

# Real Meaning of Worship

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of truly understanding and studying the Bible, not just reading it for information. It delves into the deeper meanings of words and concepts in the Bible, such as humility and worship, contrasting them with worldly perspectives. The sermon highlights the essence of worship through examples from Abraham, Job, and Jesus, emphasizing the need to surrender all aspects of life to God and to be genuine worshippers.*

**Duration:** 43:51

**Scripture:** Genesis 22:1, Job 1:20, John 17:10, Psalms 73:25, Matthew 4:10, 1 Corinthians 10:26, James 2:5, Philippians 4:18

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## Description

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## Transcript

The best book to read is the Bible and the best book to study is also the Bible. Reading is just for information. You don't study a newspaper, you just read it.

Many people read the Bible like that. And then they don't understand what the Bible says. See, even though I know English, there are many words in the English language I don't know.

Some difficult words. So, when I read that difficult word somewhere in an article, I take a dictionary to find out what it means. And many times, I discover in the dictionary that it means something quite different from what I thought it meant.

So, I'm sure Telugu also must be like that. There must be some difficult words that some of you don't know at all. And if you read it somewhere, you think it means something, but it doesn't mean that.

If you don't look up a dictionary, you will always live with that wrong understanding of that word. So, if you are humble enough to look up a dictionary and say, I don't know that meaning, let me find out. Then you will correct a wrong understanding of a word and your whole future, you will remember that.

It's the same thing when you read in the Bible. There are many words used in the Bible, which mean quite different from what the world understands. For example, humility.

The world understands humility in a very different way. Someone who hangs his head down and doesn't talk much, if he's a humble man. But the humblest man that walked on this earth was Jesus Christ.

He was the only one who could say, learn from me, for I am humble of heart. And the humility of Jesus was not seen in putting his head down and saying very little. He washed the disciples' feet.

That was humility. He took a whip and chased the money changers out of the temple. That's also humility.

No, the world can't understand chasing out money changers as humility. They say that's pride. That's why I say they don't understand the biblical meaning of humility.

When he says to the adulterous woman, I don't condemn you. That's humility. But when he tells the Pharisees, you generation of vipers, how will you escape the damnation of hell, that is also humility.

The humility of Jesus was not seen in all these external actions. The humility of Jesus was seen in his total obedience to what God told him in private. Without being bothered what people think about him.

There are very few Christians like that in the world. There are very few preachers like that in the world. People are not interested in what people think or say about them.

You hear God and do what God says. If God tells him to call somebody a generation of vipers, he says that without bothering what people think. If God tells him to call somebody a generation of vipers, he says that without bothering what people think.

If he turns around to Peter and says, get behind me Satan, that is also humility. If you study the Bible, you will learn humility. In the same way, worship.

Have you studied the New Testament about what it says about worship? For many years in my life, I just accepted what other people said was worship. Because I was young. And many were much older and godly men.

But I have discovered even godly men can be wrong. Only the Bible is right. So I started studying the Bible to see in the New Testament what is worship.

Just like looking up a dictionary for the meaning of an English word. And I discovered that what 90% of believers in all countries call worship is not worship at all. So I don't have time to tell you everything I learned.

But I will tell you a little bit. And if you want to, if you have an internet connection, you can search on YouTube with my name, you will find messages on worship there. But briefly it is this.

In our communication with God, there are four stages. The first is prayer. That's why we begin in our salvation.

We ask for forgiveness. And throughout our life, we need prayer. We got to ask God.

We ask God for help. We ask God for healing. We ask God for power.

Many, many earthly things, spiritual things. That is prayer. And we all must pray.

There is nothing wrong in telling our need to God. That shows that you have confidence that God can meet your need. And then without giving up that first, we go to another level.

When you go to the second level, you don't forget about the first. We need all four. The second level is thanksgiving.

Many people pray, very few people give thanks. You look at your own life. Look back over the number of things you asked God for in your past lives.

And when God answered them, you were happy. But did you go to God and say, Lord, thank you for answering my prayer. Does God want it? I'll tell you.

There were ten lepers who came to Jesus once. They all came to that first step of prayer. Lord, heal us.

They all got healed. How many came back to the second step? Do you remember? One. Ten people prayed, one person came back to give thanks.

But today, among Christians, it is even less than that. I think one in a hundred come back to give thanks to God. In thanksgiving, I'm not thinking of my need.

I'm coming, thanking God for what he's done for me. And sometimes it is good to have a little time where I'm not praying at all, but only thanking God. Then we go to a third level.

That is called praise. What is the difference between thanksgiving and praise? In thanksgiving, I'm thinking of what God has done for me. Or for my family or for my church.

I'm saying thank you. In praise, I'm not at all thinking of my need. I'm not praying.

I'm not even thinking of what God has done for me. Now, I'm thinking of who God is. And I'm praising him.

You are holy. You are mighty. You are sovereign.

You love the world. You defeated Satan on the cross. You got wonderful plans for your people.

And the angels tremble before you. Holy, holy, holy. Lord God Almighty.

That's not prayer. That's not thanksgiving. It is praise.

That's also something we need to do. Sometimes it is good to spend a little time only in praise. If we do only one of these, that will be strong.

That part of our body will be strong. If I have two legs and two hands, and I exercise only one hand, this hand will be very strong. This hand will be weak.

Legs will be weak. That's how it is with many people. Their prayer is very strong.

They are always praying, praying, give me this, give me that, do this, do this for me. The other three, they are weak in thanksgiving, very weak in praise, and worship almost zero. So fourth stage is worship.

Now how to understand what worship is? It's going beyond these other three stages. So we must go to the Bible to understand what worship is. Let me show you some verses.

The first time the word worship comes in the Bible is Genesis chapter 22. And it was spoken by the man of God, Abraham. He already had spoken to God for about 50 years.

He is not a newcomer. He had been called by God when he was 75. Now he is about 125.

And he had spoken to God many times. So when he used the word worship, he understood a little bit of what it meant. And it's important because that is the first time in the Bible the Holy Spirit uses the word worship.

So see what happens here. One day God told Abraham, Genesis 22, take your son and offer him up to me. Now God never asks anybody to murder his son.

But this looks like a ridiculous request. I mean if I heard it, I would have said Lord, is that you or the devil? But Abraham had such intimate communication with God. He knew it was God.

Most of the time God spoke to Abraham at night. Once we read, God spoke to him and said go out and see the stars. And here it says God spoke to him again.

Abraham. And he said here I am. I'm always amazed at that.

As soon as God called him he was ready to listen. See, that's the type of man to whom God speaks. And we know it was night because verse 3 says early in the morning he rose up to obey God.

And God told him to go three days away and offer up his son there. So he took a lot of wood for the offering. And many men, his servants came along with him.

But they did not know where he was going. They knew that sometimes he would take some animal and sacrifice it to God. So they thought he's again going to sacrifice some lamb or something.

And so they walked for three days. And then he told the people who came with him. Okay, now you have to stop here.

You can't come with me anymore. You stay here with the donkey. Only I and my son Isaac will go to the mountain.

And they would ask, Abraham, what are you going to do there? Verse 5. Abraham told his young men, you stay here. We will worship there and then return to you. What do you think Abraham said, thought he was going to do on top of the mountain? If you understand that, you will understand worship.

Because that is the first time worship comes in the Bible. He wasn't going up there just to clap his hands and sing and praise the Lord. That's very easy.

Why did God want Abraham to kill Isaac? You know, when you have no children after 50 years of marriage, 50 years. 100 years old now. And then you have a son who he will be more precious than even your wife.

And now, over 25 years he had watched his son Isaac. Isaac had become an idol in his life. He spent so much time with Isaac, he didn't have so much time to spend with God.

That happens to people. They get a good job. God blesses them.

And then the job becomes more important than God. They are poor, they start a business and ask God to bless them. God blesses them.

They have a lot of time to talk to God. But as the business becomes better and bigger and bigger, time with God gets cut down. And the business becomes an idol.

But they think it's only these non-Christians who worship idols. A lot of Christians who worship their business and their job as an idol. They worship their houses as an idol.

They worship their cars. Many idols that Christians have in their life. God says, that idol has taken the place of me in your life.

You have to destroy it. Cut it off. You have to destroy it.

Most people will say, no, no, no, no, I can't do that. Business is very important. This house is very important.

This son is very important. It's more difficult to kill a son than to destroy a house or a business. But if God tells you to give up something, will you give it up? If God tells you to give up something, will you give it up? When I joined the Indian Navy, I was not a Christian.

And I had an ambition to go right to the top. But when I became a Christian, the Lord asked me, will you give up that idol? Idol is to be the admiral of the Navy. Kill it.

And be my servant. If I had said no, I would not be a worshipper. I would have been singing songs and going to the meetings.

And I would have wasted my life. But Abraham took Isaac. We know the end of the story and we know that God didn't want him to be killed.

But remember, Abraham did not know the end of the story. He went up absolutely convinced that he has got to kill Isaac. But he also knew that in some way God would still raise him up or something to fulfill the promise.

But even if he knows your son is going to be raised up, it is very difficult to kill him. So he got up on the mountain and laid the altar there with the wood. And he told Isaac to get on top.

Remember, I was 25 years old. How do we know that? Because he was carrying all the wood up on the mountain. He was not a 5 year old boy.

These are the little things you can see when you read scripture carefully. And the other wonderful thing you see about Isaac, see how Abraham had brought him up. He told him to do something and he did it.

Supposing you tell your 25 year old son, lie down on this bed, I am going to kill you. How many of your sons will say, yes daddy, I will lie down here. I will say, who do you think you are to tell me to do that? Abraham had brought up his son in a good way.

Not with post graduate degrees, but to be obedient to his father. That is the best father who brings up his children to learn obedience to the parents. Because then he will grow up to obey God.

So Abraham takes the knife to worship God. What is his worship? God, I have no idol in my life. You are everything to me.

The most precious thing on earth to me is this son. I want to prove to you, I love you more than I love him. And as he lifts up his knife, God says, stop.

And he stopped. He says, I was only testing you. Now I know you worship me.

See what he said. Verse 12, don't stretch out your hand against the Lord, do nothing to him. Now I know that you fear God.

Verse 12, because you have not withheld your son from me. Now I know you fear God, now I know you worship God. I'll show you the example of another godly man who was a worshipper.

Job chapter 1. And there you know the story how Satan, God allowed Satan to test Job. Okay, kill his sons. Let's see if Job will still worship God.

God said, okay, do it. And Satan went and killed all his ten children. And what did Job do when he heard the news? He heard the news in verse 18, 19 that your sons and daughters were eating and drinking and a great wind came and all of them died.

Job chapter 1, verse 20. He didn't start crying. He did not cry, he just bowed down and worshipped God.

And what did he say? This is worship. When I came to this earth as a baby, I had nothing. Verse 21.

I didn't even have clothes. I came naked. One day when I die, I can't take even one rupee with me.

Not even my clothes. I'll go into the eternity without even my body. But I came to the earth, everything I got in my earthly lifetime the Lord gave.

My money, my business, my children. If he gave it, he has the right to take it away. If a landlord rents you a house, doesn't he have the right to give you notice to vacate it after a few months? If you stay there, you're a thief.

Because it's not your house. He gave you a house to live in. He can take it back.

Especially if he gave it to you free of rent. So remember this. Everything God gives us on this earth is a loan.

He gives it to you for your lifetime honor. If it is yours, you could take it to heaven. Your money which you earned is a loan from God.

It's not yours. All that you earned, all that your business profited, some of you have become very rich in money by your job and education. And it's possible many of you think that is mine.

You're a thief. It's not yours. 1 Corinthians 10, 26 says everything on the earth belongs to God.

Everything. Your money, your bank account. If you believe it belongs to God, then you're a worshipper.

You can say like Job, I came to this earth naked. I was not an engineer or a doctor or any such thing when I came to this earth. I could have been born with a brain defect like other children.

Then I would not even have finished first standard. God gave me intelligence. God gave me health.

And I could earn a lot of money. It's not mine. It's God's.

He allows me to use it. He's given me a house free of rent to live in. He's even given me a loan of his car.

It's not mine. This is a worshipper. And God, you can take it away anytime you like.

I find sometimes poor people have a better understanding of that. Percentage wise, poor people give more of their income to God than rich people. Jesus saw the poor widow with two mites.

Two mites. That was worship because that's all she had. There were many rich Pharisees who were dropping a lot of money in the offering box.

Jesus called his disciples and said, you see that widow? She gave more than what is already in that box from all the rich people here. Preachers and elders count the money. And they favor the rich people because the rich people give money.

Jesus never cared for them. I never cared for them. Because I find some rich people are the biggest misers on the earth.

Especially Christians. They don't know how to give to God. That's why their spiritual life is so poor.

Are you a worshiper? Early in my Christian life, I read Matthew 4.10. Do you know that verse? You must first worship, then only you can serve God. You cannot serve God before you worship him. And I wanted to worship God.

Because I wanted to serve him. And God gave me an anointing to serve him when I was about 23 years old. I had been baptized just two and a half years earlier.

But I decided to be a worshiper. I was a naval officer. I was earning a huge salary.

I didn't need all that. I was not married. I had no children.

Every month, I would give 50% of my income to God's work because I had so much. I was still okay because I had 50% still left. I could use it to help poor people to give Bibles to those who could not afford to buy Bibles.

I said, Lord, money will never be my idol in my life. And then God called me to serve him. I said, Lord, I still want to be a worshiper.

Even if I have financial need, I will never go to a place to preach for money. I would say, I will not go and use my gift in some rich church to get money from those rich people. That's why most of my life I have gone into the villages and that's where all our churches are.

Many people don't worship God. They worship God plus their education plus God plus their job, God plus their business, God plus their bank account. And there are foolish elders and preachers who make much of these rich people.

And those rich people think they are very spiritual. I never do that. I want to be on God's side.

God says in James Chapter 2 and Verse 5, God has chosen the poor people in the world to be rich in faith. If God has chosen them, I want to be with them too. Those who are poor in this world, but not just poor, it says also in that verse, they must love him.

So, even if you are a rich person, if you love Jesus more than everything else, then you qualify according to this verse. That means you are poor in yourself. Because I say, Lord, my money is not my own.

I have it. It's in my name in the bank account. But it's yours.

You want me to give some of it to somebody, I'll give it. You want me to serve the Lord at my own expense, I'll do it. So many people are always waiting for somebody else to give them money.

I'm not saying that you should not receive it if somebody gives it to you. Jesus also received, we read, when people gave him money. But he never asked anybody.

He never wanted anything. He used everything he had for the glory of his father. So here is how Jesus expressed his worship to his father.

John 17, and verse 10. If you can say this to God, this morning you are a worshipper. Then whatever you say to God will come as an offering of worship.

John 17, 10. He said, Father, all the things that are mine are thine. Very simple to say it, but it's very difficult to mean it.

Look what Jesus said. Everything that I have is yours. My money, my time, my energy, my health, my clothes, my plans, my plans, I am nothing, it's all yours.

You can take it away, you can change my plans, nothing is mine. This is worship. Therefore, God blessed him so much.

How did he bless him? Father, all that is yours is mine. How many of you want everything of God's? I want everything of God. I'll tell you how to get it.

Here is the secret. You give everything of yours to God and he'll give everything of yours. But some people are so calculating.

People ask me to give ten percent, it's so tough. When I was getting only thousand rupees, I could easily give ten percent. Now I'm getting hundred thousand rupees, how to give ten percent? So, I calculate, I deduct the income tax and deduct house rent and deduct all these things, try and make it as little as possible to give to God.

You think such people are worshippers? They are misers. It shows you don't love God. Supposing you are going for a wedding and what type of gift will you take for that wedding? I'll tell you.

Depends on your relationship with that person. If he's a stranger whom you met two years ago, you never met, he may take a small hundred rupee gift. But supposing it is your son's wedding, will you calculate what should I give? Because you love him so much.

When you calculate and you are giving to God, you know that you don't love God at all. He's some stranger, God is some stranger you met two years ago. You have to take some offering.

Just like you have to take a gift for a wedding. So just to look nice, you give. Most Christians are not worshippers.

That's why there is no anointing upon their life. Most preachers are not worshippers. That is why there is no anointing on their ministry.

Even an ordinary poor brother or sister who is uneducated here like Peter, can have an anointing. If you say, Lord all that is mine is yours. Don't say it without meaning it.

If you don't mean it, say Lord I am not ready but I want to come there. So when we spend a little time now thinking of how wonderful God is. Think of this word in Psalm 73.

Verse 25. This is worship. Whom have I in heaven but thee? There is nothing on earth I desire beside thee.

A person who can say that from his heart and continue saying that till the end of his life. He is a worshipper. I started saying that about 50 years ago.

I wrote it on the front page of my Bible 55 years ago. Whom have I in heaven but thee? There is nothing on earth I desire beside thee. I say that even today.

I said Lord you are more precious to me than my wife. My house. Property.

I don't have a car but anything I have Lord you are more precious to me than that. Everything I have is yours. I desire nothing on this earth.

I don't even desire honor from people for my preaching. Because it's not mine it's what God has given they must give the glory to God. My life has been a very happy life.

Because I decided I will worship God and I will serve him. Nobody will change me from that goal in my life. I want to say to all of you young people especially I started when I was 21.

Start when you are young. To worship God. Don't be like the other young people around you.

Not even like the other young people in your church. Be a whole hearted radical. You see how these Naxalites and Maoists are all radical for their foolish cause.

They are willing to lose their life. That's for a wrong cause. Why can't we be like that for the greatest thing in the world to live for Jesus Christ.

See then once you are like that even if your words when you speak are broken words for God it is worship. May God help us.

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