

INTRODUCTION

In John 4 Jesus addressed two powerful subjects, living water and loving worship. In this message we are going to concentrate on what Jesus teaches us about worship. The sad truth is that thousands attend worship on Sunday, but many never enter into the experience of truly worshipping God.

It's like the experience that happened to newlyweds Doug and Sylvia Whit. Doug had reserved a very expensive room at a nice hotel for their honeymoon. When they opened the door, they were disappointed. The room was beautiful, but it was smaller than they had expected. They didn't even see a bed in it, there was a sleeper sofa. And only a tiny bathroom off to the side. So they spent the night there, but didn't sleep well on the thin, lumpy sleeper sofa.

The next morning, Doug went to the front desk and said, "I don't mean to complain, but for the price of that room I expected more than a sleeper sofa. The desk clerk said, "Sir, didn't you open the door to the next room?" Doug said, "I saw the door, but I thought it was a closet." They went back to the room and opened the door and there was a massive suite with a beautiful bed with flowers, chocolates and rose petals. There was a luxurious bathroom with a soaking tub. When Doug tells that story, he laughs and says, "I just failed to open the door."

Sadly that describes a lot of Christians. When they are saved, all they know to do is to thank God that they aren't going to hell anymore. I thank God I'm heaven bound. But sometimes they fail to discover that there's another door to be opened—and that is the door to real worship. Once you discover the joy of real worship, your Christian experience will be transformed from the monotonous to the miraculous. Real worship is the greatest privilege and highest duty we have as children of God. It's the bottom line of the bottom line of the Christian life. We're going to see that God saved you to worship Him. Have you opened that door?

Let's read what Jesus has to say about worship in John 4. In case you missed the previous two messages, let me give you the background. Jesus and His disciples had been in Jerusalem, and they were traveling north back to Galilee. But instead of taking the normal route along the Jordan River, the Bible says Jesus HAD to go through Samaria. Jews weren't welcomed there, but Jesus had to travel that way because He knew there was a sinful woman who was lonely and empty: She needed living water. And as we shall see, the entire village eventually will drink the living water. Jesus surprised the woman by knowing everything about her. He said, "You've had five husbands and the man you're now living with is not your husband." That's when she realized the man talking to her was no ordinary man.

So let's resume their conversation. John 4:19-26 CSB. "Sir," the woman replied, "I see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus told her, "Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such

people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth.”

The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Jesus told her, “I, the one speaking to you, am he.”

One reason there is empty worship today is because we have a faulty view of who God is. Aiden Wilson Tozer was a Christian Missionary Alliance pastor and writer. Although he never received any formal theological training, he wrote over forty books. His writings are some of the most powerful of any American theologian. He wrote an amazing book called *Worship: The Missing Jewel* in which he observed: “Worship is the missing jewel in the Evangelical church ... Worship rises or falls with our concept of God; that is why I don’t believe in the half-converted cowboys who call God ‘The Man Upstairs.’ I don’t think they worship at all because their concept of God is unworthy of God and of themselves. And if there is one terrible disease in the church of Christ, it is that we do not see God as great as He is. We’re too familiar with God.” (*Worship: The Missing Jewel*, p. 4-5)

It is my prayer that by the conclusion of this message you’ll have a better understanding of worship and you’ll have a deeper desire to worship your Creator. So, let’s dig into the subject of worship.

I. Jesus’ primary teaching about worship is found in John 4.

“Jesus told her, ‘Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.’” (John 4:21 CSB)

The Bible is a worship book. The word appears over 250 times. Wouldn’t you think that Jesus would have a lot to say about worship? But in Matthew, Mark, and Luke Jesus only used the word worship twice and both times He quoted the Old Testament. When Satan was tempting Him, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6 and said, “Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.” Then Jesus criticized the Pharisees by quoting the words of Isaiah 29 which said, “These people worship me in vain, teaching for doctrines human commands.” That’s all.

But in four short verses in John 4 Jesus used the words “worship” or “worshipper” eight times. So this is Jesus’ primary teaching about worship. For the next twenty minutes, I want you to forget everything you think you know about worship, and let’s learn what Jesus had to say about this important subject.

The Samaritan woman pointed to Mt. Gerizim. Centuries earlier, the Samaritans built a temple there, just as the Jews had built a temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. As the woman pointed to the mountain, she could still see the ruins of this Samaritan temple that had been destroyed about two hundred years earlier. The Temple in Jerusalem was still standing and the priests participated in the temple worship every day. But Jesus said worship isn’t localized. It’s not about a place, it’s about an attitude of heart. It’s not about location, it’s about the Lord.

You can worship the Lord anywhere. Adam worshipped God in a garden. Abraham worshipped the Lord under a tree. Moses worshipped the Lord at a bush. Noah worshipped God in an Ark. Jonah worshipped God from the belly of a fish, and Paul worshipped God in a prison cell in Macedonia.

Sometimes we fall into the same trap of thinking that worship is about a place, practice, or posture. It is not. It's about the Lord. We call this the Worship Center, but there's nothing more holy or sacred about this place than your prayer closet where you worship the Lord all alone. Or there's nothing more sacred about this place you're your kitchen table where you have family devotions. My automobile is a worship center, because every Sunday morning on my way here I am singing praises to God. Today I sang, "I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart." I've even made up other verses. I sing, "I've got the Baptist belief that baffles the Buddhist down in my heart."

Here's the next thing we learn about worship.

II. God is looking for people to worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.

Jesus said, "But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24 CSB)

For many years I thought worship was about ME seeking an audience with God. But according to what Jesus said, God is always seeking those who will worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. In the Christian Standard Version it says, "The Father WANTS such people to worship Him." The Greek verb is *zeteo*, which is much stronger than just simply wanting something. It means to search, or to strongly desire something. When you sit down at a restaurant you may say to the server, "I want a glass of water." You may not be really thirsty, but it would be nice. But if you had gone two days without water, you would say, "I WANT (*zeteo*) water, or I'll die!" It means to "strongly desire, to search for." The Father is strongly desiring—He is SEARCHING for people to worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.

The Bible says in 2 Chronicles 16:9 that "The eyes of the Lord roam throughout the whole earth...to search for those whose hearts are devoted to Him."

There is really only one thing God really needs from us. It is our loving worship. God doesn't need your riches; you couldn't make Him any richer. God doesn't need your power; He has all power. God doesn't need your strength because He is plenty strong. But the Lord is searching and seeking for someone who will worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. God desires our loving worship and God deserves our loving worship. What is the first and greatest commandment? To "LOVE the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

So, the main question we must answer is, "How can I worship God in spirit and in truth?" Let's explore what it is to worship God in spirit and to worship God in truth.

A. Worship in Spirit: Worship is a passionate expression of our love for God.

When you worship God in spirit, you put your whole being into it. You worship with all your heart, soul, and body. But the problem is that there are many people who may attend a worship service, but they never truly worship.

Have you ever had someone tell you that they can't be someplace, but they say, "But I'll be there in spirit?" Well, sometimes on Sundays, we have just the opposite. We have people who are here in body, but they aren't here in spirit. That means that you can be present in a worship service, but if your mind is on the Cowboys and Colts game coming on at noon, you aren't here in spirit.

Worship is much more than a pep rally, but I believe cheerleaders and cheering squads have captured the idea that Jesus was talking about when He said we must worship God in spirit. Schools often give a spirit award to the most enthusiastic cheerleader.

When I think about that I recall when we were living in Louisville, Kentucky during seminary, there was a Catholic School named Holy Spirit School. It wasn't located far from where we lived. They had a really good high school football team. Each year before homecoming they would have a homecoming parade. I watched it one year as the cheerleaders were marching down the street yelling, "Holy Spirit is number one! Holy Spirit is number one! Go, Holy Spirit!" And I yelled back, "Yay for the Father, Son, AND Holy Spirit!"

True worship always involves expressing your joy. Sometimes you get so emotional in your worship that the only way to express it is to clap your hands and shout to the Lord. The Psalmist wrote: "Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with a jubilant cry. For the Lord, the Most High, is awe-inspiring, a great King over the whole earth...Sing praise to God, sing praise; sing praise to our King, sing praise!" (Psalm 47:1-2,6 CSB)

Worship must be expressed to be worship. When we worship in spirit, we will be passionate in our expression of love to God. In his wonderful book, *The Hallelujah Factor*, Jack Taylor wrote: "Praise is always active, assertive, demonstrative, and open. It is not passive, presumptuous, undemonstrative or secretive. Whenever it is mentioned in the Bible, movement, action, sounds and songs are seen and heard." (p. 16)

A great model for worship is found in Revelation 4 and 5. It is a future scene in Heaven when the twenty-four elders are gathered around the throne of God. This represents all the redeemed of all the ages, so we'll be there. When the Lamb opens the scroll the crowd of worshippers goes wild. Notice how worship is expressed. The Bible says we will fall down before Jesus: That's an action. Then it says we will shout praises to the Lamb: That's an action. Then it says we will cast our crowns at His feet: Another action. In Revelation 5 it says we will sing a new song to the Lord, "Worthy is the Lamb who is slain!" We should be rehearsing for Heaven NOW. So sometimes we are so overwhelmed that we fall down on our faces before the Lord. We give our

most precious gifts to Him. We shout and sing our praises. When we worship, we must put our WHOLE HEARTS into it! That's what it means to worship God in spirit.

B. Worship in Truth: God created us to worship and serve Him.

True worship is more than just emotional expression: It must be grounded in the truth of scripture. The first foundational truth about worship is that we must worship God ONLY.

In Romans 1, we are told that everyone on the planet has a chance to know and worship God. He has revealed Himself to everyone in two witnesses. There is the external witness of creation. There's the grand scale of creation. Everyone can look at the stars and know that Someone had to put all this together. Then there's the inner witness of the human conscience. How is it that although we are all born in different cultures, everyone knows intrinsically that taking another life is morally wrong? God has placed eternity in the human heart.

So these two witnesses the external witness of the creation, and the internal witness of conscience have been given so that human beings would worship their Creator. But in Romans 1, it tells us that sin can push a person in the opposite direction. You can read it for yourself. In Romans 1:25 it says that their minds were darkened and they exchanged the truth about God for a lie. What is the lie? It says that they worship the creation instead of the Creator. That is the essence of a sinful mind—to worship the creation instead of the Creator.

Let me give you a contemporary example of this. Don't misunderstand me. I believe in practicing an environmentally healthy lifestyle. My wife and I have recycled for years. Our church recycles. After all we are GREEN acres Baptist church. But I want you to notice something the next time you watch a climate change protest. Many of the protestors will have signs that say something like, "Protect Mother Earth." Or "Don't hurt my mom" meaning the earth. There is a huge Mother Earth movement. Just google mother earth religion. Many of the people who are fanatical about saving the planet do so because they worship nature. Please hear what I'm saying. We should be good stewards environmentally, but many of those yelling the loudest have stepped right into the trap of Romans 1:25. They worship creation instead of the Creator.

So to worship God in truth means that you worship the God of the Bible – the Creator of Heaven and Earth. And the second foundational truth about worship is that we must realize that God created us to worship first and then to serve Him second.

The age-old debate between philosophers has been: What's more important, who we are, or what we do? In other words, is it more important to do or to be? Centuries ago, the philosopher Socrates said: "To be is to do." In the last century, the existentialist, John Paul Sartre disagreed with Socrates and wrote: "To do is to be." Who's right? I think singer Frank Sinatra settled the issue when he said: "Do, be, do, be, do..." But more recently the cartoon canine philosopher Scooby do settled it when he said, "Scoo be, do, be, doo!"

There is a foundational verse in the Old Testament that tells us BOTH WHO we are in Christ and WHAT we should be doing. It's found in 1 Peter 2:9. The Bible says in 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." In my old study Bible that is falling apart I wrote these three words in the margin beside this verse: "Why I exist." God's purpose for your life and my life is that we would declare His praises.

In the Old Testament, worship was a spectator sport. The common people brought their sacrifices to the priests, and then they backed away to watch the worship. The priest slaughtered the animal, and went through the prescribed steps of sacrifice on behalf of the worshipper. But only the priest could enter the area of the Temple. The choir that sang was made up of Levites and the worshipped and the common people watched.

But in the New Testament, worship is not a spectator sport. We don't watch while the professional priests conduct worship. In fact, in the New Testament, the distinction between the people and the priests is removed. We are all part of God's royal priesthood.

The main job of a priest was to offer sacrifices. We don't offer dead animals anymore. Instead we offer the sacrifice of praise. Hebrews 13:15 CSB says, "Therefore, through him let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name."

Look at the first two words in that verse. If your life is in a mess, the ONLY way you can offer praise is through Jesus. And praise is not something we offer once a week on Sunday mornings, we are to CONTINUALLY offer praise to God.

We must be balanced and worship God in spirit and in truth. I've observed worship that was based primarily on emotion and very little truth. That's fanaticism. I've also observed worship that was so cerebral that there was no emotion whatsoever. That's formalism. God doesn't want you to fry in fanaticism or freeze in formalism. He is searching for people to worship Him in BOTH spirit and in truth.

That's why I deeply appreciate our worship ministry here at Green Acres. It's okay to shout or to kneel or to lift your hands. And our worship is based on the Word of God. Just last weekend at the Christmas musical there was a multitude of truth presented. And I don't mind saying that I cried like a baby at all three performances. I'm glad to be in a church where we can worship in spirit and in truth!

CONCLUSION

Worship is when you are truly connected to your Creator in a heart-felt expression of love. I started with a story about a married couple, let me end with another story about a couple that can teach us about worship.

In 2012 Melissa Dohme was attacked and brutally stabbed 32 times outside of Clearwater, Florida. Someone called 911 and when firefighters arrived, Cameron Hill was the first to reach

her. She looked up and said, "Please help me" before she passed out. Cameron stayed with her stopping as much bleeding as he could. When the Medivac chopper arrived, Cameron carried her in his arms to the chopper and they carried her away. After multiple surgeries she was finally released.

Eighteen months later she was speaking at a church in Clearwater and after the service, Cameron came up and introduced himself as the fireman who had carried her to the chopper. She hugged him and broke down in tears and began to thank him for saving her. Later she delivered some homemade cookies to the Clearwater Fire Station #47 as a way to say thanks to Cameron. They developed a friendship and began to date.

And you guessed it. On March 5, 2017 Melissa and Cameron were married. So you may wonder why I told this story in the context of worship. It's not far-fetched to compare marriage to our relationship with the Lord. In Ephesians 5, the Bible talks about marriage and Paul concludes by writing, "This is a mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the church."

When Melissa seemed to be at the lowest point of her life she reached out to Cameron and said, "Please help me." He rescued her and carried her to the safety of the medical team. What a beautiful picture of salvation. When we couldn't save ourselves, we cried out to Jesus and He rescued us.

Then when Melissa met Cameron she reached out in gratitude to Him. She was able to say, "Thank you for saving me." And there are many people who have been saved and they are full of gratitude. "Thank you, Lord for saving me."

But then Melissa and Cameron connected in the relationship of marriage. That's what worship is. When we connect with the presence the Almighty savior. It's more than being saved. It's more than just showing gratitude. It is expressing our love and adoration to our Creator.

Did you know that God is searching, seeking, looking for people who will worship Him in spirit and in truth? Will you be that person?

OUTLINE

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
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