

Wired for Worship

Rick Warren, Pastor of the Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, CA, tells the story of a guy from Chicago who wanted to know the meaning of life. His name was Bill. Bill traveled to India to discover the meaning of life but he didn't find it there. When got back to the states, he saw a sign on a Chevron station which stated: "As you travel ask us." So Bill went from Chevron station to Chevron station asking the question, "What is the meaning of life?" Gas Station attendants, mechanics, and convenient store clerks gave Bill blank stares and odd looks. Although no one asked him outright, many must have been wondering what mental ward he escaped from or what space ship he had just fallen out of. No one could tell him the meaning of life. Eventually Bill wrote the company. Noting the slogan "As you travel ask us," Bill's letter was short and to the point, "Sirs, please tell me the meaning of life." A couple of weeks later Bill got a return envelope from Chevron. Inside the envelope there was no answer to his question, just an application for a credit card.

The bottom line to this story is that if you want to know the meaning of life, you probably won't find it by traveling around the world, or by asking for it at a gas station. The truth is that, each one of us has been made by God and for God.

In Acts 17:26-28, the apostle Paul says *"From one man He (God) made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. 'For in Him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are His offspring.'"*

What we need to understand is that only the one who made us can tell us the meaning of our lives. Only He can give us our purpose. If we want to discover our purpose, we need to look to what God has revealed to us in His holy Word.

The Westminster Catechism states, **"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever."** What all of this means is that we are in this world to worship the Lord. Our first purpose in life is to worship God, and failing that, we are lost, like a ship at sea without a radio or compass. We are left to create purposes for ourselves that can distract

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but never satisfy the deepest longing of our souls. We are wired for worship.

But what exactly does worship mean and how do we do it? Notice what Paul says in Romans 12:1: *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship."* The New Living Translation of the New Testament puts it this way: *"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him."*

We notice here, first of all, that our motivation for worship begins with what God has done for us: *"in view of God's mercy," "because of all He has done for you."* Worship begins when we acknowledge that God made us, sustains us, and loves us so much that He gave His only Son to die for us. Therefore He deserves an appropriate response from us in return.

Near the beginning of our service this morning we sang "How Great Thou Art," a hymn which outlines reasons for worship. It is fitting for us to worship the Lord because of the world He has made for us. It is fitting for us to worship God because He loves us so much that He gave us His Son to die for us. It is fitting for us to worship our Lord because of the heaven He has prepared for us. **We worship God in response to His love for us.**

Worship then is first of all a response to God's love for us. Secondly, Worship is a giving back to God. Paul says, "I urge you. . .to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God." The appropriate response to God's love for us is to love Him back.

A number of years ago I wrote out a personal mission statement. It goes like this: "My mission (or purpose) in life is to respond to God's love for me by giving all of myself to Him everyday. And, to live in such an intimate relationship with Him that I will be able to know His heart and draw upon His power to obey His word and His leading at all times." I think my mission statement is Biblically informed when I say: "My mission in life is **to respond to God's love for me** by giving all of

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myself to Him everyday." That's what it means to give ourselves to God as a living sacrifice; it means to give all of ourselves to Him everyday.

Now you will notice here that this is a radically new definition of worship for those who may have thought that worship is only something we do on Sunday or something we only do in church or something we only do when we sing hymns or raise our arms in the air and sing worship songs. These things can certainly be part of worship, but true worship is so much more than these and so much more than what we do in church on Sunday morning. Worship means giving all of ourselves to God. It means letting His word inform and guide our minds. It means to invite and to allow His Spirit to correct our feelings. It means to obey God with our actions in our relationships with each other, and with all that God has made. It means making our wills submissive to His will.

Worshiping God means giving up the notion that we live for ourselves. True worship is the death of self-centered living. It is the death of egomania. It is the death of Narcissism, which means a fixation on oneself--"It's all about me." Notice that Paul states this very clearly when he says, "Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him." **Worship is not about us; it's all about Him.**

Romans 12:2 gives us another glimpse into how we are to worship: Paul says, *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* The Today's English Version puts it this way: *"Do not conform outwardly to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will know the will of God--what is good, and is pleasing to him, and is perfect."*

A third facet of worship revealed in these verses is what we call in the church "sanctification," a word that means being "set apart," specifically "set apart for holy purposes." Betty Jane helps me to understand the meaning of the word sanctification. Sometimes she bakes cupcakes or banana bread or some other goodies to bring here to church for the snacks after the services, or to share with the people with whom she does volunteer work. She sets these treats on our

countertop to cool “Now Jon, these are for church, or these are for the Hub.”

To be fair, she usually makes something for me too, but some of her goodies are off limits. They are set apart for the church or for someone else. That's what Paul means when he says *"be not conformed to this world,"* or *"do not conform outwardly to the standards of this world."* Lost people belong to the ways and standards of this world, but you who belong to God are set apart for something more and something better. All of us who know the Lord are set apart to glorify Him.

Once we realize that we have been made by God to glorify God we cannot be satisfied to live our lives for worldly goals. The goals and standards set by other men, or by the secular society in which we live, are not worthy of the children of God. We were not made to serve worldly wealth, fame, power, popularity, materialism, or pleasure. We were not made just to stay out of trouble or just to get by. We were made for a higher purpose. And that purpose is to know and do the will of God, thus glorifying Him. This is worship.

But how does this happen? Paul says, *"be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* or *"let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind,"* or *"let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think."* This process of allowing our thoughts and attitudes to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, is a part of our worship. We worship by seeking to know God better. We worship by planting the words of the Bible into our minds and hearts and by meditating on those words and by praying to hear the voice of His Spirit. When we study God's word together and discuss and ask questions and seek to apply His words to our daily lives in a way that transforms and renews our minds, that is worship. **When we allow our minds to be made holy that is worship.**

I hope what I have said and what we have heard from God's word this morning raises the bar for what we consider to be worship. But if we are looking for the definitive picture of what it means to worship, we need to look at Jesus. He came to demonstrate a life of worship. His whole life was worship to the Father..

This brings to mind a Ford pickup commercial currently running on T.V. Along with some impressive claims and pictures, the slogan says: “The new Ford F-150 doesn't just raise the bar; it is the bar.” When it comes to worship, Jesus doesn't just raise the bar; He is the bar. **live as He lived; that is to worship.**”

As we venture out into the world this week I want us to remember four things. **#1: Our Worship is a whole life response to the love and gifts God has given us. #2: We are not the center of worship; it's not about glorifying us; we worship to glorify God. #3: When we allow God's holy Word and Spirit to change our minds and attitudes to become more and more like His, that is the true test of worship. We are made and set apart to worship God that we may become like Him. And, #4: Jesus shows us what it means to live a life of worship. We are wired for worship.**

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Romans 12:1-2

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