurt you.

And it's wounds and wound after wound. So if I don't take that to the cross, and if I don't say, Lord, I forgive them, because I'm not perfect. I'm sure I've done my share of wounding myself.

What comes out of here is not perfect. Or nowadays we have to say, what comes out of here? Email, texting, right? We wound each other. And if you don't allow that hurt and that pain to drive you to Christ, and what I mean by drive is pain makes us bitter or it makes us better.

Many people who are wounded are not reading their Bible. You'd think they would. Many people who have been hurt by the church are not going to church.

They're not listening to worship. They're hurt and they're wounded. And that's why it's so important that we take these things to Christ and we allow forgiveness to come in.

I've been forgiven much more than I could ever forgive. Haven't we all? That's why the Bible talks about he who forgave you, shouldn't you, ought you, be even more forgiving and more understanding and more patient? I don't know why I threw this in here, but it ties right in with worship because I've seen a lot of people that aren't worshipping God because they've been hurt by the church. And I don't want to minimize this, but I want to say, well, who hasn't? Who hasn't been hurt by the church? Me times 10.

Because it's a whole bunch of sinners coming together, broken, need God and everything. The flesh comes in, wants to argue, wants to fight. We say things we shouldn't.

We do things we shouldn't. It's a bunch of sinners trying to have church. Now, how is that not going to get ugly from time to time? It's impossible.

So just, I would encourage you, and I've seen tremendous, I've seen tears flow when people finally release and they allow bitterness and unforgiveness to stop hurting them. Yeah, people have wronged us. But forgiveness doesn't mean I was wrong and they were right.

I've said this many times from here. It just means that, Lord, I'm releasing this. I'm not holding this poison in anymore.

Even if they were wrong, completely wrong. And then from that, usually you'll see a heart of worship come from that. You don't see a heart of worship when somebody's bitter and angry and resentful and hurt.

You don't see it. But the heart of worship follows once that person releases all of that. It's powerful.

This prevents worship, I think, more than people realize. Pain either prevents worship or it ignites it. It's what we do with it.

So reignite, reignite to cause the heart to catch fire again. That's what we have to do in this era of worshipping in spirit and in truth, especially in spirit. You have to make an effort to reignite your heart to walk with Him in spirit and in truth.

It's interesting. The Bible's saying, John was in the spirit on the Lord's day. Or I was in the spirit on the Lord's.

Do you think they're in some yoga trance? Or are they walking in the spirit? They're walking in the spirit and they're being lifted up by God and they're being given revelation and different things and wisdom. But they've been walking in the spirit. They're not living in sin.

They're walking in God's spirit. And God walked with them. He talked with them.

He spoke with them in that way. So it's absolutely crucial to worship Him in spirit. Now, those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

And here's where the battle lines are being drawn. I don't have to spend a lot of time here because I have many, many, many times before. But if you have a watered-down version of truth, you will not know the character of God.

See, that's the problem. And I love the churches with the rainbows on them. And they're all welcoming and affirming and things.

But you can't worship God and know the character of God if you're rejecting His truth. See, when I embrace His truth, then true worship comes from that. They'll also say that God saves everyone, some churches.

Or they'll say that His Word is true as long as it's interpreted correctly. Once we start to put what I call modifiers on His truth or governors on His truth, as long as it fits my theology, and I'll make it fit. And people think that it's called universalism, that everybody will be saved in the end, and even the devil.

No. There's universalisms. They believe that everybody will be saved in the end.

And I believe somebody like Rob Bell, if you've ever read his books, he believes that kind of stuff. So you're not gonna go and worship God if you're rejecting His truth. And I'm not trying to belittle or cause division.

I'm just telling you, you cannot, true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. You can't say, well, yeah, that's true, but I'm not gonna believe it. And we're gonna reject.

And to reject the concept of hell is to reject the need of, why did Christ come? This is not something little. When you talk about universalism, that everybody will be saved, you just mock the cross as if God is some abusive father. There's no need for the cross.

Guess what? Do you think they talk about salvation much? Or repentance? Or the blood of Christ? Or the judgment that is to come? No. So that's why this is major stuff, folks. That's why they can go on Oprah and say these things.

And that does not please God. So they think they're worshiping God. They're not.

They're arrogantly mocking His truth. And they're putting themselves in place of God because you're changing His truth. How can you tell me when Jesus spoke more about hell than heaven? Jesus Christ spoke more about hell than heaven.

Yet you're gonna erase it? Let's erase all this stuff. That's not the nature of God. That's not the character of God.

Well, Jesus said it. Jesus said it. He who believes on me will be saved.

He who does not believe on me will be condemned and is condemned already. Is damned. Is condemned.

I'm not gonna prepare to erase that verse. So you see how important this is? Because I think sometimes, oh, you're just getting a little carried away with truth. No, I'm not.

That's the foundation of everything. A person cannot truly worship God without the truth because that reveals the character of God. See, that's why I say try reading from Genesis to Revelation every year.

Then you'll know the character of God. Then you'll know the heart of God. Because if all you do is stick in John, you'll never know the God of wrath and indignation and holy fire and righteous jealousy.

You don't know that. I'm not gonna touch that God. Well, that's God.

That's the nature of God. If you will say, I can't understand that. I sure can.

I can understand a God who says, I die for you. I created for you. And you're loving some other idol.

I'm jealous for that. That's a healthy jealousy. What husband isn't gonna be jealous of his wife talking to her ex-husband? That's a healthy jealousy.

Now there's unhealthy jealousy too. But you look at the whole attributes of God, that he is loving and merciful and gracious. But he's holy and righteous.

And he dwells in unapproachable light. And all these things, that's the only way to get the whole character of God. Do I understand everything? No.

No, absolutely not. Every time I get to the parts where he would say, go into the cities and destroy everything. I'm like, oh God.

I'm not following there. I don't understand. But you are good.

You are true. You are the one true living God. I bow my knee to you.

Even though I don't understand everything, I praise you and I worship you. And although I don't understand all of the truth, I embrace it. You see the difference? But there's people saying, see that's not the nature of God.

That's not the nature of God. If he did those things, that's not God's nature. And I'm changing my view about God.

They can't worship him. It was unbelievable. I had an atheist.

I sat for three hours. He's an atheist. And I just, at the end I just had this, I don't know, laugh or cry.

But he said, well God supports slavery. I can't, I can't, you know, worship a God that doesn't. Let's look at all the passages.

Let's look at all, and if I had time, I'd need 20 minutes, but there's a big difference between indentured servants and what you saw in the movies, Roots. There's a big difference between God saying, listen this is how the economy system works and America and her sins of slavery. It's atrocity.

And he wants to tie in all these things. They say, see I can't worship a God like that. What about the other passages that you missed? And Isaiah and Jeremiah says, care for the foreigner and the sojourner.

Treat these people good and with respect and give them the first fruits and all these things. What do you do with that? Yet this person has to say that God endorses slavery, yet he goes on the next day and posts supports for Planned Parenthood. He supports Planned Parenthood, yet you're gonna say this about God? Are you kidding me? Are you kidding me? That's a mockery.

You're supporting an organization that will rip children from the womb and sell those body parts, and you have the audacity to sit here and tell me that God is a mean God because of some Old Testament scriptures that you took out of context. That's how important this topic is, folks, that the truth is everything. That's why I get fired up about the truth.

It's the foundation of everything. The foundation of all sound doctrine and learning is the truth. Paul told Timothy, preach the truth.

What's the truth? Everything, everything. The totality of the nature of God. In the difficult seasons, he said, preach the truth, Timothy.

In and out of season, wherever you are, rebuke, exhort, warn the people because there will come a time when they will not endure sound doctrine. The truth. And they will look for teachers who will tell them what they want to hear and they will tickle their ears.

Oh, I want to follow that teacher. Good, because he doesn't have the truth. Well, you're not worshiping God.

I don't know what you're doing, but you're not worshiping God. And that's one of my concerns. I've talked to young pastors before, and I'll tell them, listen, if all you're going to do is talk about community and painting neighborhoods and love and mercy and grace, it's all you're going to talk about every single week for 52 weeks.

That's only one side of the coin. That's not the whole truth. Well, I'm hoping they read those difficult passages on their own.

No, that's up to you. That's the pulpit. That's the pulpit.

It sets the tone for the church. It says, here's what God's Word says in Genesis. Here's what God's Word says in Revelation.

Here's what it talks about, the love of God, the mercy of God, if you would just turn to Him. But then it talks about the wrath of God being poured out on all mankind because of sin. You have to preach everything.

That, then, and only then can you truly worship God. That's how important this topic is. And so, that's hateful.

That's mean. That's bigoted. No, that's the truth.

And the truth hurts. And it offends. Do you want to know something? The truth is supposed to hurt and to offend.

When my little kids hear the truth, do they like it? No. Don't put your knife in the electrical outlet. Get your hand.

What are you doing that for? That offended me. That hurt me. I might even cry.

Good, because you almost died. How is this any different? It hurts. Yes, it offends you, but you're almost dead.

Dead men walking. I'm not talking about just that lifestyle. I mean all lifestyles in general that are outside the will of God, that are outside God.

They are dead men walking. Have you ever thought about that? The majority of America is going to hell in a handbasket. The majority of... There's a lot of people in the church who come in, they're worshiping, and they think they're on the right road, but they're not.

They've never repented. They've never embraced the gospel. They've never trusted in Christ as their Savior.

They've heard all the right things, but they've never taken that step, and they've never repented from their sin. They've never embraced the truth. That's why they can't worship God in spirit and in truth, because they've never embraced it.

It's a good point to remind you that half truth is not the truth. Partial truth is not the truth. Avoiding the difficult passages is not embracing the truth.

When we avoid the truth, we actually come to God as a coward, not a warrior. And this is where I mentioned Mormonism, or I mentioned Jehovah's Witness, or I mentioned different things. It's never to pick fights, but to say, listen, you can't just embrace half the truth.

You can't just embrace half the truth. Why don't you, when they, next time, you know, when a person's, they're having surgery to remove cancer, try telling them to just remove half of it. I have a malign tumor here.

It's the size of a baseball. Can you just leave half? Just take out half of it. But that's the same thing, in the spiritual.

Now, nobody has the corner, and people get mad at me. I got a few emails on this too, and I said it last year. I don't have 100% truth.

I don't have the full knowledge of every truth in the Bible. You wanna know why I know? Because one group believes in the rapture. Another group believes it's not the rapture.

Another group believes in the gifts of the Spirit have ceased. Another group believes that the gifts have not ceased. Another group believes in what they call eldership, a rule of the church, where elders govern the church, where others believe, like the Calvary Chapel movement, believes in the Mosaic form of church government, where the pastor rules, leads the church.

Women in leadership. To what degree? According to Paul's words, women should not teach, but remain in submission. Oh, good, Paul, do you have to say that? Well, okay, how this church defines it, how John MacArthur defines that, compared to Chuck Smith, is gonna have a big difference there.

So who's got the truth? But see, this is over what we call non-essentials. These are not essentials to salvation. But when it comes to, he is the only way, the only truth, the only life, nobody comes to the Father except through him, not through an angel, not through a side gate, not through a different religion, not that Jesus was a created being, not that God was once a man like us, and through a whole bunch of following, a whole bunch of moral codes, he became what he is today.

No, no, no, no, no, no, that's very dangerous ground. That's blasphemy. So there's a big difference in the Christian community.

This will help some people. There are essentials that we all agree on. He's the only way, the only truth, the only life, you cannot come to God on your own merit.

There's no good works. It's his shed blood and his blood alone. The inerrancy of Scripture, the sufficiency of Scripture, the atonement, the atoning work of Christ, the finished work on the cross, propitiation, all these big words, it basically means he did it all.

He did it all. And the inerrancy of Scripture is something being challenged today. Either God said, meant what he said and he said what he meant or he didn't.

The inerrancy of Scripture, this is a hill to die on. As soon as you say, well, it's good to a certain point, but you need this book to, and then this Watchtower Society, and this, it's okay, but it's not sufficient. See, it's sufficient.

It's sufficient for all godliness. It's sufficient. It's the inerrancy of Scripture.

Most churches will say, well, I don't think Paul really meant that. And wasn't David gay? A guy just asked me this this week. David was gay.

I said his love for Jonathan exceeds that of a woman. You're going to take that Scripture and say he was gay? It just meant he had, that's a best friend. Have you ever had a guy you're really close with and everything, and it exceeds that.

You can go play baseball. You can do some things. It exceeds that of a woman.

And Paul really, he was writing in a different time and a different thing, and he really didn't, you know, that was back then. This is, no, it's sufficient. That's why these are hills to die on.

The cross, the resurrection. The resurrection, did it occur? It's a biggie. That's a biggie, and people begin to doubt those areas.

So that's what I mean by the essentials. It's interesting, on this topic of unity, right, all the churches coming together, all the churches can come together if they're united on truth. See, I can go to, I can fellowship with the Baptists, the Pentecostal, Presbyterian, and the Methodist.

Methodist, John Wesley. Methodology, there's a methodology. Small groups.

They're more Armenian in their theology. Presbyterian, following John Calvin. They're more Calvinistic in their theology.

Baptist, very, you know, suit and tie preaching, this and that, King James only. And then Pentecostal, anything goes. You know, it's like, but they all, majority agree on the truth.

The truth. The essentials of the faith. And that's what unity really is.

See, unity isn't unity for the sake of unity. There's ecumenical movements that I've told you before. They'll email me, and they're getting Buddhists, and Hindu, and Hare Krishna, New Age, and this, and they just want us to all come together.

Kumbaya is one united religion. Say, I can't even step foot in there. Well, that's bigoted.

That's arrogant. No, that's, I have to, I'm united with God. I'm united with God, not man.

I'm united with the truth, not man. I'm united with faith in Christ, not man. Because when you come together on that, then you're not united with God.

See, that's unity. Unity in the Bible is unity of truth, unity of faith, and unity of doctrine. We're united.

One cause, Paul would say, with one mind. That's unity. So don't let anybody fool you and say, well, you Christians just aren't united.

They're against all this. Well, we're united with God. If you're not, then yeah, I'm divided against you, but you caused that, not me.

Because we're united with the truth. Boy, I had a whole section on the truth. Aletheia is Aletheia.

There's a Greek word for what Jesus used. It means reality. There's a genuine sincerity.

You're not fake. There's an accuracy. There's integrity.

There's a dependability. And then there's morality. Because sometimes we often think the truth, just moral, right? Moral.

And sometimes it's the most angry people say they're contending for truth. I always say, well, wait a minute. Truth should make you sincere and gentle and patient and loving and dependable.

Not just angry. You don't have to angrily contend for the truth. I want to recommend another book, Contentiously Contending.

It's a free Kindle download. I've recommended it before. I think it's many thousands of hits now.

For it, Contentiously Contending. Anton, who speaks here sometimes. Very short book.

Contentiously Contending. It talks about how to contend for the truth with the right attitude. And he just saved me 30 minutes of explaining.

I would encourage you to look that up. But let me just close on this. Every five minutes, I'm sure you've seen the statistics.

Every five minutes, a Christian is dying for the truth. Every five minutes, a Christian around the world is dying for the truth. It's the offensive part of the truth they're dying for, right? Not the pleasantries.

It's the offensive part of the truth. That means 8 to 10 Christians were just martyred during the service. So the next time we want to avoid the truth, we have to remember that people are dying for it.

And then don't forget, somebody who did die for it 2,000 years ago on an old rugged cross. See, people are dying for the truth. That's how important this is.

So if you truly want to worship God in spirit and truth, you have to have both. You can't neglect one without the other. If you have truth but no spirit, you're a modern day Pharisee.

And I can tell you right now, you're probably pretty depressing to be around. You're upsetting your family. You're mean.

You're arrogant. That's not having the truth. But if you're all spirit, watch out, because there's no fruit.

And you're just allowing things to happen that are not of God. You're excusing sin, saying, well, letter of the spirit, brother. God's spirit.

No, you need both. We need spirit and truth. That's the compass.

Jesus said true worshipers will worship him in spirit and in truth.

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