



## **12 TRAITS OF A BIBLICAL CHURCH – Part 15**

### **Biblical Worship**

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open with me to John 4. It’s good to be together across Washington around God’s Word. We have two more traits to go in our series “12 Traits of a Biblical Church.” Today our focus will be Biblical Worship, and from the start I want to jump right to the “why.” Why is this important for your life? As Lon has asked for so many years, “So what?”

In order to answer that question, I want to read you a portion of a hand-written letter I received this week from a teenager in our church. I won’t mention her name, but she wrote me this:

Ever since I was little, my parents have been separated. My dad is a drug addict and abusive. My first memory of him was a time when I was little, and his P.O. came to my door to do a drug test on him to make sure he passed the test. He made me urinate in the cup for him. My mom moved around a lot and married into a gang. My life has many different stories you probably wouldn’t believe. My mom died a year and a half ago, and my dad doesn’t like me anymore. I live with my grandma, but last year I moved in with my aunt and uncle, and that’s how I started going to McLean. Because of everything going on in my life, I lost faith in God, and I didn’t like going to church. But God’s Word being preached here really got through to me and changed my life forever.

I won’t read the whole thing, but she goes on to say how she was baptized recently and how much she has seen change in her life as a result of being part of this church. As I read this letter, on one hand I was heart broken by all the hurt that this teenage girl has experienced. At the same time I was exhilarated by what happened when this teenager started worshiping with this church. Having been hurt and let down in so many ways, she came into our worship gathering, and through our singing and praying and preaching she found out that God—the One Who matters more than anyone else—loves her. She found out that God will never let her down, that God can and will satisfy her like no one can or will satisfy her. She said, “God really got through to me”—and that is why biblical worship matters.

That is what I long to see happening every single week when we come together for worship, in teenagers, in business men and women, in struggling dads and tired moms, in senior adults—in a room full of people who, if we’re really honest, have all kinds of hurts and pains, who struggle with busyness in this world, emptiness, sickness. Week after week after week, I pray that we would encounter God in worship and that He would really get through to us.

This is the primary truth I hope you take away from today: God has designed our souls to be satisfied in worshipping Him. Let me make it more personal. God has designed your soul to be satisfied in worshipping Him. Maybe I can say it another way. Our souls—your soul—will never be satisfied apart from worshipping God. Now, that’s a bold statement. I just said it doesn’t matter how big or luxurious your house is—it won’t satisfy you. I just said it doesn’t matter how much money you make—it won’t satisfy you. I just said it doesn’t matter who you marry, what degree or rank or status you achieve. It doesn’t matter what job you have or position you attain. It doesn’t matter how healthy you are, how comfortable your 401k is. None of these things will satisfy your soul.

Your soul is designed by God to be satisfied in worshipping Him. Today I want to call you to satisfaction—to satisfaction that is deeper, truer, fuller and longer-lasting than anything else, even the best things this world has to offer you. So listen to this story in John 4:

*Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John <sup>2</sup> (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), <sup>3</sup> he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. <sup>4</sup> And he had to pass through Samaria. <sup>5</sup> So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob’s well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.*

*<sup>7</sup> There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” <sup>8</sup> (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” <sup>11</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.” <sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” <sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”*

*<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” <sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.” <sup>19</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. <sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” <sup>25</sup> The woman*

*said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."*

Do you see it? Here's a woman who has sought satisfaction in relationships with man after man after man, none of whom could satisfy her ultimately. Here's a woman who has sought satisfaction in her reputation, only to now find herself alone, drawing water in isolation. Here's a woman who's sought satisfaction in her religion. But even that has left her empty. If you think about it, every one of us today has the same thirsts. Every single one of us thirsts to believe in something, someone. We all want to believe that which is true, right and good.

Every one of us thirsts to belong. Loneliness is one of the most painful human emotions and experiences. We long not just to be known, but to be valued by somebody else in some way. Every one of us thirsts to be loved. Even the most calloused heart among us longs for the affection of a parent or a spouse or a friend. And just like this woman, we try to quench our thirst in all kinds of ways—through people, jobs, possessions, pursuits and various worldly pleasures. But we constantly find ourselves coming up empty.

One of the most famous songs written over the last century was penned in ten minutes by Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones. He said it summarized his view of the world and his frustration, even amidst all his success with everything around him in the world. It became their first single. It hit number one in both America and Great Britain. What was its title? "I Can't Get No Satisfaction." Part of the lyrics are, "I try and I try and I try."

Men and women and students all around this room are trying and trying and trying, thinking, "If I can be with that person, if I can get that job, if I can be in that home, if I can fix that problem, if I can get to that point..." But then we get there and before long our eyes are set on something else. Meanwhile, in the middle of it all, Jesus is saying, "I offer you different water—the kind of water that will quench your thirst forever. You won't have to look elsewhere. The kind of water I give wells up to eternal life. It lasts forever."

"How do I get this water?" the woman asks. And Jesus engages her in a conversation about what? About worship. Jesus says, "God is seeking you, because God desires to satisfy you. God has designed your soul to be satisfied in worshiping Him, seeking Him, knowing Him and loving Him." When you think about it, this is the essence of what it means to believe in Jesus, to become a Christian. It's actually how Jesus defines belief in the book of John. Two chapters later, in John 6:35, using very similar imagery, Jesus said to them, *"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."*

Follow this. To believe in Jesus is to say, "I have sinned. I have sought my own way in this world apart from God's way in His Word, and my sin has left me empty. My sin leads to death. Indeed, it's true—

I can't find satisfaction in this world apart from God. The Rolling Stones are right. But I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sin and rose from the grave in victory over it to make it possible for me to be forgiven of all my sin, reconciled to a relationship with God, in Whom my soul can be satisfied forever.” This is salvation.

Do not miss this. Salvation is not just saying some words in order to save your skin for eternity, then just living like the rest of the world, running after all the same stuff this world is running after. That is not biblical salvation. Salvation is not forgiveness of your sin accompanied by emptiness of your soul. Salvation is forgiveness of your sin accompanied by satisfaction for your soul. Salvation is not just forgiveness from sin; it's freedom from sin and freedom from the pursuit of satisfaction in this person or that possession, this position or that pleasure. Salvation is satisfaction in knowing and worshiping God.

This totally transforms the tenor of what happens when we gather together as the church, as a group of Christians. See how a right understanding of salvation transforms worship from duty to delight. True Christians don't gather together for worship because they have to. True Christians gather together for worship because we want to. This is not some sick sense of religious obligation where we think we need to do this in order to appease our God, gaining some kind of credit from Him so that maybe He will bless us in return. That's the way religions in the world works, but Christianity is totally different.

True Christians do not gather together out of a sense of obligation. True Christians gather together out of a sense of celebration. We have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, and we gather together to feast on His goodness in worship. Is this how you see the worship of God? Do you see worship as something you are supposed to do, or something you long to do?

I use the phrase “true Christians” because I fear that many professing Christians, even here today, gathered together to worship God as a religious routine. But if we're honest, there is at the root of our hearts a real lack of desire for God. If you don't desire God, then it's at least worth asking if you really know God. I fear that many professing Christians can go for years through a dull, casual, monotonous sense of religious motion, totally missing the depth of what God has designed for your soul.

I long for every one of you to see and experience worship, not as duty, but as delight. Not as something you're supposed to do on a Sunday, such that all sorts of other things so easily drown out worship on your priority list in this world, but such that you see worship as something you long to do on a Sunday. I long for worship to become the priority around which your week revolves.

Now, obviously I'm talking here about worship together as a church, but there is also a sense in which biblically worship is all of life. It's something we do all the time. We aren't just satisfied in God when we gather once a week; we're satisfied in God as we scatter all week long, in everything we do. First Corinthians 10:31 says it's all for the glory of God—eating and drinking and working and playing and sleeping. The Bible teaches that all of life is worship. Yet, the Bible also calls the church to gather together

for the purpose of worship, to hear the Word of God, to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to one another, to pray together (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 10:25).

So I want us to think about how this truth—that God has designed our souls to be satisfied in worshipping Him—shapes our understanding of and priorities in worship as a church. I’m convinced we’re totally confused on these points. I’m not just talking about where I pastor, but in the contemporary church culture that we are part of, we’ve been convinced that priorities in worship are a killer band with a killer sound system, an entertaining speaker that we can listen to from cushioned seats with the thermostat set at just the right temperature, plus coffee when we walk in the door with just the right taste—none of which you will see the Bible prioritizing in worship.

The danger is that we can prioritize all these things and we can draw a crowd. We can think, “Yeah, this is worship,” but we’re missing the whole point. We don’t want to miss the point, particularly when the satisfaction of our souls is contingent on not missing this point. If God has designed our souls to be satisfied in worshipping Him, then we want to worship Him the way He’s designed us to worship Him.

I’ve been in numerous worship gatherings around the world, sitting on a floor, crammed into a room, in the blazing heat or the freezing cold, with no band, quite frankly with bad music—yet it’s been deeply satisfying worship of God. In fact, I would say some of the most satisfying experiences before God in worship have been in settings like that.

So what are we prioritizing in worship across our church as people who are designed to find our soul’s satisfaction in God? Well, I’m glad you asked.

## **1. Biblical Revelation**

We need to prioritize biblical revelation—the Word, the truth of God. Jesus says to this woman in John 4, “True worshipers worship in spirit and in truth. You can’t worship what you don’t know.” Knowledge of God is necessary for worship of God and is only possible because of revelation from God. This is why God’s Word is central in our worship. It’s why we take such a significant chunk of our time together in worship to open the Bible and learn from it. If God has designed our souls to be satisfied in worshipping Him, then we want to know Who He is. We want to know how He calls us to live.

This is what the Word does. It shows us Who God is. Every week as we open this Word, we learn, we see, we discover more and more and more about Who God is. And the more we see Him, the more we will savor Him. The more we see God, the more we will be satisfied in God. God never ever ever gets old. The Bible shows us Who God is and how God calls us to experience life in Him. Psalm 16:11 states, “*You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*”

Who among us doesn't want to know the path of life? Who among us doesn't want fullness of joy? Do you want to taste pleasures forevermore? Then get off your phone and get into God's Word. Get off Fox News or CNN or Facebook or Instagram or Snapchat—for hours or for just a few minutes. They're not the path to life, and neither is your constant focus on work or sports or music or games. No, God and His Word are the path to life. It's the way to fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

So this is why we want to saturate worship with the Word. This is why we want God's Word to be central—not just in our reading and studying like we're doing now, but in singing and praying. In everything we do in worship, biblical revelation is primary. That's why I say, "If you have a Bible—and I hope you do..." Be assured that if you don't, we would be glad to get you one. We bring God's Word to worship because we prioritize God's Word in worship. We can't worship without it.

## **2. Spiritual Direction**

You can't worship God without the revelation of God. It's not just through God's Word, but through His Spirit. This is the second priority for us in worship: spiritual direction. Biblical revelation and spiritual direction. In the words of Jesus, "True worshipers worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). We want the Word of God to inundate our worship; and we want the Spirit of God to orchestrate direct, lead and guide our worship. Worship is a spiritual, supernatural activity.

I think about this teenager who wrote this letter to me. I obviously had no idea what's been going on in her life. But for her to come in here, for the Word of God to be sung and prayed and preached, and for her to conclude, "God's Word got through to me"—how does that happen? That is not the work of a killer band or an entertaining speaker. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. In worship, the Spirit of God supernaturally takes the Word of God and penetrates the hearts of people.

I was talking with a visitor last week from a Buddhist background who said, "As you were speaking, I could just sense something in my spirit that made me want to learn more." That is not my speaking ability. That is the Holy Spirit's supernatural authority. That's what I love about preaching. Every week I pray that God's Spirit would take this Word and cause it to land on all kinds of hearts in all kinds of different ways. There are over 10,000 people who are hearing this Word today. I pray that the Spirit of God will take this Word in 10,000 different directions, according to 10,000 different circumstances. This is spiritual, supernatural work that's happening right now.

And it's not just in preaching, but in singing and in hearing testimonies. This is why we must prioritize the direction of God's Spirit in our worship gatherings. Sometimes the Spirit leads in directions we had not planned. We want to be more sensitive to Him—sensitive to God and how He is leading and

working in our midst. This is not just a show to put on, a program to get through. This is meeting with God and He can take this meeting in whatever direction He wants.

### **3. Community Participation**

We prioritize biblical revelation and spiritual direction. We also prioritize community participation. This is where I want to pause and point out the obvious difference between worship alone with God and worship with the church before God. One is by yourself; one is with the body of Christ. One is primarily about an individual with God; the other primarily about a community with God. Both are awesome and needed, but they're different.

This means when we're gathered together as a church, we need to remember this is not about each of us individually. As such, we need to be aware of individualistic approaches to worship with the church, thinking all the time about ourselves and our preferences, whether or not I like this song or that sermon. Worship as a church is not about each of us individually; it's about all of us together. We're a community of faith that comes together for worship.

As helpful as our services streamed on the internet are for people who are traveling or who are in special circumstances, it is not intended to be your primary means of worship. It is vital to your spiritual life—and I'm looking right at the camera now—it is vital to your spiritual life to be with the body whenever possible, not just alone.

When I travel and preach in different places, sometimes I'll hear a music worship leader say, "Just imagine a box around yourself. Pretend like the people around you aren't even there." I think, "How does that make the person beside you feel? Just ignore them?" No. When we gather together for worship as the church we don't ignore one another. We value one another. It's a good thing they're there. If you want to be in a box, do that in the morning before you come. We actually prefer one another. We want younger people in the church thinking, "Don't turn the music up too loud—we don't want to offend older brothers and sisters." We want older people in the church thinking, "Turn the music up loader. I know that connects more with young people." We think these things because we prefer one another. We stop thinking about ourselves—particularly in a community like ours with over 100 different ethnicities in our church. We don't want our worship gatherings to be dominated by one style or preference or ethnicity. We want our worship to be a clear expression of our diversity in our community together.

We want to grow continually in our singing, praying and preaching. I obviously am from a particular ethnicity with a particular background and particular experiences. It's always helpful to me when someone from a different ethnicity or background comes to me and says, "You know, the way you shared that landed on my heart in this way" —in a way I never meant for it to land. It's so helpful for me to hear

that, because I want to be aware of how worship and the Word is affecting us across our community together.

So I need, we all need, to be aware of individualistic approaches to worship and to be aware of spectator approaches to worship. If I could state the obvious, this is not the World Cup or the Stanley Cup, where we're gathered together to watch the action on the field or on the ice. We are gathered to participate in the action. The church is not an audience of spectators. The church is community of worshipers.

This is huge, especially when we're used to coming together here and on other campuses in a theater-style set up, where so much centers on what happens on the stage. We need to consciously remind ourselves that we don't come together to watch worship—we come together to worship. It's why we sing together. We read Scripture together. We pray together. We study the Word together. Right now, I'm obviously the one speaking, but in both speaking God's Word and listening to it, I hope we're all worshipping. I hope that as you're listening, your heart is rising in worship to God.

We can never let worship decompose into a vicarious experience where the many in the congregation are merely watching the few on the stage who at best are worshipping and at worst are performing. If/when you ever find yourself slipping into spectator mode in the church, consciously remind yourself, "No, no, no. I'm a participant in this picture." I am, and together we are, encountering God through singing, praying, listening and preaching. We prioritize community participation before God.

#### **4. Reverent Affection**

So next, if our souls are designed to be satisfied in worshipping God, then we prioritize reverent affection for God. Reverent affection—I use both those words intentionally.

First, reverent. We have gathered together, right now, to worship God. Just think about that for a minute. We've gathered together to worship God. He is the God Who rules over the whole world, the God Who spoke and a universe came into being, the God Who created you. Think about Psalm 139. He formed your inward parts. He is the God Who is sustaining you right now.

I was talking last week with a neurosurgeon in our church. He was telling me about the 100 billion or so neurons that are firing on a few hundred trillion synapses in our brain at any moment. I don't even know what that means. I'm thinking, "Huh. God knows what that means—He designed it." God is sovereign over every one of those hundreds of trillions of synapses—whatever that is—in me, and in you, in over 10,000 of us in this church, in more than seven billion people in the world.

And not just people. Think about a fruit fly. [I hate fruit flies. I know I'm going to get an email about how helpful they are in the world from some fruit fly advocate in the church. But they just hover over and get on your food.] So I did a little research about those tiny little creatures.. Do you know how many

neurons they have in their brains? I didn't even know they're big enough to have brains, but they do. They have 100,000 neurons in their brains. How do you get 100,000 of anything in that small of a creature? I can even pop it with my hand, it's so tiny.

They estimate there are untold millions of them in the world. I don't know how we think we can count how many there are, and whose job is it to do that? But here's the deal. God knows exactly, down to the number, how many there are. One just got popped. He knows it. He's causing all 100,000 of their neurons in every one of their little brains to work. We are talking about the God Who is sovereignly ruling and reigning over everything, including all of us and all the creation and all the universe—and we have come together to meet with Him.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, worshipers of God, let us be careful never to become casual with God. Which—let's be honest—is so easy for us to do. If we can walk into a room like this, find our seat, look around, maybe start singing, bow our heads in prayer—even open up our Bibles—all the while our minds never come face to face with the fact that we're gathered together before God, I pray that no one will ever watch our worship and think, “Those people are bored with God.” I want anyone who watches our worship to think, “Those people are blown away by God.”

Let me just remind us, we are not the audience here. God is the audience here. So brothers and sisters, let us never walk away from worship critically assessing, “Did worship today please me?” Let us always walk away from worship humbly asking, “Did worship today please God?” And let us start by looking at our own hearts. Have we put all of our focus on God with fear and awe? That's what we mean by reverent.

Then reverent affection will mean awe-filled love. “This is the greatest commandment,” Jesus says, “to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength” (Matthew 22:36-40). We've gathered together today to express love for God. Don't miss it. The most important component of worship is not an instrument on a stage. It's not even human instruments, like mouths that sing and pray and preach, or ears that hear and listen, or hands that clap and rise, or legs that stand or kneel. The most important component of our worship is our hearts.

Ephesians 5:18-19 tells us to sing and make melody with our hearts. Not with our mouths. It's not just your mouth that makes what you do worship—or your hands or your feet or anything else. It's your heart that makes what you do worship. That's why Jesus, in His conversation with the woman at the well, totally shifted the focus from externals to internals, from where you worship—on this mountain or that mountain—to internals, Who you worship and how you worship with your heart.

This makes total sense when you remember the truth at the heart of all of this, which is that God has designed our souls to be satisfied in worshipping Him. It will be evident in our worship whether or not our souls are satisfied in God. I think about this teenage girl and all who are like her, those who have found in

God the satisfaction of their souls, and it just makes sense for us to sing and shout and lift our hands and bow our heads to express our affections. This is where I want to encourage us not to be guarded in our affections before the greatness of God. I know that we have different emotional temperaments by the design of God.

I think about being in an underground house church in East Asia. We were gathering together with brothers and sisters who were there at the risk of their lives, in secret, late at night. Also, they live in a country where everything is about saving face. You don't show emotion in public. From the beginning of their worship, they're on their faces, just weeping before God. They're not praying grand theological prayers, but simple ones. "God, thank You for loving us, for caring for us, for providing for us. Thank You for protecting us in this way or that way. We need You. We love You. We glorify You." An hour goes by and, it's no preacher exaggeration to say that at the end of those times, you can look around the room and there are puddles of tears, men and women who just love God. May it be happening in the worship of McLean Bible Church, that we love God with all of our hearts, all of our souls, our of our minds and all of our strength.

## **5. Honest Confession**

Reverent affection then leads to another priority: honest confession. In this story in John 4, Jesus asks this woman, "Why don't you go call your husband?" She says, "I don't have one." He says, "You're right. You've had five husbands and now you're living with a man who's not your husband." Doesn't that seem a bit bold, even insensitive, to just go right to her sin and her struggles like that?

There are at least two reasons why Jesus did this with her—and they're the same reasons why Jesus wants to do the same thing in every one of our lives. And these reasons are good. One, it's because Jesus desires to cleanse us from our sin. Jesus doesn't expose this woman's sin for her condemnation, but for her salvation. Jesus does this because He delights in taking the dirtiest of sinners and making them clean. We can't truly worship God with our lives if we're not honest with God about our lives.

It is a constant temptation among us to come into a worship gathering like this holding on to sin—maybe even harboring secret sin in our hearts, minds, lives or relationships. We're trying to pretend it's not there—going through the motions, singing those songs, listening to the sermons—then we move on with our lives. But in the middle of it all, Jesus is saying, "Stop!" Men and women, wherever you are right now, hear Jesus saying in His Word, "See the foolishness of trying to hide your sin from God." It's utter foolishness.

First, it's not hidden. He knows it. He's omniscient. He knows everything. You're not fooling God. You're fooling yourself. And second, why would you hide your sin from a God Who has made the way for you to be forgiven of it? Man or woman, student, come before God in honest confession of sin—

today. This is the Word of God for many people today. And toward this end, let's be a church that helps one another in this, that lovingly confronts one another in sin, in our worship.

Just so you know, I totally realize it's more uncomfortable to call out sin, idolatry and immorality in our lives than it is to stay silent on those things. It would be a lot easier as a pastor to not call out the idolatry and immorality in us and around us. We could probably draw more crowds if we stay more quiet on those things. If we preach sermons on the premise that people are okay, then people will come. If you call out sin, if you confront nominal, half-hearted Christianity, if you name impurity and immorality and idolatry in our lives and our families, then the crowds may dwindle.

But this is where we must not buy into the lie that the more people we have in seats, the more successful we are in the church. God is more concerned about the sanctity of our lives than He is the size of our church. We are fooling only ourselves if we think we can worship God without honesty before God. But don't miss this! It paves the way for grace from God. Let Jesus confront you in your sin, so that He can cleanse you of your sin. And that's just one reason.

The second reason Jesus does what He does in John 4 is not just because He desires to cleanse us from our sin, as if that's not enough. But also Jesus desires to comfort us in our sorrow. So on one hand, we think about how bad this woman's sin was. But think deeper for a minute. Jesus is addressing head on the pain that was in this woman's life, from man after man after man who had abandoned her. Jesus wants her to be honest with Him so that she can experience comfort that her soul needs amidst the hurt she has experienced. This is such good news in a hurting world.

So worship is not us saying together, "All right, let's put aside all the hard things we're walking through in life, then come aside and worship." All those trials, all those challenges you're walking through right now—just put them aside so we can come and worship. No. You bring all those things and lay them before God, because He is big enough to handle all of them. Cast your cares on God. Just read through the Psalms—the Bible's hymnbook—and you see this picture over and over and over again.

I know that on any given Sunday—including this one—some of you barely made it into the building today, because your hearts are so heavy. Worship is designed by God to meet you where you are, because the God we worship meets you where you are. We worship God and we experience the depth of satisfaction He has designed for our souls when we are real and honest before Him. We're not just playing religious games; we're honest before God with our sin and our struggles.

## **6. Gospel Celebration**

This then leads to gospel celebration. Here's another priority in worship. It's the good news of John 4:26: the Messiah is here. The Christ has come. Jesus has died on the cross to forgive us of our sins,

He's risen from the grave in victory over sin and He's guaranteed us eternal life in Him. That's the gospel and that is worth celebrating every single week!

Make the connection here to the last point. When we confess our sin honestly before God, 1 John 1:19 tells us God is *"faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Why? Because of the gospel. Because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. When we confess our struggle honestly before God—our hurts, pains, worries and concerns—He meets us with the hope we have in Christ. We're reminded that we're safe and secure, even satisfied in God, no matter what's happening in the world around us. Why? Because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

So we sing this gospel. We preach this gospel. We pray according to this gospel. We celebrate this gospel in stories and testimonies from each other's lives. Think about it. In His Word, God has given two visible pictures of gospel celebration for worship: baptism and the Lord's Supper. They're both gospel celebrations. In baptism, someone is confessing that they have put their faith in Christ. They're dead and then alive in Him, and we celebrate the gospel with them every time somebody's baptized. Similarly, in the Lord's Supper, the body and blood of Christ are represented in these elements that we celebrate on a regular basis in worship. We prioritize gospel celebration in worship.

## **7. Intentional Intercession**

We're clearly commanded in God's Word to pray with and for one another, so we must do this when we gather together for worship. I use the word 'intentional' here because we must make sure that prayer in our worship is intentional. Prayer must never be something we do to make a smooth transition from one part of the service to another. Prayer must never be something we do just so people can rearrange things on the stage. It feels horrible to even say that, but I trust we realize it's possible.

I trust we realize it's possible for somebody to say "Let's pray" in a service like this, so we all bow our heads. Then within seconds, we're all focused on all kinds of different things, but we're not focused on the fact that we're talking to God. Our minds go in all kinds of different directions. Prayer like that is not pleasing to God and it's not good for our souls.

It's like when I sit down with my kids for a meal and we're going to pray. I periodically say to them—and I'm really saying to myself—"Let's remember Who we're talking to. Let's not just say some words so we can dive into the pizza. We're talking to God." We need to remind ourselves of this and have intentional intercession.

## **8. Global Commission**

If we had time, we could see in the rest of John 4 how this woman leaves Jesus. The disciples reunite with Jesus and He immediately starts talking about mission with them. Then the woman comes back and she brings all kinds of Samaritans with her to meet Jesus. The picture is clear: true worship always leads to mission—always.

This makes sense, right? When your soul is satisfied in God, that's not just a satisfaction that is welling up in you. That's a satisfaction that is flowing out from you. So this is why in our worship we give our resources. We're compelled to, for the sake of mission in the world. This is why we end our worship gatherings every single week saying the Great Commission together. There are millions of people in this area who do not know the satisfaction that's found in God alone. We live next to them. We work next to them. We go to school with them. We play and shop and eat and do all kinds of things alongside them. Do we want them to be satisfied in God?

Worship is fuel for the goal of mission. Follow this. It's the fuel. We share the gospel with others—why? Because we want them to experience gladness in God. That's why we look for opportunities all week long to share the gospel. We have tens of thousands of opportunities to share the gospel this week in all the different places we are going.

Just this last week, right here in this community, I had the opportunity, by God's grace, to be in a Napali family's apartment sharing the gospel where there was a major physical need. I had the opportunity to visit a Salvadorean family whose child is struggling with spina bifida and shared the gospel. I saw the mom put her faith in Christ. I had opportunities in restaurants to invite people to church—a Saudi man in one restaurant, a Catholic woman in another. We have these opportunities, all of us, all week long, in everyday life, at work, at play, through McLean on the Move, which anybody can be involved in here.

This is why over 200 members of our church, from all our congregations, will travel to Ethiopia this week. Why? Friends, family members, co-workers think that's crazy. "Why would you do that?" Here's why. Because we want people all over the world to be satisfied in God forever. Their eternity is worth our lives on this earth. If this whole rescue operation is happening like it is in Thailand to save that soccer team, then how much more should we, who have the living water of Christ in us, be driven to marshal all of our resources and our lives and our families and the church to get the gospel to those who are on the road that leads to an eternal hell? Especially when we've tasted living water that lasts forever.

We're free to give our lives, overflowing on mission. And worship drives all of that. Mission here and around the world only makes sense if God is all-satisfying. If God's not all-satisfying, then why mission? If God is all-satisfying, then of course mission. Worship is the fuel of mission and worship is also the goal of mission.

One day, mission will be no more. We're not always going to read the Great Commission to one another, because one day disciples will have been made among all the nations and we will gather together

around the throne with every nation, tribe and tongue. Do you know what we're going to do? We're going to worship. We're going to worship forever, not just with our songs, but with life to the full. Do you know why? Because God has designed our souls to be satisfied in worshipping Him for all eternity.

Let's live toward that end and let's celebrate that as a church every single week in a way that brings glory to Him and satisfaction to our souls.

Let's pray.

O God, right now, help us focus and think about Who You are. We praise You for the privilege of worship. We deserve in our sin to be cast out of Your presence. We give you thanks that we can meet with You right now, by Your grace. We praise You we pray that You would be honored and glorified in our lives, in our church, in our worship. I trust that when we worship according to Your design, we will experience satisfaction in our souls. Thank You, God, for saving and satisfying us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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