

True Worship

by Zac Poonen

True worship is worshiping God in spirit and truth, with a heart that is fully surrendered to Him.

Duration: 36:25

Scripture: Job 1:20

Topics: "True Worship", "Surrendering To God"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of true worship, highlighting the significance of worshiping God in spirit and in truth. It explores the concept of worship from the beginning of time with examples from Abraham, Job, and the elders in heaven, stressing the need to surrender all to God and acknowledge Him as the center of our lives. The sermon challenges listeners to be genuine worshipers who cast down their crowns before God and give Him all the glory.

Transcript

Praise the Lord. This weekend I've felt I should speak on the subject of true worship. And in the three weekends that I'm gonna speak on subsequently, also I wanna make certain things clear because it's the truth that sets us free.

That was a great help to me in my younger days when I found so many Christian churches using the same Bible and preaching different truths, all claiming to have the truth. And the thing that helped me was what Jesus said in John 8, 32, you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. And what the Lord spoke to me from that verse is that if you understand the truth correctly on any subject, it'll make you a little more free.

Anything that brings you into bondage cannot be the truth. The truth always makes us free from sin, free from fear, free from anxiety, free from becoming servants of men, free from every human tradition, free to live and to serve God. So the truth about worship is very important to understand because that's what we're gonna do in all eternity, worship God.

We're not gonna preach there, we're not gonna pray, but we're gonna worship God. And so Jesus spoke about true worshipers. He also spoke about empty worship.

I wanna show you those two verses first. First of all, in Mark chapter seven. Mark gospel chapter seven, he says in verse six and seven, Jesus said, these people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far

from me.

Honoring God with their lips, they sang and praised the Lord a lot in the Old Testament times, the book of Psalms indicates that, but their heart was not in it. It was with words and that's very, very true of a lot of Sunday morning, what is called praise and worship. These people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me.

And in the next verse, it says verse seven, in vain do they worship me. That means their worship is empty. The music is nice, the instruments play well, the voices are great, but their worship is empty in spite of all that they're singing.

So that's what we don't want. Is it possible that the Lord will lay such a charge against us? I don't want to hear that. And in contrast to that, Jesus spoke in John chapter four and verse 23 to the Samaritan woman.

He spoke about a day that an hour that was coming, John four 23, an hour is coming and now is when the true worshipers will worship the father in spirit and in truth. For the father seeks such to be his worshipers. It hasn't yet come, notice what he said, it is coming means up until that time, right from the time of Adam, nobody could worship the father in spirit.

Man is body, soul, and spirit. Then how were people worshiping in the Old Testament? In body, clapping, raising their hands, raising their voice, that's body. In soul, that is with mind, emotions, feelings, great.

But there's another part of man, the spirit. And they couldn't worship in spirit. Jesus said, but the hour is now coming when the true worshipers, this is worship in truth in the new covenant, will worship in spirit.

And I've discovered that most people don't know anything about it. That hour came on the day of Pentecost. But he also said it now is, now is meant the beginning of it is already here because Jesus was here, so Jesus was there.

He was worshiping the father in spirit, in truth, the first human being ever to do it. And he paved the way, opened the way for others from the day of Pentecost onwards where the spirit of God would come in and make us really worship the father in spirit and in truth. There's an Old Testament picture of this in the tabernacle.

The tabernacle had three parts. Tabernacle means dwelling place. Man is the dwelling place of God.

So that tabernacle was a picture of man. And the tabernacle had three parts just like we are body, soul, and spirit. It had an outer court that was visible to everybody like the body.

And it had two hidden parts called the, under the tent, called the holy place, most holy place, similar to our soul and spirit that are hidden. And between the holy place and the most holy place in that Old Testament tabernacle was a thick veil indicating that nobody could get into God's presence. And God didn't dwell in the outer court.

He didn't dwell in the holy place. He dwelt in the most holy place. Nobody could go there.

When Jesus died, that veil was rent. And the way into the most holy was open. The way into our spirit was open so that the Holy Spirit could come and dwell within.

This is the significance of the rending of the veil so that now we can worship God in the spirit. Now this is not just a beautiful picture. It's something that can change our whole life.

If you can believe that God desires the best for you, there's a lovely verse in Jeremiah 29 11 which says, I know the plans I have for you, God says. Plans for your good and your welfare. It's very important that all of us recognize that every single thing God has commanded in his word is for our good.

The plans he has for us are for our very best. We can never make a better plan for our lives than the one God himself has made. And when he teaches us to worship, it's for our good.

Let me show you another verse that Jesus spoke this time to the devil in Matthew chapter four. In Matthew chapter four, we read of Satan coming to Jesus in Matthew 4 9 and telling him in the temptation in the wilderness. He showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

All the things the world had to offer. Today the devil offers many things to believers. Think of that.

He showed them to Jesus whatever was available in his time. Today he shows us all the entertainment world and money and everything else, the glory of the world. In those days, whatever was available, the devil showed all that to Jesus and said, I'll give you all of this if you will fall down and worship me.

Matthew four verse nine. All you got to do is worship me. And there we see what the devil longed for from the time he was created.

When he was created, he wasn't created as the devil. He was created, we read in Ezekiel 28 as the highest cherub, the anointed cherub, the head of the angels, leading the angels, the millions of cherubs and seraphs and angels in the worship of almighty God. He was the leader.

He was beautiful, wise, leading everyone in worship of God. And into his heart came a desire. I want people to worship me.

I don't want everyone to worship God. And you read that in Isaiah chapter 14. That's the meaning of his saying in Isaiah 14.

I will be like the most high. I want to be like God where people admire me and worship me. And as soon as that thought came into his heart, for the first time in this universe, sin was born.

And immediately he was cast out of God's presence. And the most beautiful of God's creation in a moment became the ugliest of God's creation. In a moment, that highest angel became the devil.

What was his crime? It wasn't murder. It wasn't adultery. It wasn't telling lies.

It wasn't the things that we normally consider grievous, serious sins. It wasn't even hypocrisy. It was the desire to be worshiped by others.

The desire to be the center of attraction. The desire to draw people to oneself instead of to God and to Christ. Christendom is full of it.

There are preachers, pastors, who've got that spirit of the devil where they draw people to themselves. They attract people to themselves instead of being pointers to Christ. Who take the glory to themselves that belongs only to God.

That was the origin of sin. And it's in all of us. It came to us through our parents.

It came to us from Adam. And Jesus came to save us from that. To make us worshipers of God.

Do you see how important worship is? This was the issue in which sin originated. And so when Jesus came, the devil was making one last attempt to get Jesus to worship him. And do you think that the devil tried to get Jesus to worship him, he won't try that with you and me? You gotta be really conceited to think that he won't try that with you.

But he doesn't come with horns and hooves. He comes as an angel of light. And so when he tries to get you to worship him, it's not gonna be directly.

It's gonna be indirectly. If he can get your worship, that's fine. If he can indirectly get you to bow your knee to him, that's fine.

The Bible says that Satan is the god of this world. I don't know whether you know this. Satan controls the business world.

Satan controls the entertainment world. Satan controls the programs on television. The movies that are made in different places.

Ultimately, the god of this world and a lot of the books that are written, children's books that are written, like Harry Potter and things like that. And many other things which you innocently allow your children to read. There's a god of this world who's trying to control the minds of people and he starts with children to get them ultimately to bow down to him.

I'll give you whatever you want. Do you want entertainment? I'll give it to you. I want you to bow down to me.

That's what I've always wanted, the devil says. I want people to worship me. I don't want them to worship God.

This is the great issue that's been right there from the beginning of time. And if you understand this, you'll be very, very careful never to give that worship that belongs to God to the devil. It's a very important issue.

It's not just a question of coming and singing praise to God here for one and a half hours or one hour and saying, well, I worship God. We haven't. Worship is an issue of the heart.

It's worshiping in the spirit, not just with words and with our mind and emotions, in the spirit where I give God his rightful place. And if that place, how does the devil make us worship him? By taking away God from the center of our lives and making something else, could be television, could be innocent things like sport and music. All these are good things.

Sport and music are very good, but it can become a God in your life where it becomes so important that it crowds out God. Can you think of the early days when you were born again? Think back to the time when you were first converted, when you gave your life to Christ. Just stop for a moment and think how it was then, how you were ready to give up anything for him, how you were willing to give up certain things that you took time.

You cut out certain things in your daily routine so that you'd have time to read the word of God. What's happened to that? Has time, which you've spent studying the word been, now you say you're busy. Who made you so busy? The devil has succeeded in crowding God slowly out of your life because something else has become your God.

It could be sport. It could be watching sport endlessly on television. It could be music, but, and the devil says, there's nothing wrong with that.

It's Christian music or choir practice, wonderful, but you don't have time to walk with God now anymore. You don't have time to read God's word, to get to know him, but you did have once. You think you have progressed because you know more of the scriptures, because you're more active in so-called church work, but you don't realize you've become less of a worshiper, and that's why your life is up and down and up and down and up and down when it should have been a slow, steady progress to greater Christ-likeness.

We need to understand the reason. We have stopped worshiping God. So I want to show you something of what the scripture says about worship.

The first time that worship is mentioned in scripture, Genesis chapter 22. The first time the word worship occurs in the Bible is in Genesis 22, and it's always interesting to study the first time any word occurs in scripture, and here is the story of Abraham. He's about 125 years old now.

We don't know his exact age, but around that age, and it says here in Genesis 22, one, that God tested Abraham. 50 years earlier, he had tested him by asking him to leave his family, leave his country, and to go out where God called him, and he had obeyed. The test was, will you put me first in your life? To worship God is to make him central in everything in our life.

You remember what Jesus said was the first commandment, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, all thy soul, and all thy mind, and if you think of that as a circle, there's no part of that circle that's got to be given to anybody else. It's got to be God all the way, and then if I love my wife, it's got to be through God. If I do my work, it's got to be with God being in the center of my life.

He must be everything to me, and then I do everything on earth. That's the true worshiper. Then everything, God is central.

He's number one. To put God number one does not mean just reading the Bible for half an hour in the morning. No, it means that throughout the day, my whole life is governed by the fact that I am a child of God, and I live by divine principles.

I'm never going to say anything that I will not say if Jesus were standing right next to me. I'm never going to talk to my wife in any way that I wouldn't talk to her if Jesus was standing right there, or to your husband, or to anyone. I wouldn't do anything in the office that I wouldn't do if Jesus were sitting right next to me.

I wouldn't watch a television program that I couldn't watch if Jesus was sitting right next to me. This is what it means to have God in the center of our life. It's not just a question of reading the scripture for a few minutes and easing my conscience, saying I read my Bible today.

That's not the meaning of putting God first. It means God is central in everything I do from morning till night. The Bible says whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all for the glory of God.

So God tested Abraham, and 50 years later he's testing him again. Because you and I know how easy it is, as I said earlier, to drift from that first love and devotion to Christ, and where other things take the place that God should have in our life. And that's why God constantly tests us.

And he tested Abraham when he was 50 years old with the same test. Am I still first in your life? Once upon a time, I tested you in relation to your parents. Am I going to be first in your life, Abraham, or your relatives in Ur of the Chaldees? Are you willing to leave them and follow me? He said, yes, Lord, and he followed.

Later on, we read in Genesis 13, there was a conflict between Abraham and Lot, their servants over property, and God tested Abraham again. Let me see what you're going to do now when there's a conflict over property. Am I going to be first in your life? And let him, that you refuse to fight with him, and he passed the test.

He told Lot, you take what you like, I'll take what you don't want. God tested Abraham and he passed the test. Now 50 years later, he's testing him again the same way.

This time, it's his son, the son whom he loves. He says, take your son, Genesis 22, two, take him out to Mount Moriah and kill him. And God gives him three days to walk up to Mount Moriah so that he can think about it.

God doesn't want you to decide in a hurry. He didn't tell him to take him there around the corner and kill him in the next five minutes. Because some things we do in the moment of emotional excitement and afterwards we regret it.

And God gave Abraham three days to think about it. That's why he told him to go three days journey away to Mount Moriah. And as he was walking down, the thought was in his mind was this, is it worth serving a God like this? Who asks me for the only thing I really have really that I love, the one I love even more than I love my wife, Isaac.

And at the end of those three days, Abraham says, it's worth it. God's gonna be first in my life as he was 50 years ago. He's gonna be first in my life today, even if I have to lose my only son.

And they come to Mount Moriah and at the third day it says in verse four that Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place. And he calls the young man who had come with him, Genesis 22 verse five and says to them, stay here with the donkey, Genesis 22 verse five. I and the lad will go up there.

What are we gonna do? We will worship. That's the first time the word worship comes in the Bible. We will worship.

That means when I offer to God that which is most precious in my life and I don't know what that is in your life right now, it could be a number of things. That day for Abraham it was Isaac. He said, God, this is my worship.

It's not just singing a few songs to you and then going away and living my own life. No. It's the surrender of that which is most precious to me where you are number one in my life and I'm willing to give it up.

I want to ask you, is there something in your life which is so precious to you that you find it difficult to give up? Because you always say, well, it's not a sinful thing. Isaac wasn't sinful, was he? He was a healthy boy and in fact it was God's gift and he was asked to give up even that. God may ask us sometimes to give up that which he's given to us.

Isaac was God's gift but even that which God's given to us can become more precious than God himself and that becomes an idol. We say there's nothing sinful here. I know there's nothing sinful there.

There's nothing sinful in watching clean sport on television but it can be a God to you and you can't give it up. It could be music. It could be money.

It could be something in your business where it's become so important to you. It's crowded out God. I don't know what it is.

It could be a girlfriend or a boyfriend. It's crowded out the vision of God from your life and when you look back to the days when you were first converted, it wasn't like that. Jesus was everything to you.

You've stopped being a worshiper. That's the first thing I want you to see. The second place where we see worship which is also in the beginning of time, beginning of human history as it were, is in the book of Job.

Now Job is the first book that God wrote because it's a poetic book. It comes in the middle because the Bible's been arranged like that but Job is the first book that God wrote because Genesis was written by Moses 1,500 years before Christ whereas Job lived before Abraham and all those details that are written in the book of Job, the detailed discourse and conversation that he had with his friends could never have been written by anybody other than Job himself and it's the only book in the Bible by the way which has no connection with Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. So there's every indication that this is the first book that God wrote and in the very first book, in the very first chapter you read about a man, a man of God who learned to worship.

Now isn't that significant that the very first book that God wrote he's teaching us about a man who worshiped him and the first book that's in our Bible in Genesis also you read about a man that worshiped him. You see how important it is because way back in the beginning of time as I told you the great conflict between Lucifer, whatever his name was, we don't know his real name and God was the issue of worship. We have to settle this issue.

Is God going to be number one all the time in my life, central to me, more important than even my ministry, more important than anything at all, more important than my family and everything else? That's the question. And here we read that God allowed Satan to test Job. Again, the test is will he worship God when he loses everything? This time he loses, Abraham didn't lose his son, but Job lost all his 10 children, all his business in just a few moments.

One servant after the other comes to him with the news, your children have all died, your businesses have collapsed, your property's burnt up. I've never heard of anyone who suffered like this. But imagine if you got news like this one day, that all that you valued, your family, your property, your business, your bank account, everything is gone.

What did Job do? It says in Job chapter one verse 20. Job chapter one and verse 20. Job arose when he heard the news, tore his robe and shaved his head.

He had sorrow, we naturally have sorrow when we hear such news, but he didn't lose his senses. He bowed down and he worshiped. He bowed with his head to the ground and worshiped.

He acknowledged God. See, that's the meaning of, it's very, in Eastern culture, it is very clear when you bow down your head and touch the ground, you're worshipping someone. It's a symbolic act of submission to the one whom you worship.

And that is why I have so much against what we see on television in these meetings nowadays and a lot of preachers who lay hands on people and they fall flat on the ground. They're showing their feet to God. It's the opposite of worship.

I mean, coming from an Eastern culture, it's crystal clear to me, it may not be to you, but in Eastern culture, if you show your feet to anybody, that's the biggest insult you can give him. Respect is by bowing down and it's amazing what the devil does, get all these Christians, fall and show their feet to God and the devil has a big laugh. It can't touch me, even if I go to such a meeting because I have a promise in the Old Testament that says 1,000 will fall on one side and 10,000 on the other, but it won't come near me.

That's in Psalm 91. And I have a promise in the New Testament that says Jesus can keep me from falling. We worship God, we bow down and say, God, whatever you allow in my life, I accept it.

Let God take away my family, let him take away my children, let him take away my job, let him take away everything. There are certain things that are still true. When I've lost everything in the world, there's still certain things that are true which Job did not know.

He didn't have a Bible, he didn't have the Holy Spirit, he didn't know that Jesus would die for his sins, he didn't know anything that we know. He had no fellowship, no meetings, no church, nothing, but he could worship God. How much more we, we who understand so much because we know that when we have lost everything, like the old saying goes, when you've got nothing left but God, you'll find that God is more than enough.

It's absolutely true. When you've got nothing left but God, you'll find that he's more than enough because there are certain things when I've lost everything that are still true. God is still on the throne, that hasn't changed.

That's never gonna change. He's still my father, that's not gonna change. And if earthly fathers know how to give good things to their children, my heavenly father will give me all that I need.

Definitely, not all that I want. Thank God he doesn't give us all that we want. It would destroy us.

He gives us all that we need. My God shall supply all your need. That promise doesn't change.

My sins are all forgiven, that hasn't changed. Christ's death on the cross has taken care of all the guilt of my past, that hasn't changed. The devil was defeated 2,000 years ago, that hasn't changed.

Christ is coming back in glory. I'm gonna spend eternity with him. The most important things in life haven't changed.

Maybe I've lost a few things on earth, so what? Even there, God is in control. And today we have greater reason to worship, even if we have lost everything, because we have this wonderful promise which Job didn't have. Romans 8, 28, which says, God will make all of these things work together for your good.

I praise the Lord for that. So because we have this assurance, we can much more than Job fall down and worship God and continue to worship God. Now I'll tell you, we can go higher than Job.

You remember what Jesus said about John the Baptist, that he was the greatest man under the old covenant, born of women, Matthew 11, 11. But he said the least one in the kingdom of heaven can rise higher than him. I can rise higher than Job in this way.

Job could not continue to worship God. By the time you come to chapter three, his endurance is worn out. And he starts complaining and criticizing and saying, God, why have you treated me like this? And I've been so faithful to you and I've done this for you and that for you, and you're still targeting me or firing your arrows at me.

He couldn't continue. But don't blame him. He didn't have fellowship.

He didn't have the Holy Spirit. He didn't have a Bible. He knew nothing about Jesus Christ, so you cannot compare yourself with him.

Today, we can rise higher than Job in this sense, that we can continue in worshiping God without going up and down like Job. If you read the book of Job, his life was an up and down experience. He'd worship God one moment and say, I can accept good and bad from God.

And the next day he'd be complaining to God. And a few days later, he'd say, yeah, even if God kills me, I'll trust him. And then he'd go down in the dumps again.

And then he'd come up and say, I know my Redeemer lives. And then he'd go down in the dumps again. This is the experience of many Christians.

This is a mark that a person is not living filled with the Holy Spirit, even if he speaks in tongues or whatever he does. If he's really filled with the Holy Spirit, he will not be going up and down and up and down. Paul said, thanks be to God who always leads us in his triumph in Christ.

I want to tell you, my dear brothers and sisters, it is not God's will for you to have an up and down experience. That is old covenant. It may be your experience, but it's an old covenant experience.

The devil's cheated you and robbed you of your birthright in Christ. Your birthright in Christ is described in the New Testament in words like this. Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph.

We can always rejoice. We can be free from anxiety. But that'll be true only if we learn the secret of worshiping God, bowing down and saying, God, you will care for me.

Even if everything, even if I lose everything, if I seek God's kingdom first and his righteousness, all that I need will be added to me. I proved that for 50 years in the poorest villages in India, poor people who are poorer than anybody sitting here in debt. And as I've taught them to seek God's kingdom first and his righteousness, I've seen how God's provided all their needs and they become free from debt.

God can do that. He's done that. If he's done that in a poor country without social security, without food stamps, nothing, why can't he do it here? We must trust God.

We must learn to be worshipers. Most important. And let me say finally, one more thing.

We saw how it was at the beginning with Abraham and Job. We're gonna go to the end of the Bible in Revelation and chapter four, we read about how these elders in heaven fall down and worship God. Revelation four and verse 10.

It says the 24 elders, Revelation 4.10, fall down and worship him who lives forever and ever. And they cast their crowns before the throne saying, thou alone art worthy. This is worship where they refuse to take credit for anything.

That's the meaning of casting their crowns before God saying thou alone art worthy. I mean they're given a crown. We'll be given crowns for being faithful on earth.

Jesus said that. I will come quickly and my reward is with me. But we're gonna cast it down before Jesus and say no Lord, I don't deserve that.

It's all you. That's worship. Where I recognize that I have nothing that God didn't give me.

I have no ability that God didn't give me if I exercise an ability and people are blessed by it, I cast it down before God and say God, that's you. It's not me. You see in 1 Corinthians in chapter four, 1 Corinthians four and verse seven, a wonderful verse.

What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, how can you boast as if you didn't receive it? Even a simple thing like looking at your pretty face in the mirror and admiring it and comparing yourself with someone else. Say thank God I'm better looking than him or her. Or secretly congratulating yourself that you're intelligent and not dumb like the other fellow sitting there.

You're not a worshiper anymore. You haven't cast your crown before Jesus, no. Your crown of intelligence is sitting on your head.

You haven't learned to cast it down before. That's why your life is up and down. You may be very clever, your business may be doing well, but your spiritual life is in the dumps most of the time.

Why is that? Because you're not a worshiper. God wants you to give him the glory for everything you have. Have you prospered in your business? Give the glory to God.

You could have been born mentally challenged, physically challenged, and you'd have been like a vegetable all your life. Recognize that everything you have is from God. You know, when the first baby was born in this, in the world, we read in Genesis 4, 1 that Eve named him Cain.

Now I was reading it in the Living Bible, and it says there, Eve named him Cain, saying, meaning, I have created. I have, and said, I have created a man-child with the help of God. She was pretty proud, because till then, only God had created a man, Adam.

But now, lo and behold, she found a baby coming out of her body. Said, I have created. And she passed on that spirit to Cain, and he grew up to be a murderer.

And a lot of parents pass on that spirit of arrogance to their children, what we can accomplish. And she learned a lesson when he murdered her second son. Then she had another son, verse 25.

And I read that in the Living Bible. It says, he named him, she named him Seth, meaning granted. Oh, she was humble now.

God has granted me. We can look at our things as our accomplishments, or as God's gifts. Things that God has granted us, or things that we have accomplished.

It all depends on whether we are worshipers or not. May God help us to learn this lesson, to worship him in spirit and in truth. Let's pray.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. If the Lord has spoken to you in any particular area, that's the area where you need to yield yourself to God, and to say to him, Lord, there was a time in my life when I first knew you, when you were everything to me, but I've drifted from there. Many things have taken the place that you should have in my life.

But I want you to come back to that place, Lord. I want you to be central in my life. I wanna love you with all my heart, soul, strength, and mind.

And anything you want, I'm ready to yield upon the altar. I give my body to you as a living sacrifice. Every part of me, I wanna be a worshiper.

In Jesus' name, amen. Thank you. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/2Bi7g1Bbkfw.mp4>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/true-worship/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net