

GOD!
Message 5

INTRO: Our subject again is God. This morning we will look at the last point of the section, "Why Did God Create Man"? We have asked, "Who is God?" and we have asked, "Why did God create man?" These five messages are truly introductory to the section, "What is God Like?" Answering that question, at least to some degree, is our goal.

Pastor Boehlig recently gave me the complete works of A.W. Tozer and numerous other books on CD. One of those books is entitled, *Whatever Happened to Worship?* The introduction goes like this: "Prior to his death in 1963, Dr. A. W. Tozer expressed the opinion that 'worship acceptable to God is the missing crown jewel in evangelical Christianity.' He desired to write one more book—a book concerning attitudes in Christian worship. In 1962, he preached a series of messages, 'Worship: The Chief End of Man,' from his own pulpit at Avenue Road Church in Toronto."

Now I have great respect for this man. I will never come any where near to his stature. But I see it a little differently. I believe that to glorify God is the chief end of man, but worshipping God is one of, if not the highest way of glorifying Him.

2. To worship Him

It is my firm conviction that to truly worship God we must first know some incredible things about Him. In this series of messages we will learn some incredible things about God, and then we will be enabled to better worship Him!

I have pondered this topic of worship for years now. It has only been in the last years that I feel I have come to some understanding of this great topic. I have also said many times that if I could change something about North American Christianity, and maybe it is happening elsewhere as well, it would be the sign outside most churches. Most of them say something about a worship hour. If my definition of worship is right, then I have never been in any church that had a worship hour! Now it may be that my understanding of worship is wrong, and that could

explain it all. After this message, you can think this subject through for yourself.

Some years ago a little booklet came into my hands, and I have it in my library. It is by A.W. Tozer and the title is, "Worship: the Missing Jewel Of The Evangelical Church." I agree with that title. I believe that the highest capacity of the Christian is to glorify God, and that God made us to glorify Him. And I believe that worship is one of the highest ways in which we glorify God. There are many other ways of glorifying God, but glorifying Him in worship is, I think, one of the highest.

Now let me say at the outset that you need to take what I give you this morning as one man's position on what worship is, although Tozer's view is much the same. However, many good preachers and teachers give other explanations of worship. It is for that reason that I have not dared to speak much on this subject. I have now come to the point where I am sure enough of my position that I dare, and yet it is in some trepidation that I do so. May God give you a discerning mind.

a. The definition of worship

Now my first task in this message is to define worship. You see, definition is absolutely crucial to dealing with a topic. The preacher who is unclear in definition is generally unclear in his message. A.W. Tozer, in *Worship: the Missing Jewel of The Evangelical Church*, says we must define. And he says, "If we do not define then no one knows what we are talking about." So let me ask you: How would you define worship?

Now before we seek to define worship, consider this. In the recent theological book by Swindol and Zuck, "Understanding Christian Theology", they write on page 1174, "English novelist Samuel Butler once wrote that a definition is the enclosing of a wilderness of an idea within a wall of words." Now that is a

definition of definition. Then the book goes on to say this, and mark it well, "Worship is one of those words that qualifies as a wilderness yet untamed." That is a huge admission, and that, by very capable theologians. Swindol and Zuck admit here, a dissatisfaction with any definition of worship they have studied.

Worship, what is it? We must define, and if we do not, our ideas of it may well prove to be inaccurate. So, after years of pondering this word, I want to give you my definition of worship as I understand it to be used in the Bible. Here it is: ***Worship is an expression of awe or adoration to God for some attribute or action of God which takes place while the worshipper is in a deeply humbled state.***

Now lest you think I am altogether off track, listen to Tozer in the book, "Gems from Tozer." He writes, "I want to define worship, and here is where I want to be dogmatic. Worship means 'to feel in the heart.' A person that merely goes through the form and does not feel anything is not worshipping. Worship also means to 'express in some appropriate manner' what you feel. And what will be expressed? 'A humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe and astonished wonder.' It is delightful to worship God, but it is also a humbling thing."

Let me say here, that as far as I can find, worship is never defined in Scripture. But the position of the worshipper is given in the word translated 'worship'. So I have come to the conclusion that what happens in worship is described by the physical position the word describes. The OT word for worship is *shachah*. It means *to bow down* or *to prostrate oneself*. The NT word is *proskuneo* means 'to kiss toward.' Bauer Arndt and Gingrich say that this word was, "...used to designate the custom of prostrating oneself before a person and kissing his feet, the hem of his garment, the ground, etc.: the Persians did this in the presence of their deified king, and the Greeks

before a divinity or something holy." So, these words translated 'to worship' speak of a position that admits the humbled state of a worshipper.

In many instances in the Bible one person would bow down before another in acknowledgement of the superiority of the other (Gen. 18:1-3). To bow down before others was a recognition that the other was in some way superior. The Hebrew word used is *shachah*. However, in other cases people would stand to worship, but they would bow their head to worship, *shachah*. In the Scripture reading of Eliazar's search for a wife for Isaac we saw this (Gen. 24:26). In this reference worshipping was, as I see it, saying words of awe or adoration to God for what He had done, that is, guiding Eliazar to a wife for Jacob.

So worship is that which happens in a bowed down or prostrated position. And I believe that what happens while the worshipper is in that position is ascribing words of awe or adoration to Almighty God. The bowed down position is in recognition of our lowliness and of God's supremacy over us. So let us explore worship in the Bible and in personal experience.

b. The practice of worship

So let us look at the practice of worship. We find an account of this in Genesis 24. In Genesis 24 Abraham sent Eliazer, his servant, to find a wife for his son Isaac. And Eliazer was worried because what woman is going to follow some old man to another country on his word to be a wife to someone she has never seen? Well, Abraham said, you try and if the woman you find does not want to come, then you are no longer under obligation to me for this.

So Eliazer went. And after a long distance he came to a well. And he prayed to God there. He knew that by custom it was the young ladies who watered the animals and they would come to

the well. But how was he to know which girl would make a good wife for Isaac? So he prayed, and we heard in the Scripture reading earlier, the tremendous answer to prayer! Eliazar was so humbled that it says in Genesis 24:26, "Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped the LORD!" The word is shachah. And what did he do when He worshipped? I believe he expressed his awe for the God who could lead him so directly to the right place and give him the wisdom how to find the right woman! It was a humbling moment for him when he experienced first hand the greatness of God!

I want us to look at another OT example. You will remember the account of Job. God had a little dialogue with the devil about the righteousness of Job and the devil said, "Hah. He serves You for one reason only and that is because You give him everything he wants. But touch his possessions or his children and then he will curse You to Your face." You will remember how God allowed the devil a lot of lee way in Job's life and one day a messenger came and told job, "The Sabeans have raided your herds and killed your servants." Hardly was he done reporting when another came and said, "Fire fell from God and consumed your sheep." While he was speaking another came and said, "The Chaldeans came and raided your camels and killed your servants." And then, immediately after this report came another saying, "Your sons and daughters are all dead!"

Now I want you to open your Bibles to Job 1:20-22 (read). What tremendous words these are! Job put on, not the garments of praise, but the garments of mourning and then he worshipped God. He did not praise God. He did not bless God. He did not thank God. He worshipped God (shachah)! "Oh God. I have lost all but I have You. I yet have the greatest treasure man could have. There is none like You. Oh God, how I am tempted to question Your goodness but I know better. You alone are God

and there is none like You. The Lord has given and the Lord has taken, blessed be the name of the Lord."

And then his wife, came along and said, "You utter fool. God has taken everything from you and here you are worshipping Him. What ails you. Curse God and die. What utter nonsense, worshipping God when He has stripped you of everything meaningful in life!" And Job said, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks! Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?"

I tell you, that day God was glorified in the life of Job! How God must have rejoiced when the devil had to hear these words. How God must be pained when we can no longer see How great and good He is, because bad things have happened to us.

Well, let's take a look at an example of worship in the NT. In Jesus' three great temptations by Satan, the last was an effort to get Jesus to worship him (Matt. 4:8-9). What was it the devil wanted here? First, he wanted Jesus to fall down before him, to acknowledge by position the devil's superiority. Second he wanted Jesus to express words of worship him. Now the word *worship* here is *proskuneo*. This word literally means to kiss towards. It has the idea of *shachah* in the OT where they would fall and kiss the superior person.

And from the act of acknowledgement of the superiority of the other person by prostrating oneself before him and kissing him, I believe we get the idea of what worship is. It is doing with words, what is done physically in *shachah* or *proskuneo*. We speak words that exalt the one we are worshipping and make ourselves low in comparison.

Now before we leave this topic, let me explain the difference between worship, praise, thanksgiving and blessing God. **Worship is** an expression of awe or adoration to God for any

of His actions or attributes while the worshipper is in a deeply humbled state. **Praise is** expressing good things to the Lord for any action or attribute of God. But the one praising is in an uplifted state. **To bless** the Lord is saying good things about the Lord to others. Again the one speaking is in an uplifted state. To thank the Lord is an expression of gratitude to Him while the one giving thanks is again in an uplifted state.

b. The practice of worship

So, let us give a little time to the practice of worship. A question was directed to me some time ago about worship and it was this: Can you schedule worship? The one who questioned me believed that worship was always spontaneous and could not be scheduled. So, let us consider these two, beginning with spontaneous worship.

1) Spontaneous worship

What is spontaneous worship? It is when I walk through the forest, or on the mountains, or am out on the lake somewhere and I am suddenly filled with wonder and awe at God's great creation. Now I think many people think that feeling is worship, and maybe partly it is. But when I bow and come low before Him and express myself in awe or adoration, realizing His greatness and my own smallness, that is truly worshipping.

If I am correct, spontaneous worship is about the only kind most Christians ever experience to any extent.

2) Scheduled worship

Earlier we looked at the worship of Eliazar and Job. Those were examples of spontaneous worship. Now we ask this question: Can worship be scheduled? Well, listen to the following verses:

Psalm 95:6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.

Psalm 5:7 But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.

Psalm 132:7 Let us go into His tabernacle; Let us worship at His footstool. Deuteronomy 26:10b Then you shall set it before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God. 1

Samuel 1:3 This man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh.

I could give you a host of other verses that clearly indicate that worship can be scheduled. I believe worship can be learned and it can be scheduled. As a matter of fact, I think it is safe to say that if we do not learn to worship, most of us will never worship much in all our lives.

Now there are at least two different ways of worshipping the Lord. The first and major way I want to mention is worshipping God in prayer. I believe it would be good to set aside special times to just worship God. But I also believe that it is good to often begin prayer with words of worship first. So let me make a suggestion that I have learned from someone else and that I have mentioned before. When you pray, use the acrostic from the book of Acts for a formula for prayer. The spelling of acts is A, C, T, S. And someone has suggested we pattern our prayers according to these letters. In prayer, begin with Adoration. There is worship. After expressing awe or adoration to God then we come to the C which stands for Confession. It is not hard to come to confess our shortcomings when once we acknowledge some attribute or characteristic of God.

The T stands for Thanksgiving. So after worship and confession, then spend a moment in thanksgiving. And when those three are done, then comes the S, supplication or asking for things. I recommend that to you. All you have to remember is ACTS. And I think if we would analyze our prayers, we would find that we mostly start with supplication and end with the same. We simply pray to ask for things.

Look at an example of a prayer in the Scriptures that begins with worship and concludes with supplication (Acts 4:23-29).

The second way to worship God is in singing. Now let me mention a word about worship in singing. Though I have not analyzed the whole Bible on this topic, it seems that worship and singing are seldom if ever found together. The Psalms are the hymnbook of Israel and as I briefly scanned through each Psalm, worship is certainly seldom if ever found there. The Psalms are full of praise and testimony and prayers, but not worship.

However, it is possible to worship God in song. It seems to me that singing is often understood to be worship, but in my estimation it seldom is. But sometimes we do worship God when we sing. I have spoken to you from Colossians 3:16. As I see it, this verse teaches that singing has two directions; man-ward and God-ward. When we sing man-ward we often sing about God. Now songs sung man-ward are songs that either teach or admonish. But a song may be directed towards God. Such a song may be a song of prayer or of praise or of thanksgiving or a song of worship.

Now when we analyze a song as a worship song, from my definition of worship it

would need to be a song that is directly addressed to God in words of awe or adoration for who or what He is or for what He has done or is doing. A classic example is the song, "How Great Thou Art". Note that the chorus clearly tells us we are singing to the Lord. And awe and adoration run throughout the hymn.

Now let me say a few things about the worship songs and choruses that are sung. Most songs that we would call worship songs do not worship. They may be a call to worship, or they may talk about worship, but they do not worship. Now all these songs are fine. The only problem is very few truly worship. So let me give some examples.

We have a chorus that says, "Come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our God our Maker..." You see, this is a call to worship, but it is not worship. However, when we sing a song like 'How Great Thou Art', this song is mostly worship. It begins like this, "Oh Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder, consider all, the worlds thy hands have made..." You see, these words are directed towards God and they are filled with awe and adoration.

Hymns or choruses that deal with worship usually do not worship. Worship hymns that worship are scarce. Praise hymns that praise are scarce too. Worship and praise hymns about worship and praise are more plentiful. Maybe our song leaders can alert us to some of this when they lead in praise or worship songs.

CONCL: So, let us conclude. We have focused this morning on worship. In the last message we said that the reason God made man was to glorify Him. This morning we have said that one of the main highest ways of doing that is by worshipping Him. I gave you this definition of worship:
Worship is an expression of awe or adoration to God for

some attribute or action of God which takes place while the worshipper is in a deeply humbled state.

Now in conclusion, let me say this. We can only worship God to the extent that we know Him. We can increase our knowledge of Him by studying the Bible. There are no quick lessons on learning to know who God is. This takes time and energy, and if we are not willing to do that, we will never worship God much. Take common passages like the Lord is my Rock or my Shepherd, or my refuge, or my strong tower. Then study what that means. And then in real life, learn to find Him that, and you will worship Him!

So, what is worship? It is to, in a deeply humbled state, express awe or adoration to God for some attribute or action of His. How about giving it a try this week some time? It takes a lot of learning to learn to truly worship. I am a learner.