

More Than A Song

Scripture, Prayer and Song in the Worship of God

By Walt Harrah

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INTRODUCTION

"Who's On First?"

Bud Abbott and Lou Costello made this question famous in their back-and-forth exchange trying to figure out which players played what position on a mythical baseball team called the St. Louis Wolves. It is a masterpiece of miscommunication, to say the least.

For four decades now, church music has been transitioning. Old wineskins have been thrown out left and right for the new wine. And some who tried to use the old wine skins with the new wine made a mess. For those who appreciated the old wine, the new replacement tastes like what you paid for it, a version of Trader Joe's two-buck-chuck. And in a culture that has open disdain for the old and a love affair going with the new and instant, the chasm in church music has widened.

The new kids on the block often appear to care less, seeming to say, "You had your day- it's over - now it's our time." And often the safest solution has been "to each their own," with a service for the old guard, and a service for the non-traditionalists.

Old school worship and the new school voices have been speaking past each other with regularity, alienating each other in the process. In the process babies have been thrown out with the dirty bathwater. True, some of the babies needed to be thrown out (can I say that, or have I stretched the analogy a little too far???) But continual naval-gazing has brought on a self-consciousness to our worship that you could cut with a knife.

Just what has been lost? The chief baby rejected has been the role of theology in our services, with the effect that worship now seems to lack any real mooring. It's no longer "about" anything. We no longer encounter the God of the Bible, if we encounter God at all. We feel strangely empty when we leave, and no one can put their finger on it. And so if we miss church, we haven't really missed anything. And so by the millions, churchgoers have dropped out.

And since it is now an unquestioned truism that the sung worship style is what brings people to church or drives them elsewhere, we look to our musicians and the songs as the elixir. But sadly, a new song is merely a bandaid, and not really up to the task it is called on to fix.

With the historical anchor of doctrine having been de-emphasized, stranded on shore with the worship boat already departed, substance has fallen on hard times. And in culture at large, style wins over substance hands-down. So why not the church?

Pragmatism is now the order of the day. What works is what prevails. And we all hope for the best, with our fingers crossed. Meanwhile, the waves are crashing over the worship bow, with the rudder inoperative. And no one has of yet sighted land.

What went wrong? Simultaneously as the organ and choir were been asked to step aside, music and song was then expected to take on a role that it could never fulfill. The structure of worship was thinned out, and in many cases removed. Music was asked to be the show, and it willingly took on that role. Worship became about the song, and entertainment became a criteria. Meanwhile, what the song conveyed became largely irrelevant. Content began to play a lesser role in the big picture, at the same time that our culture was denying any truth exists - claiming instead that we each have our own truth.

Now the primary question of a song was - is it popular? Does it "work?" What Christian artist sang it, or wrote it? Enter market niche. Say "hello" to branding. The beats-per-minute became the primary criteria as to where the song could be slotted. For the first time anyone could remember, it was all about the song.

And as the church began to see their message as a product, the worshipper turned into a consumer, and was given the role of calling the shots. Their taste was a vote. The church began to market, and as we all know, in sales the customer is always right. So certain topics became taboo. Sin? Yikes, you want to scare people off. "We all know we miss the mark, you don't have to remind us of it!! Christian service, tithing, sexual immorality, the Second Coming - these topics just made people feel, well, uncomfortable. And an uncomfortable consumer will find some place else where they feel comfortable.

Grim assessment, huh? How do we make sense of all this? Is there a way out? I know it sounds presumptuous, but this book suggests a solution. It's not rocket science. It's pretty simple. The song has a place, but must never fly "solo." It can't bear the weight of being the end all. It must take its place as a complement to Scripture and prayer. The three, when choreographed correctly, can convey truth in a far more profound way than any of the parts can individually.

If you're a musician, it is threatening to "devalue" what you do best - which is to present a song, with a great arrangement and great players and great sound and images. I get that.

But the blessing that awaits you when content - not song - is the main thing cannot be measured. When the song fits the message and not vice versa, your worship will begin to bless and be fruitful in ways that you can only imagine. You will grow and change, and your congregation of worshippers will transform and mature before your very eyes. And the Lord God will be honored and magnified in your worship in ways that you never thought possible. Sound good? Let's think more about these things.

CHAPTER ONE

"Knowing and Loving God"

Attention, worship leader. Consider yourself warned:

The first duty of every lover of Christ is to enter constantly within the veil, offering himself a sacrifice to God, to obtain some sensible communion with the great Invisible; and his second, to come forth with a shining face, as Moses, and be ready to speak and do whatever God, by his word, providence, and indwelling Spirit, shall appoint.

If we reverse this order, and wear out our lives in the most indefatigable services, without an habitual sense of holy unction and divine communion, God may, indeed, in mercy to souls, bless our labors in some degree, but our own souls, though just saved, will suffer great, irreparable loss, through all eternity.

Adoniram Judson

The knowledge of God is very far from the love of Him.

Blaise Pascal Section 4, #280

“Worship means to feel in the heart, and to express in some appropriate manner a humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe, astonished wonder and overpowering love in the presence of the most Ancient Mystery. That Majesty which...we call our Father in heaven.”

A.W. Tozer

It is a solemn thing, and no small scandal in the Kingdom, to see God's children starving while actually seated at the Father's table. The truth of Wesley's words is established before our eyes: `Orthodoxy, or right opinion, is, at best, a very slender part of religion. Though right tempers cannot subsist without right opinions, yet right opinions may subsist without right tempers. There may be a right opinion of God without either love or one right temper toward Him. Satan is proof of this.'

Preface to *THE PURSUIT OF GOD* by A.W. Tozer

Mechanical worship is easy, but worthless.
Charles H. Spurgeon

Religion consists of what God is for man...
Geerhardus Vos

***I am like a green fir tree;
From me is thy fruit found.
Hosea 14:28***

Geerhardus Vos speaks of the potential for “conscious, intelligent fellowship with God. What the Psalmists strive for, he says, “is nothing more nor less than that mutual revelation of person to person, that grasping of God himself in the various forms of his approach unto us which is the culminating act of all religion....**man is designed to hold converse with God and to become practically acquainted with him.** Nor is it merely a subjective aspiration of man which underlies this idea of religion (this is not just something that we dreamed up!). At the basis of it lies the conviction that **there is in God himself the possibility, even the desire for this.** Notice how our passage expresses it....

“The secret intercourse of the Lord is with them that fear him and he will teach them his covenant.” Psalm 25:14)

“It is God condescending with us, and not our own aspirations that renders real this crowning act of religion. The Psalmists are convinced that God himself desires to enter upon close fellowship with man; that if he institutes a covenant for his servants, it is because he is in his very nature a covenant God. In the saints upon the earth is all his delight. We have no right to say that there was any lack or deficiency in God to be supplemented by the creation of man in his image and for communion with him for that would be inconsistent with his character as God. The Scriptures teach that he is all-sufficient unto himself and forever blessed in himself. Nevertheless having created man, it is natural in God to receive man as an inmate of his house and companion of his own blessed life. God himself takes pleasure in the immediate personal fellowship with us to which he invites us. There is that in him which corresponds to the highest in our religion. The prayer of his people comes like incense before him; the lifting up of their hands as an evening sacrifice. And it is because the Psalmists realize this that their own

desire to meet with God and speak with God obtains that intensely passionate character to which reference has been made.”

...and what man is for God.
Geerhardus Vos

*As the deer pants for streams of water,
So my soul pants for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?
Psalm 42:1,2*

The ideal posture of the worshipper, according to Vos, is “when the Spirit of God moves the center of our life transferring it from self to God, immediately waking a longing to come in touch with God and possess him and enjoy him for his own sake. We can best illustrate this from the relation of a child to its parents. We do not blame the child because it many a time turns to its father or mother for the simple reason that it wants something which in no other way it can procure. But what would you think of a child which never sought its father's arms or climbed upon its mother's lap unless there were some such external want to be supplied. The true child will spontaneously, instinctively turn to the presence and smile of its parents as a flower will seek the face of the sun. And in the same way the true child of God will have moments in which he turns to his Father in heaven unconscious of any other desire than the desire to be near unto God.

"Whom have I in heaven, but thee? And there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee: though my flesh and my heart shall fail, God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Ps. 73:25-26).

This and nothing else underlies all the passages in which the Psalmists speak of their love for the house of God or deplore their compelled absence from it. Their attachment to the house of God is at bottom an attachment to the person of God himself, just as the love which we cherish for our house would, when analyzed, ultimately appear to be a love fed not so much from association with the material structure but from that intimate contact with the spirit of our kindred and friends of which the house is as it were the external embodiment.

A Sermon on Psalm 25:14 by Geerhardus Vos

BE THOU MY VISION

**Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.**

**Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.**

**Be Thou my battle Shield, Sword for the fight;
Be Thou my Dignity, Thou my Delight;
Thou my soul's Shelter, Thou my high Tower:
Raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.**

**Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.**

**High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.**

Worship and the Heart

Jonathan Edwards say that God has equipped the soul with two faculties. One he enabled the soul to perceive and speculate. By those qualities it can discern and judge matters, and we refer to that as the understanding. The other faculty goes beyond perceiving and viewing – it inclines the soul to move into the thing it is considering, to move toward that object or thing, or to move away from it. The soul does not remain detached or indifferent, but is pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting. This could be referred to as an *inclination*. When actions result from the determination, it can be called the will. The mind, as it gets involved in the process, is often referred to as the heart. (Religious Affections, page 24)

“Such seems to be our nature, and such the laws of the union of soul and body, that there never is in any case whatsoever, any lively and vigorous exercise of the will or inclination of the soul, without some effect upon the body, in some alteration of the motion of its fluids, and especially of the animal spirits. And, on the other hand, from the same laws of the union of the soul and body, the constitution of the body, and the motion of its fluids, may promote the exercise of the affections. But yet it is not the body, but the mind only, that is the proper seat of the affections. The body of man is no more capable of being really the subject of love or hatred, joy or sorrow, fear or hope, than the body of a tree, or than the same body of man is capable of thinking and understanding. As it is the soul only that has ideas, so it is the soul only that is pleased or displeased with its ideas. As it is the soul only that thinks, so it is the soul only that loves or hates, rejoices or is grieved at what it thinks of. Nor are these motions of the animal spirits, and fluids of the body, anything properly belonging to the nature of the affections, though they always accompany them, in the present state; but are only effects living alongside the affections, nonetheless are entirely distinct from the affections themselves, and no way essential to them....The affections and passions are frequently spoken of as the same; and yet in the more common use of speech, there is in some respect a difference; and affection is a word that in its ordinary signification, seems to be something more extensive than passion, being used for all vigorous lively actings of the will or inclination; but passion for those that are more sudden, and whose effects on the animal spirits are more violent, and the mind more overpowered, and less in its own command.

As all the exercises of the inclination and will, are either in approving and liking, or disapproving and rejecting; so the affections are of two sorts; they are those by which the soul is carried out to what is in view, cleaving to it, or seeking it; or those by which it is averse from it, and opposes it.” (Religious Affections page 26)

What does this have to do with worship, you ask? Simply this. We can enter into the worship of God in a way that leaves the affections detached, uninvolved, passive. That is condition we want to speak to today. What does it look like when we worship God with our heart engaged? Does this matter to God?

Stephen Charnock (THE EXISTENCE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD) from a chapter called ON SPIRITUAL WORSHIP....

When the affections are separated, worship is no longer worship, but a dead offering, a lifeless bulk, for the essence and spirit of worship is departed. Though the soul be present with the body in a way of information, yet it is not present in a way of affection, and this is the worst; for it is not the separation of the soul from informing that separates a man from God, but the removal of our affections from him....To present our bodies without our spirits is....a usage of God that implies that he is a dead image, not worthy of any but a dead and heartless service, like one of those idols the Psalmist speaks of that have eyes but don't see, and ears, but don't hear, no life in them. (Psalm 115:5-8) We intimate God to be no better than an idol, and to have no more knowledge of us and insight into us, than an idol can have. (p. 265)

"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the LORD Almighty. "It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name. "But you ask, 'How have we shown contempt for your name?' "You place defiled food on my altar. "But you ask, 'How have we defiled you?' "By saying that the LORD's table is contemptible. When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the LORD Almighty. "Now implore God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?"-says the LORD Almighty.

"Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD Almighty, "and I will accept no offering from your hands. My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations," says the LORD Almighty. "But you profane it by saying of the Lord's table, 'It is defiled,' and of its food, 'It is contemptible.' And you say, 'What a burden!' and you sniff at it contemptuously," says the LORD Almighty. "When you bring injured, crippled or diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from your hands?" says the LORD. "Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For I am a great king," says the LORD Almighty, "and my name is to be feared among the nations. Malachi 1:6-14

How does losing a heart for worship, just going through the motion, end up showing contempt for God's name?

What was God's reaction to being worshipped this way?

Since God is the most excellent Being, he is to be served by us with the most excellent thing we have, and with the choicest veneration. God is so incomprehensibly excellent, that we cannot render him what he deserves; we must render him what we are able to offer – the best of our affections, the flower of our strength; the cream and top of our spirits. (Charnock, page 242,3)

Remember when David was running from King Saul, and he longed for water

(1 Chronicles 11:17-19) and he moaned, "Oh that someone would get me a drink of water from the gate of Bethlehem!" So three mighty men broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David. What did David do? He refused to drink it. Instead he poured it out before the Lord. He worshipped with it! That water became holy water! It was something that he desired very much, it was valuable to him, and he gave it to God instead. He turned a selfish act into a selfless act. "Far be it from me to do this, O Lord! Is it not the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives?" And David would not take a drink. When we give God the flower of our affections, when our heart is all his, we give him the finest we can give.

"Without the heart it is not worship; it is a stage play; an acting a part without being that person really...a hypocrite. We may truly be said to worship God - though we lack perfection; but we cannot be said to worship Him if we lack sincerity....Not to give God our spirit is a great sin. Every alienation of our hearts from him is a real scorn put upon him. The acts of the soul are real...they are the acts of the choicest part of man...the internal speech whereby we must speak with God. To give him, therefore, only an external form of worship without the life of it, is taking his name in vain...As with a musician it is absurd to play one tune and sing another, so it is a foul thing to tell God one thing with our lips, and think another with our hearts.

Charnock page 263

Example of heart worship engaging the affections –

Anne Bradstreet 1612-1672 (from TO MY DEAR CHILDREN)

I have often been perplexed that I have not found that constant joy in my pilgrimage and refreshing which I supposed most of the servants of God have, although He hath not left me altogether without the witness of His Holy Spirit, who hath oft given me His word and set to His seal that it shall be well with me. I have sometimes tasted of that hidden manna that the world knows not, and have set up my Ebenezer, and have resolved with myself that against such a promise, such tastes of sweetness, the gates of hell shall never prevail; yet have I many times sinkings and droopings, and not enjoyed that felicity that sometimes I have done. But when I have been in darkness and seen no light, yet have I desired to stay myself upon the Lord, and when I have been in sickness and pain, I have thought if the Lord would but lift up the light of His countenance upon me, although He ground me to powder, it would be but light to me; yea, oft have I thought were I in hell itself and could there find the love of God toward me, it would be a heaven. And could I have been in heaven without the love of God, it would have been a hell to me, for in truth it is the absence and presence of God that makes heaven or hell.

(Norton Anthology p. 71)

What a person looks like in the middle of “sinkings and droopings” tells a lot about who they are. Hannah is such a person. Let’s look at her story in 1 Samuel 1.

There was a certain man.....whose name was Elkanah He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD. Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. And because the LORD had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. Elkanah her husband would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?" Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now

Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple. In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine." "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief." Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." She said, "May your servant find favor in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

What do we know about Hannah's worshipping heart so far?

Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him." When the man Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vow, Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, "After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the LORD, and he will live there always." "Do what seems best to you," Elkanah her husband told her. "Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the LORD make good his word." So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, "As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole

life he will be given over to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there.

Then Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance. "There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. "Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed. "The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry hunger no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away. "The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. "For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's; upon them he has set the world. He will guard the feet of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness. It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the LORD will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. "He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed." Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the LORD under Eli the priest. 1 Samuel 1-2:11

What is Hannah's relationship to God like?

There is a difference between having an *opinion*, that God is holy and gracious, and having a *sense* of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness. A man may have the former, that knows not how honey tastes; but a man cannot have the latter unless he has an idea of the taste of honey in his mind. So there is a difference between believing that a person is beautiful, and having a sense of his beauty. The former may be obtained by hearsay, but the latter only by seeing the countenance. There is a wide difference between mere speculative rational judging any thing to be excellent, and having a sense of its sweetness and beauty. The former rests only in the head, speculation only is concerned in it; but the heart is concerned in the latter. When the heart is sensible of the beauty and amiableness of a thing, it necessarily feels pleasure in the apprehension. It is implied in a person's being heartily

sensible of the loveliness of a thing, that the idea of it is sweet and pleasant to his soul; which is a far different thing from having a rational opinion that it is excellent. **Jonathan Edwards A DIVINE AND SUPERNATURAL LIGHT**

The Author of the human nature has not only given affections to men, but has made them very much the spring of men's actions. As the affections do not only necessarily belong to the human nature, but are a very great part of it; so (inasmuch as by regeneration persons are renewed in the whole man, and sanctified throughout) holy affections do not only necessarily belong to true religion, but are a very great part of it. And as true religion is of a practical nature, and God hath so constituted the human nature, that the affections are very much the spring of men's actions, this also shows, that true religion must consist very much in the affections.

Jonathan Edwards RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS

"Truth without emotion produces dead orthodoxy and a church full (or half-full) of artificial admirers (like people who write generic anniversary cards for a living). On the other hand, emotion without truth produces empty frenzy and cultivates shallow people who refuse the discipline of rigorous thought. But true worship comes from people who are deeply emotional and who love deep and sound doctrine. Strong affections for God rooted in truth are the bone and marrow of biblical worship."

John Piper

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' " Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her. John 20:1-18

In what ways is Mary's heart of worship revealed in this passage?

When the heart is cast... into the mold of the doctrine that the mind embraces, when we have not only the sense of the words in our heads, but the sense of the things abiding in our hearts; when we have communion with God in the doctrine we contend for, - then shall we be garrisoned, by the grace of God, against all the assaults of men. And without this all our contending is, as to our selves, of no value. How am I the better if I can argue for Christ as God, but have no sense of sweetness in my heart...that he is a God in a covenant with my soul? What will it avail me to evince, by testimonies and arguments, that he hath made satisfaction for sin, if, through my unbelief, the wrath of God abided on me, and I have no experience of my own being made the righteousness of God in him? Will it be any advantage to me, in the issue, to profess and dispute that God worked the conversion of a sinner by the irresistible grace of his Spirit, if I was never acquainted experimentally with the deadness and utter impotence to good, that opposition to the law of God, which is in my own soul by nature, and with the efficacy of the exceeding greatness of the power of God in quickening, enlightening, and bringing forth the fruits of obedience in me?

(Translation: Edwards is saying here that the heart must experience, not just know, that it is deceitful and wicked and prone to deadness, that it is

ok about being opposed to God. He must also experimentally know that God is able and willing to jumpstart obedience in us.)

Let us, then, not think that we are any thing the better for our conviction of the truths of the great doctrines of the gospel.... unless we find the power of the truths abiding in our own hearts and have a continual experience of their necessity and excellency in our standing before God and our communion with him.

J.I. Packer A QUEST FOR GODLINESS page 217

*How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD Almighty!
My soul yearns, even faints,
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh cry out
for the living God.
Even the sparrow has found a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may have her young—
a place near your altar,
O LORD Almighty, my King and my God.
Blessed are those who dwell in your house;
they are ever praising you.*

Psalm 84:1-4

WHAT DOES THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART SOUND LIKE?

Let's look back at a saint who walked with God, and see and hear what his worship looked like.

While I was staying at Nailworth, it pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, irrespective of human instrumentality, as far as I know, the benefit of which I have not lost, though now...more than forty years have since passed away. **The point is this:** I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, **to have my soul happy in the Lord.** The first thing to be concerned about was not, how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but **how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished.** For I might seek to set the truth before the unconverted, I might seek to benefit believers, I might seek to relieve the distressed, I might in other ways seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world;

and yet, not being happy in the Lord and not being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in a right spirit.

Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer, after having dressed the morning. **Now** I saw, that the **most important thing** I had to do was to give myself to the **reading of the Word of God and to meditation on it**, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, instructed; and that thus, **whilst meditation, my heart might be brought into experimental, communion with the Lord**. I began therefore, to meditate on the New Testament, from the beginning, early in the morning.

The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God; searching, as it were, into every verse, to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word; not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon; but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that **after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication**; so that though I did not, as it were, give to **prayer** but to **meditation**, yet it turned almost immediately more or less to **prayer**.

When thus I have been for awhile making confession, or intercession, or supplication, or have given thanks, **I go on to the next words or verse**, turning all, as I go on, into **prayer** for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it; but still continually keeping before me that food for my own soul is the object of meditation. **The result of this is, that there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, supplication, or intercession mingled with my meditation**, and that my inner man almost invariably is even sensibly nourished and strengthened and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a **peaceful if not happy state of heart**. Thus also the Lord is pleased to communicate unto me that which, very soon after, I have found to become food for other believers, though it was not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word that I have myself to meditation, but for the profit of my own inner man.

The difference between my former practice and my present one is this. Formerly, when I rose, I began to pray as soon as possible, and generally spent all my time till breakfast in prayer, or almost all the time. At all events I almost invariably began with prayer.... **But what was the result?** I often spent a quarter of an hour, or half an hour, or even an hour on my knees, before being conscious to myself of having derived comfort,

encouragement, humbling of soul, etc.; and often **after having suffered much from wandering of mind** for the first ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, or even half an hour, I only then began **really to pray**.

I scarcely ever suffer now in this way. For my heart being nourished by the truth, being brought into **experimental fellowship** with God, I speak to my Father, and to my Friend (vile though I am, and unworthy of it!) about the things that He has brought before me in His precious Word. It often now astonished me that I did not sooner see this. In no book did I ever read about it. No public ministry ever brought the matter before me. No private intercourse with a brother stirred me up to this matter. And yet now, since God has taught me this point, it is as plain to me as anything that the first thing the child of God has to do morning-by-morning is to **obtain food for his inner man**. As the outward man is not fit for work for any length of time, except we **take food**, and as this is one of the first things we do in the morning, so it should be with the inner man. We should take food for that, as every one must allow. Now what is the food for the inner man; not **prayer**, but the **Word of God**; and here again **not** the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but **considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts....**

I dwell so particularly on this point because of the **immense spiritual profit and refreshment** I am conscious of having derived from it myself, and I affectionately and solemnly beseech all my fellow-believers to ponder this matter. By the blessing of God I ascribe to this mode the help and strength which I have had from God to pass in peace through deeper trials in various ways than I had ever had before; and after having now above forty years tried this way, I can most fully, in the fear of God, commend it. How different when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning, from what it is when, without spiritual preparation, the service, the trials and the temptations of the day come upon one!

George Mueller

Geerhardus Vos preached a sermon called THE WONDERFUL TREE in which God portrays himself and his purposes “as a green tree, bearing fruit for his people. This is truly a marvelous representation, well adapted to startle us when we think ourselves into it. It seems to imply something in God that, in the desire for self-communication, exceeds even the strongest affection of a human parent for his children. And yet, my hearers, when reflecting upon it for a moment, can we fail to observe that the

marvel in it is nothing else than the heart-miracle of all true religion, the great paradox underlying all God's concern with us. That he, the all-sufficient One, forever rich and blessed in himself, should, as it were, take himself in his own hands, making of himself an object to be bestowed upon a creature, so as to change before the eyes of the prophet into a tree, showering its fruit upon Israel, lavish as nothing in all nature but a tree can be.

This surely is something to be wondered at, and something which, though it recurs a thousand times, no experience or enjoyment ought to be able to rob of its wonder. There is in it more than we convey by the term "communion with God." That admits of relativity, there are degrees in it, but this figure depicts the thing in its highest and deepest possibility, as flowing from the divine desire so to take us into the immediate, intimate circle of his own life and blessedness, as to make all its resources serve our delight, a river of pleasures from his right hand. It might almost seem as if there were here a reversal of the process of religion itself, inasmuch as God appears putting himself at the service of man, and that with the absolute generosity born of supreme love. This relation into which it pleases God to receive Israel with himself has in it a sublime abandon; it knows neither restraint nor reserve. Using human language, one might say that God enters into this heart and soul and mind and strength. Since God thus gives himself to his people for fruition, and his resources are infinite, there is no possibility of their ever craving more or seeking more of him than it is good for them to receive. To deprive religion of this by putting it upon the barren basis of pure disinterestedness is not merely a pretense to be wiser than God, it is also an act of robbing God of his own joy through refusing the joy into which he has, as it were, resolved himself for us. So far from being a matter of gloom and depression, religion in its true concept is an exultant state, the supreme feast and Sabbath of the soul.

Geerhardus Vos THE WONDERFUL TREE

And now, finally, what is the lesson we ought to draw from the prominence of this feature in the spiritual experience portrayed by the Psalter? Are we sure that we feel with the frequency and intensity which our greater privileges demand the desire to meet with God? Or are we satisfied with that indirect relation to him which our service of him in his kingdom and our daily study of his word leads us to sustain? I need not tell you that there is a tendency at the present day to make the religious life seek the surface, the periphery; to detach it more or less from its center which lies in

the direct face-to-face communion of the soul with God. The devotional is not so much in evidence as it has been in other periods of the church's history. There are two causes for this. The former of these may perhaps but little concern us. It is found in the modern reluctance to lay emphasis upon any religious practice which at all involves the idea of a clear, definite, personal knowledge and experience of God—in other words in agnostic tendencies. Its watchword is we can know little about God, but we can know what our religious duties are towards our fellow man. With this, I say, you and I may have little to do, although to some extent of even this we may feel the reflex influence.

But the other course concerns us directly. It lies in the stupendous multiplication of the out-going activities which the present practical age makes it incumbent upon every minister of the gospel to pursue. With all these centrifugal forces playing upon us, what wonder if sometimes the one centripetal force which ought to drive us to the heart of God for the cultivation of our own devotional life is less felt in our experience. And yet it is absolutely essential for us that we should not only have our seasons of communion with God, but that all the time in some degree we should carry with us into the outward and public work a living sense of our nearness to God and of his nearness to us because in this way alone can we make our service in the Lord's kingdom truly fruitful and spiritual. If the savor of this is wanting in our work, if we do not bring to the world when we come to it the unction and peace acquired in prayer, we cannot hope to impart any permanent blessing or to achieve any lasting results. Let us endeavor to cultivate diligently the devotional spirit of the Psalmists. Or, better still, let us take for our example the spirit of Jesus himself for whom notwithstanding the busy scenes of a most public career no distractions existed, to whom every call upon his strength became an occasion for meeting with God, a real contact with God, because the fountains of his strength lay hidden deep in the recesses of his inner life where he and the Father always beheld each other's face. **Geerhardus Vos October 15, 1902 in the Chapel of Princeton Theological Seminary**

CHAPTER TWO

"Knowing Yourself"

Christian Worldview #101

Do you know what you believe? Pop culture will be glad to formulate a worldview for you, free of charge. Just tune in. On the other hand, if you are at all concerned about the world "squeezing you into its mold," then just how do you whittle it all down into a few essentials? Strange as it may seem, saints from the past, uninfluenced by our age, might be able to best assist you in this endeavor.

J.I. Packer, a saint who has not yet passed on to glory, had this to say about being influenced by the wisdom of Christian saints now dead and gone...

".....there are periods of great creativity and vitality in Christian history, which can nourish and sustain those who live in less happy times. no age shows equal insight into all spiritual truths and all facets of godliness, but the explorer of tradition finds the wisdom of every age opening up for him to draw on."

George Bowen lived as an ascetic missionary in India in the 19th Century. A man who knew him and ministered alongside him for a few years in India says of him, *"all the people of this region, high and low, European and native, know George Bowen, and set him down without debate as a saint. He is a learned man, and author, a clear thinker, a transparent preacher of great humility and usefulness, a good musician, - a John the Baptist, to prepare the way for the Lord's coming to establish the self-supporting Indian Mission of which he has now become a member and minister."*

Here is some wisdom that George Bowen left behind from his journal, entry March 30, 1845.....

"....students of theology and ministers, instead of coming for their everyday standard to the Bible, take it from the conduct of one another. And no man thinks he falls short of his duty, when he does not fall below the average of practice. This is wrong unquestionably. God speaks to us in the Bible, and not in defective conscience of those around us. And we must come

to the Bible and there learn what God thinks of our conduct and what He would have us do."

The world acts as a shield if you let it. It protects its own. If you take in the basic presuppositions this world dishes up, then the Bible seems to be the one who is out of step. But we need a worldview that we can make life decisions from, one that acts as a foundation for all we think and say and take in. Scripture gives us the surest set of essentials, because it reveals to us the heart of God, and what He is up to in history. It reminds us of eternity, and no earthly set of principles can go there. Try these on for size.

1. THIS WORLD IN IT'S PRESENT FORM IS PASSING AWAY. 1 Corinthians 7:31 **The ultimate reality is that *the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ.* Revelation 11:15** Not maybe - WILL!! How will this make a difference? We can let go of this world, hold onto things loosely. Robert Moffat was a missionary to South Africa in the early 1800's and father-in-law to David Livingston. At his funeral it was said of him in regard to this world that he possessed a "perfect disinterestedness. As long as he had just enough to sustain him, he never seemed to covet anything more." Our jobs and work takes on a new perspective. We see church differently, we see family differently, relationships differently, accumulation differently. Making a mark on this world is not the driving passion anymore.

2. ALL THE WORLD WILL ULTIMATELY BOW AT JESUS' FEET. Philippians 2:10,11 Welcome to the purposes of God. Again, this is where everything is headed, no ifs, ands, or buts, or maybes. With this understanding, we see beyond the natural attractiveness or uniqueness of people (did you see that double reverse layup??? Unbelievable!!) and become aware of their spiritual condition. We see people as souls, and pray with real heart concern for their conversion. Also, with this mindset, the ground is prepared for us to become ambassadors of the good news. And even though we are clay pots, we are excited that God will use us, however imperfectly, to advance his kingdom.

3. ALL CREATION IS CURRENTLY GROANING, BUT THAT WILL NOT ALWAYS BE. Romans 8:20-23 Our life lived here is a moment in time, and our difficulties and trials and sufferings are **achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.** 2 Corinthians 4:17 Persevering down here takes on meaning, for we are being watched, every tear is kept in a bottle, and something eternal is being created even now as we sit in this room that will make everything we endure down here more than worth it.

So Adoniram Judson, the missionary to Burma who buried two wives

and four children while planting a witness to Christ, who was captured and tortured for two years, sleeping at night suspended from a rope with his feet in the air, and only his shoulders touching the ground, so this tested saint was enabled to say.....

"our happiness in Jesus will never come to an end. Nor will our happiness be eternally stationary. It will be eternally increasing, and not merely at the same ratio, but eternally increasing on an eternally accelerated rate. There will unquestionably be a moment in the ages of eternity when the additional, superadded happiness already being enjoyed by each glorified spirit will infinitely outweigh the whole sum of human happiness enjoyed in this world."

4. I AM BEING CHANGED. 2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 12:2 Change is not optional, it is the point if we are disciples of Christ. We are not our own any more. We were purchased at the price of the blood of Jesus. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us. And the idea is to become like Christ. It glorifies God, and is what we were made for.

Even now, though imperfectly, we reflect the Lord's glory. We are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory. God and you, God and I, partner in the process of sanctification, of becoming more like Christ. As we continue to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, we can rest in the knowledge that works in us to will and to do his good pleasure. **Philippians 2:12-13** The Lord is fashioning us, and the Holy Spirit is the artist at work. What effect does this have? We are not what we will be. God is not done with us yet. We are a work in progress. The purposes of God are being worked out in us, so we can relax, knowing that what we are is not what we will be. We can be confident that **he who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.** **Philippians 1:6**

5. MY PERSPECTIVE WILL NOT BE HIGH-DEFINITION IN THIS LIFE. 1 Corinthians 13:12 Everything I see is as a poor reflection in a mirror. Result? Hopefully, humility. I need to have a realistic view of myself, with what Paul calls **sober judgment.** **Romans 12:3** I need to involve others in my life, to consult, to get other opinions, to not be an island to myself. Someday I will see Jesus face to face, and there will be no more fuzziness.

6. HOW I LIVE MY LIFE COUNTS FOREVER. **Romans 14:10-12** I will someday stand before God's judgment seat, and give an account of myself to God. Result? This attitude guards against trivializing life. It leads to intentionality, purpose, substance. *In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for*

noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. *2 Timothy 2:20-21*

7. THE TIME IS SHORT. 1 Corinthians 7:29 We can't just assume on the future. We do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is our life? We are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. **James 4:14** No one knows the day or the hour of the coming of the Son of Man. We are to keep watch, because we don't know on what day our Lord will return. **Matthew 24:36-42** Watching means living in a way that is appropriate were Jesus to return and catch us by surprise. And understanding the present time keeps us fully awake, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in riotous living and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, let's clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop being so concerned about how we can gratify the desires of the flesh. **Romans 13:11-14**

How might a prayer sound that is informed by the views above? Consider the following....

Based on a sermon by Jonathan Edwards
"The End For Which God Created The World"

Creator God, from you and to you and through you are all things. Romans 11:36 Someday you will be all in all, with everything subject to you. 1 Corinthians 15:28 There is a plan set in motion from before time began, and nothing can stop your purpose and design from its fulfillment. The earth will be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. Habakkuk 2:14 Thank you that this earth is not just flying around in orbit aimlessly, but that its very foundations are handcrafted by you, and they are yours, sustained by your power and might. Colossians 1:17 It is you who made the earth and created mankind upon it. Isaiah 45:12 Thank you for manifesting your power, for exercising your perfections, for communicating with us through what you have made. The heavens wonderfully declare your glory, O God - the skies show off your craftsmanship. Psalm 19:1,2 Thank you for seeking us out, for calling to us from what you have made, for using your creation as a mouthpiece to call attention to your eternal power and divine nature. They have been clearly seen. Who has not looked into the sky and not wondered? Who has held a newborn infant in their arms and not

marveled? **Romans 1:19,20** Thank you for broadcasting your glory, and that by your grace I have understood that you were calling to me. You made me hear, and caused my heart to swell in praise to you, and gratefulness for what you have done.

Father, may your will be done, so that all glory goes to you. I long for the day when every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, bringing glory to you. **Philippians 2:10,11** Then will your joy and happiness be consummated. Thank you for the effort you extend, even now, to call your creatures to yourself. You have withheld nothing to show us how much you love us. **Romans 8:32** Even our esteem of you and our love for you come from you, as you communicate your fullness to us. In your wisdom, you have so designed that we your creatures find our ultimate joy and happiness when we rejoice in you. And in your wisdom, you have designed it so that nothing else on earth can truly satisfy. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God! **Romans 5:2** We even rejoice in our sufferings, for the promise is that you will ultimately be glorified through them. **Romans 5:3**

How you love us! You have given us the ability to understand, and the capacity to comprehend you through the Spirit. **1 Corinthians 2:10** The whole earth is full of your glory, and we are aware of it. **Isaiah 6:3** We even know that when we stop living according to the pattern of this world and are willing to be transformed, then we are given the ability to find your good, pleasing and perfect will. **Romans 12:1,2** And for this we will be eternally grateful.

How George Mueller got fed by the Word of God

In the middle part of the 1800's, the name George Mueller was known by virtually everyone in England. His orphanage for both boys and girls was caring for thousands, yet was "run" on faith, as they never overtly let their needs be known. Instead, he chose to pray and wait quietly for God to answer. And answer God did! Over and over!! Preaching up till his death at age 93, Mueller was a man who lived in the Bible, reading it over and over. Here in his own words he gives an account of how it became food for his soul, to sustain him spiritually.

While I was staying at Nailsworth, it pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, irrespective of human instrumentality, as far as I know, the benefit of which I have not lost, though now...more than forty years have since passed away.

The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul

happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not, how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished. For I might seek to set the truth before the unconverted, I might seek to benefit believers, I might seek to relieve the distressed, I might in other ways seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world; and yet, not being happy in the Lord, and not being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in a right spirit.

Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer, after having dressed in the morning. Now I saw, that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, instructed; and that thus, whilst meditating, my heart might be brought into experimental, communion with the Lord. I began therefore, to meditate on the New Testament, from the beginning, early in the morning..

The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God; searching, as it were, into every verse, to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word; not for the sake or preaching on what I had meditated upon; but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so¹⁵⁶ that though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer, but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer.

When thus I have been for awhile making confession, or intercession, or supplication, or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it; but still continually keeping before me, that food for my own soul is the object of my meditation. The result of this is, that there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, supplication, or intercession mingled with my meditation, and that my inner man almost invariably is even sensibly nourished and strengthened and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not happy state of heart. Thus also the Lord is pleased to communicate unto me that which, very soon after, I have found to become food for other believers, though it was not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word that I gave myself to meditation, but for the profit of my own inner man.

The difference between my former practice and my present one is this. Formerly, when I rose, I began to pray as soon as possible, and generally spent all my time till breakfast in prayer, or almost all the time. At all events I almost invariably began with prayer.... But what was the result? I often spent a quarter of an hour, or half an hour, or even an hour on my knees, before being conscious to myself of having derived comfort, encouragement, humbling of soul, etc.; and often after having suffered much from wandering of mind for the first ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, or even half an hour, I only then began really to pray.

I scarcely ever suffer now in this way. For my heart being nourished by the truth, being brought into experimental fellowship with God, I speak to my Father, and to my Friend (vile though I am, and unworthy of it!) about the things that He has brought before me in His precious Word.

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As the outward man is not fit for work for any length of time, except we take food, and as this is one of the first things we do in the morning, so it should be with the inner man. We should take food for that, as every one must allow. Now what is the food for the inner man: not prayer, but the Word of God: and here again not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts....

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Autobiography of George Müller, comp. Fred Bergen (London: J. Nisbet, 1906), 152-4.

SPENDING THE DAY WITH GOD

Adapted and updated from
RICHARD BAXTER (1615-1691)

by Matthew Vogan

A holy life is inclined to be made easier when we know the usual sequence and method of our duties - with everything falling into its proper place. Therefore, I shall give some brief directions for spending the day in a holy manner.

Sleep

Measure the time of your sleep appropriately so that you do not waste your precious morning hours sluggishly in your bed. Let the time of your sleep be matched to your health and labour, and not to slothful pleasure.

First Thoughts

Let God have your first awaking thoughts; lift up your hearts to Him reverently and thankfully for the rest enjoyed the night before and cast yourself upon Him for the day which follows.

Familiarise yourself so consistently to this that your conscience may check you when common thoughts shall first intrude. Think of the mercy of a night's rest and of how many that have spent that night in Hell; how many in prison; how many in cold, hard lodgings; how many suffering from agonising pains and sickness, weary of their beds and of their lives.

Think of how many souls were that night called from their bodies terrifyingly to appear before God and think how quickly days and nights are rolling on! How speedily your last night and day will come! Observe that which is lacking in the preparedness of your soul for such a time and seek it without delay.

Prayer

Let prayer by yourself alone (or with your partner) take place before the collective prayer of the family. If possible let it be first, before any work of the day.

Family Worship

Let family worship be performed consistently and at a time when it is most likely for the family to be free of interruptions.

Ultimate Purpose

Remember your ultimate purpose, and when you set yourself to your day's work or approach any activity in the world, let HOLINESS TO THE LORD be written upon your hearts in all that you do.

Do no activity which you cannot entitle God to, and truly say that he set you about it, and do nothing in the world for any other ultimate purpose than to please, glorify and enjoy Him. "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." - 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Diligence in Your Calling

Follow the tasks of your calling carefully and diligently. Thus:

- (a) You will show that you are not sluggish and servants to your flesh (as those that cannot deny it ease), and you will further the putting to death of all the fleshly lusts and desires that are fed by ease and idleness.
- (b) You will keep out idle thoughts from your mind, that swarm in the minds of idle persons.
- (c) You will not lose precious time, something that idle persons are daily guilty of.
- (d) You will be in a way of obedience to God when the slothful are in constant sins of omission.
- (e) You may have more time to spend in holy duties if you follow your occupation diligently. Idle persons have no time for praying and reading because they lose time by loitering at their work.
- (f) You may expect God's blessing and comfortable provision for both yourself and your families.
- (g) it may also encourage the health of your body which will increase its competence for the service of your soul.

Temptations and Things That Corrupt

Be thoroughly acquainted with your temptations and the things that may corrupt you - and watch against them all day long. You should watch

especially the most dangerous of the things that corrupt, and those temptations that either your company or business will unavoidably lay before you.

Watch against the master sins of unbelief: hypocrisy, selfishness, pride, flesh pleasing and the excessive love of earthly things. Take care against being drawn into earthly mindedness and excessive cares, or covetous designs for rising in the world, under the pretence of diligence in your calling.

If you are to trade or deal with others, be vigilant against selfishness and all that smacks of injustice or uncharitableness. In all your dealings with others, watch against the temptation of empty and idle talking. Watch also against those persons who would tempt you to anger. Maintain that modesty and cleanness of speech that the laws of purity require. If you converse with flatterers, be on your guard against swelling pride.

If you converse with those that despise and injure you, strengthen yourself against impatient, revengeful pride.

At first these things will be very difficult, while sin has any strength in you, but once you have grasped a continual awareness of the poisonous danger of any one of these sins, your heart will readily and easily avoid them.

Meditation

When alone in your occupations, improve the time in practical and beneficial meditations. Meditate upon the infinite goodness and perfections of God; Christ and redemption; Heaven and how unworthy you are of going there and how you deserve eternal misery in Hell.

The Only Motive

Whatever you are doing, in company or alone, do it all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Otherwise, it is unacceptable to God.

Redeeming The Time

Place a high value upon your time, be more careful of not losing it than you would of losing your money. Do not let worthless recreations, television, idle talk, unprofitable company, or sleep rob you of your precious time.

Be more careful to escape that person, action or course of life that would rob

you of your time than you would be to escape thieves and robbers.

Make sure that you are not merely never idle, but rather that you are using your time in the most profitable way that you can and do not prefer a less profitable way before one of greater profit.

Eating and Drinking

Eat and drink with moderation and thankfulness for health, not for unprofitable pleasure. Never please your appetite in food or drink when it is prone to be detrimental to your health.

Remember the sin of Sodom: "Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food and abundance of idleness" - Ezekiel 16:49.

The Apostle Paul wept when he mentioned those "whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame -- who set their minds on earthly things, being enemies to the cross of Christ" - Philippians 3:18-19. O then do not live according to the flesh lest you die (Romans 8:13).

Prevailing Sins

If any temptation prevails against you and you fall into any sins in addition to habitual failures, immediately lament it and confess it to God; repent quickly whatever the cost. It will certainly cost you more if you continue in sin and remain unrepentant.

Do not make light of your habitual failures, but confess them and daily strive against them, taking care not to aggravate them by unrepentance and contempt.

Relationships

Remember every day the special duties of various relationships: whether as husbands, wives, children, masters, servants, pastors, people, magistrates, subjects.

Remember every relationship has its special duty and its advantage for the doing of some good. God requires your faithfulness in this matter as well as in any other duty.

Closing the Day

Before returning to sleep, it is wise and necessary to review the actions and mercies of the day past, so that you may be thankful for all the special mercies and humbled for all your sins.

This is necessary in order that you might renew your repentance as well as your resolve for obedience, and in order that you may examine yourself to see whether your soul grew better or worse, whether sin goes down and grace goes up and whether you are better prepared for suffering, death and eternity.

May these directions be engraven upon your mind and be made the daily practice of your life.

If sincerely adhered to, these will be conducive to the holiness, fruitfulness and quietness of your life and add to you a comfortable and peaceful death.

Pride

It is considered one of the seven deadly sins. It caused Satan's fall. It is difficult to spot in ones own self, and easy to spot in others. But it must be dealt with in order to have an effective and fruitful ministry.

From the blogging world of Fred Sanders, a professor at BIOLA University, we get this insight on pride.

In his 1965 book *How to Be Rich: The Success Secrets of a Billionaire Businessman*, J. Paul Getty (1892-1976) tells the story of how he quit smoking. On a vacation in France, he woke up at two A.M. in his hotel room, craving a cigarette. Finding none in his pack, none in his jacket, none in his luggage, he decided to make the hike to the nearest all-night vendor, at the train station six blocks away. It was pouring rain in the middle of the night in a small town in France. In Getty's own words:

But the desire to smoke gnawed at me, and, perversely, the more I contemplated the difficulties entailed in getting a cigarette, the more desperately I wanted to have one. And so I took off my pajamas and started putting on my clothes. I was completely dressed and reaching for my raincoat when I abruptly stopped and began to laugh –at myself. It had suddenly struck me that my actions were illogical, even ludicrous.

There I stood, a supposedly intelligent human being, a supposedly responsible and fairly successful businessman who considered himself sensible enough to give other people orders. Yet I was ready to leave my comfortable hotel room in the middle of the night and slosh a dozen blocks through a driving rainstorm for no other reason than that I wanted a cigarette –because I felt that I “had” to have one. Thus J.P. Getty took a step back from himself, saw the situation from outside, and had to laugh at the little tobacco sticks that were somehow in command of the great businessman. The comedy of the situation came from the contrast in scale, because this silly little habit just did not measure up to the stature of the intelligent, responsible, successful, sensible commander of men. Getty crumpled up his empty pack of cigarettes, and with it he crumpled up the tobacco habit in one decisive movement, a triumph of will power over the force of habit.

Jonathan Edwards
on Spiritual Pride

Spiritual pride is very apt to suspect others; whereas an humble saint is most jealous of himself; he is so suspicious of nothing in the world as he is of his own heart. The spiritually proud person is apt to find fault with other saints, that they are low in grace; and to be much in observing how cold and dead they are; and being quick to discern and take notice of their deficiencies. **But the eminently humble Christian has so much to do at home, and sees so much evil in his own heart, and is so concerned about it, that he is not apt to be very busy with other hearts; he complains most of himself, and complains of his own coldness and lowness in grace.** He is apt to esteem others better than himself, and is ready to hope that there is nobody but what has more love and thankfulness to God than he, and cannot bear to think that others should bring forth no more fruit to God’s honour than he.

Some who have spiritual pride mixed with high discoveries and great transports of joy, disposing them in an earnest manner to talk to others, are apt, in such frames, to be calling upon other Christians about them, and sharply reproofing them for their being so cold and lifeless. There are others, who in their raptures are overwhelmed with a sense of their own vileness; and, when they have extraordinary discoveries of God’s glory, are all taken up about their own sinfulness; and though they also are disposed to speak much and very earnestly, yet it is very much in blaming themselves, and exhorting fellow-Christians, but in a charitable and humble manner. Pure Christian humility disposes a person to take notice of every thing that is

good in others, and to make the best of it, and to diminish their failings; but to give his eye chiefly on those things that are bad in himself, and to take much notice of every thing that aggravates them.

C.S. Lewis on Pride

But in the third book of *Mere Christianity*, Lewis ponders the various kinds of vices and sins, with typically piercing insight. He considers the various lusts and temptations which make their way into our lives from our physical or animal nature, and has wise counsel about dealing with them. But then he turns his attention to the greatest sin, pride, and notes that it does not “come from the devil working on us through our animal nature.” Pride is different: “It comes direct from Hell. It is purely spiritual: consequently it is far more subtle and deadly.” He goes on:

For the same reason, Pride can often be used to beat down the simpler vices. Teachers, in fact, often appeal to a boy’s Pride, or, as they call it, his self-respect, to make him behave decently: many a man has overcome cowardice, or lust, or ill-temper by learning to think that they are beneath his dignity –that is, by Pride. The devil laughs. He is perfectly content to see you becoming chaste and brave and self-controlled provided, all the time, he is setting up in you the Dictatorship of Pride –just as he would be quite content to see your chilblains cured if he was allowed, in return, to give you cancer. For pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense.

CHAPTER THREE

"Knowing Your Worshippers"

It's all about branding. Worship is a product. The consumer is in charge. How did we get here, and how do we get out of this mess?

Generation "Y" THE NEXT GENERATION OF WORSHIPPERS

Gen Y forces retailers to keep up with technology, new stuff

By Richard Eisenberg, Special for USA TODAY

The next time you see a member of [Generation Y](#), show some appreciation.

In Gen BuY: How Tweens, Teens, and Twenty-Somethings Are Revolutionizing Retail, Kit Yarrow and Jayne O'Donnell say today's teens, tweens and twentysomethings "were the least likely to cut back spending after the onset of the 2008 recession."

What's more, Yarrow (a consumer researcher and chair of the Golden Gate University psychology department) and O'Donnell (USA TODAY's retail reporter) say the 84 million Generation Yers born from 1978 through 2000 are so influential they've changed shopping for all consumers. They call [Gen Y](#) "the taste-makers, influencers, and most enthusiastic buyers of today," who will become "the mature, high-income purchasers of the future."

Because of Gen Y, we have:

- More creative, technically advanced websites (50% of retailers redesigned their sites last year).
- A wide availability of online customer reviews (Gen Y writes half of them).
- A faster stream of product introductions (Gen Y gets bored fast).
- Bigger, more comfortable dressing rooms (Gen Yers like to bring in friends to review outfits).

Generalizing about any group this size is risky. And making broad declarations about this generation is especially dicey, because they pride themselves on being unique. Some Gen Yers loathe brands that others in their cohort love. Some prefer thrift-store finds to name brands. But the authors have done their homework. They surveyed 2,000 Americans, conducted 11 focus groups, interviewed hundreds of Gen Yers, spoke with retail executives and spent lots of time in malls.

They found that Gen Y not only decides what they'll wear but often what their parents and grandparents will wear. The authors cite a Denver high school senior who persuaded her 70-year-old grandmother to get Uggs and her 93-year-old great-grandmother to shop at Chico's while teaching her 50-year-old mother to text pictures so they could "keep each other in the retail loop."

Says [General Motors'](#) sales and marketing chief Mark LaNeve, "Younger people teach us what's cool." One of the book's most intriguing findings is the "gaplet" between Gen Yers over 20 and under 20, which makes it hard for retailers to aim messages at the entire group.

Many older Gen Y members grew up without iPods or computers in their bedrooms and shopped within limits as teenagers. By contrast, most of today's teens have cellphones (what the authors call "their third hand") and high-speed Internet connections. The word "recession" isn't in their vocabulary.

"My younger sister is way more into stuff than I was," says Regina, 25, of San Francisco. "She not only wants more, she's so much more particular about what she wants. I see young kids with \$300 jeans and Coach bags."

Recent sales figures, however, suggest that even Gen Y is feeling the economic pinch. Sales for four of the five favorite tween girl brands (Abercrombie, American Eagle, Hollister and [Target](#)) fell in August vs. a year ago. Only Aeropostale saw sales rise. Analysts attribute that bump to the chain lowering prices. The authors say Aeropostale's success is partly due to having dressing rooms in the center of stores, letting Gen Y customers be the center of attention. To paraphrase Freud, what does Gen Y want? The authors say:

- Websites with free overnight or second-day shipping.

- Brands that resonate with them, through hip celebrities or causes.
- To be asked for their opinion.
- Fun shopping experiences.
- "Fast fashion" — pop-up stores and limited-edition items.

What Gen Y doesn't want is heavy-handed advertising aimed at them. Although if the appeal comes in a 20%-off text message on their cellphone, they'll take a look.

Brand Recognition and Worship

Essentially, this means that just like there is comfort in Starbuck's as a brand, and identity, so young worshippers identify with songs.

What Our Current Worship Mess Has Produced

From a current "church shopper," when asked what her criteria was for finding a new church to call home while away at school. The following is her answer....

Well my church had an hour long service which was nice because I tend to have a short attention span when it comes to sermons etc. although length isn't that big of a deal. I just tend to look forward to it more when I know it won't be super long, however that's probably an attitude I should work on fixing because 1 hour of my week is not a big deal at all. Anyways, I went to the contemporary service at my church, so it started at 11:11am and went till 12:11, and it was held in the "center" rather than the sanctuary and had lots of young people but also families. It played loud contemporary music and had kind of a darker (lighting-wise) atmosphere.

Haha I'm not sure of my answers to some of these questions because I don't really have things set in stone of what I want.

But here's my attempt: What are my essentials? I'm not exactly sure, but the music is really important to me because that's my favorite part. I tend to have a hard time focusing on sermons so music is kind of the part that I get sold on, but also a good speaker. I need someone who speaks who is

interesting and to the point. My like to sees? I really like Hillsong, Paul Baloche, Tommy Walker....etc. those type of songs, because those are the ones I know and really enjoy. I love upbeat songs you can rock out to, those are my favorites, but I also enjoy when a few quiet ones are thrown in. The atmosphere of the church is also an attraction, like I like the mood/tone of my old church. [i think i'm just gonna combine my answers to 1 and 2 because while they are "absolutely necessary" they are what I really enjoy. 3. I don't think I have any absolute deal breakers.

Grace had a nice atmosphere, not like my service at home, but it was attractive. I like that there seemed to be a number of BIOLA students there, lots of young people. I like the idea of going to church with kids from school. The music was good but I didn't know most of it, and while I could follow along, I've been missing singing all the songs I know (and the funny thing is, is that I thought I knew LOTS of worship music from being exposed to it in various areas of my church, and then I came to BIOLA and they hardly ever do all the "well-known" artist stuff that I know haha).

Thanks! Bethany

Barna Finds Four Mega-Themes in Recent Research

A high-profile research firm has published a description of the four most salient trends that emerged from its studies throughout 2007. The Barna Group continually tracks cultural changes, especially in relation to matters of faith, entertainment, lifestyles and values. A special analysis of thousands of interviews the company conducted during 2007 identifies several patterns that are significantly affecting the development of American culture. Those transformations were described as Americans' unconditional self-love; nouveau Christianity; the five Ps of parenting; and designer faith with rootless values.

Americans Accept Themselves Unconditionally

Barna studies underscored the fact that Americans have a high opinion of themselves - and lingering reservations about others. Despite their self-satisfaction, many Americans want to continue to change and grow. Among the terms that more than four out of five adults selected to describe themselves were loyal, reliable, independent thinker, supportive of traditional family values, clear about the meaning and purpose of their life,

making a positive difference in the world, and well-informed about current events. More than two out of three also noted that they are open to new ideas and easily adapt to change. The prevailing paths to maturation, however, are usually not characterized by planned or intentional development; instead, engagement in a series of adventurous experiments seems to be the norm. When it does occur, growth takes place rather unpredictably, and the changes accepted are typically adopted on the basis of feelings. Most Americans, it seems, are willing to change as long as the pathway promises benefit and enjoyment, and generally avoids pain, conflict and sacrifice.

The data also indicated that Americans increasingly require unique personal applications for the things they experience. Somewhat paradoxically, they also want to be seen as being in the mainstream of what's happening in society. It seems that many Americans are seeking to be viewed as individuals distinct from the ever-growing masses.

Another oddity observed through the research is that adults - especially those under 30 - regularly strive to be connected to a substantial number of other people and yet possess a nagging sense of loneliness, isolation and restlessness. The constant involvement with social networking via the Internet, text messaging and phone calls via mobile devices, and frequent appearances at common hangouts (think Starbucks, movie theaters and favorite restaurants) are manifestations of the investment in relationships and connections that are important but somehow not as fulfilling as desired.

Nouveau Christianity

The research discovered that people are reframing not just faith in general, but Christianity in particular. While slightly fewer adults - and many fewer teens - are identifying themselves as Christians these days, the image of the Christian faith has taken a beating. This battered image is the result of a combination of factors: harsh media criticism, "unchristian" behavior by church people, bad personal experiences with churches, ineffective Christian leadership amid social crises, and the like. The result is that those who choose to remain Christian - however they define it - are also reformulating the popular notion of what "Christian" and the Christian life mean. Some of those changes are producing favorable outcomes, while others are less appealing.

For instance, a generational analysis of the Barna data showed that spiritual practices among those who claim to be Christians are shifting dramatically. New practices are in vogue: embracing racial diversity and tolerance within congregations; pursuing spiritual diversity in conversations

and relationships; valuing interpersonal connections above spiritual education; blending all forms of the arts and novel forms of instruction into religious events; and accepting divergent forms of spiritual community (e.g., house churches, intentional communities, marketplace ministries). Traditional ventures such as integrating discipline and regimen in personal faith development are becoming less popular. Repeating the same weekly routines in religious events is increasingly deemed anachronistic, stifling and irrelevant. Rigidity of belief - which includes the notion that there are absolute moral and spiritual truths - is perceived by a large (and growing) share of young people to be evidence of closed-mindedness. The result is a nouveau form and structure for the Christian faith that will have broad-based consequences on the practice of Christianity for years to come.

CHAPTER FOUR

"What Is Worship Anyway"

As the psychologist says in Peter Shaffer's play *Equus*, "If you don't worship, you'll shrink."

"Worship – to fear God."
J.I. Packer

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge...
Proverbs 1:7

My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"
Your face, LORD, I will seek.
Psalms 27:8

First, our God is a seeker. He wants a relationship with his creatures, he desires to communicate with us, and to have communion with us. He is relentless, he is full of mercy and love, and he is slow to anger. Listen to how Isaiah 65:1,2 puts it:

I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me...I said, 'Here am I, here am I'...All day long I have held out my hands...

God is the seeker, and our role is to respond. As creatures we are to move toward our Creator, to value him above all else, and to fit in with his plans and purposes. There is no worship until we come to that point. God is waiting for us to respond back to him, to live life his way, to fit in with his revealed word – and that is worship. If we will humble ourselves, God will come to us.

Jesus says in revelation 3:20, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."

God says in Isaiah 57:15 that he lives in a high and holy place. But in the same breath he mentions that he also dwells with those who are contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive their spirit and their heart.

James 4:8 says that if we come near to God, he will come near to us. Remember the verse from last week. I will bring him near and he will come close to me, for who is he who will devote himself to be close to me? (Jeremiah 30:21)

If you want to get warm, you must stand near the fire. If you want to be wet you must get into the water. If you want joy, power, peace, eternal life, you must get close to or even into, the thing that has them. They are not a like prizes which God could, if he chose, just hand out to anyone. They are a great fountain of energy and beauty spurting up at the very center of reality. If you are close to the spring, it will wet you. If you are not, you will remain dry.

C. S. Lewis MERE CHRISTIANITY page 135

When I first began to draw near to belief in God and even for some time after it had been given to me, I found a stumbling block in the demand so clamorously made by all religious people that we should 'praise' God; still more in the suggestion that God Himself demanded it....He is that Object to admire which (or, if you like, to appreciate which) is simply to be awake, to have entered the real world; not to appreciate which is to have lost the greatest experience, and in the end to have lost all..... I did not see that it is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His presence to men.

C. S. Lewis Reflections on the Psalms – chapter 9

This pursuit of God is no small thing. It is to consume us. We will never regret it. God becomes our refuge, our source of everything good, a hedge against the world. His portion and the cup he has us drink make us secure, not disappointed. His boundary lines that he draws up for us are deeply satisfying, and lastingly so. We can't get enough of him. Even at night – in our sleep - our hearts beat with his. Because he is our Rock, we can't be shaken. Our heart is glad, and we can't help but speak his praise. The path of life is under our feet, we are filled with joy in his presence, and through all eternity, we will enjoy eternal pleasures at his right hand. (Psalm 16) How could we possibly say no to all this? Are we crazy? Yet we do. Listen to C. S. Lewis again....

Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards

promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

C. S. Lewis THE WEIGHT OF GLORY

Most high, most excellent, most potent, most omnipotent; most merciful and most just; most secret and most truly present; most beautiful and most strong; stable, yet not supported; unchangeable, yet changing all things; never new, never old; making all things new, yet bringing old age upon the proud, and they know it not; always working, ever at rest; gathering, yet needing nothing; sustaining, pervading, and protecting; creating, nourishing, and developing; seeking, and yet possessing all things. You love, but without passion; you are jealous, yet free from care; you repent without remorse; are angry, yet remain serene. You change your ways, leaving your plans unchanged; you recover what you had never really lost. Never in need, still you rejoice at your gains; you are never greedy, but still demand dividends. Men pay more than is required so that you become a debtor; yet who can possess anything at all which is not already yours? You owe men nothing, yet pay out to them as if in debt to your creature, and when you cancel debts you have lost nothing. Yet, O my God, my life, my holy Joy, what is this that I have said? What can any man say when he speaks of you? But woe to them that keep silence -- since even those who say most are dumb.

(It's better to attempt to praise and show how little able we are to extol our God, than to just keep quiet out of fear of saying something stupid!)

Augustine CONFESSIONS

Why Worship?

1. It's what we were created for

Without worship, we go about miserable. We are called to an everlasting preoccupation with God. Christian theology teaches the doctrine of prevenient grace, which briefly stated means this, that before a man can seek God, God must first have sought the man. Before a sinful man can think a right thought of God, there must have been a work of enlightenment

done within him; imperfect it may be, but a true work nonetheless, and the secret cause of all desiring and seeking and praying which may follow.

We pursue God because, and only because, He has first put an urge within us that spurs us to the pursuit. *'No man can come to me,'* said our Lord, *'except the Father which hath sent me draw him,'* and it is by this very prevenient drawing that God takes from us every vestige of credit for he act of coming. The impulse to pursue God originates with God, but the outworking of that impulse is our following hard after Him; and all the time we are pursuing Him we are already in His hand: *'Thy right hand upholdeth me.'* In this divine *'upholding'* and human *'following'* there is no contradiction. All is of God, for as von Hugel teaches, God is always previous.

In practice, however, (that is, where God's previous working meets man's present response) man must pursue God. On our part there must be positive reciprocation if this secret drawing of God is to eventuate in identifiable experience of the Divine. In the warm language of personal feeling this is stated in the Forty-second Psalm: *'As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?'* This is deep calling unto deep, and the longing heart will understand it.

"The doctrine of justification by faith--a Biblical truth, and a blessed relief from sterile legalism and unavailing self-effort--has in our time fallen into evil company and been interpreted by many in such manner as actually to bar men from the knowledge of God. The whole transaction of religious conversion has been made mechanical and spiritless. Faith may now be exercised without a jar (without interrupting) to the moral life and without embarrassment to the Adamic ego. Christ may be *'received'* without creating any special love for Him in the soul of the receiver. The man is *'saved,'* but he is not hungry nor thirsty after God. In fact he is specifically taught to be satisfied and encouraged to be content with little. The doctrine of justification by faith--a Biblical truth, and a blessed relief from sterile legalism and unavailing self-effort--has in our time fallen into evil company and been interpreted by many in such manner as actually to bar men from the knowledge of God. The whole transaction of religious conversion has been made mechanical and spiritless."

Tozer THE PURSUIT OF GOD Chapter 1

GOD COULD DEMAND WORSHIP – He is at the center of everything

What does it mean to be God?

*Every living soul belongs to me. (Ezekiel 18:4)

*With my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its peoples... and I give it to anyone I please. (Jer. 27:5)

*Numbers 27:16 refers to the Lord as the God of the spirits of all mankind.

*To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. (Deuteronomy 10:14)

*The earth is the Lord's and all who live in it...(Ps. 24:1)

*...a man's life is not his own... (Jer. 10:23)

*God, for whom and through whom everything exists... (Heb. 2:10)

*God gives all men life and breath and everything else... (Acts 17:25)

*Dominion belongs to the Lord... (Psalm 22:28)

*We are his offspring... (Acts 17:28,29)

Everything under heaven belongs to me. (Job 41:11)

*For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. (Eph. 3:14)

*God, who gives life to everything.. (1 Tim. 6:13)

*In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind. (Job 12:10)

*In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists... (Heb. 2:10)

*This is what God the LORD says—

he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it... (Is. 42:5)

*But you did not honor the God who holds your hands in his life and all your ways. (Daniel 5:23)

*We belong to the Lord.... (Romans 14:8)

*..the world is mine, and all that is in it. (Ps. 50:12)

*All things serve you. (Psalm 119:91)

Is it any wonder that Jeremiah bursts out – *Who should not revere you, O King of the nations? This is your due. Jeremiah 10:7*

We can even see our privilege to live for God as an imposition. Remember the parable of the talents? The guy with the one talent couldn't have been less interested in fitting in with God's agenda.

'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. Matthew 25:24 – 26

What a disaster to have a wrong view of God. Sure, he has power. Sure, he could compel us all to worship him. But our God is not like that. He is gracious. He woos us. He is winsome. Here is the true God, the One we want to worship and adore and magnify. Listen to Jonathan Edwards....

God glorifies himself towards the creatures also in two ways: 1. By appearing to...their understanding. 2. In communicating Himself to their hearts, and in their rejoicing and delighting in, and enjoying, the manifestations which He makes of Himself...God is glorified not only by His glory's being seen, but by its being rejoiced in. When those that see it delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it. His glory is then received by the whole soul, both by the understanding and by the heart. God made the world that He might communicate, and the creatures receive, His glory; and that it might be received both by the mind and by the heart. He that testifies his idea of God's glory doesn't glorify God so much as he that testifies also his approbation of it and his delight in it.

Piper, GOD'S PASSION FOR HIS GLORY, page 79

Do you feel uncomfortable with a God that always aims to glorify himself? Does that seem 'unworthy of God?' How could a God of moral perfection be concerned with himself? Many are troubled by the jealous God of the Old Testament. How could a loving God be concerned first and foremost with his honor? J. I. Packer speaks to this specifically in his book HOT-TUB RELIGION....

Many of these people are themselves trying as best they can to face and fight this desire. Hence they conclude that for God to be self-centered

would be equally wrong. The vehemence with which they reject the idea that the holy God would exalt himself reflects their acute sense of the guiltiness of their own self-seeking.

Is their conclusion valid? We repeat: It is, in fact, a complete mistake. If it is right for man to have the glory of God as his goal, can it be wrong for God to have the same goal? If man can have no higher purpose than God's glory, how can God? If it is wrong for man to seek a lesser end than this, it would be wrong for God, too. The reason it cannot be right for man to live for himself, as if he were God, is because he is not God. However, it cannot be wrong for God to seek his own glory, simply because he is God. Those who insist that God should not seek his glory in all things are really asking that he cease to be God. And there is no greater blasphemy than to will God out of existence.

If the objectors' line of reasoning is so clearly false, why do so many today believe it? The plausibility of the argument derives from our habit of making God in our image and thinking of him as if he and we stood on the same level. In other words, his obligations to us and ours to him correspond – as if he were bound to serve us and further our well-being with the same selflessness with which we are obligated to serve him. This is, in effect, to think of God as if he were a man, albeit a great one. If this way of thinking were right, then for God to seek his own glory in everything would indeed make him comparable to the worst of men and to Satan himself. But our Maker is not a man, not even an omnipotent superman. And this way of thinking of him is gross idolatry. (page 27-29)

So worship is what we were created for. Worship is the appropriate response of the creature to the Creator. The end of creation is that the creature might glorify God. Now what is glorifying God, but a rejoicing at that glory he has displayed? The happiness of the creature consists in rejoicing in God, by which also God is magnified and exalted.”

Edwards quoted in GOD'S PASSION Piper page 32

Did you catch that? The happiness of the creature consists in rejoicing in God. What would happen if we would truly come to understand that? Everything in us screams that this is not true, that God just can't be all that satisfying. And so we look elsewhere. In Jeremiah 2, God accuses his people of forsaking him, the spring of living water. How? They dug their own cistern, that's how. They looked for other sources to quench their thirst. And the cisterns they dug were deficient – incapable of holding water. So why is the Psalmist so enthusiastic when he says....

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. Psalm 100:1-4

...because he knows that when we do – when the creature “exercises a supreme regard for the Creator in beholding his glory, in esteeming it and loving it, and rejoicing in it, then not only will God be glorified, but we will be satisfied, truly satisfied, finding our happiness as God is magnified and glorified.

*Man alone is made to serve his Lord in all his ways,
and be the Trumpet of his praise.
Francis Quarles vol. 2, p. 28*

**All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.
Him serve with fear, His praise forth tell;
Come ye before Him and rejoice.**

**The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;
Without our aid He did us make;
We are His folk, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take.**

**O enter then His gates with praise;
Approach with joy His courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless His Name always,
For it is seemly so to do.**

**For why? the Lord our God is good;
His mercy is for ever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.**

**To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
The God Whom Heaven and earth adore,
From men and from the angel host**

**Be praise and glory evermore.
WORDS ATTRIBUTED TO WILLIAM KETHE**

We are made in God's image. We have the spiritual capacity to engage with God's spirit. Since we are made in the image of God, we have the built in software to interface with God. Communication with God is possible.

You and I are in little (our sins excepted) what God is in large. Being made in His image we have within us the capacity to know Him. In our sins we lack only the power. The moment the Spirit has quickened us to life in regeneration our whole being senses its kinship to God and leaps up in joyous recognition. That is the heavenly birth without which we cannot see the Kingdom of God. It is, however, not an end but an inception, for now begins the glorious pursuit, the heart's happy exploration of the infinite riches of the Godhead. That is where we begin, I say, but where we stop no man has yet discovered, for there is in the awful and mysterious depths of the Triune God neither limit nor end.

(Tozer THE PURSUIT OF GOD chapter 1)

God is the highest good of the reasonable creature, and the enjoyment of him is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. — To go to heaven fully to enjoy God, is *infinitely* better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, children, or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows. But the enjoyment of God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the fountain. These are but drops, but God is the ocean. — Therefore it becomes us to spend this life only as a journey towards heaven, as it becomes us to make the seeking of our highest end and proper good, the whole work of our lives, to which we should subordinate all other concerns of life. Why should we labor for, or set our hearts on anything else, but that which is our proper end, and true happiness?

Our present state, and all that belongs to it, is designed by him that made all things, to be wholly in order to another world. — This world was made for a place of preparation for another. Man's mortal life was given him, that he might be prepared for his fixed state. And all that God has here given us, is given to this purpose. The sun shines, the rain falls upon us, and the earth yields her increase to us for this end. Civil, ecclesiastical, and family affairs, and all our personal concerns, are designed and ordered in

subordination to a future world, by the maker and disposer of all things. To this therefore they ought to be subordinated by us.

Jonathan Edwards THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIM

Why Worship?

2. God means to transform us

We get changed in the presence of God.

Being made in God's likeness (Genesis 1:26) means that we have a moral similarity with God whereby we can grow as we live in communion with God. God not only has graciously given us the initial and fundamental capacity, but aids us in the process and promises that the goal will ultimately be realized some day.

*And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect (or contemplate) the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
2 Corinthians 3:18*

"We only learn to behave ourselves in the presence of God."

C.S. Lewis

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth." Genesis 28:10-21

In worship we take in the outpouring of God's creative and redemptive love, and we offer in return our thanks and supplications. In this personal exchange we are coming into the moral and spiritual likeness of our Lover. This transformation is our glorification in both the objective and subjective senses: by grace we are being enriched by the requital (response or repayment) of his love on the part of his creatures. Our being changed from glory into glory is itself for the greater glory of God. Wainwright p. 462

When we speak of glory, and God gaining glory, what do we mean? What does it mean, for instance, when Isaiah says that "the whole earth is full of his glory?" On earth, glory is the sign of God's active presence. The word denotes both his character and his presence. We glorify God as we grow in conformity with his character, and are changed into his likeness. And we become glorified in the process. When we commune with God in worship, our human character is transformed according to God's own character, and this is experienced as the enjoyment of God. The believer "feeds on the will of God." (Wainwright page 17) Jesus said to his disciples when they asked him if he had eaten, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me... (John 4:34)

"The more clearly we behold the Lord's glory, the more brightly should we reflect it in our living. If as persons we are growing in the moral and spiritual likeness of God, our actions will congruously make us fellow-workers with God in the establishment of his kingdom. Wainwright," p. 437

Worship of God subdues sin

All duties of worship tend to the wounding of corruption.

Why Worship?

3. To not worship God is to invite condemnation

If we don't worship, we stand to experience God's wrath. There is no middle ground, no neutrality.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. Romans 1:18-20

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. Psalm 19:1-4

Matt. 4:10 "Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only."

Rev. 14:7 Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water.

Deut. 6:13 Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name.

Deut. 10:20 Fear the Lord your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. He is your praise, he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes.

Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God? 1 Samuel 6:20

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12:28,29

Lev. 10: 1-3 Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of

the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke of when he said:

*" 'Among those who approach me
I will show myself holy;
in the sight of all the people
I will be honored.' "*

Exodus 24: 3 When Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the Lord has said we will do."

Genesis 18:19 For I have chosen him (Abraham) so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.

Joshua 23:6-8 "Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. But you are to hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have until now.

Zechariah 14:16 Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles

Why Worship?

4. To worship God now

is to get in on the ground floor of eternity

GOD HAS A PLAN THAT HE IS ACHIEVING

*All mankind will fear;
They will proclaim the works of God
And ponder what he has done.*

Psalm 64:9

*At the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
In heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess the Jesus Christ is Lord,*

*to the glory of God the Father.
Philippians 2:10,11*

*All the nations you have made will come
and worship before you, O Lord;
They will bring glory to your name.
For you are great and do marvelous deeds;
You alone are God.
Psalm 86:9,10*

*No one is like you, O Lord,
you are great,
and your name is mighty in power.
Who should not revere you,
O King of the nations?
This is your due.
Jeremiah 10:6,7*

*The Lord is the true God;
he is the living God,
the eternal King.
Jeremiah 10:10*

Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song:

*"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals,
because you were slain, and with your blood
you purchased men for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.
You have made them to be a kingdom
and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth."*

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang:

*"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!"*

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

*"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!"*

The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Revelation 5:6-14

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean." (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he

determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. 27God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill. 30In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." Acts 17:16-34

Perhaps nowhere is Lewis's consciousness of the utter difference between God and those made in His image greater than in his compelling science fiction trilogy, the Space Trilogy, consisting of three books, *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*. Lewis draws the reader into a world of time and space travel, alternate worlds, evil and technological destruction and good and selfless sacrifice. It is the story of all stories, the redemption story that began in Eden and, for this series, ends in post-World War II England: God has created us for glory. We have abandoned Him in favor of our own evil desires. He has done everything to redeem us to Himself. Will we respond in faith believing, inheriting the glory prepared for us? Or will we respond with continued self-worship and absorption, damned by our own idolatry to worship ourselves, gods beneath our own dignity? The first way is God's way. The second—whether cloaked in pantheism, polytheism, the henotheism (worshipping one God, while acknowledging the existence of other gods) of Mormon theology, or the masterful guise of materialistic humanism—is not.

Listen to Piper again...

What is at stake in the doctrinal hollowing out of contemporary evangelicalism is the loss of God. And with him the loss of his truth and beauty, we lose the ability to see and savor God. Soon we may wake up and discover the evangelical king has no clothes on. The successes are hallow. And worst of all, our very reason for being may be lost – the capacity to know and love the glory of God. And if we lose the true knowledge of God and the true love of God – the seeing and savoring of God and the true love

of God – then we lose our ability to reflect his truth and beauty in the world. And the world loses God. That is finally what is at stake.

GOD’S PASSION PAGE 83

GOD, THE BLESSED AND ONLY RULER, THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS, WHO ALONE IS IMMORTAL AND WHO LIVES IN UNAPPROACHABLE LIGHT, WHOM NO ONE HAS SEEN OR CAN SEE. TO HIM BE HONOR AND MIGHT FOREVER. 1 Timothy 6:15

Lord, if thou are not present, where shall I seek thee absent? If everywhere, why do I not see thee present? Thou dwellest in light inaccessible; and where is that inaccessible light? Or how shall I have access to light inaccessible? I beseech thee, Lord, teach me to seek thee, and show thyself to the seeker, because I can neither seek thee, unless thou teach me, nor find thee, unless thou show thyself to me: Let me seek thee in desiring thee, and desire thee in seeking thee: Let me find thee in loving thee, and love thee in finding thee.

Anselm EMBLEMS p. 240

O light inaccessible, in respect of which my light is utter darkness; so reflect upon my weakness, that all the world may behold thy strength: O majesty Incomprehensible, in respect of which my glory is mere shame: to shine upon my misery that all the world may behold thy glory.

F. Quarles Vol. 3 page 191

CHAPTER FIVE

"Informing The Head To Warm The Heart"

In churches everywhere, the same problem exists. The Sunday service has become the place where all the programs of the church converge and find their expression. And with the disappearance of the Sunday evening service, there is no longer any option available.

You've all experienced this. A couple of songs are sung at the front of the service, mainly to settle the worshippers, and warn those out in the lobby that it is time to find a seat, which they do during the singing of the second song.

Then most likely begins the variety portion of the service. Announcements often are placed here, and frequently are all over the map, especially now that video communication has become the medium of choice. Maybe a baptism or two follows, or perhaps the new membership class is graduating, and needs to be welcomed into the life of the church. Or perhaps the children have just memorized some scripture, and publicly commending them is desired. There may be a trustee announcement that precedes the offering, and the person singing the offertory happens to be a guest musician, who needs to be acknowledged. (And, yes, they do have cd's for sale in the back).

Following the offering, there is just enough time to squeeze in one more song (so that the children can be dismissed). Then, following the reading of scripture, the sermon ensues. Whew!

At this point, a lot may have been communicated, but the heart of the worshipper is pretty unmoved, in roughly the same state that it was in the parking lot. There has been no time to reflect, to wonder, to pause, to hear, or to sing in response to something. It seems like everything musical has had some ulterior purpose.

What to do? Let me ask you, when was the last time you were at an orchestra concert? People pretty much seem to come on time. At the appointed hour, there is now the prefatory announcement to turn cell phones off. Open your candy wrappers now. The place gets very quiet. Expectation is heightened. Suddenly from stage left the conductor appears, the applause begins, the orchestra takes a bow, everyone is seated, the conductor takes to the podium, intense quiet follows, and then the music begins.

There has been no announcement regarding the young musicians association needing funding. Nobody has been told that they left their lights

on. We haven't been dragged into the finagling over the musicians union contract. A controversial new assistant conductor has just been named, but not mentioned. We are here to have our souls transported by some wonderful music. And here we go.

What's my point? Simply that a symphony concert has something to teach us about the composition (pun intended) of a worship service. The goal is the heart of the worshipper. It must be transformed. All that follows is to that end. Heart change is the Holy Spirit's business, and He's very good at it.

But we must first see the Lord, or no change will happen. Our minds must leave the mundane and focus on the God we worship. His character must grab our attention, and awaken gratitude. We need to pray. We need to reflect, until we get caught up in who He is, and we are moved by His grace once again.

How can this best happen? I believe that a symphony has something to teach us. The composer gets our full and rapt attention, and not for just one movement. He has something he wants to say, and four or five movements in which to do so.

Can you imagine a program where the opening number was just the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth, the *Allegro con brio*? Duh duh duh duh....duh duh duh duh.... You're there for the 5th. You are pumped. But to your amazement, the first movement finishes, the conductor turns and begins to bow. Incredulously, you look at the program.

Oh no! To your horror you see that the next composition is by Steve Reich, a composition called *Music for Pieces of Wood* (1973) for five pair of tuned claves. Yikes! Not exactly duh duh duh duh... You listen impatiently, longing for something, anything to hum. The applause is tepid.

Next follows a madrigal by John Wilbye entitled "Unkind! O Stay Thy Flying for SSATB. It's nice enough, I suppose, if you like madrigals.... Last but not least, you are left with the fifth and final movement of Mahler's grand *Resurrection Symphony*, complete with onstage trumpeters and reinforcement players off stage. Thrilling!

But as you leave, you feel empty. You have just been programmatically yanked all over the place for the last hour and a half. You had no sense of where you were headed, or where you had been, or why you were hearing what you were hearing. Notes and sounds came whizzing, confusing you emotionally. Nothing seemed connected. There was no context, dare I say it? If there was a grand theme, it wasn't obvious.

And now we get to the heart of what I want to say.

Obviously, a symphony is meant to be a unit, and when performed in order of the movements as composed, the proper and intended message

results. Why would we expect it to be any different in worship? A case could be made that the public worship of God is like a tone poem. It is meant to go somewhere, and has a desired emotional response. Why else would Death and Transfiguration be called Death and Transfiguration? Strauss wanted to take us somewhere.

Much of our worship today is smorgasbord. Meaning there is something on the menu for everybody. If meat and potatoes is your thing, just ignore the salad bar. Or go straight to the dessert. I am suggesting that worship is better as a sit down meal that has been carefully prepared by a fine chef.

Did you ever see the movie *Babette's Feast*? A small and dying sect of believers is served an amazing meal by Babette, in appreciation for the love she has received for 14 years. And she spends all her lottery earnings on the ultimate meal. The meal has been reluctantly agreed to by three sisters, daughters of the founder of their sect. Included on the menu is a live sea turtle, quail, numerous wines, fine china and crystal from France.

An amazing thing happens. As these believers take of this meal, and delight in each new taste, old wrongs are forgotten, ancient loves are rekindled, and a mystical redemption of the human spirit settles over the table - thanks to the general elation nurtured by the consumption of so many fine culinary delicacies and spirits. No one is allowed to bring in MacDonal'd's. In eating the same food prepared by the same chef, they enjoy a common experience.

Worship is corporate, not individual. I heard about a church that chartered a train for a picnic outing. Their destination was an hour away. The train made no stops, picked up no passengers. It had a specific place it was headed. The congregation arrived, enjoyed their time together, got back on the waiting train, and returned home. There were no side trips. Nobody got off early. They had a corporate experience.

Corporate worship is maximized when it has a destination. Let's just say that the topic is hope. Not a bad choice these days, what with the economic uncertainty and all. What if you started off by saying to the congregation a word of encouragement. Try this...

How are you going to be different one hour and fifteen minutes from now? Here's my prayer for you. The God of Hope, by His Holy Spirit, is going to fill you with all joy and peace in believing. That's Paul's words in Romans 15:13.

When you leave this place, you are going to overflow with hope, for our God is able to do immeasurably more than all we could ask or imagine. In the quiet of this moment, why

don't you ask the Lord to do nothing less than this in you this morning.

Now follow that with THE SOLID ROCK. "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness...." This song reminds them that their hope is not based on the economy, on who is president, or how happy their marriage is, or how fulfilling their job is. Already, their spirit is being realigned with God's purposes. Now what?

In Romans 15:5, Paul refers to **the God who gives endurance and encouragement**. Just how does God encourage us? Remember Gideon? God enlisted him to take on the Midianites. In order to keep Israel from boasting, the army was whittled from probably 25,000 to 300. That's encouragement? God knew he needed assurance, so....

...that night the LORD said to Gideon, "Get up, go down against the camp, because I am going to give it into your hands. If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp." So he and Purah his servant went down to the outposts of the camp. The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore. Gideon arrived just as a man was telling a friend his dream. "I had a dream," he was saying. "A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed." His friend responded, "This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands." When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped God. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, "Get up! The LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands." Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside. "Watch me," he told them. "Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around

the camp blow yours and shout, 'For the LORD and for Gideon.' " Judges 7

O.K. You have just allowed scripture to enlarge the heart. The passage showed that God really does encourage us, and help us to hope and trust in him. He really does have our best at heart. He is thinking ahead for us. He is orchestrating events in our favor. He is for us. The mind is loaded. Now the spirit needs a chance to expel praise. EVERLASTING GOD would be a wonderful song right here. It reminds us of the truth of Isaiah 40:31, that God gives strength to the weary. Our hope tank is filling up.

Now what? Let's access the power of scripture again to remind us of how those who have gone before us have coped, and hoped.

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead - since he was about a hundred years old - and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

Romans 4:18-23

Now that Abraham has inspired us to keep trusting in the promises of God, just what are those promises that we are hoping for? My song walks you through them this way.

For the New Jerusalem
For eternal rest with Him
Halleluiah and Amen!
THIS IS THE HOPE WE HAVE!
Our Redeemer face to face
Then the Father's glad embrace
Now and always in His grace
THIS IS THE HOPE WE HAVE!

CHORUS

So we run with perseverance now
Being held, we hold on tight somehow
Till at Jesus' feet we humbly bow
This is the hope we have
The hope we have

From the seed of suffering
Persevering faith will spring
Where O death is now your sting?
THIS IS THE HOPE WE HAVE!
No more night, no tears, no pain
As the Lamb who once was slain
Claims His right to rule and reign
THIS IS THE HOPE WE HAVE!

Our salvation now complete
Trophies laid at Jesus' feet
At that marriage feast we'll eat
THIS IS THE HOPE WE HAVE!
Saved forever from the rod
There before the throne of God
Faithful love we'll then applaud
THIS IS THE HOPE WE HAVE!
Walt Harrah 2008 Seedsower Music ASCAP

By now the theme of hope is hitting home. People are beginning to track with you. Now how can it become more personal? Try this....

Alexander Whyte recalls Lady Kenmure, who was one of the Campbells of Argyll in Scotland back in the 17th Century. They were a family distinguished for their depth of piety, and he comments that Lady Jane was "one of the most richly-gifted members of that richly-gifted house."

But she had her own crosses to carry. She had the sore cross of bad health to carry all her days. Then she had the sad misfortune to "make a very bad marriage in the morning of her days" and, partly as the result of all that, and partly because of

her peculiar mental constitution, her whole life was "drenched with a deep melancholy."

On September 14th, 1664, Her pastor, Samuel Rutherford wrote to her on September 14th, 1664, when she had just become a widow...

Madam, let me implore you, in the bowels of Christ Jesus, and by the comforts of His Spirit, and because you know that in the future you will appear before him: let God, and men, and angels now see what is in you. The Lord has pierced the vessel; it will be known whether there be in it wine or water.

Let your faith and patience be seen, that it may be known your only beloved first and last has been Christ. Therefore, now cast your whole love upon Jesus Christ; He alone is a suitable object for your love and all the affections of your soul. God has dried up one channel of your love by the removal of your husband.

Let now that river run upon Christ. I dare say that God's hammering of you from your youth is only to make you a fair carved stone in the high upper temple of the New Jerusalem. Your Lord never thought this world's worthless, imitation glory a gift worthy of you; and therefore would not bestow it on you, because he is offering you a better portion.

Let the small change go; the great inheritance is yours. You are a child of the house, and joy is laid up for you; it is long in coming, but none the worse for that. I am now expecting to see, and that with joy and comfort, that which I hoped of you: that you have laid such strength upon the Holy One of Israel, that you defy troubles, and that your soul is a castle that may be besieged, but cannot be taken.

Your soul is a castle that may be besieged, but cannot be taken. Why not stop and pray. "Father, many of us here have been watching our hope shrivel up and die. For some of us, our hope has flatlined. You are the God of hope. All over this room right now, would you revive hope? Would you restore confidence in your word? We place our lives back into your hands. Help us to "let the small change go." Forgive us for taking control from you, for thinking we knew better than you. Restore what the locusts have eaten. We say with Habakkuk...*Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no*

food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

Now let's say these words together (and on your media, make these words available)

CONGREGATION AND LEADER TOGETHER:

The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

What better song now than BE STILL MY SOUL? Or BLESSED BE THE NAME? The offering would fit beautifully here. Why? The heart is overflowing. The people are ready to show gratitude. And don't destroy the spirit that is in the place with a bunch of announcements. As people are giving, have them sing, continuing the theme. NOW AND FOREVER is a contemporary restatement of Psalm 23.

The Lord is my Shepherd
I never will be in want
In shady green pastures
there's comfort and rest
Beside the still water
my soul is restored again
He leads me in paths of righteousness

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
now and forever
I will dwell in His presence eternally
now and forever
now and forever

Though I walk through the valley
as shadows of death draw near
No evil can harm me
there's nothing to fear
His loving protection
is stronger than all my foes
My cup of salvation overflows

Walt Harrah 2008 Seedsower Music ASCAP

CHAPTER SIX

"Has Anyone Seen My Bible?"

Man was made to know good with his mind, to desire it, once he has come to know it, with his affections, and to cleave to it, once he has felt its attraction, with his will: the good in this case being God, his truth and his law. God accordingly moves us, not by direct actions on the affections or will, but by addressing our mind with his word, and so bringing to bear on us the force of truth. Our first task, therefore, if we would serve God, is to learn the contents of God's word written. Affection may be the helm of the ship, but the mind must steer; and the chart to steer by is God's revealed truth. **A QUEST FOR GODLINESS by J. I. Packer (page 195)**

***"Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD,
"and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"***

Jeremiah 23:29

When I was a kid (the fifties!) we used to have Bible drills. Maybe some of you remember. (Maybe some of you still do that??) Anyway, everybody would hold their Bible in the air (bringing them to church was common then) and the leader would shout out a reference. Then began this wild scramble to be the first to find the text, and if your knowledge of those 66 books was razorsharp, and you were fast to your feet, you would proudly leap to up and read the passage, impressing all of your friends (we didn't do high fives back then, but that would have been the time). Of course, we never worried about what we were reading *might mean*, or how to apply it in our lives. The emphasis was purely on speed, not content.

Looking back now on those days, I both cringe and feel slightly nostalgic. The nostalgic part is that the Bible was a bigger deal back then. The cringing part is that we devalued what the Bible was trying to convey to us. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that God's Word has fallen on hard times in our day. It seems like the more the translations, the smaller the readership! For a hundred years at least, critics have taken pot shots in the name of scholarship, picking away methodically as confidence in the Bible's reliability has waned steadily. Face it, the whole concept of truth has changed. You know, your truth, my truth. As Bill Clinton said, "it depends on what the meaning of *is* is..."

Truthfully (yes, the irony is intended) this problem is not new. The human race has never liked authority from outside that sets an agenda other

than the one we personally approve of. And if God's word is about anything, it's about what He is up to, what He loves and hates, and just how we can come under His blessing. God has a plan, and when we find it and fit into it, all is well. You want a recipe to ultimate joy and happiness and satisfaction, then this Book is for you.

Yet somehow we remain unconvinced. In Isaiah 8, God has had enough of His people consulting anything and everything but Him.

*When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, **they have no light of dawn**. Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.*

Isaiah 8:19-22

No light of dawn. Wow. Just what do we lose when we set the Bible aside, and never dust it off? We lose our map, that's what. We set our compass aside. It's like going from GPS in your car to having to cross the road blindfolded with only a cane. Losing sight of God's Word always results in spiritual blindness.

2 Chronicles 34 tells of the priesthood cleansing the temple after a dark period in Israel's history. Hilkiah the priest found "the book of the law," dusted it off, and ran and told Shaphan, a king's aid. Shaphan took the book to the king, and informed him, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book."

A book! He didn't even know what he had. But they began reading, and would you believe a revival resulted? The king repented, then the people repented. There were tears mixed with new resolve, and as long as Josiah continued to reign, the people continued to follow the Lord. Wonderful story.

So why is it that we read every manual we can find to help us do our jobs better, but do we go to God's word, to hear from Him? We network, we conference - all to be as relevant as we can. And meanwhile the Bible doesn't quite fit into our busy schedule. Hello! God's word is food! It is designed to uniquely satisfy, as nothing else can. Is it any wonder that we are distressed and hungry, as we rummage through the garbage cans of culture (and the internet!) to find some morsel of half-truth to get us through another week?

The Bible makes wonderful claims about itself:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:14-17

In Jeremiah, the prophet at one point aims his prophetic guns at the other prophets.

Which of the has stood in the council of the Lord to see or hear his word? Who has listened and heard his word? Jeremiah 23:18

What difference does it make, you ask?

If they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds. Jeremiah 23:22

The book of Hebrews tells us that scripture is *living and active*, able to penetrate *even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart....everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.*

Hebrews 4:12:13

Without this transcendent Word in its life, the church has no rudder, no compass, no provisions. Without the Word, it has no capacity to stand outside its culture, to detect and wrench itself free from the seductions of modernity. Without the Word, the church has no meaning. It may seek substitutes for meaning in committee work, relief work, and various other church activities, but such things cannot fill the role for very long.

Cut off from the meaning that God has given, faith cannot offer anything more by way of light in our dark world than what is offered by philosophy, psychology, or sociology. Cut off from God's meaning, the church is cut off from God; it loses its identity as the people of God in belief, in practice, in hope.

Cut off from God's word, the church is on its own, left to live for itself, by itself, upon itself. It is never lifted beyond itself, above its culture.

It is never stretched or tried. It grows more comfortable, but it is the comfort of anaesthesia, of a refusal to pay attention to the disturbing realities of God's truth.

GOD IN THE WASTELAND David E. Wells (page 150)

We need often to be in a solitary place, alone, for a hearkening to the Word of God in an hour like this. We need a shut door, a bowed heart, a listening ear, a believing soul, a mood of expectance, as we open again these pages, which contain for us, and for those who will hear, the truth regarding the origin of the world, which is so troubling our contemporary scientists, the great redemptive work accomplished for us in Christ Jesus the center of all history, and the end of this age with its violence, anarchy, world dictatorship, and increasing blasphemy which will be terminated with the coming again of Him who will bring peace on this earth, power over every evil force, joy and abundance of life to the nations that will then be on earth, and a body of resurrection glory and eternal life to all who are redeemed by His precious blood. For ministers of the Word particularly, this is the supreme hour to put away everything trivial, to demand of ourselves a more careful use of time, a severer discipline of mind, a determination that secondary things will not rule where primary things ought only to be enthroned, that we may be found when the Lord comes as the "workman who needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth."

Wilbur M. Smith CHATS FROM A MINISTER'S LIBRARY page 20

The point I am trying to make should be obvious by now. God's word is our biggest ally, and our chief source of support to keep us strong and vital in our faith. It is what we need personally, and what our congregations needs to see oozing out of us. Who else but scripture can promise that it will completely prepare you for all that life throws at you?

One more thing. Enjoying scripture is a learned skill. It is an acquired taste. Ask the Lord to give you a love for His word. He will love that prayer request. So dive in with a reading program, because it takes you by the hand and "tells you what to do." And if you get behind (which you will) just skip those passages and stay current. Eventually you will read through the Bible, and joyfully, at that.

Some people can run a marathon. 26 miles can seem daunting. You start training for it by running around the block. Before long, you'll be up to a mile, and eventually 26 miles will be doable. Bible reading has eternal rewards, for it keeps you in the race, running well, with your eye on the

prize. It invigorates, it revives, it restores, and leads you to the finish line. Give it a chance. You'll never be sorry.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"The Gasoline of Thanks"

*“AMEN!
Praise and glory and wisdom and
thanks
and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever.
Revelation 7:12*

Thanksgiving is the exercise of our memory in the presence of the source of all blessings. Our imaginations are kindled when we contemplate the marvels of creation, the ocean of the fullness of His love, the firmament of His glory, - the exceeding greatness of His power. Lean souls may be restored to health and vigor by the exercise of this lost art.”

Samuel Zwemer

If murmuring were a duty, some saints would never sin, and if mourning were commanded by God they would certainly be saved by works, for they are always sorrowing, and so they would keep his law. Many of the saints of God are as mournful as if they were captives in Babylon, for their life is spent in tears and sighing. They will not chant the joyous psalm of praise, and if there be any that require of them a song, they reply, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

But, my brethren, we are not captives in Babylon; we do not sit down to weep by Babel's streams; "the Lord has broken our captivity, he has brought us up out of the house of our bondage. We are freemen; we are not slaves; we are not sold into the hand of cruel taskmasters, but we that have believed do enter into rest:"

C. H. Spurgeon

God has given us so much, it makes you head swim. *You have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

Now Powerball jackpot lottery could ever compare to the inheritance that God's children look forward to. In love we have been transported into the Kingdom of Light. As you read these words you are breathing the atmosphere of heaven and eternity. God has given us His Spirit to guide us and empower us. Christ in us is our hope of glory! The very thought of what God has done through Christ should make our pulse race. As our world heads towards the brink and threatens to jump, we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Try to get your head around that!!

When we recognize what God has done, and a sense of gratitude begins to grow in us, a heart of thanksgiving emerges. And this, we are told by the writer of Hebrews, constitutes "acceptable worship." The following is an example of gratitude from the heart and mind of John Piper, blessing the Lord for his goodness.

Eternal Father, you never had a beginning. You will never have an ending. You are the Alpha and the Omega. This we believe, because you have revealed it to us. Our hearts leap up with gratitude that you have opened our eyes to see and know that Jesus Christ is your eternal, divine Son, begotten, not made, and that you, O Father, and he, your Son, are one God. We tremble even to take such glorious truths on our lips for fear of dishonoring you with withering and inadequate words.

But we must speak, because we must praise you. Silence would shame us, and the rocks themselves would cry out. You must be praised for who you are in the world you have made. And we must thank you for you have made us taste and see the glory of Jesus Christ, your Son. Oh, to know him! Father, we long to know him.

Banish from our minds low thoughts of Christ. Saturate our souls with the Spirit of Christ and all his greatness. Enlarge our capacities to be satisfied in all that you are for us in him. Reveal to us the Christ, and rivet our attention and our affections on the truth and beauty of your all-glorious Son. And grant that whether rich or poor, sick or sound, we might be transformed by him and become an echo of his excellence in the world. In Jesus' name we pray. AMEN. (Piper SEEING AND SAVORING CHRIST p. 32)

When the writer of Hebrews uses the phrase "acceptable worship," he opens the door to question, "do you mean to be saying that the worship of God is not always acceptable?"

Apparently so. The entire book of Malachi is an account of how Israel has slighted God in their worship. And God has had enough!

Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you," says the Lord Almighty, "and will accept no offering from your hands." Malachi 1:10

An English poet from the 17th Century named Francis Quarles confessed for all of us this way.....

*Lord, 'tis a common curse; we are apt and free
To take the best, and share the worst to thee:
We fleet the Mornings for our own design;
Perchance, the sleepy afternoons are Thine
Thou givest us silk, we offer camel's-hair
Thy blessings march in front, our thanks, in the rear.*

Ouch. But he's right. Thanksgiving is slow to rise to the surface, isn't it? Remember ten lepers were healed, and only one returned to thank Jesus. One. Ten percent were thankful. Is it possible that that percentage holds true in your average Sunday congregation? Not so good.

So what's the big deal with being thankful? Just this. Thanksgiving is the fuel of our worship. It is what drives the engine. And if our tank of thanks is empty, our worship won't get very far. And more distressingly, it is unacceptable to God. It is inadequate.

Thanksgiving is the opposite of grumbling. You can't fret if you're giving thanks.

CHAPTER EIGHT

"Prayer Changes Things"