

## Proper Worship in God's House -Ecclesiastes 5 – (15 March 15)

The subject, I'm going to speak on today is the subject of public worship. Public worship when God's people gather in God's house. Now, when we look at the Bible, there are different kinds of worship, there is a worship in life, we call that perpetual worship. In other words, everything we do, is an act of worship. The Bible says whether therefore you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, you do all to the glory of God. That's worship as a lifestyle, that's perpetual worship.

There is also a worship that is called private worship, that's the worship you have every once a day, maybe, where you open the Scriptures, you hear God's Word and you pray back to him, in response. And then there is a third kind of worship public worship, where the people of God, you and I, we gather together to sing praises to His Name and to hear His Word, public worship. So this morning we are going to look at public worship, in God's house.

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Maybe this is the 1st time you are in a church service, you're wondering what is going on, what's the purpose of it all, I'm glad you came because we are going to look at that question. Maybe you have been a worshiper, you have come to church services for a long time, many years, but you want to know more as to what really worship is about. I'm also glad you came because we are going to help you from God's Word. So we're going to look at public worship, what it is.

But before I tell you what it is, I'm going to tell you what it is not, and I am going to show you, by means of a very funny I think and humorous video clip on what worship should not be.

Video plays

“I will sing of your love on Sundays  
Only sing of your love on Sundays  
I will sing of your love on Sundays  
Then this feeling is gone by Monday”

“I surrender some  
I surrender some  
Jesus I will give you little  
I surrender some”

“I stand amazed at my hairdo  
My stylist outdid herself

I lift my hands and see my nails  
They match my eyes oh so well”

“How great is this song  
Sing with me  
How great is this song  
Man I love to sing (oh yes)  
To sing this song”

“And I just go  
Go through the motions  
(hallelujah)  
(lift up your hands)  
And I fake the emotions

I exalt me (3x)  
Only me

(praise me)  
(yeah)  
(hallelujah)  
(someone stop that baby from crying right now)  
(I’m all ready for lunch)”

Well, that is what worship should not be, isn't it. Worship is not about singing of God's love on Sunday, only to have that feeling gone by Monday. Worship is not about surrendering some and giving Jesus little. Worship is not about being amazed at ourselves and my hairdo and how I look this morning. Worship is not about a song, it's not about how nice that song really is. It's not about whether I love to sing that song or not. Worship is not going through the motions and certainly not faking the emotions. Worship is not about me, not about me, not about me. Today, we are going to look at worship in the place where God's people would gather together, what is worship then.

We are going to hear from Solomon, he is the qoheleth, he is the preacher, he sees that there is vanity all over the world, and he sees that there is vanity that can happen, even in the house of God, that people can have a pretence of worship and not really worship at all. So we are going to hear from him, share with us, what worship is all about.

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In Ecclesiastes chapter 5 and verses 1 to 7, he tells us about what worship is like in the house of God. He says

Guard your steps when you go to the house of God.  
To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools,  
for they do not know that they are doing evil.  
Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter  
a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth.  
Therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes with much business,  
and a fool's voice with many words. When you vow a vow to God,  
do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow.  
It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.  
Let not your mouth lead you into sin,  
and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake.  
Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?  
For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity;  
but God is the one you must fear.

(Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 ESV)

Solomon here gives us a panoramic view as to a complete understanding of public worship. He begins by leading us to what happens before you come to the house of God and then he is going to tell you what happens during the time we are in the house of God and he is going to tell you what happens after you leave the house of God. So, he is going to give you a spread, these are the various stages, movements involved in proper worship in God's house (pastor showed a slide depicting the 3 stages of worship: Before, During and After).

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#### 1. Preparation before worship

Without much ado, let's plunge right in to what happens before. He tells us, in essence, that there must be preparation for worship, in God's house. He says:

Preparation:

Guard your steps when you go to the house of God (Ecc 5:1).

Watch your feet, be careful about how you approach the place of worship. He is saying, don't rush into God's house thoughtlessly but consider, prepare, let your hearts be ready.

I usually come to church on Sunday mornings via taxi. I just want to have a easy way to come to church, without distractions, taking bus and so on and so forth, and so I take a cab and usually I get here at about 8:30 AM. Because, of course, I have to prepare some stuff, make sure the PowerPoints are up and so on and so forth, and 8:30 is good. But last Sunday I was late. I mean late by a mile when compared to 8:30. I had to wait for a cab and it took a long time. It was about 15, 20 minutes' wait when the cab was coming my way, at least it's green now, I could hail the cab, but someone got in front of me and got the cab instead. And I was really getting nervous. I mean, if I don't come to church, it's terrible right, I mean, what's going to happen on..., we don't have a backup plan, and so on and so forth. So I was pacing up and down, I was restless, I was nervous, I was praying and thankfully, after waiting for at least 30 minutes, the cab came and I arrived here at Novotel at 8:55 AM. Managed to greet you at the door, welcome you, even though I was new, just arrived. But I tell you something, while I was able to get here physically, my heart was not quite here. My heart was still pacing, still restless, still, just, just not in the right frame, and I think I blew my first sermon on that day, just didn't do well, my heart was not right there.

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Maybe, that's your experience, when you arrive late for service, you, your heart is not quite here. I mean, you are still frantic, still, still huffing and puffing, catching your breath. It's not helpful for you, you are not able to watch and prepare yourselves adequately. Now, I understand that we can be late, because the transport issues arise or maybe your kid vomited all over the bed and you have to clean him up or maybe you lao sai (colloquial for diarrhea) diarrhea, you just not convenient to rush here, we, we understand that and when that happens it, it doesn't help you to worship properly isn't it?

Or maybe, it's not that you are late, but you are just not rested and attentive because you've had a hard week, you worked really hard or maybe you really stayed up late because you went to Zouk and disco your way away, your time away, or you were watching the latest game in the English Premier league and the last game is 3 AM, you finish at 5 AM, you slept 2 hours, 3 hours and huh. At least, I came to church.

Now I know you guys are lovely people and you love to encourage your pastor, you love to agree with him, but it's not very encouraging when you're agreeing with your eyes closed. (Laughter in the congregation) Nodding your way, nodding yourself away and that doesn't help you, because you're not prepared, you're not rested to worship and to hear His Word.

Maybe you are not ready because you have just screamed at your kids and shouted at your wife or your husband and you kick your dog and you are angry about something, you are upset about something, you're thinking about something and your heart is not quite here, or maybe right out there, you have talked about the latest politics, the latest entertainments scandal, the latest soccer game score and

after talking, immediately you come in and you say, blessed be Your Name when your mind is actually on the game. It's not good preparation.

You know God said to Moses and Joshua almost the same thing, put off your shoes from off your feet, because the place you stand on is holy ground. God is saying to His servant, prepare yourself. I wonder if you're prepared every time we gather to worship God. I remember the good old days, 20 years ago when Gospel Light was worshiping at this place called RELC, how many of you were at RELC when we worship, can I see by a show of hands 123456789, probably less than 20, amazing, 20 years ago, 20 of you were there, OK, aah, 20 years ago at RELC. Whenever you come into the place of worship, you will see two signs. Today we have no signs, but in the past, there are two signs. Can anybody remember what is on the 2 signs, Deborah? Very good, "Habitual lateness dishonours God", the 2nd sign? Nobody remembers the 2nd sign, everybody remembers the punctuality one right, habitual lateness dishonors God, the other one is "Pray silently before service". They are actually the same thing. It's about preparation. Habitual lateness dishonors God. We know, we know, we understand sometimes, you lao sai (colloquial for diarrhea), it's fine. But you don't lao sai every Sunday, right? (Laughter in the congregation) You can't say to me, pastor, I'm sorry I'm late because I lao sai. OK, next week, I lao sai, again, if every week, I hear that, you better see a gastroenterologist, something wrong. Habitual lateness dishonors God.

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I've noticed a pattern in Gospeliters. I know exactly who comes at what time. (Laughter in the congregation). After a while, I know, from the 9 or 11 to 11:05 band, I know which who comes in, 1105 to 1115 who comes, and 1115 to 1125 who comes and after that I won't know who comes, I am already here (that is, no longer at the door welcoming church members and visitors). But I know and you guys have timed yourself to perfection. (Laughter in the congregation) You have mastered the transport route and everything, including the time you take the lift and park the car, you know exactly the protocol, the sequence and you time yourself to come in, so that you miss this, or escape that, so that you can hear at least the sermon and that's all you want. That's not worship.

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I'm glad you want to hear God's Word but God is worthy of worship. What is worship, worship is "worth"ship. He is worthy of our worship, worthy of our praise, worthy of our sacrifice of lips. He is not here just to give you knowledge, we are here to give Him worship. It's not about you coming to a sermon alone. Some of you must be heaving a sigh of – wah pastor talking about those who come at 1115, heng (colloquial for lucky) I always make it at 11 one. I always make it at 1059 and when you walk in at 1059, you feel so good about yourself, yah, I am not late, and I never waste time, I never waste time coming early, I am on time. Have you prepared your heart?

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I say, Gospeliters, if you are serious about worship, Solomon says, prepare, very simple, prepare. Are you prepared? It means not coming on time, it means coming before time. If you have an appointment with Lee Hsien Loong, I dare you to come on time. You all come before time. When we have job interviews, I realized job interviewees all come before time. When you go for music, a concert, you all go before time, but when it comes to worshipping of God, we all come after time. It's amazing, it's really amazing if you think about it. I say to you if you want to prepare well, sleep well on Saturday night. Sleep well, I am not dictating how many hours is well, it's variable. Some people 12 hours, I don't know, somebody some people 5 hours. It is variable, but sleep well, be adequately rested. Worship should impact your Saturday, to prepare for worship on Sunday, it means your Saturday is ready for it. It means that when you come here, you search your heart, because if you have sinned against someone or if someone is, has something against you, you've got to get it right, you got to confess your sins, repent before the Lord and not just assume that because you just screamed at your wife, you can come in and say to God be the glory.

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Do you see the inconsistency there, pretending that just because you are in this room, because you are singing, God is pleased? It means, it means that even if we are outside having small talk with others talking about soccer, I don't think it is necessarily wrong but when you come in, do you give yourself time to reflect then on His Word, the Gospel, His goodness, His glory? Do you give yourself time? Some of you probably are saying, wah, pastor, why you so serious. Wah lao, so many things to do, too serious already lah. You know, I think when we get to heaven, God will not say to me, Jason, you too serious aah, you ask the church to take me too seriously. They honour Me too much, they come too early already, 5 minutes, no need, let them sleep more, 5 minutes let them sleep. I doubt God would ever say that to me and I think God will not say that to you.

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Now, let me be clear, I'm not saying that you should come early and you should sleep well, you should do all these things so that God will now be loving you and will not judge you. No, no, no, that's not what Scripture teaches. This is legalism, to try to do something so that God will now be giving me His favor, no God loves you to the max in Jesus Christ. He doesn't love you any less if you come late, and if you come early, He doesn't love you more because He loves you maximally in Jesus already. What I'm saying to you here is this, if you really love God and you want to honour Him, you want to please Him, the 1st movement of worship (referring to preparation) will be properly looked at. You will not assume that your alarm clock that is set at this particular time today will make you be able to arrive earlier

next week, you would say I'll make a commitment to switch it half an hour earlier, its commitment. But you will do it, because you love the Lord. So Solomon says prepare.

## 2. Participation during worship

A 2nd movement is when we now enter the house of God, it's a participatory aspect. What does participation in worship mean? Well, he says in verse 1,

Participation:

To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, (Ecc 5:1)

Worship is certainly not going through the motion, when to stand up, when to sit down, when to raise hand, when to bow your head, no, that's not what worship is about, that without the right heart is merely going through the motion. Worship is also not faking the emotions. So what is worship? This is it, it's listening. Worship is not going through the motion, it's not faking the emotions, it's receiving God's revelation, to know God through His Word, that's what worship centrally revolves around, to hear God, to know Him through the preaching of God's Word. Throughout church history, the preaching of God's Word is central to worship services. You say why, JI Packer says

“Worship in the Bible is the due response of rational creatures to the self-revelation of their Creator.....”

Worship is about the creator, God and worship is coming, flowing from understanding God and the understanding of God will not take place without Him revealing Himself to us, the self-revelation of God, where does He reveal Himself, the Bible, so when we as rational creatures, thinking people, see our Creator in His self-revelation, worship now becomes the response of it all.

So, the understanding, the knowing of God through preaching of the Word is central in worship services throughout history. It is therefore sad that we live in a culture and day and age where people want shorter sermons, less preaching, more music, more fun. It is sad, when today, people do not appreciate the teaching of God's Word, edification, they want entertainment, sad. You see, JI Packer continues to say

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“Learning from God is worship too: attention to his word of instruction honors him; inattention is an insult.”

I dare you to go before your boss, and say boss, you play your handphone, SMS or your computer game, your candy crush, boss, I respect you a lot, you know, every time you talk, I listen to you. Would

you do that with your boss? No, but we do that with our God. Worship is about attention to His Word. Someone says,

"Much of the music entertains.  
Sermons have remarkably little actual content,  
however dynamic the delivery.  
The Bible is cited, but rarely explored"

Much of the music entertains. Today when you go to worship services, what is the primary driver? It's mixed of course, I think in many circumstances many churches, but there may be a trend today and I think this is fairly true that much of the music in church seeks to entertain, not so much to edify. Sermons today have remarkably little actual content, however dynamic the delivery, or the preacher. The Bible is cited, quoted here and there, but is rarely explored. So we borrow the verses of the Bible to say what we want and what we like, but not really hearing what God has to say in the context He wants to say it.

Why, because we just don't want the Word, we just want to feel good, we want to have a pumped up session. God, I need to be pumped up, because I've been working so hard from Monday to Saturday. I come to church, so that I may be re-energized, so that I may feel good, so that I may have the strength to face another week. Real worship is not just skimming through the Scriptures, it's going into the self-revelation of the Creator, knowing Him for who He is and then proper worship flows.

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By the way I'm not against emotions, I am not against emotions, we can't be against emotions, we are made emotional creatures, isn't it and the Bible tells us to worship the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, strength, all our heart, all our soul, emotions are involved. Nothing wrong with emotions in worship. Actually, I find in GLCC, you are emotionless or at least, I see your face, it makes me feel like you are not emotionally engaged. Emotions are not wrong, but if emotions is what we look for, emotions is the main thing in worship, that's where it has gone wrong. Emotions are not primary. They are secondary to the revelation and the understanding of God and I believe that if we really hear God in His Word, we will be taken to various extremes of emotions. We will, we will feel it, we will feel joy when we hear the Gospel. We will have grief when we talk about our sins, we will have excitement as we look at the hope that is before us, God will bring us through the emotions and we will respond to Him emotionally, but emotions are secondary revelation, because you can come for worship services and we can worship God with just emotions and nothing about God.

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A lady got to Kenya as a missionary, she wanted to bring the Gospel to many lives and she went to Kenya, she got to a house and people were singing in a very worshipful manner, they raised their hands, they cried tears, they were joyful, they were so into it, it looks so worshipful and she wanted to be part of it. So she asked the interpreter, can you tell me what's the meaning of the worship song they sing, so that I can join in with them, and the lady says, it's not a worship song, they are singing, "If we boil the water, we will not have diarrhea." (Laughter in the congregation)

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And they can be very emotional, they can realize that this is the problem they had, but it has nothing to do with God. You can go to church today where people are swaying, crying, all kinds of emotions, but the question is, why the emotions? Is it worked up apart from truth or does it flow from an understanding of the greatness, the splendor, the Majesty, and the love of our God? Sad, when Christians today just want short messages, we call sermonettes, heard of that? Don't want sermons, pastor, shorter, please, the shorter the better, more time for singing, more time for eating, more time for fun, sermonettes. I tell you what sermonettes give you, sermonettes give you christianettes. (Laughter in the congregation)

You want to be a small puny little Christian, who doesn't know God, then, go ahead, sermonettes. Then you will use it as serviettes. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools (Ecc 5:1).

How are you listening today, how have you listened for the past 3 months in 2015, have you really worshipped the Lord, have you really said, Lord, I want to know You, see You, hear from You and praise You.

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### 3. Practice after worship

The 3rd movement is that of practice. All right, we hear God's Word, we come prepared, we come attentive, we come, saying, Lord, speak to me, change my life. What do you do when you leave this door? That's it? The feeling is gone? Solomon says in worship, you will commit yourself, proper true worship will result in commitments to God.

Practice:

When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. (Ecc 5:4)

That's why, he says there will be a vowing of vows. In the Old Testament, the Jews, the vowing of vows and the sacrifices are often linked together, for example, in Leviticus in the description of worship, there is a presentation of offerings and vows at the same time, and it's linked.

When any one of the house of Israel or of the sojourners in Israel presents a burnt offering as his offering, for any of their vows or freewill offerings that they offer to the LORD,  
(Lev 22:18 ESV)

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In Psalm, for example,

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,  
and perform your vows to the Most High,  
(Psalm 50:14 ESV)

offer to God, sacrifice of thanksgiving, perform your vows. So what he is saying is, not only does God want your substance, more than that he wants your obedience. Worship is not to give something apart from us, but to give ourselves to Him. A vow is in order.

Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion,  
and to you shall vows be performed.  
(Psalm 65:1 ESV)

We make commitments, if we properly worship God, we will. We will feel God speaking to us, we will know God speaking to us and we can't help but say, Lord, help me to do this, to obey You in this, to follow through in that. You will, if you're serious and you are sincere in worshiping Him. So, you will vow a vow, you will pay it and you will not like what this man does, he will sing of your love on Sunday, and the feeling is gone by Monday, because proper worship from Sunday will flow into your Monday all the way to Saturday. Lord, I will live a pure life, by Your grace, help me, it will make a difference on Monday, it will make a difference on your Tuesday. Help me to be a witness for You, it will transform your Friday, because it's not just about the feeling, folks, it's about obedience. It's about commitment to Him.

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The 2 hours you spend this morning will flow into the 166 hours for the rest of the week. Your public worship will impact your perpetual worship, it would enrich your private worship and that again will fuel your public worship on Sunday. It's all part of God's desire, when we go to God's house in worship.

So Solomon says, this is a portrait of the true worshiper. Notice it has nothing to do with the kind of songs or the kind of instruments, I am not talking about these things, and it's about the heart issues. How do you prepare yourself, what is your alarm clock set to, what time do you tuck in at night on Saturday, would you be out there, or would you be in here preparing yourself, would you be confessing your sins and searching your heart, would you do all that? I will, if I am a true worshiper. How will I listen, callously or attentively, humbly, willingly. Best acid tests of worship, what happens to you after.

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Sometimes, we measure a church, how worshipful it is, by how loud the church sings, by how much tears are being shed. Now it may be, but that's not the best gage. The best gage is how obedient are God's people, after the service. You know what's a good sermon, not where people are laughing and clapping and say, pastor, that's a good sermon. A good sermon is when you see life change in people. Good worship is when we go out with a new practice.

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Solomon tells us about the true worshiper, but he also tells us about someone who does not do all these things. What does he call them? You don't have to guess, it's in your text. In Ecclesiastes 5, Solomon calls those who don't do these things, "The Fool". Now I know, it's a very strong word, but it's not my word, it's God's Word. In verses 1 to 4, He tells you the fools, the fool's, the fool. So, what's a fool? A fool is someone who does not do what Solomon has told us we ought to do, he is a fool. He can be a very intelligent man, a very rich man, but in God's eyes, he is a fool.

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So what is a fool, a fool is someone who doesn't prepare himself, when he approaches God in the place of worship. He is a fool, actually, if you think about it. He has no idea who he is coming to, amazing. He is so smart, he can make all the business deals, earn all the money, but when it comes to coming to God, he's a absolute fool, because he doesn't recognize God for Who He is. Think about it, he is right, he can't care two hoots, how he sleeps, how he prepares.

The fool is someone who doesn't draw near to listen, he just wants to feel good, and he just wants to be entertained, he just wants to go through the motion, what a fool, not knowing who God is. Now, this fool can come in disguise, because he can come offering sacrifices, he can come giving lots of things, doing lots of things, even sing very loud, but God says they are doing evil, the hearts are far from, with their lips, they draw near, but their hearts are far from Me, Isaiah says, a fool. This man, however, is so deluded, he doesn't even see it himself. He doesn't even recognize his problem. He's very quick to say yes, very quick to say, I will do this, but he never does it and God says I've no pleasure in fools.

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So, the fool is someone who doesn't prepare, he doesn't participate properly and he doesn't practice what he is led to do, and this separates humanity in two parts, the fool who doesn't worship God, the true worshiper who worships Him in a proper way. Let me ask you now, what is the difference between the fool and the true worshiper, don't tell me the three P's. No, no, those are the forms. What is fundamentally the difference between the fool and the worshiper, you don't have to guess, it's in your text, right there in front of you. The answer is found in verse 7, God is the one you must fear. Vain worship is when we have no fear of God and we look like we are worshiping, like Cain, look like worshipping God, but he did not. Real worship is when we fear God, he tells us, because God is in heaven, and you are on earth (Ecc 5:2).

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So the fundamental ingredient in proper worship is the fear of God, it's a beautiful thing. The fear of God is an essential thing in worship. It is however a very misunderstood and under preached, very poorly understood aspect of Christian theology. You see, we live in a day and age where we love to hear about good things, nice things, the grace of God, the love of God, the mercy of God, we are soaked with that in modern literature, but something has been missing and we did not realize it, and that is the fear of God. We don't like to talk about God's fear, or fear of God. We like to make things very human. For example, I hear that even in our church in the past, there is a desire to say, let's not call this, worship service, let's call this singspiration, because worship is very intimidating, we are coming to the great God, the Holy God, and it is intimidating, so don't have that. Somehow, not somehow but the human heart does not appreciate the fear of God, but it is a beautiful thing, according to Scripture.

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You see the Bible tells us the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). Aah, I know what your answer will be, pastor, I know this is a very good verse, throughout Proverbs, but Proverbs all Old Testament. Old Testament is the age of the law. We now live in an age of grace, so New Testament Christians no need to fear. I say, first of all that is rubbish theology, I can fight you if you, if you want to speak with me about that. But the New Testament is full of the fear of God as well.

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In the book of Acts, the church had peace and was being built up, why, why was the church thriving and growing and expanding because they were walking in the fear of the Lord (Acts 9:31). It's a good thing. Hebrews tells us, "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken and let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe." (Heb 12:28). Proper worship is balanced worship, where we understand the fear of God and we also rejoice in the love of God, they

don't cancel out each other, folks. They reinforce each other. When I see how holy God is, I realized how much He loves me by giving me His Son, and when I see how much He loves me by giving me His Son, I realize how majestic He is and how He is to be feared. They don't contradict, they reinforce. But Satan has so subtly says, it is all about the goodness of God, don't have to consider the fear of God. My friend, it robs us of worship, because it turns a worshiper into a fool.

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I tell you what happens in worship today, this is the picture: The Worship Evolution (from the book: The Tabernacle of David Today, written by: Edgar Winter) – not from a, not from a plankton into a human being or a gorilla, or whatever, this is the reverse evolution, where we began with understanding of worship, of reverence, of awe, but with time, man starts to think himself somebody, he looks up, he thinks he is capable, and now the worship is about me. What's out there, now I am not saying the worship band is not worshiping, no. But this posture can easily be the posture of the heart, it's all about me.

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Why, what is the reason why someone will be face down and now he is all about himself, why? I tell you why, he has lost the fear of God, that's why. He's forgotten how God is in heaven, and I am on earth. You can't have this posture, if you know you are standing before God, you can't. When Isaiah saw a glimpse of God's glory, what did Isaiah say? He said woe is me, but today in worship services, people stand up on stage and say, wow is me. No more fear of God, lost it. Real worship begins with the recognition that God is truly different from ourselves, do you know that? Again, I lament the Christendom today where, where we talk about God as our buddy, as our friend. Now, I am not saying that's wrong, but that is , if that's the only thing you know God in, you are not going to have the fear of God, you are not going to really worship, he's your buddy, he's my friend. Remember what Jesus said, when he taught His disciples how to pray, He says, "Our Father, which art in heaven" – beautiful balance and poise. "Father" reminds me of intimacy. Theologically, we use the word immanence, the nearness of God. "In heaven" reminds me of the greatness, the superiority, the transcendence of God. Proper worship requires knowledge of God in both His immanence and transcendence, both dynamic are to be in our soul as we worship Him, not minimizing any of it.

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So it (referring to real worship) begins with knowing the transcendence of God. Reverence and awe today, have often been replaced by a yawn of familiarity, now our God is all too familiar to me. The consuming fire spoken of in Hebrews 12 has been domesticated into a candle flame, adding a bit of religious atmosphere, perhaps, but no heat, no blinding light, no power for purification. Today, Gospeliters, you and I, myself, we must face our tendency to trivialize God, the human heart has a

tendency to trivialize God. Look at Israel, the moment they got out of Egypt, they tried to make God into a calf, that's the tendency to trivialize God. Make Him like us, make Him in fact, below us, make Him like a cow, make Him like an elephant, so that we can manage this manageable deity. But God is not to be treated like this. Don't trivialize Him, know Him for who He is and there'll be a awe in your soul as you see Him for who He is in Scripture.

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Intimacy with God doesn't begin with the comfort of familiarity, but with the humility of a holy distinction that separates us. Amazing dynamic, I'm on earth, He is in heaven, He is so other-worldly, we are separate. But because of Jesus Christ His Son, I have intimacy. That's the balance of it.

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Matt Redman, is a man that you might have heard of because he wrote songs and one of the songs we sing in this church is 10,000 Reasons, remember that, Bless the Lord, O my soul, that's the song. It's voted one of the top, if not the top, or most popular Christian song in churches by the way, 10,000 Reasons. And Matt Redman had something to say about worship. He says

“When we see the heights of who God is, everything in us wants to get as low as we can in response. He must increase; we must decrease.”

When we see the heights of who God is, everything in us wants to get as low as we can in response, like the Isaiah experience. We will not say, wow is me; we'll say, woe is me. He must increase and we must decrease. So often, in our worship and in the church, we shrink God down. We make Him like one, He is one of us. You even here songs that sound like they could be a normal love song or a pop song. I know what people are trying to do, they are trying to be culturally relevant. But there is a bigger value in worship than cultural relevance, it is the glory of God.

So let's write songs that paint a big picture of God because He is big, let's have worship services that immerse us in God's splendour. Let's not shrink God down, we are the ones who are going to do the shrinking. He had an album called Facedown, what a strange name, you say. Facedown refers to the posture of worship in his album and he says:

“It's such a biblical posture in worship that speaks of reverence. If you look through the Bible, there's a whole host of people who faced up to the glory of God and found themselves facedown in worship. So the album weaves through a theme of reverence, wonder and mystery in worship, things I feel we really need to grasp more of in our worship expressions. I know that I do!”

I like that, face up, face down. Face up as we see God in Scripture, facedown as we respond to Him, you can't do anything less, if you really know Him. I'm not talking about behaviour modification today, folks. I'm not, I'm not going to close, I know there are people who suggested to me to close the door at 9 AM, 11 AM and let no one else in. We have thought about that before, we have, but we never did it. We have thought about many ways to get you to come early, we had done our part. I think the worship team comes early 7 AM. Set this place up, rehearses, so that we are ready for worship. This is about you and God, your behaviour, but please don't do it because I guilt you into it or some, because that motivation won't last and it doesn't please God.

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You prepare yourself, you hear God's Word and you obey His ways, because God is the One you fear. And if you fear God and you know how much He loves you, you will be a true worshiper. Today, your alarm clock settings will change, your transport arrangements will change, your sleeping time on Saturday will change, your office behaviour will change, because that's what a true worshiper who knows God, who has a face-up experience with God will do in his face-down posture every day. But folks, it's about the heart. Like I said, I'm not interested in legalism or behaviour modification, it doesn't, it's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches us to love Him from our hearts, it's about the heart of worship.

I end again with heart, with Matt Redman's song, Heart of Worship. He comes from a church where there was a struggle about worship, because people didn't seem engaged, didn't seem interested in worship. They were more interested in what songs were sung, what instruments were used and and it was a difficult time. They were just going through the motion. He said, sometimes it is so easy to be just going through the motions and there was a dynamic missing. So, my pastor did a pretty brave thing. His point was that we'd lost our way in worship and the way to get back to the heart of worship, would be to strip everything away. So he took away the instruments and we didn't have a sound system for a while. His point was that we have already consumed so much. We have already been flooded with the knowledge of God, revelations of His grace and glory and His hand on our lives, so when we come as a church, please, he says, don't come to enjoy yourselves primarily, come to worship God, to give to Him, to praise Him. So be producers, not consumers and The Heart of Worship simply describes what occurred. When the music fades and all is stripped away and I simply come longing just to bring something that's of worth that will bless your heart, I'm coming back to the heart of worship and it's all about You, Jesus.

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How's your heart today, folks? And what would your heart be like this week and next Sunday, when we gather? Would you consider these things, as a true worshiper will? Let's bow for a word of prayer

together. Who are we coming to this morning? If we are coming to a pastor, you don't have to come that early, if you are coming because of your friends, you don't have to come so early, but if He is God, wouldn't that change the way we worship? This God, is an amazing God. It is so sad when we are so blinded to His Splendour and Majesty, we trivialize Him. But look through the pages of Scripture and be amazed and be stunned and be wonderfully blessed to know that this God is an indescribable God, His ways are beyond understanding, He is absolutely Sovereign and Powerful and Majestic. And yet He is a God of crazy grace and love, for those who have sinned against Him. He is a God of unflinching faithfulness and unyielding righteousness. He is a God who ever gives and gives and gives, a God who gave His only Son for you and for me. He gave you His heart. Would you give Him your heart of worship? Consider in your seats today, your preparation, your participation, your practice. Consider today your heart, do I really fear Him. My friends, you do not need to hide, God sees it all and this morning, He wants you to pour your heart before Him, asking Him to change you and He will.

My friends, this God, who is to be feared, is a God to be loved. He tells you why you need to love Him because He has first loved you by giving you His Son Jesus Christ. Would you love Him? How do I love God, you say? Honor Him, obey Him, serve Him, let it be all about Jesus for you, let it be all about Him. Father we thank You this morning, thank You for Your Word that calls us to consider our ways. I thank You today, we can gladly obey not because we have been guilted to do so, or because we have been pressured to do so, but because we can want to do so, in the light of who You are and what You have done for us in Your grace. I pray the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ would so motivate us, every single day. Lord I pray for Gospel Light, that we will be a worshipful people, not really in terms of decibels, or the streams of tears, but as Solomon has taught us, in our fear of God, expressed in how we prepare, how we hear and how we obey. Lord, make this really practical and life-changing for each one, so that through our lives, You will be glorified. Thank You for loving us, thank You for Your mercy this morning, thank You for Jesus, bring us to the heart of worship, we pray in Jesus' name, amen.