



A 5 DAY LEARNING EXPERIENCE

# ESSENTIALS IN WORSHIP THEOLOGY

WITH DAN WILT, M.MIN.



A 5 Day Course with Dan Wilt

# ESSENTIALS IN WORSHIP THEOLOGY

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## **Ready For A Worship Theology Tune-Up?**

Thank you for joining in this 5 day experience in worship theology! You're here because you're serious about being the most effective, long-haul worship leader and/or worship community member you can be. Welcome.

Many years ago I sat in N.T. Wright's living room at Westminster Abbey, enjoying a long and rich conversation about worship theology (and drinking strong tea, I might add). We talked about the important role a worship leader and team has in forming our congregations' views on worship and discipleship. It was then I knew in my heart that this course needed to be created - for *all* of us.

**Before we start tomorrow**, please watch the introduction video that was sent to you in your email: *Introduction: Worship Is Out Of The Box*. Then read the introduction below. That will be the daily pattern,

### **1) watch, 2) read, 3) reflect**

This will get you started strong, and will let some light in the cathedral window for the 5 days ahead. Blessings, and I'm looking forward to the journey with you!

Dan

# INTRODUCTION

## WORSHIP IS OUT OF THE BOX

Total video time: 2:04

Reading time (est.): 10:00

Introduction Total Time: 12:04

### **Worship Is Out Of The Box**

What big ideas about God, people, and worship both anchor us in the Scriptures, and help us understand what it means to worship in our generation? We want to catch the best glimpse we can of God's vision for worship - taking us as far beyond our own as the Spirit would like.

*"Worship is all about God."* If I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times. But then, after I've made that statement in conferences and seminars for years, I've typically followed up with a phrase I no longer believe to be a "complete" vision of worship.

*"Therefore,"* I would say, *"worship is not about us."* Once, when I said this in front of a group of about 500 at a conference in the deep south of the United States, I pounded on the plexiglass podium for emphasis. A large glass of cold water spilled from the inner shelf of the podium as I did it, and tipped right onto my pants. From my belt to my toes, my pants were soaked. The place went wild with laughter, and I could only go with the moment. "See," I declared, "It's not about how we look, or how we sing - it's about Jesus!"

Years later, I've come to think that moment may have been instigated by God's quirky sense of humor. Perhaps He wanted to flag that moment in my memory, so that I would revisit it again and again to think about what I had said.

Yes, *worship is about God.* He is the focus of our worship. But to say, without conditions, *"Therefore, it's not about us,"* does not ring biblically true.

Worship is indeed for God alone as the focus of our adoration, but we have something to *do* with worship happening (in fact, human-divine worship doesn't happen without us), and something to *become* in response to the activity. We are integral to worship.

As well, something seems to matter in the heart of God, according to the Scriptures (Rom. 12:1-2), when He sees we are engaged with Him in the life-to-life exchange that is worship.

*Yes, worship is all about God.*

*Yet God, in turn, makes worship about forming us into His likeness.*

### **Theology Takes God Out Of The Box**

Before we unpack big ideas about worship theology, let's say a few things about our contemporary visions of worship (and by extension, our visions of God). Sometimes, truth be told, we make worship in our own image.

In other words, we attempt to put worship in a box and keep it there so it doesn't surprise us! We make worship about the music, about the service, about the song, about the worship leader, about the seminar or conference, so it doesn't rock our world the way Jesus does.

However, every time we attempt to keep worship in a box, we are attempting to keep God in a box. And most of us know, from experience, that God doesn't stay in our boxes for long - if He even visits there in the first place!

In a strange twist of Genesis 2, we tend to then make God in our own image, attempting to tame the one who Mr. Beaver in the Chronicles of Narnia series suggested was not "safe," but was "good."

In the same way, worship theology may not always be *safe*, but it is *good* to give time to it. God is found in the wildlands as well as in the orderly places. We want to be open to all the places that Christ plays in this world.

### **My Way Or The Highway**

It's important to say at the outset of a worship theology learning experience that churches are deeply married to their theology of worship, and what they think happens or should happen in worship.

I was once told offstage, just after a worship set I had led in a unique church in another country, that I wasn't leading worship "right." They then proceeded to show me at the next session what "right" meant to them. All I will say is that I got out of there as fast as I could!

Sometimes we justify virtually everything we do in worship, in our church or denomination, as the most biblically and theologically *right* way to do it. There is only one problem. Estimates tell us there are somewhere between 20,000-30,000 denominations in the world, that all worship differently!

So, who is 'right' when it comes to worship practices?

We might come to the conclusion that everyone is right (that could be problematic), or everyone except you and I are wrong (I like that one). There is probably, however, a middle ground.

While I do believe that some approaches to worship are more effective in forming a Christ-like disciple over a lifetime, I would suggest that the diversity of practical and theological approaches to worship simply means that we should speak about worship with some *humility* - especially when talking about topics as precious as who we understand God to be as revealed in Jesus (the One we worship), who human beings are who are designed to respond to God's Love and Story (the worshippers), and what worship (the activity) is all about.

*Humility.* That's a good posture for us to have as we explore theology, and how it impacts our view of worship.

### **Why Should We Care About Theology?**

Let's take the time to get honest as we begin. Many worship leaders, musicians, and creative leaders I have spoken to throughout the years have asked me a hard question:

*Dan, honestly, why should I even care about theology? My theology is Jesus. Don't I know enough about God and what He has done through Jesus to get me through a lifetime? Why invest my time in it? I can just play songs that are about Jesus, the Church loves it, and I'm all good.*

My answer is usually simple and straightforward, and it surprises them.

"You shouldn't care about theology," I say.

"I shouldn't care about theology?" they ask, quizzically.

"No," I say, "you shouldn't care about theology. You shouldn't care about theology if you don't care about your congregation becoming like Jesus."

They respond, "Of course I care about that!" "Then," I say, "you had better care about the theology that people are quietly carrying around with them every day - that you are quietly carrying around with you every day - and that you are delivering to them on a silver platter with every welcome, prayer, worship set, reading, and teaching moment."

Everyone has a theology we carry around with us like a piece of luggage, and we draw from it every moment of every day. That theology is either slowly killing us (whether it causes us obvious pain or not), or that theology is making us more whole, more centered in a biblical vision of life with God, and more like Jesus in our thoughts, emotions, and attitudes (Phil. 2).

The worship leader and team has a vital part to play in helping our congregation become more like Jesus - even in helping us think better, broader, and more lovingly about the God that we worship.

*What if we knew that studying theology could make us more full of wonder at who God is, and that wonder would shine through our words, our musicianship, and our ministry life?*

*What if we knew He would, quite literally, blow the doors off of who we have known Him to be as He revealed to us new aspects of Who He truly is?*

*What if, led by our own small world of sermons and conferences, what our Grandma told us, or what our personal experience tells us when we read the Bible, we have actually put God in an invisible box of our own making - and don't even know it?*

*What if, when we pray on a Sunday morning, it lacks depth because we are really only mashing together heartfelt yet Christian clichés about God (like "God, we just really, really love you, God, and, well, we just really do; You are the Trinity... and we really, really love you")?*

*What if people are coming in to our church with "bad" theology, thinking God is disappointed with them, moved by anger toward them rather than abounding grace and lavish love, or holding a quiet, unspoken belief that He is making all the bad things in their lives happen to them?*

*What if they are primarily seeing God through the lens of a painful relationship with their earthly father? What if we are training everyone else to see God in a limited way, because we're not willing to push the limits on our own way of seeing, talking, and feeling about God?*

*What if the people in our congregation are getting more of their understanding about God, the purpose of creation, about relationships, and about the meaning of our lives from the songs we lead than from any sermon they hear, or worse yet, from the shows they binge watch every evening?*

*What if what we're feeding them is not enough to help them be discerning as they immerse themselves in the distorted, romanticized, or even absent views of God they see in movies, hear in music, or need to believe so they can justify their hidden actions?*

*What if they can't talk about God well at work with their atheist, Buddhist, or nominal Christian friend because we're not helping them understand what they believe or why they believe it?*

***What if we are (by influence) one of the leading theologians in our church, and whatever music or liturgy we plan for our community each Sunday is possibly the steady theological meal they are eating (while the sermon is dessert)?***

Are we feeding our community, as we lead and influence, our best thoughts about God and God's Story, thoughts shaped by the Scriptures, by wonder, by beauty, and by mystery - thoughts that can help us all understand just how and why God deals with us the way He does? Or are we just giving our congregation what we *feel* like giving them?

What if, just if, a choice to avoid theology is not because it seems dry and boring, or even because we just want to focus on God's love - but because our avoidance actually springs from spiritual laziness as a leader of God's people?

That's probably not the case with you or I today, but I have seen it, walked leaders through it, and felt it - on my worst days - myself.

### **Theology, Mystery, Beauty, And Wonder**

I see myself in some of the statements above, and at different stages in my own experience as a growing worship leader and worship thinker.

Some of the reasons mentioned above are why a basic understand of worship theology is so important for everyone involved in worship.

- Theology is about *expanding* our sense of beauty, mystery, and wonder at the Person of God.
- Theology is about *helping people* live in a world charged with Grace because a God of Love is at the center of the universe, who Self-revealed His passionate heart for us in Christ Jesus.
- Theology is about *inviting our hearts and minds* to dance with the complexity and majesty of a God who threw the supernovas into space, sparked the atom into being, put the innocence into a baby's eyes, and loves each one of us back to life.

Many people live, even believers, in a world full of self-hatred, self-criticism, fear, cynicism, and pride because they imagine God to be someone who He is not and never will be.

*Theology matters. It really, really matters.*

### **A Journey Of Discovery**

We're about to go on a journey of discovery. The Spirit will be our Guide (John 16:13), and the Bible will be our constant companion. Allow the ideas we touch here to lead you to Scriptures that aren't mentioned, and to journal your own ideas along the way. Ideas will be repeated from time to time here and in the videos; that is because all learning is like water dripping on stone - what happens consistently and repetitively shapes us.

Worship is a celebration of the God who makes all things new, and is an invitation to discover the wonders of this mystery with a Name - the Creating Father, the Living Son, and the Pursuing Holy Spirit.

The Lord God, King of the Universe and Keeper of our Hearts is His Name. He is the reason studying theology is worth our while. And He is with us, in us, on these 5 days together.



# DAY 1

## YOU HAVE A THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP

Total video time: 6:03

Reading time (est.): 20:00

Day 1 Total Time: 26:03

*“Gradually ... we discover that the voice whose echoes we began to listen for ... becomes recognizable, as we reflect on the creator God who longs to put his world to rights; on the human being called Jesus who announced God’s kingdom, died on a cross, and rose again; and on the Spirit, who blows like a powerful wind through the world and through human lives.”*

N.T. Wright, *Surprised By Hope*

### **Lifting The Veil On Theology**

Let’s talk about theology. The word comes from the Greek word *theos*, the word for God, and *-logy*, the Greek suffix meaning “the study of.” Theology, therefore, is the *study of God*.

In our time, theology has been defined more practically as “faith seeking understanding” (Anselm: *fides quaerens intellectum*), which provides us with a beautiful way to think about how learning can expand the joy and awe we experience in our growing relationship with God.

As we are always seeking understanding in our day to day lives, fueled by our faith, we can confidently say that theology has everything to do with our daily life.

## **God Conceals And Reveals**

Proverbs 25:2 says,

*“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter;  
to search out a matter is the glory of kings.”*

In other words, discovery is a sacred privilege, and those who seek understanding, often find what they seek.

Worship is, in so many ways, a quest to more fully comprehend the Sound behind the texture of music, the Rhythm behind the beating heart, the Vision behind the gift of sight, the Colors behind the radiant spectrum, and the Life behind all forms of life.

There is a knowing that is a knowing of facts (empirical), and there is a knowing that is a knowing of Love and Beauty (relational and experiential). In Christ, both forms of knowing come together as the worshipping heart turns both thought and feeling toward the ultimate goal of knowing God as we are known by Him.

*“For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face.  
Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”*

1 Cor. 13:12

## **How The Arts Carry Theology**

When Jodie Foster’s character was propelled into the stunning vastness of space in the 1997 movie *Contact*, she stuttered, upon seeing the cosmos as she had never seen it, “They should have sent a poet.”

In other words, often an expression of art (such as a song) can convey meanings in sounds, words, or phrases that simple verbal descriptions from a pulpit cannot.

Songs, music, and liturgies can provide doorways, portals to a fresh encounter full of relational and experiential knowing. In fact, songs and liturgies can be a place we go to meet with God; non-locational spaces (Phyllis Tickle) that create a spiritual environment for intimacy between the unseen God and the waiting spirit.

Our gathered worship experiences, whether we lead them primarily through music, liturgy, visuals, sound, architecture, or other arts, are vital in exposing the average Christian to the nature of God and the individual's place in His unfolding story.

### **The God Who Self-Reveals**

The Bible is our narrative guide to the nature of God, the nature of human beings made "in His image" (Gen. 1:26-27), and the nature of worship. In the following days, we will look at all three of these areas, welcoming the Spirit to reveal the heart of the Father and the love of the Son to us along the way.

To our great benefit, and in contrast to what the voices of the new atheism may say, Christians believe in a God who has not remained hidden. In other words, God doesn't play games with humanity, thrusting us into this strange, undulating cosmos, to then dispense with offering any description of why we might be here.

Love doesn't play games that go nowhere; love however does disclose some truths, while retaining others, for good reason. For who are Christians, we believe that God has indeed revealed Himself, and has revealed Himself once and for all, in the Person of Jesus (Heb. 1:3; John 1:1, 14, 8:28, 14:9, 15:5-6).

Because of Jesus, we aren't left to our own opinions about who God is, even if we want to be. Just because someone doesn't claim Christ, does not mean that He has withdrawn His claim on their life or the cosmos! He is Lord or He is not - that is both the defining question of the ages, and of every human heart.

Christ *reveals* the nature of God to us. In Colossians 3:18-19 we read,

*"And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him...."*

Jesus is the revelation of God to us, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the God of every human being who has ever lived. We are not left alone to our own religious concoctions.

Despite what politicians, pundits, and Twitter celebrities say, it is not every person for herself/himself when it comes to who God is! God has not, nor ever will, conform His inimitable Person to our most popular or pious descriptions.

The beginning of good biblical theology, and good worship theology, sits in this simple idea:

*God has made Himself known.*

This is the greatest act of love one can give, to *reveal* oneself in relationship – vulnerably, with self-sacrifice, and with a complete emptying of one’s own self-fulfilling agenda (the term *kenosis* in the Scriptures speaks to this idea, ex. Phil. 2:6-7).

And this idea, that God self-reveals and that we are not in charge of what God is like, is terrifying to the person who has not yet encountered His confounding grace and irrepressible affection.

The God we worship as Christians is a God who, in love, self-reveals. He invites us into revelation and meaning by not remaining hidden, by not remaining distant nor silent. This is a God who enters into the joy and delights of our lives, and who also suffers with, suffers for, and suffers among His children.

This is a God who takes on flesh and blood, and who incarnates to make His point. And what is His point?

That we are loved, that we are pursued, that we belong to the Father. This is Jesus, the self-revealing of God. And this is the beginning of good theology.

### **The Scriptures Guide Us To Who God Is**

We are given a guide, the Scriptures, to lead us forward as Christian communities welcoming the Holy Spirit’s leadership.

Despite our diverse understandings of the Bible’s authoritative letters, histories, songs, prophecies, and stories, we are rooted by the Bible in a covenantal vision of

God offered across time through a single tribe in our ancient human family - the Jews (for an excellent book on this topic, see Sandra Richter's *Epic of Eden*).

If we have enough imagination to recognize that this is indeed what God has done, to self-reveal, and that He has particularly selected a tribe through which to speak His Story into the world - then we are ready to start unpacking our biblical theology about God and His world.

### **Our Categories For Talking About Worship Theology**

Here are our three categories of discovery, which form a trinity of ideas that tumble over one another like sweet harmonies, and bring us back again and again to the Scriptures and a rich, vibrant theology of worship.

Our theology of worship should first tell us who we believe that God has revealed Himself to be.

In the next days we will look at:

- God as Creator (the God who creates)
- God as King (the God who reigns)
- God as Trinity (the God who relates)
- God as Savior (the God who saves)

Our theology of worship should then tell us who we believe that human beings are revealed to be.

In the next days we will look at:

- Human beings as Sub-Creators (people who make and share)
- Human beings as Image Bearers (people who reign and steward)
- Human beings as Community Builders (people who relate and reveal)
- Human beings as Salvation Storytellers (people who act and tell)

Our theology of worship should then tell us what worship is revealed to be in the Scriptures.

In the next days we will look at:

- Worship as a Creative Act (to worship is to make and to share the gifts of that making)
- Worship as a Royal Act (to worship is to benevolently reign within, and to steward, creation)
- Worship as a Relational Act (to worship is to relate rightly to God, ourselves, other people, and the creation, including the whole community of living and non-living things)
- Worship as a Narrative Act (to worship is to tell and retell a story that provides the optimal context for the universe, and to act in accord with that story)

### **Good Theology & Bad Theology**

In laying a foundation for the days ahead, it's important we address one more thing here on Day 1.

We said earlier that every person you will ever meet, including yourself, has a theology. In other words, we have ideas about who God is (or who God is not), and we will live out those beliefs whether we do so knowingly or not.

Our theology shows itself over time in the ways we live, the ways we relate, the ways we communicate, and in the ways we act. Some theology we might see as "good." Other theology we might see as "bad."

Have you ever been in a church worship gathering, and something felt very right or very wrong?

Our theology shows up, often when we least expect it. We simply feel something when we experience someone else's theology guiding a worship gathering, and we make an inner evaluation - a gut opinion - about what is happening.

Let's look at some examples of bad and good theology for moment.

## **1. Bad Theology**

We begin to understand that theology is important when we see the results of bad theology. In Waco, TX, many years ago, 76 people (including 21 pregnant women and children) died in a fire after a standoff with a government agency.

Led by David Koresh, the “Branch Davidians” had a theology to which they held tightly, and which compelled them to stock firearms as an outworking of their shared theology. As the cult leader, Koresh was willing to face death for his theological convictions - and to take many others with him.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, many in popular culture began to ask the question, “If Koresh was basing his beliefs about God in the Bible, is that really what the Bible says about God? How could a group of people believe such strange things about God - using the Bible - that would lead to the death of innocent children?”

Most of us would say, “Now that’s an extreme example of some seriously bad theology. We don’t have anything like that going on in ‘normal’ churches today.” Maybe. But there are a few (very few) churches in which I have led worship that view God as a divine judge demanding that people get it right all the time, believing He is quick to bring judgment if someone steps even a bit out of line. Doesn’t mercy triumph over judgement (James 2:13)?

How did I know that theology was rife in those congregations? Not because they told me (in most cases), “This is our theology.” Rather, I knew it because I saw the way the worship leader exhaustingly cheer-led us through a series of religious gymnastics and hyped-up songs about only happy things and the sweet by and by to come, and I sensed the negative and degraded view of the human person that seemed to ooze out of the message from the pastor.

As another example, how about the theology, or view of God, that regards God’s primary mission as being completely focused on my personal life and happiness, to the exclusion of others? In some brands of western Christianity, this view of God shows itself in the self-actualizing and consumeristic messages of many churches on a Sunday morning. We worship the God we think we *need* and *want* to believe in - a God who orients His life around us and our desires. The unspoken

understanding is, "If you just give your life to Jesus, then His job is to fulfill your dreams and make you happy."

This may be a god of someone's choosing on their spiritual playlist, but it is not the God of the cosmos that we see depicted in the pages of the Old and New Testaments.

## **2. Good Theology**

Now, on the one hand, the stories mentioned above may seem to be a cartoon, a caricature, of what really happens out there. Don't most groups have it somewhat right? Why would so many people be involved in something if the theology was sp bad?

I learned something about crowds from a friend many years ago. He said, "Just because an idea is embraced by a large group of people, does not mean it is either healthy or right. Following this logic, New York City would be one of the most 'healthy and right' cities on the planet - and we all know that can't be true!"

We all have hook points in our hearts, needs for emotional support or community, that can draw us toward both good or bad theology. And we all need friends who will help us see where our hearts have gone astray and help us get on a better path.

Large crowds, great music, and persuasive personalities do not baptize theology and make it right. We must be, as the apostle Paul admonished his listeners, like the Bereans of Acts 17:11 - who were 'more noble than the rest' because they searched the Word of God to see if what Paul was saying was indeed true.

True to what? True to Jesus' teaching. As Jesus said in John 14:15:

*"If you love me," Jesus said, "Keep my commands."*

We might say that good theology would be any theology that enlarges our view of God and enlarges our view of humanity, rather than shrinking our view of God and shrinking our view of humanity. Someone else might suggest that good theology



is *biblical*, i.e., there is strong Scriptural support for the way that we view God, how He interacts with humanity, and how we interact with Him.

This could be a good definition of good theology, but we must again remember that those 20,000 - 30,000 protestant denominations apparently see the Scriptures supporting some very different ideas about God, or at least how we worship Him.

Good theology could mean, for many of us in our time, "Any way of viewing God that leads us to recognize that His love is unfailing, His truth is enduring, and His actions are always just."

For our purposes, let's bring a few of these ideas together for a working definition of good theology, at least for the length of this study:

Good theology is theology that:

- Draws us near to the covenant-keeping God of the Scriptures (James 4:8),
- Strengthens love in our hearts for Him and people in this world (John 3:16), and
- Equips us to live the Jesus life as those who obey his loving commands (John 14:15).

### **Embedded Theology And Deliberative Theology**

As I mentioned earlier, it was Anselm of Canterbury (the Archbishop of Rome in the 1000s) who said, "Theology is faith seeking understanding."

In other words, we can know what the Bible says, but theology is about what the Bible *means*.

Theology is about the questions that we have about the Scriptures and our faith.

- Who is God?
- What is He like?
- Why are we alive and on planet earth?
- Who is Jesus?

- What is worship all about?
- Who am I?

All of these are questions that theology seeks to provide real answers for, and are questions that bubble up often in our worship leadership and creative activities.

In their excellent and simple book, *How to Think Theologically*, Howard Stone and James Duke suggest that there are two types of theology at work in the world.

### **1. Embedded Theology: “I Grew Up Believing This”**

The first is called *embedded theology*. I like to call this ‘folk theology.’ This is the theology, or way of viewing God and the world, that you and I learned from our family, from our church (or non-church environment), from our upbringing, from the music we listen to, from our unstudied interpretation of the Bible, and so on.

It is the simple theology that most of us live from every day. A variety of emotions, beliefs, feelings, experiences, values, hopes, and dreams make up that theology, and most people are pretty sure those unspoken ideas they hold are correct.

My own grandmother used to say, “Well, if it happens, it’s God’s will.” I loved my grandma, but I’ve come to understand that this simple phrase topples 94% of the entire biblical view of sin, human choice, and the mission of the Church!

Embedded theology, Stone and Duke say, is what “rushes to the frontline in every battle over the moral and social issues of the day.”

Some of our embedded theology may be good, and some of it may be bad. Just as I suggested there is good theology and bad theology in the world, so too, there is good theology and bad theology inside of us.

In most of the hymns, contemporary worship songs, and Christian music we lead, listen to, and participate in today (and all forms of music) there is some degree of helpful biblical theology, usually mixed with some degree of unhelpful biblical theology.

Oh, what are we to do?

## **2. Deliberative Theology: "I've Reflected And I Choose to Believe This"**

Deliberative theology is "the understanding of faith that emerges from a process of carefully reflecting upon embedded theological convictions.... Deliberative theological reflection also carries us forward when our embedded theology proves inadequate" (Stone and Duke).

The word deliberate, meaning "by choice," is in the phrase above. In this case, we are intentionally choosing to reflect on our beliefs, the story they describe, and their general helpfulness on the journey of following God.

In many ways, choosing to do this study is an act of deliberative theology on your part.

We are made to be people on a quest, on a journey, with God. Because a true quest often involves our deepest questions marching up to the front of the line as companions, many Christians shy away from such a journey.

Historically, this was not true of the Church in its earliest years. Rather than shying away from challenging questions - questions whose answers might impact some of the embedded and popular theologies of their time - early Christians ran headlong into the most difficult questions of their age!

This is how we must approach theology, and how we must approach the kind of study we are in - with *courage*.

### **God Is The Subject Of The Worship Sentence**

As a final thought, go back in your imagination to one of your favorite school grammar classes (if you have one!). Remember subjects, verbs, and objects in a sentence structure? Remember diagramming sentences on the chalk board?

It is God who is the Subject of the worship sentence. We are the Objects of the worship sentence, toward which the Subject of the sentence acts through the Verb of Love (for more on this, read the late Robert Webber's online article "*God: The Object Or Subject Of Worship?*").

If our worship theology begins with God as the Subject of the worship sentence, acting toward us in love, then we are the Objects of His love. According to 1 John 4:19, we then “love Him,” because “He first loved us.” Worship is our response to God’s actions of love toward us.

*We are the pursued; God is the primary Pursuer.*

Let’s get this truth in our bones, and let this truth inform our study this week. Our worship theology will get off to a shaky start if we believe that we are the Subject of the worship sentence, acting on God with our worship activity, and God is simply the Object and recipient. This simple mix-up in worship theology may cause more damage in the Body of Christ than you and I will ever know.

Amos 5:23, the famous passage where God calls music “noise” because it isn’t flowing from a heart of love and justice, reminds us that if we are the focus of the worship experience we will always, always go wrong.

Embrace the journey of becoming an “in the trenches” theologian, and expect God to expand your horizons as you begin to look for theology at work – everywhere.

## **DAY 1 | REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

These reflection questions are for personal journaling or discussing with a group taking the course with you. Give a few minutes to each one.

1. What idea moved you the most from this Session? Why?

2. How do you think your embedded theology has influenced you so far in your life? Your deliberative theology?

## **DAY 1 | A NOTE FROM DAN**

Congratulations! You just finished with Day 1, and I hope your mind is already considering how our theology impacts our every day lives.

Tomorrow, get ready for Day 2, one of the most intriguing days in our whole theology tune-up, as we focus on the question: "Who is the God we worship?"

I'm excited to explore the biggest of ideas with you - let your imagination lead as we do.

Blessings,

Dan

# DAY 2

## WHO IS THE GOD WE WORSHIP?

Video time: 10:36

Reading time (est.): 20:00

Day 2 Total Time: 30:36

Welcome to Day 2 of 5.

This will be the longest session of the week, so buckle in! The ideas we'll explore today will take us into the mysteries of the unfathomable God we worship - and a fresh rediscovery of powerful truths about Him that impact our worship leadership.

*Our view of God, in so many ways,  
sits at the center of our theology of worship.*

Blessings as we consider "things too wonderful" for us (Ps. 139:6).

### **Who Is the God We Worship?**

Before we can talk about what worship is all about, we have to start with who God is.

God is the focus of our worship, but sometimes we only give quick attention to His person and actions through our lyrics and don't dig deep enough to realize who we're really dealing with.

While libraries about the nature of God have been written, and the whole of the Scriptures gives us an ongoing window into the heart and motives of God, we'll take this session to explore just a few core areas that will help us connect our theology with our worship.

## **God Bursts Out of the Maze**

*"But suppose that God, if there is a God, were to come bursting out of the center of the maze on his own initiative?"*

N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian*

From the flashes of God's personality revealed in the micro and macro cosmos (God as Creator); to the biblical declaration of God's sovereign rule over all time, space, and matter (God as King); to the historical and experiential evidence of God's manifest presence as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (God as Trinity); to salvation history's culminating celebration when God is one who rights the world (God as Savior); we as believers worship the God who *reveals Himself*.

"We become like what we worship," someone wisely said.

In other words, if our view of God is small, we will become small people living in a small story.

If, however, our view of God is passionate, joyful, expansive, and creative, we will tend to become like the God we worship.

Here these words from John, rendered by Eugene Peterson in *The Message*:

*"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish."*

John 1:14 (*The Message*)

In other words, what we love about Jesus, is what we love about God. Jesus painted God before our eyes, showing us how God views the poor, the outcast, the lonely, the rich, the educated, the uneducated, the fisherman, the ruler, the women, the men, and the children.

With Jesus as our lens, let's look deep into the whole counsel of Scripture at four different ways the Father God has "burst out of the maze" into the world.



## 1. God As Creator (the God who creates)

*"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."*

Genesis 1:1

The book of Genesis, in its very first verse, clearly communicates about the nature of God. In fact, could we imagine that our loving heavenly God chose specifically to emphasize something very important about His Personality by making a firm statement in the very first verse of the Scriptures?

In the Bible, it's not just *what* is said that is important. It is *how* and *when* what is said is said that also reveals the thoughts behind the greatest Thinker of all.

We should consider that God wanted to show us that central to His nature, is *creativity*. God, in His very essence, is a *Maker*.

From the outset, this verb-based language describes in vivid, unfolding detail the nature of God as a Person who *makes* (that is what the Hebrew word for 'create' means in this context).

In other words, in the first verse of the first book on the first moments of cosmic infancy, God is depicted as Maker, Creator, Lead Artist, and wildly Imaginative Engineer of the Cosmos.

That's important. Creativity is not only for artists or the more right-brained leader – creativity is literally for *everyone*.

Anyone who can think up over 25,000 species of land snail (that doesn't include sea or freshwater snails), with myriad skin colors, has got to be creative. And why would God do that? Simply for function's sake? Could it be possible that, according to the first verse of the Bible, we are dealing with a God who is both playful Artist and precise Engineer, both visionary Creative and consummate Physicist?

From the quark to the quasar, God wins the Art Show. At the beginning of time, the macro world and the micro world spilled forth from the imagination and

administration, the art and the science, the mathematics and the music, rumbling in the Person of God.

God designed a cosmos of astounding complexity, beauty, immensity and intricacy and invited human beings to go exploring.

Some Christians seem to believe that the best answers in the world are the simple answers, and indeed, this may sometimes be the case. However, when we consider the glory of the atom (which, as particles ever smaller are discovered and documented in their activity, may turn out to be made completely of light; i.e., light being the building block of all matter - "Let there be light!"), and the vastness of the space beyond our atmosphere (billions of stars, solar systems, galaxies, nebulae, and other celestial wall hangings in the divine studio) - we would have to embrace that God delights in complexity as much as in simplicity.

The implications of beginning to understand God as the Originator and Source of light, time, matter, energy, stars, galaxies, mathematics, microorganisms, sound, narwhals, rock strata, quarks, bees, air, clouds, music, gastropods, and Venus flytraps - are immeasurable.

When we add to this list the mysteries of the universe within us - the human body, the human soul, and the gifts of love, joy, friendship, laughter, and parental love - we should be left with nothing less than our hearts ravished with wonder that such a Being would invite us to play within this stunning universe.

## **2. God As King (the God who reigns)**

*"God has set His throne in heaven; He rules over us all. He's the King."*

Psalm 103:19 (*The Message*)

The central, guiding metaphor that God self-reveals about both His Personality and His role in the universe, is that of *King*. Throughout the pages of Scripture, God both refers to Himself, and seems to welcome others to refer to Him, as Sovereign over the universe.

For the early Church, worship was a political act. The declaration "Jesus is Lord" was a direct affront to the common expression of divine honor of the day, "Caesar is Lord."

At one point I stood on the spot where, almost two thousand years before us, Christians would have stood before screaming crowds in preface to a sporting event and been challenged as to their political allegiance, which was to Jesus as their Lord. Looking deeply into the eyes of their inquisitors, they would have said what young Cassie Bernall, victim of the 1999 Columbine High School shooting, was said to have spoken to her assailant: "Yes, I believe in God."

While the concept of kingship is a difficult one to understand for those who live in North America, it is a more familiar idea in many other parts of the world. Kingship speaks of sovereign, governmental authority. Related to the idea that God is King is the idea that human beings are subject, ultimately, to live their lives according to the will of another.

Not only are the laws of time, space, and matter subject to this King, but all individuals, rulers, powers, and authorities will ultimately answer to the One who reigns over the universal order.

To recognize God as King is to recognize that by His rule He has a claim on every life that lives under His benevolent leadership.

### **3. God As Trinity (the God who relates)**

*"Hear O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is One."*

Deuteronomy 6:4

The biblical doctrine of the Trinity is based on the recognition that God has revealed Himself to humankind as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The great "Three in One," is the God of the Jews, the great "I Am" of history (Ex. 3:14), and has been revealed to us by the Spirit of God through the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

In N.T. Wright's collection of worship sermons, *For All God's Worth*, he suggests that the doctrine of the Trinity expressed in the Scriptures and in the Christian understanding of God, was never meant to be a math equation confining our understanding of God - but rather a way of God confirming that He is beyond the confines of our wildest perceptions.

To understand God as One Person standing at the center of reality, expressing Himself in three ways as Father, Son, and Spirit, can be mind-boggling. The early Christians, in the face of their revelation of Jesus as God, came to the doctrine of the Trinity as their best way of talking about holy mysteries.

Scholar Jeremy Begbie of Duke University has suggested that we use an analogy from the world of music to comprehend the Trinity - three in one, all existing and acting at the same time. A chord is made up of three notes. They are individual frequencies, each with their own part to play. But when those notes are played *together*, a chord is sounded and all notes co-exist in auditory space at the same time. To take away one note, is to take away the chord. The three are truly one when played together.

The late Robert Webber, one of our generation's most dedicated scholars in both ancient and contemporary worship, challenged worship leaders to think this way when leading Trinitarian worship:

*"Rediscover the Trinitarian nature of worship - we worship the Father in the language of mystery; the Son in the language of story; the Spirit in the language of symbol."*

#### **4. God As Savior (the God who saves)**

*"You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."*  
Matthew 1:21

How many times have you heard another Christian, or even yourself, say "I'm saved"? We should probably ask the question, "From what are we saved?" Evil? Immorality? Yourself? A fiery pit of hell? Your fears?

Another question should then follow this one - a question that seems to be far more important to the Story woven throughout the Old and New Testaments. According the Scriptures, we should not only ask ourselves *from what* have we been saved, but we should also ask *to what* have we been saved?

If the God of the Bible is anything, He is the God who is *near*. Jesus' title, *Immanuel*, means "God with us." Jesus' name, Y'shua, means "God saves."

In other words, when things go wrong in God's creation, God intervenes, recreates, and rescues.

It is very difficult to read the first five pages of the Bible without seeing at least two things:

1. We should immediately see that there is a God who has deeply and passionately loved the human race. We all know the Story. God speaks a word and creates. God creates human beings to steward that creation, at least on earth. Humankind is special, made in God's image from dust and divine breath. Community and intimacy, the threads weaving together all of the created world, are in perfect and radiant condition.
2. We should see that there is a severe problem that rears its head. That problem, conveniently known to us as a little three-letter word, is *sin*.

Sin is a word that causes the modern person to recoil. Biblically, it means that we've "missed the mark." We've somehow fallen short of our vocation (our calling), our mission (our co-labor with God), and our identity (our relationship to God, one another, and the world).

And it manifests itself in a thousand ways, every day, in a life that is not free from its grasp. Whatever we don't name holds power over us - sin, by any other name, retains its grip on the human heart. Who will set us free?

How the Story began is the way it was, and is, meant to consummate. We began in the pristine beauty of the Garden of Eden, destined to live forever in community with God and one another. Instead, we chose to eat the fruit from one of the

forbidden trees in that verdant sanctuary, shattering the glorious intimacy we once shared with our Maker and with all the created order.

Sin is the problem, and God is the kind of Person who will not ignore the brokenness in His own work of art.

### **The Cross and Atonement**

To restore humanity, fix the sin issue, and bring new creation life (2 Cor. 5:17), Christ did three things that each contain a broad range of details and gifts for we who are the benefactors. Christ...

- 1) lived among us,
- 2) suffered on the cross, and then
- 3) rose again from the dead.

Let's look at the cross and the resurrection, just for a moment.

The word *atonement*, or Christ's relationship-restoring act on the cross to bring "at-one-ment" between God and humanity again, is a profound and deep theological idea rooted in the ancient near-Eastern concept of covenant-keeping. We won't have time to completely unpack this here, but I would recommend you read Sandra Richter's book, *The Epic of Eden*, the first chance you get.

We'll use atonement as a category for breaking down the very specific ways the death of Jesus on the cross worked the rescue of God for a disconnected and sin-chained humanity. We'll draw on George Ladd's categories in *A Theology of the New Testament* for the following glimpses into the work of the cross.

#### **1. The Cross Reveals The Love of God**

*"God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."*  
Romans 5:8

In the suffering of Jesus on the cross, we see the love of the Father manifest in the most stunning and profound of ways - the complete self-giving of His only Son. If you only write one song or create one expression related to the work of the cross,

focus on this reality: that God so loved, that God gave, and gave, and gave of Himself.

Helpful References: 2 Corinthians 5:19; Romans 8:3; Romans 8:32; Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Ephesians 5:25

## **2. The Cross Represents Sacrifice**

*“Sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,  
he condemned sin in the flesh.”*

Romans 8:3

The apostle Paul described Christ’s death as a “fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Reflecting on the ancient practice of offering a lamb’s blood in sacrifice for the sins of the people Israel, in an expression of covenant-keeping, Jesus becomes that “life for a life” exchange.

Helpful References: Romans 3:25; Ephesians 5:2; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; Ephesians 2:13; Colossians 1:20; John 19:34

## **3. The Cross Highlights The Vicarious Offering Of Christ**

*“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Romans 5:8

This term “vicarious” is used to depict the fact that Jesus did not die just for you, or just for me, or just as an historical event. Jesus died, according to the Scriptures, “for us,” i.e., in our place.

(This is an idea that has kept theologians busy for centuries – so don’t be worried that it’s a challenge for any one of us to comprehend.) But it is comforting to know that someone “took our place” in facing down the enemy of our souls.

Helpful References: 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Romans 8:32; Ephesians 5:2; Mark 10:45

#### **4. The Cross Expresses Christ's Substitutionary Death**

*"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died."*

2 Corinthians 5:14

Another way to see Christ's death is to see it as *substitutionary*, which is similar to the previous idea. In other words, Christ died in our stead, in our place, and therefore we all have died. In submitting to judgment, he delivered us from our judgment.

Now, identifying with the death of Jesus, we are able to identify with his rising from the dead to new creation and new life.

Helpful References: 2 Corinthians 5:21; 2 Corinthians 5:14; 1 Timothy 2:6; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 6:1

#### **5. The Cross Speaks Of Propitiation**

*"...And are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished."*

Romans 3:24-25

What in the world does the word *propitiation* mean? Propitiation literally means to "render us favorable" before someone we have offended. In this way, the offering of Jesus' life on the cross renders us favorable before God.

Helpful References: Romans 1:18; Romans 1:32; Romans 2:12; Romans 6:23; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Hebrews 9:5; Romans 3:25; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Philippians 2:5ff



## **6. The Cross Resounds With Redemption**

*“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,  
and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

Mark 10:45

Redemption literally means “to buy, or to purchase.” It speaks of words like *ransom* and *freedom*. The words used for redemption in the New Testament spring from themes common to the period. Redemption had to do with, according to George Ladd, ransoming those who were war prisoners, or purchasing back slaves for the purpose of freedom. We were slaves to sin, disobedience, self-preservation, and independence from God. We are now rescued, saved, to a new Master. We no longer obey the old master.

Helpful References: Titus 2:14; 1 Timothy 2:6; Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:7; Romans 8:23; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Corinthians 7:22-23; Galatians 3:13; Galatians 4:4

## **7. The Cross Demonstrates The Victory Of Christ**

*“And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”*

Colossians 2:15

The historic theological vision of this expression of the cross’s efficacy is held in the idea of *Christus Victor* - Christ The Victor or Champion. The achievement of Christ on the cross, no matter what some of our contemporary worship songs say, was not just for you, or even just for me! Jesus’ death on the cross did indeed fix the sin issue for you and me, but not solely for you and me.

A great, spectacular cosmic triumph occurred in those dark hours on Calvary’s hill. Every ruler, authority, and power in Paul’s conception of a spiritual realm was to be rendered powerless by Christ’s work on the cross. He will reign until He has put every enemy under His feet (1 Cor. 15:24-25).

Helpful References: 1 Corinthians 15:24-25; Ephesians 2:2-8; Ephesians 3:10

## Resurrection And The New Creation

*"He is not here; he has risen, just as he said."*

Matthew 28:6

Like a song rushing toward its conclusion, we see that the work on the cross of the Saving God was not the culmination of the New Life Story. It is on the resurrection that our faith ultimately, for this life and for eternity, rests. If you're going to write one song of worship and faith before you go on to your reward - write it about the *resurrection*.

*If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead.*

*But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.*

*If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

*But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.*

1 Corinthians 15:13-22

Early one morning, according to Matt. 28:1–10, a stone was rolled away, a tomb was found empty, and the disciples of Jesus were propelled into the world with such joyful force that even the most unbelieving scholars of our day are confounded by what exactly happened on that first Easter Sunday.

According to New Testament scholar N.T. Wright, the resurrection is a *guarantee of the age to come* - Jesus is the firstborn from among the dead (Col. 1:18) and his

followers will follow suit (1 Thess. 4:16). New creation is presently at work in us (2 Cor. 5:17) and is in the cards for the whole created order (Rev. 21:5).

*A restoration is at hand. Can you feel it all around you? Can you taste it on the breeze, sense it in your soul? Can you sing it, play it, and creatively express it to your congregation?*

That restoration is a personal restoration, but it is also a community restoration, a heaven-and-earth restoration, and, ultimately, a cosmic restoration.

This restoration is captured in the Hebrew vision of *shalom* - a peace that makes whole and complete. *Shalom* not only permeates the human heart, but also permeates relationships, vocation, creation, government, and every expression of human culture.

One day God's great *shalom* will be the melody of all of creation, and the Prince of Peace will rule and reign on the earth, in the New Jerusalem (which holds the word *shalom* within its name).

God's Kingdom is breaking into the world by the Spirit of God through the way opened by Christ, and we as his followers are participating in bringing healing and wholeness to the world through Jesus.

Empowered by the Spirit of God, we bring God's pervasive, all-consuming peace to the situations that God has given us to influence (Matt. 5:9).

Peace of mind, peace of heart, peace of circumstance, peace of government, peace of society, peace of relationships - in all of these arenas requiring wholeness and completeness, God's *shalom*, we are Christ's ambassadors.

### **We Live In Resurrection Light**

For the early Church, every Sunday was a mini-Easter celebration focusing on the resurrection of Jesus and the New Life at work in us. The *Eucharist*, called "The Great Thanksgiving" (what we call Communion), celebrated the resurrection life.

As Christ's ambassadors, every act of forgiveness, reconciliation, and hope-giving is now a *new creation* act – an act of shalom-making or peace-making. We anticipate the age to come every time we make a choice to act in love, in shalom peace, and not in hatred or bitterness.

We are Easter people. We live in Resurrection Light. Hope lives in us.

*Jesus did not come to make bad people good.  
He came to make dead people live.*

### **Our Creator, King, Trinity, And Savior**

While we can't do justice in this short study to all that God's character means to us and the world, we can see that our theology of worship depends on understanding Who we worship.

We become like that which we worship. And to become like Christ is the goal of all Christian worship.

In this way, worship is *formative* more than it is *expressive*. What I mean by this is that worship welcomes the Holy Spirit to form us into Christlikeness, and worship uses words, symbols, music, architecture, and all the practices and patterns we associate with it to open us to that formation.

There is no higher goal in worship than all those gathered being formed into Christ. That is what the Holy Spirit is about in worship.

### **A Great Hymn Of The Church**

We conclude with Colossians 1:15-20, one of the great biblical worship hymns that scholars believe was sung in the early Church in some form:

*"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

*And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*

*For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."*

Col. 1:15-20

## **DAY 2 | REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

These reflection questions are for personal journaling or discussing with a group taking the course with you. Give a few minutes to each one.

1. What idea moved you the most from this Session? Why?

2. Which of the titles of God used in this Session – Creator, King, Trinity, Savior – most connects with you at this stage in your life? Why do you think that is?

## **DAY 2 | A NOTE FROM DAN**

You just finished Day 2 – and I hope your wheels are beginning to turn. Theological growth is not about getting the right answers; it's truly about asking the right questions, and being open to God's unfolding answers.

Tomorrow, as we daily head toward our end goal of formulating our own theology of worship, we'll turn from this big question to another big question that follows:

*If God is Creator, King, Trinity, and Savior – what does that say about who we are as worshippers, made in His image?*

Have a great day and get a good rest. Tomorrow is our half-way point, and there are more exciting ideas to come!

Blessings,

Dan

# DAY 3

## WHAT IS A WORSHIPPER?

Video time: 8:45

Reading time (est.): 20:00

Day 3 Total Time: 28:45

Welcome to Day 3 of 5 - we're at the midway point of our 5 day learning experience!

I trust your heart and mind have been stirring on the ideas covered so far, and you're already finding fresh revelation from the heart of God to you as we continue.

As on the days before, watch today's video, then read the material below.

Blessings as you do.

### **What Is A Worshipper?**

Yesterday we looked at the nature of God through four lenses: God as *Creator* (the God who creates), God as *King* (the God who reigns), God as *Trinity* (the God who relates), and God as *Savior* (the God who acts).

If the words of Genesis 1:26-27 are correct, then we who are made in the *imago Dei*, the image of God, will reflect the heart and attributes of God into the creation.

### **How Does God See Us?**

The very first chapters of the Bible reveal to us a very intimate picture of the creation. God speaks, and heaven and earth come into being. God's Spirit is hovering over the surface of the waters of chaos, shaping earth and sky as we know it.



Then, something remarkable takes the work of creation to a whole new level. God breathes into simple dust - the elements of the earth - and the flower and crown of the created order (N.T. Wright) rises. Human beings walk the earth.

*“God spoke: ‘Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth.’*

*God created human beings; he created them godlike, reflecting God’s nature. He created them male and female. God blessed them: ‘Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth.’”*

Gen. 1:26-27 (*The Message*)

*“At the time God made Earth and Heaven, before any grasses or shrubs had sprouted from the ground—God hadn’t yet sent rain on Earth, nor was there anyone around to work the ground (the whole Earth was watered by underground springs)*

*God formed Man out of dirt from the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life. The Man came alive - a living soul!”*

Genesis 2:7 (*The Message*)

### **What Do We Have to Do With Worship?**

Understanding the nature of human beings is an essential part of understanding what worship is all about. After all, we are the ones who worship.

I once saw a poster, hanging in a university dorm room, that said,

*The two most important facts of the universe:*

- 1. There is a God.*
- 2. You are not Him.*

The poster was meant to put human arrogance in its place, and there is plenty of that spiritual flu around to infect all of us.

At the same time, there is a magnificence about what it means to be human that must never be overlooked as we seek to clarify that God is God, and we are not.

“The heavens declare the glory of God,” the Scriptures say. “The trees of the fields clap their hands,” the pages of the Psalms profess. The new colts kick, and the harvest moves in the wind. The stars shimmer and dance in celebration of the One who names them, and microscopic organisms respond according to their way and their wiring as participants in the symphony that is worship.

And here we are, as human beings, in the midst of this resplendent glory. What is our job? What is our place? Why are we not of the same kind as a rock, an octopus, or a star in the night sky? Is there something special about us?

According to Genesis, there is something very special about us. Our job is to reflect God’s glory into His good world, and then to gather up the praises of creation to offer to God, in articulate speech, declarations of thanks, praise, adoration, and acclaim.

Does that sound familiar?

*Human beings were designed to take their place as  
the lead worshippers of the created order.*

When we stepped out of that role in the fall from Eden, attempting to become gods ourselves (Gen. 3:5), we broke the circle of worship we were intended to complete.

### **What Is A Human Being Here For?**

In Genesis 1:26-27, the Hebrew word for “image” is the word *tselem*. It’s a Hebrew word with very limited usage in the Old Testament. The word is used to speak of children and their similarity in personhood (and even physical features) to a parent.

While scholars debate the exact meaning of this word in its context, most perspectives on what it means to be made in the *imago Dei*, or the “image of God,” come down to two ideas: *nature* and *vocation*.

## **Nature And Vocation**

The nature perspective purports that our creativity, force of will, moral nature, and capacity to love and give, all stem from the fact that we are somehow made in the spiritual nature of God. There is some merit to this understanding of the image of God in human beings, yet scholars differ on what exactly it means.

The vocation (or role) perspective suggests that we are made in God's image, i.e., we are His Image Bearers and vice-regents, His stewards and caretakers, according to the ancient near eastern tradition of Kings setting exact replicas of their image in distant lands in order to declare their dominion over those lands.

For the purposes of this session, we will mingle both ideas together, though both perspectives in isolation have strong merits in terms of biblical scholarship.

In each of the following sections, reflect on the possibility that God has both formed us after His Personality and that He has given us a mission to be His vice-regents and caretakers of this good planet and all facets of its life.

Each category below reflects those in our previous session describing the nature of God, but now applied to human beings.

### **1. Human Beings As Sub-Creators**

If God is the *Creator*, then we are *Sub-Creators*.

The doctrine of creation tells us that God creates *ex nihilo*; He creates something out of nothing. We, on the other hand, create something out of something.

The Sub-Creators of God walk in the cool of the garden. With the "stuff of life," including light, fabric, voices, metal, elements, mathematics, materials, food, drink, sounds, and by means including our mental capacities, physical handiwork, and human sexuality, we express both glory and story through acts of sub-creation - creation after the order of the original Creator.

## **We Make With What We Have**

Our wildest creations as human beings, with all due respect to the great inventors and scientists and engineers and artists of the world, have always begun with elements that God *already* created.

We have yet to make our own dust out of which to make a human being. We have yet to create a new color, a new air to breathe, or a new building block of life. We work with what is, and we manipulate what is in order to discover, explore, and rejoice in the world for which we are made.

When we lose perspective on our utter dependence on God to be the source and goal of our creative outflow, we become lost in our creations. The unyielding creative pride of a scientist, artist, thespian, or even Christian leader must bow its knee before the One from whom and for whom such vibrant creativity flows.

We create from a palette placed into our hands by God. The hues are of His ultimate making.

## **Creativity Is A Gift Of Both Joy And Necessity**

This impulse to make and create expresses our personality, but also is a primal function within our psyche that God has given us to invent, innovate, and supply for ourselves.

Our creativity may be called out by necessity (in times of suffering, there is often tremendous creativity expressed in caring for the needs of the many) or by play (when space is created for self-expression or community expression, e.g., a jam session).

In other words, creativity is a gift given to human beings to support us in a continually adapting, changing world. Studies in the strengths of both the right and left hemispheres of the brain tell us that there are both right- and left-brained forms of creativity, and every person on the planet exhibits some form of one, the other, or both.

Whether we are designing an Excel spreadsheet, creatively parenting a child, music-making, or star-studying, human beings are, at their essence - *creative*.

## **2. Human Beings As Image Bearers**

If God is the *King*, then we are *Image Bearers*.

Again, Scripture informs us that human beings have come onto the stage of terra firma with a calling, a co-mission, and a vocation. We have something to do.

If God is the King of the universe, then we who have his breath are of royal origin. We too, have the capacity to lead and order great systems, and to reflect love, goodness, and wisdom into that which we lead.

### **Icons In The Ancient World**

In the ancient world, it was not uncommon for ancient Kings and Queens to declare their authority over conquered lands by setting up images, or *ikonos* (icons), of themselves in those lands.

When a subject would look at the image, they knew that they were under both the authority, and the protection, of that ruler.

Imagine now, that God breathes into dust, placing images of Himself all over planet earth, in every color, shape, and size of person. Dark skin and tribal rhythm populate some corners of the world, while golden skin and desert strength populate others.

Image Bearers are now everywhere - every human being declaring by their sheer presence, "God rules in this place. God's goodness, love, mercy, kindness, and grace are your shield and protection.

Offer your allegiance to this benevolent Sovereign who will rule us with mutual joy!" Even when we don't believe it, we're still designed to be God's Image Bearers.

## **Righteousness And Right-Relating**

In this understanding of vocation, Image Bearers are called to live in righteousness – literally, “right-relatedness” – in four key relationships:

We are called to live in right-relatedness to God.

- We are called to live in right-relatedness with each other
- We are called to live in right-relatedness with ourselves
- We are called to live in right-relatedness with creation (i.e., all animate and inanimate creation).

In so doing, we honor God and take our place as the stewards of this good world that He created. No longer do we embrace or afford any credibility to dualistic ideas that separate the physical world from the spiritual world, but rather we look forward to days of new creation by tending to what is before us with love, goodness, wisdom, and creativity – all to the end of learning to rule and reign with the living Christ.

### **3. Human Beings As Community Builders**

If God is the *Trinity*, then we are *Community Builders*.

All this talk of “right-relating” and eternally living with others sounds tiring. For those of us who are introverts, the joys of community have their limitations.

However, no matter our background, virtually every human being who has ever lived has recognized their deep need for some form of relationship with other human beings, and has sought to find a way to build on this natural impulse within.

#### **Made For One Another**

Hear these profound words from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the courageous Lutheran pastor who formed the Confessing Church (spiritual leaders who disagreed with Hitler’s tactics in Nazi Germany), and who died in a concentration camp within a day of the Allied forces securing victory. He speaks to other men in his language, but as men and women we can all apply his insights to our journey:

*“Not what a man is in himself as a Christian, his spirituality and piety, constitutes the basis of our community. What determines our brotherhood is what the man is by reason of Christ. Our community with one another consists solely in what Christ has done to both of us.*

*This is not true merely at the beginning, and though in the course of time something else were to be added to our community; it remains so for all the future and to all eternity.”*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, from *Life Together*

We know it. We’re built for community. Give any one of us enough time alone, and we’ll begin to understand that a level of mental health begins to deteriorate as we long for the company of another.

In the movie, *Castaway*, Tom Hanks plays a man lost on a lonely island, without companionship. A small soccer ball he calls Wilson becomes the only form of companionship he can find. Though it’s a sad image, the hunger for relationship and the desire to not be left completely alone is common to the human family.

### **Wired To Gather Community**

Human beings who believe in God’s covenant pursuing activity, now step into the world as Community Builders, who are ideally wired to be the ones who re-gather the scattered human family under the banner of God’s good leadership and the fullness of unconditional love. The kinds of communities that we are taught to build by Jesus in the New Testament, idealistic as it sounds, are those kinds of communities where love and grace is felt in the air and warms the chilled soul in need of thaw.

Think of the moment where the prostitute caught in adultery felt the forgiveness of God after her accusers were sent away (right and law abiding as they were!). Imagine the feelings of euphoria in Peter when, after denying Jesus in the courtyard before his death, he experiences the grace and forgiveness of Jesus for his cosmically criminal actions.

Imagine the thriving Body of the early Church welcoming into their ranks those distressed and overburdened by the unjust financial systems of their day, as the Church infiltrated the Roman Empire by caring for its widows and orphans as family.

The community of Christ is designed and called to be marked by a love that sustains through the most tremendous of sorrows and even internal conflicts within itself.

Christians, as healthy Community Builders, are called to become the supreme re-humanizers of every age, purging human hearts of the toxic effects of the dehumanizing atmospheres in which we live with the power of love. Whether we are Community Builders in our homes, on our streets, in our cities or in our churches, we are acting in accord with our nature as human beings and in accord with the heart of God when we bring people together.

#### **4. Human Beings As Salvation Storytellers**

If God is the *Savior*, then we are *Salvation Storytellers*.

A number of years ago, a writer came out with a book that hit the Christian shelves with the words, "God chasers" in the title. Maybe you read it, and it was a powerful turning point for your life. If so, you would find no one more excited than me that God had met you profoundly through someone's faithful writing. However, I just could not get past the title.

#### **Who Is Chasing Whom?**

As far as I understand, no faithful Jew, at any point of history, would ever have dreamed of making such a brash claim before God or their fellow Jews.

If the story of the people Israel (which literally means "one who wrestles with God") tells us anything about the game of chase going on throughout all time, it tells us that the Pursuer in this relationship has rarely ever been known to be an ordinary human. In covenant after covenant, pursuit after pursuit, God showed the Jews that they were not God-chasers, rather they were the *God-chased*.



Salvation history paints a picture of a God who will not allow His creation, His work of art, to see corruption and decay. "At the fullness of time," the Scripture says, "Christ came" (Gal. 4:4). Our theology of God as Savior demands that we recognize the expansive nature of God's pursuit of humankind.

### **The Story Of An Age To Come**

Christians tell the story of an age to come, of a present and future move of God that is righting all that is wrong in this world. We tell the story of a day when the world will be put to rights, when justice will be done, when the human family will understand how dear and priceless we are to one another.

The creation/redemption project, the history of God's covenantal pursuit of humankind, provides our lyrics, themes, textures, and contrasts. Each of those poetic pieces mark the Story of Hope - the Story of a new creation and a bright Day of Awakening to come.

We, as creative leaders in this wayward and forgetful human family, are asked a profound question as we stand before our human family:

*"Will you be the narrator of the Story for us? Will you tell us in a thousand ways and in a thousand churches, homes and venues, the Story of God that makes sense of our lives?"*

And God says,

*"Yes, will you narrate My Story?"*

### **DAY 3 | REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

These reflection questions are for personal journaling or discussing with a group taking the course with you. Give a few minutes to each one.

1. What idea moved you the most from this Session? Why?

2. Which of the ideas about a human being is most connecting with you in this season of your life? Why do you think that is?

### **DAY 3 | A NOTE FROM DAN**

You're finished with Day 3. I'm praying for you as you see the study through to Day 5. Hang in there! It will be worth it.

I hope the last few days have piqued your curiosity about how reflection on who God is, and who we are, impacts our theology of worship.

Tomorrow, we reach the core question that sits at the heart of this 5 day learning experience - the grand question, "*What is worship?*"

I'm excited to explore that big idea with you, as it impacts everything we say, pray, and song write as leaders of worship, musicians, and team members.

Blessings,

Dan

# DAY 4

## WHAT IS WORSHIP?

Video time: 7:28

Reading time (est.): 20:00

Day 3 Total Time: 27:28

Welcome to Day 4 of 5 - the day that all we've done so far has been leading toward.

First, watch today's video here, then, read the following.

As you do today's work, begin to jot down your ideas for a 3 paragraph My View Of Worship Statement.

Tomorrow, that will be how we practically bring these 5 days of study right into your daily life as a worship leader.

### **What Is Worship?**

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

Romans 12:1-2

I often begin conferences and seminars by saying "How many of you have come here to learn more about worship?" Many people raise their hands. Then I say, "How many of you are hoping I might have something to say about worship that might be new, revelatory, or interesting?" More people raise their hands.

Then I say, “I have a confession to make. The more I dig into the meaning of worship, the mystery of what it means to engage in this privileged relationship with God, the less I feel I have to say about worship.”

### **A Mystery And A Wonder**

Like David, talking about worship is talking about things “too wonderful” for us” (Psalm 139:6). Yet, here we are, leaders of worship, participants in worship, and those who live out what it means on a daily basis.

Worship is a mystery, a wonder, a gift of intimate exchange between our Creator and us. At the same time, the Scripture above quite clearly tells us about what worship truly is. Let’s take a brief look at what it means to have our worship be a living sacrifice before God.

When Paul spoke about the living sacrifice and self-offering in Romans 12:1-2, he knew exactly what he was doing. He was speaking to a culture familiar with the idea of sacrifice.

The Jews knew one thing about a sacrifice: it was dead. When Paul begins speaking about a living sacrifice, he is saying to them, “As dead as a dead sacrifice is, that is how living your sacrifice is to be.”

Hear the retelling of this passage by Eugene Peterson in The Message:

*“So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking- around life – and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for Him. Don’t become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God.*

*You’ll be changed from the inside out.”*

Romans 12:1-2 (The Message)

### **What Is Worship?**

In other words, worship is a word we use for an activity that encompasses all of our lives offered to Jesus in complete and utter surrender. Whether we are singing songs on a Sunday morning, handing clothes to someone who needs them on

Wednesday, or choosing how we'll spend our work paycheck on Friday, every act of life has the potential to be an offering of worship.

The early Church father Irenaeus of Lyons put it this way,

*"The glory of God is a human being, fully alive."*

When Romans 12:1-2 defines worship, it describes worship as a "living sacrifice" on the part of the worshipper. In other words, we put God at the beginning, middle, and end of our every thought, choice and action.

When we turn all of life into a simple response to the love of God (1John 4:19), we are truly becoming the worshippers for whom the Father is searching (John 4:24).

### **The Melody And Harmonies Of Worship**

When Jesus speaks to the woman at the well in John 4:21-24, he says that God is seeking a certain kind of worship, and it's not the kind of worship that is based on services, locations, and doing things right.

It is based on a life living out its relationship with God, "in spirit and in truth." It flows from the heart in the midst of life, like a melody flows in and around the notes and accompaniment telling a beautiful story.

In our generation, we sometimes confuse the melody of worship with the harmonies that are meant to support it, beautify it, and reveal it. First, Jesus is after our hearts, our lives. Music won't cut it. Liturgies won't replace it. The Arts will never displace the call of the heart to offer itself in response to the everlasting love of God.

**Life Worship** is the melody God is after in John 4:21-24.

**Gathered Worship** is a harmony meant to support this melody. It is what we do when we make music, break bread, share fellowship, and experience art.

**Family Worship** is also harmony and is gathered worship in our homes.

**Personal Worship** elevates and energizes the other forms of worship and ultimately lifts the melody of life worship to its height.

- 1) Life Worship (the melody),
- 2) Gathered Worship (the accompaniment),
- 3) Family Worship (the accompaniment), and
- 4) Personal Worship (the accompaniment).

So now we ask, for our worship theology, why do we worship?

### **Why We Worship**

Why this complete giving over of our life worship to an unseen God?

*“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”*

1 Peter 1:7-9

Our hearts have been captured by a Story. It is the story of a Creator King, an Intervening Savior, who penetrated into the darkest tombs of humanity and emerged the Life Victor.

It is the Story that invites us, moves us, and draws into relationship with a God who is unseen. Even with our belief in Jesus, who John said walked and moved among us, we remain today the worshippers of a God who does not choose to make Himself in flesh and bone before our eyes. We “... love him ... and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,” as Peter states above.

### **We Love Because He First Loved**

The Story moves us, and the Person within the Story encounters us, and we respond. Our completely surrendered life is the only offering that is fitting when one truly begins to understand the Story in which we find ourselves. God has taken the initiative in a relationship to reveal Himself intimately to us and to passionately pursue us. In the light of this reality, we begin to discover why we worship.

This biblical perspective is found in a simple passage in 1 John 4:19.

*"We love him because he first loved us."*

1 John 4:19

From this passage, we understand that a healthy theological approach to worship suggests that worship is primarily a response to the already, and all-consuming, love of God.

### **What Does Music Have to Do with It?**

If worship is a whole life response to the love of God, then what does music have to do with worship?

Brian Doerksen (*Come, Now Is The Time To Worship*), respected contemporary worship leader and songwriter, explains it this way:

*"Why do we sing songs in the first place? We do it because it is something that we can do together. There are probably other things that we could do to express our love and our worship to God that would be, in one sense, just as valid, but they're not easy for us to do together."*

*Yet we can get ten people, or a hundred people, or a thousand, or a hundred thousand –whatever number we choose—and we can all get together and sing a song. That song reflects what is going on in our hearts and our minds, together. There is truth that we're affirming, but there's also affection that we're expressing. That's why I think that singing as an expression of worship has stood the test of time."* [From a personal interview]

In other words, when we use the power of poetic lyrics, blended with the power of music, we are literally creating a place where God can meet with people, and people can meet with God.

*Songs are a place we go.*

Songs are an encountering ground where our prayers can take flight on the wings of words and melodies. As a worship team, when we select, practice, prepare, and



perform songs in the tapestry that we call a “worship set,” we are literally creating a place for people to encounter God.

People come to a time of worship saying in the quiet of their hearts what the psalmist said, “Where and when can I go and meet with God?” The worship leader responds, “How about here? How about now?” and leads them to that place of meeting.

### **What Is The Role Of Those Who Lead Worship?**

Suddenly learning parts from a recording, preparing set lists, rehearsing mid-week for a few hours, getting up early on a Sunday morning to set up gear and to sound check, choosing to love in relationships and playing for two or three services a week, takes on a context.

We are serving the people of God, with the gifts and passions that energize us, by creating a place for us all to encounter God.

In some beautiful way, this reality makes all the hard work seem to be a grand privilege to be able to enjoy our love for music in such a way that leads others to a more beautiful place with God than they had been before.

Worship leading is most like the role of the best man or maid of honor at a wedding. We are leading the Bride and Groom to intimately share in acts of love and commitment between one another. How horrible it would be to think of the best man in a wedding drawing away the attention of the Bride to Himself, or of the maid of honor drawing the Groom’s attention to herself!

We are in the role we are in, as lead worshippers, to make a way for people to meet with God, and to create a space where simple songs can put wings to the prayers of those who have gathered to worship. We usher people gently to a place where they can respond to the love of God.

It’s as simple as that.

### **Four Ways We Can Look at Worship**

Let’s wrap this up with some good, solid, biblical worship theology.

Remember our definition of “good theology” from the first session? Here it is again to remind us, and let’s keep it in mind as we continue.

Good theology is that which draws us near to the God of the Scriptures (James 4:8), strengthens love in our hearts for Him and the people of this world (John 3:16), and equips us to live the Jesus life as those who obey his loving commands (John 14:15).

With Romans 12:1-2 as our pivot point, we reflect on key theological ideas related to worship that have been supported both biblically and traditionally by the Church.

If worship’s focus is a God who is Creator, King, Trinity, and Savior, and is then participated in by human beings who are Sub-Creators, Image Bearers, Community Builders, and Salvation Storytellers, then Worship is a creative activity, a royal activity, a relational activity, and a narrative activity.

### **1. Worship Is A Creative Act.**

If God is *Creator* and we are *Sub-Creators*, then worship is a *Creative activity*.

The expressions of worship call to us from the pages of biblical history and church history. Multi-colored, multi-media, multi-ethnic, multi-sensory, and multi-disciplined expressions of worship have pulsed throughout the whole of the record of Christian worship.

Engaging what biologists today tell us may be at least 32 senses active in the human body, we are free to engage all of the media this life affords us to express our adoration and self-surrender to God.

In Exodus 35-36, two artists named Bezalel and Oholiab are brought onto the stage of the Old Testament. They are “skilled in their craft,” and they apply that craft, along with a rich community of other artisans in metal, fabric, color, and more (we see the first “yarn art” in this passage) to the ornamentation of the amazing Tabernacle of Moses.

In Genesis 4:21, Jubal, the father of all who play the harp and flute, is recounted to our remembrance. Jubal's name, speaking powerfully and vocationally to all musicians of any age, means "stream or river." Like a river into which we never step twice, due to its constantly moving waters, creative leaders have the capacity to reinvent old ideas in new and stunning ways.

In Revelation 4-5, we see a visual and sonic (sight and sound) display that must boggle even the most over-imaginative mind. Creativity is at the center of the lavish display of honor and affection that is worship.

## **2. Worship Is A Royal Act.**

If God is *King* and we are *Image Bearers*, then worship is a *Royal activity*.

If human beings are indeed the Image Bearers of God according to Genesis 1:6-7, then worship becomes a supremely royal act. This is the essence of Peter's words on worship in 1 Peter 2:9 (NIV):

*"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."*

In other words, we are a royal priesthood, so that we may declare praise. It is precisely because we are those images of the true Deity, set up in regions over which He has rule and dominion, and upon which He sets His protection, that we are able to offer the accumulated praise of the created order back to God.

We are royal subjects of the Great King, so that we may give voice to creation's praise.

## **3. Worship Is A Relational Act.**

If God is *Trinity* and we are *Community Builders*, then worship is a *Relational activity*.

A dark moment occurred between David and his wife, Michal, in 2 Samuel 6. Michal (daughter of the previous king) mocked David upon his return to

Jerusalem with the Ark of the Covenant, as he led the dancing throngs in worship with himself clad only in a small loincloth.

*“How wonderfully the king has distinguished himself today – exposing himself to the eyes of the servants’ maids like some burlesque street dancer!” David replied to Michal, ‘In God’s presence I’ll dance all I want! He chose me over your father and the rest of our family and made me prince over God’s people, over Israel.*

*Oh yes, I’ll dance to God’s glory—more recklessly even than this. And as far as I’m concerned, I’ll gladly look like a fool ... but among these maids you’re so worried about, I’ll be honored no end.”*

2 Samuel 6:4-5 (*The Message*)

David found connection with the people of God, with those whose hearts were like-passioned with his own. It is vital that we understand the corporate nature of worship, and that it overshadows the more individualistic visions of worship we have today. David could dance because the presence of God, and the joyful faces of his people, gave him the gumption to do so.

Building a community of like-hearted worshippers is vital to worship being vibrant in a local fellowship.

#### **4. Worship Is A Narrative Act.**

If God is *Savior* and we are *Salvation Storytellers*, then worship is a *Narrative activity*.

The *Salvation Storytellers* of our generation, the followers of a God who is the *Savior* of humankind, have a narrative to tell.

From the hanging of phylacteries (small vessels containing various scriptures) on the forehead by the Jews, to the call for them to retell the stories of their deliverance from the hands of their oppressors, to the acts of worship that have continually propelled the people of God into the world inflamed with a Story that speaks to slavery, poverty, and government – worship is a profoundly narrative act.

Worship expression is not simply the romantic emoting of an individual or a community before God. Worship is the act of retelling the Kingdom Story in many, many ways.

When we put fresh lyrics into the mouths of God's people, they find fresh ways of talking about what God is doing in their lives throughout the week. As worship leaders and teams, we are helping people to narrate their own lives with God with the language of hope, joy, and renewed confidence.

### **The Whispers Of Worship In Our Ears**

Every time you think about worship now, I'd like to encourage you to hear whispers of Romans 12:1-2, 1 John 4:19, the Psalms, Genesis, the Epistles, and Revelation. I would encourage you to see life worship as the melody we are calling everyone to sing.

Our gathered worship, family worship, and personal worship experiences are meant to harmonize with that melody and lift it to its proper place.

See the life worship you lead as your loudest instrument, and see gathered worship as a creative, royal, relational, and narrative activity vital to strengthening your community to live a full, rich lifetime as disciples of Christ.

Above all, embrace that worship is a response to the love of God. We'll finish with a quote from Evelyn Underhill, from her important work, simply entitled, *Worship*, written in 1937.

*"Worship, in all its grades and kinds, is the response of the creature to the Eternal."*

Let's respond, with all we are, to the love of our Creator, King, Trinitarian God, and Savior.

And let's lead others to do the same.



## **DAY 4 | A NOTE FROM DAN**

I'd like to pause here as you finish Day 4.

We've covered a lot of ground. What is stirring in your heart and mind, what is lingering in your spirit, from these days of reflection so far?

Take out your journal, and write down (bullet point form is fine) the key insights you sense that God is giving you into a theology of worship that is big enough to live in, that is strong enough to stand in today's world; that is even worth living and dying for.

Tonight as you rest, ask God to begin to distill for you the most important ideas that He wants to guide your thinking, creativity, and leadership as a worship guide going forward.

I encourage you to review any daily reading or viewing as we approach our last day of the course tomorrow, so you can make the most of this 5 day season of thinking about this vital arena in worship leadership and involvement.

I'm continuing to pray for you; we all have a part to play in being the lead worshippers of God's people in our generation.

Blessings, and your final day is tomorrow. Well done.

Dan

# DAY 5

## BECOMING A LIFELONG LEARNER

Video time: 2:40

Reading time (est.): 10:00

"My View Of Worship" One Sheet: 12:00

Day 3 Total Time: 24:40

Welcome to Day 5 of 5 - we're coming in for a landing on our 5 Day Worship Theology tune-up - a journey that has taken us into the very heart of worship theology. This section will be short, so that you can get to the exercise at the end.

Watch today's video, then read the following.

### **Becoming A Lifelong Learner**

Worship is as big as God is. To discover His mysteries is a lifelong call, and it will change the way we lead worship, write songs, pray, teach, and disciple others in what it means to be God's worshippers.

As we begin our last day, a brief summary and synthesis of these 5 days, let me offer this encouragement - take the rest of your life to explore the depths of worship theology.

Read books from different traditions, and make sure that what you love about worship has deep roots in Scripture and is empowered by a grace-filled relationship with your Lord.

### **On God, Humans, And Worship**

We have, over the course of a few weeks, reflected on a wide range of foundational theological and worldview topics vital to understanding the contemporary worship experience.



We have explored:

- God as Creator: the God who creates
- God as King: the God who reigns
- God as Trinity: the God who relates
- God as Savior: the God who saves

Flowing from this grand vision of the Eternal One, cascades our vision of human beings, central to understanding our theology and activity of worship:

- Human beings as Sub-Creators: made to create
- Human beings as Image Bearers: made to reflect
- Human beings as Community Builders: made to relate
- Human beings as Salvation Storytellers: made to share a story

If worship is indeed an activity for which human beings are hard-wired, and if we bear the image of God within us, then the activity of worship should bear some resemblance both to the character of God and the nature of human beings who He has made.

- Worship is a Creative Act: we respond to our Creator from our role as creative beings
- Worship is a Royal Act: we respond to our King from our position as vice-regents
- Worship is a Relational Act: we respond to the Trinity in building right-relationships
- Worship is a Narrative Act: we respond to our Savior by retelling God's great Story

### **A Song To Stir Us: Psalm 139:1-18;23-25**

I'd like to conclude our time, and stir worship in our hearts, with the worship words of David, pouring from his soul as a worship leader and king who both knew God and knew about God. He expressed both intimate and expansive knowledge of his Creator in a beautiful symphony of poetry we call the Psalms.

Feel the worship pouring from David in this elegant prayer rising like incense from his heart, and join it with your own:

### **Psalm 139**

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

*1 You have searched me, Lord,  
and you know me.*

*2 You know when I sit and when I rise;  
you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

*3 You discern my going out and my lying down;  
you are familiar with all my ways.*

*4 Before a word is on my tongue  
you, Lord, know it completely.*

*5 You hem me in behind and before,  
and you lay your hand upon me.*

*6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,  
too lofty for me to attain.*

*7 Where can I go from your Spirit?  
Where can I flee from your presence?*

*8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;  
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*

*9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,  
if I settle on the far side of the sea,*

*10 even there your hand will guide me,  
your right hand will hold me fast.*

*11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me  
and the light become night around me,"*

*12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;  
the night will shine like the day,  
for darkness is as light to you.*

*13 For you created my inmost being;*

*you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.*

*15 My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place,  
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.*

*16 Your eyes saw my unformed body;  
all the days ordained for me were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.*

*17 How precious to me are your thoughts, God!  
How vast is the sum of them!*

*18 Were I to count them,  
they would outnumber the grains of sand—  
when I awake, I am still with you.*

*23 Search me, God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.*

*24 See if there is any offensive way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.*

### **Introducing A Worship Theologian For The Church**

How do you feel knowing you are officially one of the Church's theologians of worship?

I know how I felt when I first realized that people were learning more theology from the songs we were singing (that I was writing and/or choosing) than from the sermons they were hearing. I felt overwhelmed, humbled, concerned, invigorated, and desperate for help - all at the same time!

Like it or not, we who are spiritual leaders in our communities are doing theology all of the time. We are practical theologians. We are also teaching theology through our practical leadership tasks, and teaching others as we ourselves learn at the feet of Jesus (and others who have gleaned insight from that place).

## **A 12 Minute Writing Exercise To Bring It All Home**

Bringing all we've learned together over these past few days to your heart and mind now, let's conclude in a simple exercise.

Take out your journal that you used to take notes during this study.

Write at the top,

### *"My View Of Worship"*

Using a paragraph per section, and just 2-3 sentences per paragraph, write your summary thoughts on the following:

1. Who Is The God We Worship?
2. Who Are The Worshipers The Father Seeks?
3. What Is Worship All About?

Make each paragraph your own. Use language from the study, draw on the wealth of the Scriptures, or come up with your own words from scratch. Write it in a such a way that you can own it, and that would articulate how you view the heart of worship from the Scriptures.

Then, post it on a blog, or on social media, and let others interact with it. Use the hashtag *#myworshiptheology*, and the rest of us will find it! This will further hone your vision of worship, and give others a gift of insight from your study.

When you are finished, read the following.

## **A Blessing On Your Worship Leadership**

I trust today was helpful in refreshing, or tuning-up, your thinking about worship theology. I also trust that some of what you discovered as the Spirit spoke to you this entire week will find its way into your speaking, praying, songwriting, writing, and relational life as a worship leader.

I would encourage you to read books on worship theology from time to time, to inspire you in your ongoing thinking as a spiritual leader.

Lead from a vibrant, passionate, living relationship with your Lord Jesus, that involves both your heart and mind, and cultivate your love for Jesus through inspiring ideas that move you - and will move your congregation.

Blessings as you continue the journey of discovering more and more about the inestimable, infinite, and intimate God we love.



## **DAY 5 | A CONCLUDING NOTE FROM DAN**

I truly hope this course was all you hoped it would be!

You have full access to this material through your emails, so every once in a while it might be good to revisit it to refresh your thinking about worship theology.

If you enjoyed this course, there will be other courses that are communicated only to my email list at [DanWilt.com](http://DanWilt.com).

If you sign up on the email list (if you haven't already), you'll get regular emails that will encourage you in your life of worship, and that you can pass around to your team.

Also, would you consider sending me a one or two sentence quote about this course that I could use to let others know about it? Just send me a quote, with your name, role/title, city, state, and church name to [danwiltresources@gmail.com](mailto:danwiltresources@gmail.com).

And I'd love to have you in the next course! Watch for new ones at

[www.DanWilt.com/Courses](http://www.DanWilt.com/Courses)

I'm looking forward with you to God's Great Future, unfolding at this very moment!

Peace, Grace, and Friendship,

Dan



About DanWilt.com

# YOU ARE A HERO

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The mission of the [DanWilt.com](http://DanWilt.com) site and email list is to equip active worship leaders for the 21st century needs of the worshipping Church. Through various forms of technology, we seek to create and provide resources that amplify the calling and effectiveness of today's worship leader - impacting the lifestyle, spiritual formation, creative inspiration, and worship education of the international worship leading community. We draw on all traditions of Christian worship - from Protestant, to Catholic, to Orthodox - to help worship leaders engage with the ways we have narrated the Story of God across time - through worship.

Join the email list to stay up to date on fresh resources at [www.DanWilt.com](http://www.DanWilt.com).