

**Worship**  
**The Heart of Worship (Part 6)**  
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We do continue our study this morning of the issue of worship, of true worship of our God. This week I was reminded that true worship is a rare commodity in our world. Thanks to the promotion of Oprah Winfrey, a book and a video entitled *The Secret*, by Rhonda Burn have taken the country literally by storm. I'm sure you've seen it in book stores, you've read about it. Over 2 million copies now of the book have been sold. It's topped the New York Times best seller list and the USA Today top 150 best sellers. The promotional for this book, *The Secret* makes this audacious claim, "this is the secret to everything, the secret to unlimited joy, health, money, relationships, love, youth, everything you have ever wanted." No wonder the book is flying off the shelves. So, what is the secret you ask? Well here it is from page 71 of the book, here's the secret. Your current reality or your current life is a result of the thoughts you have been thinking. So, in other words all you have to do then is change your thoughts. Change your thinking; its basic premise is very similar to Scientology or Kabbalah.

Listen to Burn explain herself,

"You are god in a physical body, you are spirit in the flesh, you are eternal life expressing itself as you, you are a cosmic being, you are all power, you are all wisdom, you are all intelligence, you are perfection, you are magnificence, you are the creator, and you are creating the creation of you on this planet. The earth turns on its orbit for you, the oceans ebb and flow for you, the birds sing for you, the sun rises and it sets for you, the stars come out for you." [I'm not making this up by the way, this is from the book.] "Every beautiful thing you see, every wondrous thing you experience is all there for you, take a look around, none of it can exist without you, no matter who you thought you were, now you know the truth of who you really are, you are the master of the universe, you are the heir to the kingdom, you are the perfection of life and now you know the secret."

Sounds a lot like a sign I saw recently that said, "am I self-centered or is it just me." Seriously it sounds a lot more like what Satan promised Eve in the Garden of Eden, you will be like God.

As we've studied recently, every human being has been hard wired to worship. And if they refuse to worship the true God, they will worship something or someone else. Oprah and *The Secret* are encouraging millions of Americans to worship themselves; teaching them that it really is after all, all about you. But true biblical worship, as we've been learning, is not about us at all. It's all about God, the object of our worship matters. Now *The Secret* is an especially egregious example of having the wrong object of worship, but even Christians, who worship the true God, can undermine their worship by having a flawed understanding of God Himself. So, in John 4, Christ teaches us to worship God in truth. To worship God in truth requires that we understand who it is that we're worshipping.

Turn to John 4 and let me read this text for you again, these wonderful teachings of our Lord as He encounters this woman at this the well there in Samaria. She begins this part of the conversation in verse 20 by saying,

“Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and *you people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship,” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”

In this amazing paragraph, this encounter with Jesus and the Samaritan woman, we've discovered that there are buried within it several inviolable laws of true worship. We've discovered several weeks ago now, number 1 that true worship is not external but must rise from the heart. It's not about where your body is it's where your heart is.

Secondly, we've learned that true worship is not merely emotional but must result from knowledge. Jesus told this woman, “you worship what you don't even know” you cannot truly worship without that worship being based on knowledge.

And then over the last couple of weeks we've been looking at the third law of worship, and that is true worship is not intuitive but must be directed by the truth. We find this in verse 23, look at

what Jesus said to this woman, "... an hour is coming, and now is, when ... true worshipers will worship the Father ... in truth". Our worship must be consistent with and directed by truth of God.

Now, there's a sense in which all of God's truth or all of God's revelation is to direct our worship. But Jesus' emphasis here in this place is on understanding the truth about worship itself and the truth about the God that we worship. To worship in truth, we must understand the truth about what worship is, and how we're to worship, and we must understand the truth about whom we worship.

Over the last couple of weeks, we've examined the truth about worship itself. How we are to worship. We concluded our study last week by defining worship. We said that worship is seeing and savoring the supreme value and worthiness of God and responding in "humble submission, thankful praise and adoration, and Godly fear". That is worship. That's what our worship will look like if we want how we worship to be directed by God's truth. But worshiping God in truth not only demands that we understand the truth about worship itself, it also demands that we understand the truth about the object of our worship or about God. There is no true worship if our concept of God is flawed.

That's exactly what happened to the Samaritans isn't it? Jesus told this woman you people aren't truly worshipping the true God even though you think you are because your knowledge of Him is flawed and incomplete. You don't even know who it is you're worshipping. Because they refused to accept God's complete revelation about Himself in Scripture, Jesus told this woman that her worship and the worship of her people was not true worship. That means that if we want to worship in truth, then we must understand the truth about God.

But that raises the question how, how do we learn the truth about God? Where do we go to discover the truth that we need to know in order to worship Him rightly? What are the sources of our knowledge of God? We come to know God rightly, not through our own efforts, not through our own steam, not through our own machinations, not through our own mental processes, but rather, the Scripture everywhere screams at us that we come to know God through revelation, revelation. Now the Greek word that's translated "revelation" or "God revealing Himself", is a word that has an English counterpart that we get from that word, the Greek word is "apocalipsis". The word we get is "apocalypse" the word literally means "an unveiling or a disclosure". When we speak of God's revelation of Himself we mean God's drawing back the veil in order to show us Himself. We could say revelation is God's self-disclosure. God's self-

disclosure, and that self-disclosure or God's revelation comes to us on two paths, or in two different forms. What theologians call "general revelation" and "special revelation".

"General revelation" is what God teaches us about Himself apart from the Bible. It's what God teaches us about Himself in nature, and in providence and in conscience. For example, in Psalm 19, verse 1 and in Romans 1:19 to 21, we're told that nature, that creation teaches us about God's existence, that it teaches us about God's power. Look around you and you can see in the created world the evidence of God's existence and of His power. You can see His deity in His creation. So, God has generally revealed Himself in creation. He's revealed the truth about Him that He is God, that He exists, and that He is powerful. In Acts 14, Paul talks to the crowd there in Lystra, in Acts 14:17 he says that "the God who made the heavens and the earth has not ... [left] Himself without [a] witness..." [What witness, Paul,] "... in that He did good and He gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

Every person who lives in the world experiences the goodness of God. God reveals His goodness through His providence in giving us all of the good things that are a part of this life. And so, God reveals Himself through nature, He reveals Himself through providence. We learn of His deity, and we learn of His goodness.

In Romans 2:14 and 15, we learn that through conscience God reveals Himself. In your conscience God reveals something about Himself, the fact that every one of us sitting here and every human being has a conscience and written on that conscience Paul says in Romans 2 is the substance of the law of God. We understand the substance of God's law, that there is a Righteous Being who has established right and wrong, that He is the moral judge of the universe, every human being understands that. It's written on the heart, God has generally revealed Himself through conscience that He's righteous and that He has a moral code of law by which He rules the universe.

In fact, according to Romans 1:32, all men even understand that there is coming judgment for violating that law, verse 32 of Romans 1 says, "although they know the ordinance of God," there it is written on the heart "that they who practice such things are worthy of death," they understand that what they do deserves God's judgment. They not only do the same, but they give hearty approval to those who practice them. Understand that apart from the bible, God has revealed those things about Himself. He's revealed His deity. He's revealed His power He's revealed His existence He's revealed His goodness. He's revealed His expectations, His righteous law code written in the heart and even an innate sense of coming judgment for the

violation of that law code. All those things can be learned about God without a bible so that every man is without excuse.

But here's the problem, we don't clearly perceive God's message in "general revelation". Why is that? Because of the effects of the curse around us jumbled the message so that we don't get it clearly and also because of what's inside of us, our own sinfulness causes us to misinterpret God's message in general revelation. For example, unbelievers look at the majesty of God's creation, and do they see the Deity of God, do they see the existence of God, do they see His power? No, they look at general revelation, and they conclude the ridiculous theory of evolution.

It's like having bad hearing and bad eyesight. Another person may be speaking very clearly to you, and if you were able to understand, you would understand them clearly, but you don't. The fact that you can't understand them isn't their fault; it's your eyes and your ears. In the same way, general revelation cannot give us infallible truth about God, not because there's something flawed with the message God is sending; but with the problem of our own ability to see and hear it.

So, we can thank God, that God has not only revealed Himself in "general revelation", but God in His grace has revealed Himself specially through what theologians call "special revelation". God has spoken; special revelation is when God speaks to man either directly or through chosen messengers.

Think about how God has communicated, before the scripture was complete God spoke in a variety of ways. He spoke through personal address; actually, a voice would come from heaven and speak. He spoke by means of a Theophany, that is physical appearance of God, or a Christophany a visible appearance of Christ before His incarnation. He spoke through mechanical means, like the lot cast in the lap or like that mysterious breastplate of the high priest the Urim and the Thummim through which God communicated. He spoke through miracles and visions and dreams, He spoke through intelligent beings such as the angels and of course the prophets. And God's final word came to us in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This was God's supreme self-revelation.

Listen to the writer of Hebrews, Hebrews 1:1,

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son....

The Apostle John in John 1:18 says, “No one has seen God at any time; [but] the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.” Literally, He has exegeted God. God’s final word, all God wanted us to know with certainty about Himself, He has revealed through His direct communication, through His messengers the prophets and ultimately culminating in the revelation of His Son.

Then through the work of the Spirit, God has ensured that all that He’s revealed, that He wanted us to know, all that He revealed through the prophets, and all He revealed through His direct communication, and all He revealed through Christ and His teaching and through the Apostles was recorded for us on the pages of Scripture. All of those messages have now been recorded as written revelation. And so, God’s self-revelation comes to us especially through the Scripture. Those messages have been written down in a book that you hold in your hand. God is most fully and completely revealed to us in His Word.

Do you ever find yourself wishing that God would speak directly to you? Do you ever find yourself wishing that God would reveal Himself personally and directly? You would have some sort of vision. That’s not an uncommon temptation for Christians. Listen to how Peter responded to that, Peter said listen, I was there on the mount of transfiguration, I saw the glorified Christ, I heard the voice from heaven. Wouldn’t you have loved to have been there and seen that? But then Peter says, but we have a much more sure word of prophecy. God has taken everything He wanted us to know about Himself, His self-revelation, and He’s put it in a book that you hold in your hand. How do we learn the truth about God in order to worship Him rightly? We learn it through His self-revelation that is recorded for us in the Bible.

Now that raises a question for me and it does for you, turn back to John 4. What did Jesus teach this woman, this Samaritan woman about God in this conversation? What did He teach her? Well notice that He taught her about the nature of God. He made it clear for example in this passage that God is a person. Every comment Jesus makes in the passage I read to you in this conversation, makes it clear that Jesus knew God personally and that He knew Him to be a self-conscious, rational, personal being. So, He made it clear to this woman that God is a person.

In verse 24 He states that God is Spirit, now we’ll touch on this more next week when we talk about what it means to worship “in spirit”. But He is obviously opening up the nature of God to this woman. In this brief conversation God taught this woman profound truths about the nature of the being of God, some of which she would have already embraced. But then Jesus went on to teach her what she had not known about God. And that’s what I want to focus on in the time I

have remaining this morning. Specifically, He taught her, and as He teaches her, we kind of watch over His shoulder, and He teaches us as well; about the character of God, not only about the nature of God, but the character of God. Notice what He wants us to know here about Gods character. He wants us to know that God has revealed Himself as a Father, did you notice that three times in these verses Jesus refers to God as Father; one time in verse 21, twice in verse 23. This in fact was Jesus' favorite title for God. In the Gospels Jesus refers to God as His Father more than 60 times.

Now when we understand that, we hear that expression, when Jesus uses the expression "Father", we understand that God was the Father of Jesus in a special sense that He is not our Father. Jesus made this very clear, turn over to John 10, in John 10, and you remember the basic flow of this text, Jesus is interacting in verse 22,

At ... [the] time [of] the Feast of the Dedication ... it was winter, Jesus was in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews [verse 24] gather[ed] around Him, and [they] were saying ..., "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the ... [Messiah], tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you don't believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. "But [if] you do not believe because you are not My sheep." [You do not believe, Jesus says, because you are not of My sheep.] "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; ... no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand." [Here He is using this this language of God as His Father, well just in case they missed what He meant by calling God His Father, He defines it, look at verse 30.] "I and the Father are one."

That is, we are unity. We are of one essence. You say well wait a minute, are you sure that's what Jesus meant? That's not what the Jehovah's Witnesses teach. Well the Jews certainly understood that, verse 31,

The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we are not stoning You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be* God."

You see they understood that by that statement, I and the Father are one, We are unity, We are one essence. Jesus was claiming to be God Himself. Jesus responds to them, and He ends His explanation by making the same point again, verse 38, let's look at verse 37,

“If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand (this) that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.” [He simply reasserts in slightly different language the same point, and they get it again, look at their response,] Therefore [verse 39,] they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp.

When Jesus called God His Father, He was speaking in special terms of His equality with God. And it's obvious here, the Jews understood that claim, and on this occasion, and on several others in the Gospels, they picked up stones to stone Him. So, Jesus' relationship to the Father was unique, unlike anyone else. He was the only begotten God, He was the eternal Son, He is God's unique Son in every sense, fully equal with God. But, Jesus also taught us to think of God as a Father, in a different way, in a different sense.

You remember even in Matthew 6:9; Jesus said this is how I want you to pray. Pray, “Our Father”. We are to approach our God as we would a father. Why is that? Because, as the Epistles explain, something amazing happens at the moment of salvation, the moment you repented of your sins, and embraced Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, God really adopted you as His own. We use that language, you know, I'm a child of the King, and we use it almost as if it's not real, it's kind of ethereal, no it's really true. At the moment of salvation, God legally adopted you as His own child. You belong to Him. He is in every sense your Father. We can call God our Abba, just as Jesus did. That term of reverence and intimacy, here's the amazing truth, the same intimacy that exists between the Father and Christ from all eternity is ours. Philip Ryken writes,

“Jesus teaches us to call God, Father, and to do so with confidence even if we have never known a father's love. This is because Jesus knows that a father's love is what we have always longed for. He invites us to become God's beloved child. He teaches us to speak to Him as our dear Father.”

That's what Jesus was teaching this woman and us about the one we worship. God has revealed Himself as a Father. But He also teaches us that God has revealed Himself as a “Savior”.



Jesus had already showed this woman her sin and her desperate, desperate need for a Savior. Look back in verse 16 of John 4,

He said to her, “Go call your husband and come here.” The woman answered and said, “I have no husband,” Jesus said to her, “You have correctly said, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly.” [He had put in bold relief her desperate need of a Savior; she knew her sin and Jesus had made sure that she embraced it.

And then in verse 22 He’d said, “... salvation is from the Jews.” In other words, it’s through the God of Israel that any hope of Spiritual rescue can be found.

But there’s another crucial truth about God as Savior in this passage, it’s in verse 23. Notice how verse 23 ends and I love this. “for ... the Father ... [is seeking such people] to ... [worship Him.]”

Now what does that mean, it’s a rather enigmatic expression. What does it mean? It could mean only that worship is so important to God that He Himself is seeking out worshipers. It’s so important that He wants worship. But I think there’s more implied in this phrase than just the importance of worship. I think instead it answers a crucial question. It answers the question of how do you and I become true worshipers. Why are you here this morning, why am I here, why are we true worshipers of God? Is it because we seek God? Jesus says no, it’s because in Christ the Father seeks us. Notice the flow of logic in verse 23: “true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth;” [Why, for, because] “the Father is seeking such people to worship Him.”

Now what is implicit in that statement, Jesus makes explicit just a couple of chapters later. Turn over to John 6, in John 6:36, Jesus here is interchanging with those who have rejected Him and He says,

“But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe.” [Verse 37,] “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.”

Now skip down to verse 44, He makes the same point again, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.” Notice what Jesus is

saying here, it is impossible for you to come to Me. We all remember our mothers or many of us do anyway, our mothers teaching us the difference between may and can. Mom, can I have an ice cream cone? Well, son, of course you are physically capable of having an ice cream cone, that's what can means. Are you asking, may I have an ice cream cone?

Well "can" implies ability, that's exactly why Jesus uses that word here; it's the same in Greek as in English. This isn't talking about ability, no one has the ability to come to Me unless, this is the exception, the Father who sent Me draws him. The word draws is a very interesting word, it's not the word "to woo". Father woos us; it's a word that means "to compel by force". It's a word that's translated in the Acts of the Apostles as dragging someone off to prison. Now that doesn't mean God drags us to Himself against our will. As the great reformer said, "no, God instead makes us willing to come." God draws us. Only those come to Me, Christ said, whom the Father draws. The Father is seeking worshipers.

Why do we need to be drawn? What's our problem? Turn over another couple of chapters to John 8. In verse 39, again Jesus is having this interchange with these who have not believed in Him, verse 39 of John 8, "They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our Father." They had that great ethnic pride that they had descended from Abraham. They were his physical offspring.

Jesus said to them, "if you are truly Abraham's children" [that is if you are his true descendants, his spiritual descendants,] "[then] do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God, ... Abraham did not do [this]. "You are doing instead the deeds of your true father." And they said to Him, "We are not born of fornication; we have one Father: God." [By the way this is undoubtedly a less than subtle slap at Jesus Christ. There have been questions raised about who His true parents were. Because, of course, the story of the virgin birth had been distorted by His enemies, and the question who was His true father, so they're getting in a dig at Christ here.] "we have one Father; God." Jesus said to them, [in verse 42,] "If God were your Father ..." [but He's not,] "you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He [has] sent Me. Why do you not understand what I am saying? [That's a good question, why didn't they get it? Well Jesus explains,] "*It is* because" [verse 43,] "you cannot" [there's that word again, you do not have the capacity, the ability to] "hear My word." [Why verse 44,] "It's because ... you are of your

father the devil,” [there’s your true father, you have a different father, it’s the devil;] “and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there was no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you don’t believe Me.”

[Verse 47,] “He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.” You first have to be of God to hear and understand the words of God. You see what Jesus is saying here, we are by nature, just like they were, children of the devil. He is our father by birth, and left to ourselves, we will respond to Christ the same way these Jewish leaders responded. The only way that you and I can become true worshipers is if God seeks us out and if God draws us to Himself. If by grace, He makes us true worshipers. And here’s the amazing reality of it all, God Almighty has done just that. The fact that you’re here this morning and you care about worshiping the true God is because God sought you out.

What Jesus taught this woman about God is that He is by nature a Savior, and He seeks out even the worst sinners like this woman and He makes them worshipers. The worst sinners like you and like me, and He makes us true worshipers. The question that comes into my mind is why? Why would God do that? Why does He want me to be His worshiper? Well Jesus explains, turn to John 17, in His High Priestly prayer the night before His crucifixion, look at what Jesus prayed to the Father. Verse 24, John 17; “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me,” [that’s an interesting expression, Father You have given Me these people, You drew them to Yourself and You gave them to Me.] “I [want them to] ... be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

That is a remarkable verse; you know when we think of our salvation, we tend to think, again, it’s about us; and in one sense that’s true of course, God loved you. God loved you because He loved you, because it’s God nature to be a Savior and to love; but why you and why me? What was God doing? You see our salvation is part of a great cosmic eternal plan. You know what really is happening, God the Father has always loved the Son and in eternity past, He promised to give Him a gift of love, a redeemed humanity that would forever praise Him and reflect His glory by being like Him. You are a love gift from the Father to the Son. That’s why God sought you, that’s why He’s made you a true worshiper, so that you will worship the Son forever.

Well there's one more great lesson Christ had for this woman and has for us about God. He wanted her to know that God has not only revealed Himself as the "Father", He's not only revealed Himself as the "Savior", but also God has revealed Himself in "His Son". You have to interpret this phrase "worship" "in truth", in the context of John's Gospel. Let me remind you of the context, go back to John 1:14, "And the Word" [speaking of Christ here] "became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, [and He was] full ... of truth." [Jesus was full of truth, He was permeated by truth. Verse 17,] ... "... the Law was given through Moses; but truth was realized through Jesus Christ." [Not only was He full of truth, but He was the source of truth to others.]

In the passage we looked at just a moment ago in 8:40, it says, Jesus says to them, "... you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you [or taught you] the truth, which I heard from God"

Jesus was full of truth, Jesus was the source of truth, and Jesus taught the truth. But by far the most remarkable statement our Lord made regarding the truth comes in John 14, turn there with me. John 14, my name sake, Thomas, in verse 5 says to him,

"Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and [I am] the truth."

Not, I know the truth, not, I teach you the truth, but I am the truth. Think about that for a moment. In a world adrift in a sea of relativism, Jesus claims that everything He is, that everything He says, that everything He does is absolutely objectively true. And everything that conflicts with what He is and says and does is objectively false. So, when Jesus says that true worship must be in truth, He means that it must be in response to an accurate understanding of God and His self-revelation and that self-revelation reached its climax in Him. The only right way to worship the Father is through the Son, and what He taught us about the Father.

So, you see here then this great law: that true worship is not intuitive but must be directed by God's truth. To worship God in truth you must understand the truth about worship, and you must understand the truth about God. You see worship is not some kind of a wax nose that you can shape however you want. If you're serious about worshiping God, you must come to God on His terms. God has prescribed how He is to be worshiped.

Think about this with me for just a moment. God has decided who will worship: every Christian will worship Him. He's decided in what venues, in what context we will worship: that we will

worship individually in our private lives, that we will worship in our families, and that we will worship together in the church with other believers. In the Scripture God has prescribed how we are to think of Him when we worship, what our conception of Him is to be. We can't just decide what God is like. Well, you know, my God is love. Well who cares what your God is? The question is what has God revealed Himself to be? Yes, God is love, but the same God who said I am love also says I'm coming in wrath to destroy those who are my enemies. You can't remake God.

He's also determined what our attitude in worship ought to be. We studied that last week together. When we come to worship, we can't just decide, you know, well this is how I think it ought to be done. God says when you come in worship before Me, come in "humble submission", come in "thankful praise and adoration", and come in "godly fear". God has decided the elements or the components of our worship, both individually and corporately. And all of those components center in His revelation, in the Bible. That's why we can say, well how do we worship God? And we're going to talk about this more in a couple of weeks. How do we worship God?

Well we worship God by, we sing the Scripture. By that I mean, we sing music rooted in the Scripture. We pray the Scripture; our prayers are our response to the Scripture. We read the Scripture. Paul told Timothy to give attention to the public reading of Scripture. We teach the Scripture and hear it taught. And when we gather as the church, we give our offerings. Why? To see true Biblical worship supported here and extended beyond these walls. And we see the Scripture acted out in worship in two signs or ceremonies: baptism and the Lord's Table. Worship is all about the Scripture.

In terms of corporate worship, God has even appointed the day we are to worship, the Lord's Day the first day of the week. You can't just decide, you know, I think I'm just going to worship on Saturday because it's more convenient for me, and I can make all the games. You can't just make those decisions. God has prescribed these things. God has determined who can and who can't lead in worship. I can't say, well you know, she's a wonderful person and a committed Christian, so I think she needs to lead the worship. It's contrary to what God has revealed.

The only decisions that God has left open to us about worship are what theologians call, the incidentals. For example, things like where we worship, the Bible doesn't say that. The order in which the prescribed components or elements come, we can change the order if we choose. The specifics of which songs are sung on a given time when we come together to worship or the

passages we read or the prayers we pray, whether we use hymn books or power point or we sing the songs from memory. What time of day we meet, how often on the day we meet. Other incidentals like these; those are up to us and to the leadership of the church, of each church to decide. But, most of what we do in worship is prescribed by God, both your individual and private worship, as well as the corporate worship of the church. Everything important about worship has been decided by God and has been revealed in His Word to us. And this has been the testimony both of the Scripture, and of church history.

Listen to the one voice of both the Westminster confession of faith, which goes in the Presbyterian and Reformed direction; as well as the Baptist confession of faith of 1689. It's put like this, both of them say the same thing, listen to the wording.

“The acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by Himself and so limited by His own revealed will” that's the Scripture, “that He may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devises of men or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.”

We can't just decide how we're going to worship God. You can't decide that individually, and I can't decide that and the elders of how we're going to do it as a church. God has decided that, and true worshipers, Jesus says, worship God in truth. That is directed by His truth. Next week we'll see what it means to worship God “in spirit”.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You for Your truth, we thank You for Your Word which gives us such clear direction. We thank You Father, for the privilege of worship. How can we ever adequately thank You for giving us as a love gift to Your Son, then in time drawing us to Yourself and making us Your own, adopting us into Your family so that we can now cry out with Your Son, Abba, Father.

Father we thank You, we praise You for such amazing grace, that when we were worshiping ourselves, when we were worshiping idols, when our hearts were generating idols as fast as they could, that in love You sought us out, and You made us true worshipers in Christ.

Lord, we praise You and we thank You, we ask that You would help us to understand what our Lord taught here. Help us to embrace and never to let go of the reality that we must worship You according to Your truth, the truth about worship and the truth about You.

Father, I pray that individually You would help us to worship like that; and I pray that Father together corporately You would help us to commit ourselves to guarding our worship, that we would always worship according to Your revelation, both privately as families, and corporately as the church. Lord, help this church to be known as a place where You are worshiped according to truth.

We pray it in Jesus name and for His sake, Amen.