

The Necessity of True Worship – Part II
Pastor Ty Blackburn
John 4:19-26
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the 4th Chapter of John. This morning, we want to look at the subject of worship, something that is really often misunderstood in our day. We have lost the Biblical definition of the word. It's funny how we do this. Even in more conservative circles, we just develop habits that sort of over time obscure the meanings of Biblical concepts. Like, let me give you an example of how we've done this with worship, and I find myself struggling with this at times. How do you use the word worship? Somebody says, "I really enjoyed that church. I enjoyed the worship, but the preaching wasn't so great." What does worship mean? It means the music, right? "Oh, I liked the praise and worship section of the service best at this church," or, "I didn't care for the praise and worship section." Then worship's just singing.

The Biblical concept of worship is much bigger than that. You certainly should worship when you sing, but preaching is a key part of worship, as is teaching and Bible study. In fact, when we look at what Jesus teaches the Samaritan woman, it's the very spring of it that you don't really worship until you have truth. So we need to examine this. We want to ask the question: How can we experience true worship? We want to get to the point this morning of understanding some practical, experiential principles about how we can truly worship. That's our goal this morning.

You remember in the context that Jesus encounters this woman of Samaria at the well outside the town of Suchar, there, at the base of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, and He has a conversation with her. She is there to draw water. He asks her for a drink. She's perplexed and surprised that He, being a Jew, would ask a Samaritan for a drink. Jesus says, "What's really astonishing, much more astonishing than that, is that you haven't asked *Me* for a drink, given who *you* are and who *I* am, because I am the One who possesses Living Water. I have the answer to your deepest needs, the deepest need of your heart. This water's only going to satisfy for a little while. The water I give you will satisfy forever. That's the really amazing thing that's happened here is that you haven't asked *Me*."

They have a conversation, and He exposes her heart and her deep need. He shows her her deep immorality. She's been married five times and is now living with a man who's not her husband. So she sought to meet the deep needs of her heart

through the idol of romantic love, and He's offering to her the satisfaction of her soul. What we find out as the context unfolds is that what this woman's greatest need was, and what every person's greatest need is, is to experience true worship. The greatest need of your heart is not significance. It's not even just to be loved. According to the Bible, really the greatest need of the human heart is to worship God.

Now, when you come to a relationship with God and you worship God, you will find that all your needs are met – all the other needs. Needs for love. I mean, we want to feel important of course, and those things, but Biblically, the greatest need and what Jesus is laying out here is to worship. We feel the most significant, ironically, when we see how little our significance is, and when we give God all the significance. When you lay your life down, you find it. When you bow before Him, He lifts you up. So He's been dealing with this great need.

A few weeks back, we looked at our great need for worship. Then we started to look at the question, the nature of true worship. Two Sundays ago, we began to look at this passage, and we walked along with the Samaritan woman, and she asked, "Where?" To understand the true nature of worship, you need to understand: Where are we to worship? We saw the dispute in her mind. Are we to worship in Jerusalem or are we to worship in Samaria? Samaritans believed they could worship at Mount Gerizim. That's where the true temple was. The Jews believed the true temple was in Jerusalem. Jesus basically says, "I can answer that question for you," and He does answer it, basically, by saying, "The true temple is in Jerusalem." Not the 'true' temple, but we're getting to that word 'true'. The genuine temple at that time was in Jerusalem, but the true temple was the body of Christ Himself, so He agrees that the Jews had the right place, but He said, "Listen, the real issue now is not where you worship, but what's amazing is something new and radical is happening. Now the issue is *Whom* you worship." The issue is really who, and if you come to Christ, that's the one place that you worship God, is Jesus Christ.

We looked at the Old Testament background, how *Where?* was so important, that truly the Jews did worship in Israel, and the only place you could worship in the world was Jerusalem. All of that was to prefigure the fact that no matter where they're born, no matter what their background is, the only place that a human being can come into the presence of the Living God is at the feet of Jesus Christ. There's no other place. But the wonder of it is now we're going to see Jesus anticipating the fact that having come personally to live a perfect life, and offered Himself as an atoning sacrifice, being resurrected from the dead, and ascending to heaven,

what He's beginning to unpack for us in this passage is the reality that when you come to know Jesus Christ through faith, now on this side of Calvary and on this side of Pentecost, you have the Spirit of God living in you, and you can worship anywhere, because the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Whom? The Spirit of Christ. So He's with you, and you can worship anywhere. You can worship in a church building that is characterized by beautiful architecture, some of those great cathedrals where you feel inspired when you just walk into them. Just the architecture itself is inspiring. You can worship there. But what we're going to see is that it really isn't a big deal about the architecture. The big deal is that you have a relationship with God, and the Spirit of God in you, and you can worship anywhere. You can worship in a dungeon. You can worship with people. You can worship all alone. We can worship anywhere. So that was the *Where?* of worship.

This morning, what we want to do is begin to continue to follow out the nature of true worship. This is the Nature of True Worship – Part 2, and the question we want to look at is *How?* How are we to worship? What is the manner of true worship? That's the big question we're going to look at this morning is *How?* We're going to have to spend a little bit of time before we get to *How?* with *What?* What is worship? What is true worship? So there's going to be a little bit of time on *What?* and then *How?* That's how we're going to outline the message this morning.

Now, let's read here in the passage from Verse 20 through Verse 26. This is where the Samaritan woman asks the question:

John 4:20-26

20 Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” 21 Jesus *said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” 25 The woman *said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.” 26 Jesus *said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”

Let's pray together...

Father, we ask that You would now open the eyes of our hearts by the power of Your Spirit, and that You would open up for us the written words that we might see the Living Word, that we might glory in our Savior. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Now, we want to get to how we are to worship, and we're going to see that the key phrase is: **...in spirit and truth**. We want to unpack that, but before we do, I want us to start by asking: What is worship itself? And then what is meant by true worship here in the text? Before we can ask how we experience true worship, let's ask: What is true worship?

To look at that, we first need to understand: What is worship? The word worship occurs 10 times in 5 verses here from Verse 20 to Verse 24. It's clearly a key word in the passage. The word worship here in this passage translated in the Greek, is the word προσκυνέω (proskyneō), which is a compound word from a word which means *toward*. *Pros* means *toward* and *kyneo* mean *to kiss*. It means to kiss toward. It comes from the Oriental Eastern tradition of greeting, that when people would greet one another, they would kiss. We don't do that. We kiss our mom, or grand mom, or something like that, or our children, but we don't just walk up... If I walked up and kissed some of you today, you would be very upset about that, and I probably would be too. But in Oriental culture, and in some cultures today, still they greet with a kiss.

The way they actually greeted as we look at historical documents is if two people were of equal rank, they would actually kiss on the lips. If they were of slightly different rank, they would kiss on the cheeks. The cheeks would make contact. And if there was a great difference in rank, one person would bow down. In an extreme difference in rank, the person bowing down would put his forehead on the ground in the presence of this great king, for instance. You would bow down, and that idea was the Biblical word. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word שָׁחָה (shachah) means the same thing. It means to bow down, to prostrate one's self. So the Old Testament idea of worship was bowing down in the same way as the New Testament word προσκυνέω (proskyneō). They would bow down, and the idea was to kiss toward. I can't come close enough to kiss you, but the idea is affection. It's not just submission. It's not just reverence. It's affection. I'm kissing toward. It's kind of hard for us to relate to this. It's so different of a concept, isn't it? But the idea really that we need to pull from this is submission, reverence, and affection.

Worship is to acknowledge the greatness of another, and worship in the Bible is only to be given to God. Worship is to acknowledge the greatness of God, to submit to Him, and to express our affection to Him at the same time. That's what the Biblical word means.

What does true worship mean? The important adjective is *true* worship. We see it here in the passage in Verse 23, when He says: ***But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth;...*** This is a key word actually in John's Gospel, an important word. The word translated *true* here is a word which is distinctly different from the word for truth that's used later in the verse, ἀλήθεια (alētheia), which just means truth, as in that which conforms to reality. But ἀληθινός (alēthinos) is the word for true worship. ***But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth;...*** *True* worshipers means genuine. It means authentic.

In fact, a lot of times this word would be used to speak of genuine versus counterfeit. That is true currency. That is counterfeit currency. That would be the kind of usage that would define one major part of the way this word true was used. But it could also mean true as in the sense of complete versus incomplete, or true as in the sense of full versus partial. You see the difference. True versus counterfeit is one thing. That's false and this is true. But the way John uses this word throughout his Gospel is not like that. He uses the word where true means complete, perfect, fullness, versus incomplete or partial. Do you see?

Let me give you an example. The first occurrence of this word true is in John 1:9, where when John the apostle wrote about John the Baptist in Verses 6-8, he said, "There was a man sent from God whose name was John." He's talking about John the Baptist. "And he came to bear witness to the Light." In Chapter 1:9, he says, "And there was the true light which coming into the world enlightens every man." He's telling you something about Jesus. Jesus is the true Light. Now, it's interesting. Does that mean that all the other lights that came before were false? Were the Old Testament lights false? Was John the Baptist a false light? Of course not. He wasn't a false light. He wasn't a counterfeit light. He was just a partial light. He was truly a light but not the true Light. You see this actually of Jesus in speaking of John the Baptist in John 5:33 and following. He says, "You went out to hear John and his testimony, and you rejoiced for awhile in his light." Jesus says, "Yeah, John was a light." All of the Old Testament prophets were lights, but Jesus is the true Light. The way they were a light really gave light.

You're thinking about Dr. Kirick's wonderful sermon last week. He talked about walking around in the dark. He talked about us being the light of the world and how important that picture was. I had an experience this week. It was actually Saturday morning before I was getting ready for men's Bible study. We were staying in the mountains at my parents' home up there, and so I don't know the terrain very well, which doesn't guarantee that when I do know the terrain, that in the dark I'm going to find it. But it was dark, and one of my nephews was sleeping over on the sofa, so I was trying to make my way across an area to get to the stairs to make my way to Bible study. It's about 5:45 in the morning. It's dark, and I was struck by how dark it was. Man, it's really dark. The light from the microwave oven across there in the kitchen is giving me no help. So I bumped around and stumbled around, and then I got in my car and I drove down, and as I was driving, I was thinking about that, and I noticed in all these country roads in the mountains, some of those houses will have those safety lights outside. And when you see those, it's amazing how in a very dark, dark, morning, this is still before the sun's even thought about coming up, those lights are really encouraging. I mean, I would hate to be out walking around there with no lights. I was having enough trouble walking across the floor in the house, but to walk through the woods or through that field over there without a light would be impossible. How thankful you would be for a light.

That's what the Old Testament prophets were. They were lights. They were truly lights, but how much different the light that they offer, like the light of that safety light, when the sun comes up. I mean, if I was to drive up there right now, I wouldn't need those safety lights. In fact, I can walk across that floor without bumping into the stuff I bumped into yesterday morning, right now. Why? I don't need the light, because the Light has risen. The Son is up. That is a picture of the great difference of light that we had when Jesus, the only Begotten of God, God in flesh, takes up residence in the world. The Son is risen. You can't see the stars anymore. Everything's lost in the glory of this One. That's the picture. That's true Light versus previous lights. You see partial light versus the true, complete Light.

He uses the same word, Jesus, on His own lips in John 6:32, when He says, "The Lord gave Moses manna from heaven, and the children of Israel manna from heaven. He gave them bread from heaven, but I'm telling you that the True Bread of heaven is here," and He says, "I am the Bread of Life." They had real bread. It wasn't false bread. They were eating real bread. It was pretty amazing bread, wasn't it? It fell out of heaven, but as wondrous as that is, so great is the distance between when the God man came into the world, the true bread of life. What a cataclysmic distance that is between those two realities. The true Bread, the true

Light. Jesus is the true vine in John 15:1. In the old covenant, Israel was God's vine, but how much greater is the true vine than the original vine, the partial vine. If you want to come into God's vineyard, you come through the true vine, Jesus Christ. This is the same word for worship.

So what he's picturing is a dramatic, earth-shattering change in the quality of worship that is available. He's not saying that in the old covenant, they didn't truly worship. They did truly worship, but what a great distance. He's announcing to this woman – that's why He says, "Believe Me, woman, an hour is coming. Believe Me. I'm telling you something that is earth-shattering and going to be hard to believe." Why would Jesus ever have to say, "Believe Me"? Or, "Truly, truly I say to you"? He is Truth, right? But he condescends to our weakness. He knows this woman's going to have a hard time believing what He's about to say, and He gently condescends to her weakness, and says in Verse 21: "**Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.**" And then in Verse 23: **But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth;** That's the astonishing reality.

Let's think about this distance. In the old covenant, I said they really, truly worshiped, but think about what worship was like in the old covenant. We looked at Leviticus on Wednesday evening. We spent one brief night looking at the whole book of Leviticus and all of the regulations about the offerings and the sacrificial system, the tabernacle. If you and I had lived in that day and we wanted to worship God, we wanted to restore our fellowship with God, we wanted to come and meet God, remember, worship is really an interpersonal encounter. Remember, the word comes from the idea of greeting, bowing down, kissing toward, but it's something that happens when you encounter. It's not something you do third person. You're worshipping, you're encountering. So in the old covenant, they could encounter God, but in the new covenant, you can really encounter God. That's what Jesus is saying. Look at the difference.

In the old covenant, if you and I were Jews living 1400 BC, and you sinned, I sinned, we knew we sinned, then what do we do to get right with God? You take a sin offering. You take something from the flock, a goat or a lamb, and you take it, and you walk no matter how far it is to the one place you can go, the tabernacle. You go to the door of the tabernacle and request admittance to the door of the tabernacle. If you're a man, you can go in. If you're a woman, you can't. You have to wait outside. But if you can go in, you walk into the tabernacle court. It's basically a cordoned off area with a veil around it, but open to the sky, and you'll

walk to the brazen altar, and you'll bring the lamb. The priest will have you confess your sins over the lamb, you'll place your hand on the head of the lamb, confess your sin to it, and then he will kill it, catch all the blood, offer a good portion of it on the altar there, and then you will stay right there. You're at the brazen altar which is an altar in the middle of the courtyard, so to speak, of the tabernacle. The priest will take the blood, and he will go into the tabernacle proper, that is the real tent part, the covering part, or later would become the temple, the inside part of the temple, into the Holy Place. He will take that blood in, and he will take it to the altar of incense, which is just beside the veil that separates the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place. He won't dare go behind the veil to the Most Holy Place, but the priest representing you (you couldn't go) he will go and he will put the blood of that sacrifice on the horns of the altar and sprinkle it there before the veil, and that is your encounter with God, through proxy, through mediation. You're standing outside, across the way at the altar, waiting for him to come back and give you the word, "I prayed. I represented you before the Lord." But he couldn't even go behind the veil. It was like he had to wait in the next room, your representative did.

What Jesus is telling her is that something radical is going to happen so that you yourself will be able to worship God at any moment. It's as if (we read earlier from Hebrews 10) it is reality, but to put it in the Old Testament picture to get a picture of it, it's as if you and I now bypass the priest. We don't even have to bring a lamb with us. We walk right by the brazen altar. This is unthinkable. If you, a non-Levite, a priest who had not been cleansed and set apart that day to worship, if you tried to walk into the temple, they'd cut you down with a sword. You're going to defile the temple. In fact, you couldn't even come into the tabernacle court if you were unclean for some reason. If you had a death in the family and you helped bury the body, you're unclean. You can't come near. If you start to come near, we're going to kill you. But now because of Jesus Christ, you can bypass. You walk right into the tabernacle court. You walk right past the brazen altar. You walk directly into the Holy Place, and you don't stop in the Holy Place. You walk right through the veil, because the veil is not there. It's torn down. You walk right up to the very throne of God and you talk to Him. Isn't it astounding? He says, "The Father seeks worshipers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth." How astounding. How absolutely stunning that word must have been in this context. This woman's asking about worship. She's thinking about the Samaritan temple that they had built offering the same kind of sacrifices. They had the Pentateuch. They were offering them just like the Pentateuch described. They just believed it was to be at Mount Gerizim. *We would never dare call Him Father.*

In fact, in the entire Old Testament, there are only 15 times (and that's a gracious rendering) that you can say that the Bible is referring God in the name Father. He'll speak, "I'm a Father to Israel," but you never find anybody calling Him Father. He speaks of Himself as Father through Isaiah 9, the everlasting Father. But when they called on the Lord, they called on His Name Yahweh, or they called on His Name Elohim. They were given many other names fifteen times in the Old Testament, but when Jesus has come, 245 times we're encouraged to call God Father. We bypass all of that formality, the blood, the ugliness of the sacrificial system which was showing us the ugliness of our own sin. This is what it requires for you and me who are sinners to become right with God: killing an animal, draining the blood, pouring it, sprinkling it, the nasty smells.

All of those things were eradicated by one sacrifice: Jesus Christ offering Himself, and now you come as it were, and it's like we want to go meet with God, and Jesus grabs our hand and leads us right through the tabernacle courts, right through the Holy Place, right into the Holy of Holies, and says, "Father, he wants to talk to You." That's true worship. This is radical. It's so hard for us to remember that, because we have such different views. In this culture, everybody thinks they can just go to God, don't they? But the reality is that if you don't know Jesus Christ, your prayers do not get through to God. The only prayer that God hears of the sinner is the prayer of repentance and faith in Christ. But once you come to faith in Christ, He hears everything. He invites every concern. Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you. Pray at all times, for all things to the Lord who wants to hear it all. "Come, tell Me what you need." That's what Jesus Christ has accomplished. That is what true worship is. So true worship is now the ability to come before Him and there's still that attitude of reverence, there's still that attitude of submission, there's still that attitude of acknowledging His extraordinary greatness, and we're still, as it were, in our hearts bowing down, but there is no requirement other than just coming through Christ. So that's what true worship is.

Now, how do you experience true worship? This is the key question, and this is where, again like I said earlier, with the word worship, there's a lot of confusion around the word and what it really means. Does it just mean singing? What we see is worship really is the heart bowing, the heart expressing its love to God, and what the New Testament is trying to call us to is a life of worship. All of life is to be worship. Everything. Whatever you do, you're to do for the glory of God. You're to be worshiping God all the time, but we forget, and we get distracted, and we lose focus. And how is it that you recover true worship? That's an important question.

Earlier we talked about, “How did you like that or this church?” or whatever, and we’re all too much about what we like and don’t like, anyway. We need to watch out for that, don’t we? But a better question is, “How do I get my heart in an attitude of true worship? How can I prepare my soul to really worship the Living God? I know that I have access through Jesus Christ, but practically, how do I do it?” And this is where some people would say, “I need upbeat music. I need some rhythm if I’m going to worship God.” I don’t have any rhythm. I was probably off rhythm even in that, wasn’t I? Someone else says, “The most worship I’ve ever experienced was walking into one of those Gothic cathedrals, and the architecture itself just made me stand in awe.” Or like there’s a movement today called the Ancient Future Worship. You may have heard something of that, which is there’s this real tendency to want to recover kind of ancient traditions and bring them into sort of a modern, very up-to-date kind of approach to worship, thought-wise, but then bringing in things like the burning of incense, and creating a mood so that you can worship.

Now, listen carefully. Some of these things are not in themselves evil. Some are and some aren’t. I mean, with architecture, there’s nothing wrong with making a church building, and thinking about the acoustics, and thinking about even the way it’s formed, because we are people and these things can be an aid, but it’s not about that. These things are so far secondary. In fact, the music, though it’s important, Ted mentioned a couple weeks ago that Martin Luther said that music is the language of the soul. It is, and God created it, but what we see here is that even music is secondary to true worship, because true worship is in Spirit and truth. It’s not so much about my environment. It’s not so much about the aesthetics around me. It’s about an issue of the heart. So how do we experience true worship? Let’s talk about that now. Now we’re at the question *How?*

The key phrase is *...in spirit and truth...* which you see in Verse 23: *...will worship the Father in spirit and truth;* Verse 24: *God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.* One important thing to note about that phrase, which is repeated twice, in spirit and truth, is that there’s one preposition and two objects. *...in spirit and truth.* It’s not in spirit and *in* truth. In fact, the NIV messes up here. In Verse 24, it adds an “in” in there that’s not in the original. The NIV says in Verse 24: *in spirit and in truth,* but the text says: *in spirit and truth,* and that’s important, because in spirit and truth is almost a hendiadys, that is, two terms that mean one thing. We’re to worship in spirit and truth. What we really have here is they’re concepts, but they’re complimentary concepts. Spirit and truth go together. They’re two sides of a coin, so we’re to worship in spirit and truth.

To understand it, spirit brings some meaning and truth brings some meaning, and we're going to look at them somewhat individually, but not separately. That's what's important about studying that phrase: *in spirit and truth*. Let's not separate the concepts.

Now, what does it mean to worship the Father? How can we worship the Father in spirit and truth? I think there are five things I want us to look at today, five principles I want to begin looking at today to understand what in spirit and truth means.

1) True Worship Requires the New Birth: That's the first principle. True worship requires a new birth. Since God is Spirit and you must worship in spirit, we have to step back from this a little bit and look at it in context. We are privileged to some information that the Samaritan woman didn't understand, though she experiences the new birth through Jesus talking to her as we see later in the text. She becomes a believer, but John, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has included this story without much intervening separation between what he said in John 3 in his discussion with Nicodemus. And what did he say in John 3? Jesus said to Nicodemus:

John 3:3 ~ Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

"You must be born again," He said. Now, we saw when we looked at that, that born again really would be better translated as born from above, that the language could mean either born again or born from above. But as you read through the rest of the passage, He says again in Verse 5: ***...I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*** So you must be born of the Spirit if you can even begin to see the Kingdom of God. So to worship, to see God, to see the Kingdom of God, you have to be born of the Spirit. This is speaking of regeneration, to be born from above, to have the Spirit of God work in your heart to give you a new heart. We defined regeneration as a renovation at the core of a man's being by the Holy Spirit. It means that you've been made alive.

In fact, the New Testament word for Spirit, πνεῦμα (pneuma), and the Old Testament word רוּחַ ruwach, both words *spirit* in the providence of God also mean breath. The word could mean breath or spirit, or wind, given the context. So the word spirit means life. How do you tell someone's dead? They stop breathing.

When there's breath in the body, they're alive. So to worship in spirit and truth, you must be born in the Spirit. You have to be born again, otherwise you're dead.

Remember what Ephesians 2:1 says: *And we were formerly dead in trespasses and sins*. We weren't just sick. We were dead. He's talking about being dead spiritually, dead to God, completely unable to respond to the impulses of God. He goes on to say in Chapter 2 of Ephesians: *You were formerly dead in your trespasses and sins, but you were made alive through Jesus Christ*. That's the new birth. That's regeneration. We were made alive, spiritually awakened. Now you possess life. The spirit is renewed in you if you belong to God, and so you're able to be affected by the Spirit. So, true worship requires the new birth. You can't truly worship if you've not been born again, because you can't see the Kingdom of God and you're not going to be inspired to worship, because you're dead to God. You and I were that way. So that's the first thing about true worship. How do I worship in spirit and truth? How do I experience true worship? First of all, you've got to be born again.

One of the reasons many people haven't experienced true worship is they've not been born again. It shows the great error of cultivating or planning your worship services around pleasing unbelievers. They're not worship services. *Let's survey unbelievers and see what they want to hear about*. They don't want to hear about Christ. It makes no sense. So, true worship begins with new birth. It requires new birth. That's the first principle.

2) True Worship is the Ongoing Work of the Holy Spirit: When He says to worship in spirit and truth, taking into context the Holy Spirit, this is what Jesus is saying is that the hour is coming, and now is when people will worship in spirit and truth. And what He's talking about is the decisive event of His cross and His resurrection, when He became sin on the cross and bore the sins of everyone who would ever believe, and paid the sin debt in full by bearing the wrath of God, taking all of that away, taking our sins away, carrying them as far away as the east is from the west, and then giving us His righteousness, being raised from the dead on Sunday to prove that His offering was accepted, and then what? He ascended to heaven.

In fact, we're going to see as we go through the rest of the book of John that there's great theology of the Holy Spirit in this book. One of the things that you'll see Jesus saying in John 14-16 as He talks more and more about the Spirit, when He starts off that passages saying, "Look, I'm going to have to go. I'm going to go and prepare a place for you," the disciples are all upset, remember? They say,

“Hey, where are You going? We don’t want You to leave.” He says, “It’s better for you if I go.” Why? “Because if I go, I will ask the Father and He will send another Comforter, another Paraclete, another One to come alongside you, the Holy Spirit.” If Jesus didn’t ascend to heaven, the Spirit wouldn’t come.

Now, back to the Samaritan woman. When she’s talking to Him and she asks, “Hey, where should we worship? In Jerusalem or up there on the mountain?” the irony is that she’s standing talking to the true temple. The one place in the universe that you could worship God at that moment was two feet away from her. Remember Jesus said, “Destroy this temple and I will raise it in three days.” He was speaking of the temple of His body. He was the temple. Now He says, “I’ve got to go to be with My Father, and I’m going to send the Spirit.” When He sends the Spirit, it’s now as if Jesus – had He stayed on the earth, even in His risen nature, we would not have been able to experience His presence all over the universe, but He goes to heaven.

J. L. Packer, in his book *Knowing God*, says, “It’s as if He’s set loose now.” By going to heaven, the Spirit comes and the Spirit is called the Spirit of whom? The Spirit of Christ, so that the Spirit of God mediates the presence of the risen Christ, so that if you possess the Spirit, you are directly in the presence of the risen Christ. You and I have it even better than the Samaritan woman did. This is the great plan of redemption. The giving of the Spirit was so that God would come and take up His residence within us. So what does it say in the New Testament?

1 Corinthians 6:19 ~ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you...

He’s speaking individually about every Christian. You are a temple of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit dwells within you. So true worship is now available to us because the Spirit is inside of us, and the Holy Spirit produces true worship in us. True worship is the ongoing work of the Spirit. We’re indwelt by the Spirit and the Spirit is working always to produce true worship in us.

How does that happen? Well, it happens through the truth. In fact, I failed to mention spirit and truth continually. How are you born again? You’re born again by the Spirit, right? But you’re also born again by the truth. Read 1 Peter 1:23, which says that you were born again not of corruptible things, but you were born again by the living and abiding word of God. Spirit and truth are always working together. In fact, three times in Chapters 14, 15, and 16 of John, when he’s talking about the Holy Spirit, Jesus refers to the Spirit of what? The Spirit of truth, so that

the Spirit always works with the truth. In your new birth, He works with the truth. And in producing true worship, the Spirit's work is always in line with the truth. He presents the truth. The focus is on the truth. So, true worship requires the new birth. True worship is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

3) True Worship Originates in the Innermost Part of a Man: This is actually a very important thing to understand than it seems at first. Well of course, but it really is much more important that we see this. True worship originates in the innermost part of the man. The word spirit πνεῦμα (pneuma) in the New Testament and רוּחַ (ruwach) in the Old Testament meant the immaterial part of man. True, it was dead, but God had made us to possess an immaterial part that was made to relate to Him, the spirit. The innermost inward part of a man is what the Bible sometimes refers to when it talks about the heart. It's talking about the spirit. Not always, but many times, it's talking about the spirit, the innermost part of the man.

When she heard the words, "The Father desires people to worship in spirit," she would have immediately thought of the innermost part of the man, the immaterial, invisible part. This is really the principle: True worship originates in the innermost part of the man. The locus, the place of true worship, the birthplace, the fountain head of true worship is the deepest part of your heart. Now, let's think about that. Some people say, "I like to have a nice rhythm. I need some music to get worked up so I can truly worship." They think worshiping is jumping around and all that, and that you've got to get worked up. But listen to this carefully. What this tells you is that true worship is not an outside in process. It's not something that comes from the outside into the heart and is produced. True worship is an inside out process. True worship originates at the very center of your heart as God takes His laser and puts it in the center of your being, and then it works its way out. It doesn't come from the outside through the emotions to the heart. No, true worship starts in the heart. It does come through the mind. There's spirit and truth again. True worship originates in the innermost part of the man. The locus is the heart.

Well, how do you get there? How do you get to the heart? This is again where some of our modern errors are going on: *The way you worship God is you've got to get in touch with your heart, and so you need to sit in a room silent for hours and empty your mind.* This is being taught in evangelical churches. It's a growing movement using eastern meditation techniques. Like think on a word. Just think about that word. Empty your mind. I even hate to bring these things up. They're wicked, deceptive strategies of satan, and they do not produce true worship. They may produce a good experience. They may produce a life-altering experience so that people have such euphoria. And this is what happens. You'll talk to people

and they'll say, "I know what I experienced." Well, I can't argue with your experience, but according to Scripture, this is our God, and the reality is the Bible teaches us that we are always (we saw this on Wednesday night) we are always wanting to invent ways to worship God. Man wants to invent ways to worship God. That's what idolatry is. The heart of man is an idol factory. *I want to do it this way.*

We saw in Leviticus 10 what happened to Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron. Remember in the euphoria of what God had done in giving the tabernacle, and giving the sacrificial system, and the cloud of glory comes down upon the tabernacle. God's glory is visibly manifest, and apparently Aaron's sons, in the euphoria of the moment, pick up censers and take incense and begin to walk into the tabernacle to offer this incense, but they didn't take the time to do it the way God had prescribed. He had prescribed a specific recipe for the incense that was to be burned. When you look at Exodus and Leviticus, what you come out knowing is God determines how He is to be worshiped. We do not. And this is one of the warning signs, because what happens is the fire had just come down and licked up the offering, the cloud of glory is there, and the people fell on their faces worshiping God. There must be such joy in the presence of the Lord. These two men lose their minds for a moment. They take these censers into the presence of God, and all their offense is they don't have the right recipe for the incense. The Bible says the fire of God came out and destroyed them both, and Aaron, losing two sons instantly like that, Moses said, "Don't mourn. Don't tear your clothes. The anointing oil is upon you. If you do, you will die also." This is what the Lord meant when He said, "Those who come near to Me, by them I must be treated as Holy." God determines how He is to be worshiped. We may think that experientially I really get a lot out of it. It really doesn't matter. What matters is are you doing what's Biblical? Because it may seem right. The Bible says there's a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is the way of death.

So it's not meditation techniques fixating on objects or looking at pictures. It's not reading creative new ideas about God that aren't from the Scripture. It is that worship originates in the heart, the deepest part of a man's being, but it originates through the truth, the spirit and truth. It's truth in the Spirit. That's how you get to the heart. So it's fine to have some times of silence so that you can think about the truth. Silence with your Bible open or silence meditating on a verse of Scripture, that would be true worship. But you can do that also in a crowded room with lots of noise going. You can think on the word. That's the key. All the other stuff is secondary. It doesn't matter what kind of building we're in. It matters if we have

the truth. And if we have the truth, we can experience true worship. So the third principle is that it originates in the innermost part of the man.

4) True Worship Does Work Through the Mind: What you see in the Bible is that God speaks to us coherently in sentences and words and paragraphs. His word is revealed so that we would use our minds to understand it. Now, the Spirit's got to illuminate the mind, but worship starts in the mind. Let's think about a song again. There are folks that know a lot more about music than I do, that can debate different styles of music. I think there's good in a lot of different types of music. I'm not saying that in worship. But the style of music is not nearly as important as the words that you're signing. Now, style can also, I think, work against that. I'm not saying just cart blanch any kind of style, because some styles work against your ability to concentrate. Worship happens when you concentrate on the truth. So when you sing a song like Isaac Watts, "Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small. Love so amazing, love so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all," when you're thinking about, "When I survey the wondrous cross," and you're thinking about the glory of what God has done, those words can inspire true worship. The song itself can. And when that is enriched by the fact that you've been growing in the Word, reading your Bible, meditating on the Gospel, hearing good preaching, and involved in good Bible studies, then what happens is that speaks to your heart and it creates kind of an explosion like the ignition of the car. The gas hits the flame. The spark hits the gas in an internal combustion engine, and it comes to life. But it's the truth that does that. It's not anything else for true worship, but it comes through the mind. The thought must pass through the mind. We meditate. We think on these things. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Now we'll look at the final principle. True worship not only requires a new birth, true worship not only is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, true worship originates in the innermost part of the man, true worship works through the mind, and lastly:

5) True Worship, Though It's Not Primarily Emotional, Ought to Affect the Emotions: This is the balance especially for us. It doesn't start in the emotions, but true worship ought to move the emotions. The Spirit is the place of life, and if you're alive, you ought to see it. Now, there's ebb and flow with our humanity. Sometimes you just are worn out and you don't have the energy, but if you stay in the word long enough, in the truth, it will energize you, not in a put-on sort of way, but from the depth. When you abide in the vine, you will bear fruit. Abiding in the vine means looking to Christ, by the power of the Spirit, through the word of God. That's where true worship happens. But when it happens, there ought to be some emotion.

When I went to Seminary, I chose to go to a Reformed Theological Seminary and I praise God for that, because at the time I went, all of the Baptist Seminaries were liberal. I mean really liberal. Southern Seminary, for instance. You need to know that until 1993, Southern Seminary, I think out of 100 professors had two people who believed in the literal resurrection of Jesus Christ. That was Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Today, it's a wonderful Seminary because the Lord used Al Molar as the President to change it. Can you believe that, though? They weren't saved! Most of the Professors at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary were on their way to hell and they were leading other people that way. But then the Lord did a work and He changed that.

Well, the other Seminaries were kind of bad too like that. So I ended up going to RTS. When I got to RTS, Reformed Theological Seminary, I was new to Reformed theology and I didn't know what I was talking about with anything. I was just some Southern Baptist kid raised in a kind of a middle of the road Southern Baptist Church, asking dumb questions, I'm sure, a lot. But one of the things I heard them talking about and as I went to worship with them, I got to experience is they had a praise for themselves they were trying to work on, that is that Presbyterians can sometimes be known as the frozen chosen. I mean, you go and you hear an incredible sermon. I used to sit and hear bad sermons with lots of amens, or people really being enthusiastic afterwards. I mean, you're like, "What's that guy amening for?" You'd go hear these tremendous sermons, and no movement. Something's wrong with that picture. They were so afraid of letting themselves get emotional, that they just restrained it.

Now, we have to be careful, and you see the excesses, but if you are really moved by truth, truth about Jesus Christ from the word of God, then it should affect you all the way out. And that's going to be different for different people. Some of us are more expressive. Some of us are more contemplative, more quiet, but there ought to be joy. There ought to be excitement about it. We don't have to necessarily jump up and down. I'm not trying to make any changes to our basic worship. I like things kind of calm, but if the Lord were to decide to send the Spirit on this place like He did in Enfield, Connecticut when Jonathan Edwards was preaching that great sermon? Jonathan Edwards is one of the heroes of the Christian church in history and in particular Reformed Theology. The Lord moves sometimes, and people have to express themselves. And if He does that, if it's truth that started it, then don't worry so much about it. The key is: Is it truth? Am I loving Christ? Am I seeing Christ? That's Spirit-filled worship. It's not all about the emotion.

I mentioned awhile back I was at a conference and we heard a sermon, and one of the guys was commenting, “That was really Spirit-filled preaching,” and I remember thinking, “That wasn’t.” I tried to listen as positively as I could. I’m always praying for the speaker when I’m listening, because I know I want people to pray for me when I’m preaching. But he never told us anything about Christ. It was all kind of like a cheerleading session, but there was no truth to get excited about. *Let’s get excited! Let’s get excited!* Tell me about Jesus, and then we can get excited. That’s true worship. The Spirit is the Spirit of truth.

Jesus talks about later in this Gospel how the Spirit will take of Mine and He will glorify Me. When the Spirit is at work, He lifts up Christ. He calls all the attention to Jesus. Look at Jesus. Look at what He’s done. Look what a great Savior we have. That is the work of the Holy Spirit, and that’s the work of the entire Bible. So you need the truth and the Spirit, and then you have true worship. When you have those things wed together, you find yourself in the presence. Now, the presence of Christ is in us, but we don’t experience it, do we? We get dulled by our sin. We get distracted. What is the answer? Worship in Spirit and truth. It’s get back in the truth, depending upon the Holy Spirit. *Lord, open my eyes. Let me see Christ.* You come and then you find yourself in the presence of Jesus, and then you’re worshipping the Father through Christ, and you’re experiencing true worship. It’s like the difference between that safety light outside that house along the road I drove yesterday, and the light of the sun when Christ is lifted up. And so when we examine our worship, how have we worshiped? What’s going on in my own heart? What did I do today?

You know, this is one of the things I’m blessed by in this congregation. When you have a congregation that loves the truth and loves Christ as much, you can preach weak sermons, and they still got fed. Why? They didn’t get as fed as they would by a better sermon. I know that, so I’m aiming low, but what I’m saying is this: When you come wanting to see Christ, and I’ve seen this myself, you go wanting to see Christ, and maybe the message wasn’t that good, but you gave me something of Jesus, then I can feed on that. I can think about that as I’m listening. I see this happen so often. Somebody will tell me what I said in a sermon, and I didn’t say it. I was talking in that direction, but they say, “When you said this...” and I’m thinking, “I wish I *had* said that.” What was happening? The Spirit of God was working in them taking the truth that was there and taking it farther. So this is why we’re called to help each other be worshipers. We’re to be talking about Jesus, lifting up Jesus to each other, so that we will worship in Spirit and truth whether we’re in service on Sunday morning, whether we’re at home talking around our dinner table, or whether we’re just walking through life. It’s all about worship, and

we have the privilege of worshiping God, true worship, at any moment in Spirit and truth. One day we won't have to work at it at all anymore. One day when Christ comes back or when you go to be with Him, there will be no more laboring to focus. You will see Him face to face, and all the darkness that's been around our lives will just flee in the glory of Christ. May the Lord hasten that day. But until then, let's worship Him in Spirit and truth.

Let's pray together...

Our Father, we glory in what You've done through Jesus Christ to take those of us, all of us here, who are by nature objects of wrath, all of us in ourselves, are sinful, and there's no health in us or hope for us in and of ourselves, but we're so grateful that You've made a way for sinful people who deserve wrath to come and experience the presence of Your holiness, and to come not merely as servants, but as children, beloved sons and daughters. We marvel at the great work of salvation that Jesus Christ has accomplished. And Lord, we pray that You would help us to glory in that more and more every day, so that we would boast in nothing but the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we would celebrate His great work and magnify His Person all the days of our lives with increasing joy, with increasing consistency, and with increasing intensity. May His glory, the glory of the light of the face of Christ shine more and more in this place, and off of our countenances as we worship Him, and through Him as we come to be in fellowship with the Triune God. Lord, we pray for those that are here that have not repented and believed, that You would grant them this morning faith and repentance. Help them turn, Lord, from their sin, and flee from everything else that is competing for their attention, and see that the one thing that matters is knowing You, the One true God, and Jesus Christ whom You've sent. We pray this in His Name, Amen.

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