

Blurred Lines: Sacred vs. Secular Worship: Beyond the Ritual series by Chris Famisaran

Let's pray. Gracious Lord, we thank you for the opportunity to gather together as we dive into your word as we begin a new series on worship beyond the rituals leading Guide us in Jesus name. Amen.

I think it was in 2001, so roughly 25 years ago, there was a TV series called the Band of Brothers that came out and well done and quite amazing and interesting. And one of the actors that really stood out to me was Neil McDonough. He played Buck Compton. I think he was one of the officers and he was the one that eventually, he experienced what they called shell shock at the time of PTSD, and he eventually. His character wasn't written off, but he eventually left. Quite interesting if you actually look up his real character, Buck Compton had quite a fascinating story, but I bring his name up because several years later, Buck, I'm sorry, Neil got married to an individual lady by the name of, I think, Roy Robertson. I apologize if I got her name wrong. A couple years later, after the series dropped, and when he got married, he made a promise and took a vow that if he were ever to take a role, he wanted to be faithful and honor his marriage, that he would have no scenes where there was kissing, or shall we say, intimacy.

And everything was going great. His career was burgeoning. There was a few other really big names shows that he was attached to, and he was on the up and up until in 2010, he was slated to be part of a new show that. I'll just say it's called Scoundrels. Right off the bat, it seems kind of sketchy, right? And his faith was tested because they asked him to do things that went against his convictions. And so he decided, well, I'm not going to take the job. They removed him from the show, and all of a sudden he was considered a nutjob. He was an extremist. He was this, he was that for two years. Two years. He lost everything. The nice home, the cars, everything. Because he stood firm in his convictions and he surrendered his life and his faith to God. And it was difficult.

There was a point where he actually struggled. He turned to drinking. And eventually, though, however, there was a turning point. I think it was in 2012. He was able to get a job on a show this time, though, playing the villain. And if you notice, a lot of his characters that he's since played has often been a villain, but he's a man of faith and he tries as much as possible. Even though he's playing a difficult role, he still tries to honor God in everything that he does. But for two years, it felt like he was in the wilderness. He lost everything. He had some friends who were very... He was very fortunate to have to help get him through that time. But being a husband, being a father, this sense of wanting to be able to provide and yet you cannot find work. He surrendered himself to God. And later he was given an opportunity. Graham Yost offered him a deal to play a villain. And all of a sudden, doors reopened.

Neil chose faith and family over fame. He probably could have made a whole lot of money, but he didn't want to compromise his principles. One person I think wrote said, Neal McDonald's greatest act of faith wasn't getting a role in Hollywood. It was being willing to lose one. When his convictions collided with his career, he chose to surrender. He trusted the obedience to God was more important than success before men.

And this word surrender is going to come up later again. And today I want to start a new series called *Worship: Beyond the Ritual*. When you think of the word worship, what comes to mind? I think we often think right now we're here in church, we're worshiping God. Yes. Or maybe some of you might be thinking, I immediately think of worship music, worship as a community, or maybe a daily worship. I need to be able to spend time in God with prayer and Bible reading and this and that. And maybe for you, for some of us here, it's like, I feel like, yeah, I checked the box off. Or when you woke up, or maybe later today, are you looking forward to being able to spend time with God in worship? Has worship for you become a ritual? Something that you just have to do to make sure you can get by? Because, you know, it's something we do. But have you ever asked yourself, why, why, why do we worship God?

I'd like to go to several passages, and these are some of the passages that we'll be studying. And the first one, actually, I want to go to John 17, decided to move this up. But let's go to John 17, starting at verse 14 to set the context of what I want to talk about. We have to understand the backdrop that we're

living in. So John 17:14-19, we all there, okay, this is Jesus. *I've given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from who they are not of the world, even as I am of not sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them, I sanctify myself that they too may be truly sanctified.*

And you see, we live in a world that was created by God, right? But then we also know that the devil is prowling, as a Bible writer wrote, prowling as a roaring lion, trying to distract, to pull us away from God. Yet what did Jesus say that we're called? To be set apart, to be different. We still live in this world, but are we part of the world? Because if you look at the world, what are the values of the world? Are they aligned and concurrent with God's desires and teachings, or the complete opposite? I think it's fair to say that a lot of what the world wants and projects is not of God. And when you're going through your day, through your week, do you ever perhaps maybe find yourself dividing your week up? Maybe the sacred or the spiritual versus the secular? Which one do you focus on more? I think it's. It's common for us to think, well, I'm going to give Sabbath. That is a day with God. That's my spiritual day. But what about the rest of the week? Is God not present in your life? Are these the times where you're just dealing with the secular stuff, just trying to get to Sabbath? Or does God desire more for us? I'm gonna say God wants more for us.

But I think that, you know, looking back, I always thought, man, I can't wait for Sabbath when we can spend time with God. And the reality perhaps is maybe, why do we have to wait? Why can't we do that now? Scripture says pray without what? Ceasing, right? Are our minds focused on this world and attempting to achieve everything that we can on this world? Or are we listening and fulfilling what God has called us to do as disciples? What was one of the last things that Jesus shared with the disciples? To go out to teach, preach, and to baptize and make disciples? And what was that last promise that he left with? I will never leave you nor forsake you. I'm not going to abandon you. Essentially, right?

So one of the things that we have to recognize that in this world, we live in a world that there's this dichotomy of the sacred and the secular, or maybe not even just sacred, but spiritual. We see that there's this tension that we have that we're living within, and both are maybe trying to compete for your attention. Is that possible?

I recently came across an illustration or a parable that kind of helps to understand this tension. And it's called the church phone versus the work phone myth. So have you ever thought of your lives as working with two phones? Okay. You have the phone that is God's phone. You use it on Sabbath, you use it during worship, and then you use it maybe when you're praying or when you're reading scripture. And the other phone is what we call the real life phone, where you're using it for business, for parenting, for finances or work or daily decisions that you have to make.

And the problem is that here we see that we treat God as an app instead of the whole operating system. Does that make sense? Okay, God is just an option that we can swipe left or right on our phones. When I just want to speak with God, I hit the app and boom. Kind of like opening your Bible, right? You can get your Bible. But what if God wants more for our lives? What if God wants to be more present? What if God wants us to be more in tune with God to see, to understand? You see, I think we often assume that worship is sacred. Work is secular communion. We just experienced communion last week. It's a sacred service. We honor God. We recognize what God has done for us. But then we think, well, the budgeting is secular preaching, sacred spiritual, changing diapers. That's secular.

And so we often find ourselves treating God as an app on the phone when God wants a whole package, not just an app, but the whole system. And I don't think God ever actually really designed us to be having separate. I think that God called us to be in the world, to be influential in the world. Amen. When we saw Adam worshiped God while attending what, the garden? Right.

I think how did Daniel honor God? By serving. Where in government did God not use Daniel? His influence in his position in the government. We also know that Paul, what was his job after he decided to leave the Jewish community? Or actually, that's not right. What did he do when he was convicted by God?

He became, what, a tent maker? So all these individuals have jobs or occupations that allowed God to use them to be influential. Right. And I think it's not where we are, but who we are serving. Who's your master? Is God your true master? Or do you let other things pull and buy you away from the one who's loved and gave you everything?

Someone once wrote, we tend to think that God is interested in what happens in the sanctuary while God says he is the Lord of The sanctuary, he's there in the office. Your business office. He's there in the kitchen, he's in the classroom, he's in the marketplace, he's at Ralph's, he's at the post office, he's in the neighborhood. Everywhere we go, God is there.

Another thought too is if God removed the line between the sacred and the secular, what ordinary activity this week could become an act of worship? Have you ever thought about your drive time? Now, don't get me wrong, you have to be mindful, be a good driver, right? But is there perhaps anything you can do? Have you ever thought about praying for the people that are maybe passing you by or you're maybe that are on the side of the road? Have you ever thought, well, maybe this is the time that I can take to be able to pray for my family, my church family, my friends all, or maybe the person that God has already that I am to be a blessing. Are you praying for wisdom and guidance? Maybe it's preparing a meal, answering emails, how you respond to an email could be a witnessing opportunity. Are you being faithful as you study for something? Or how are you treating a customer? Sometimes a random act of kindness can change somebody's life.

So the next passage that I really want to go to now, okay, Romans 12. Let's go to Romans 12. And I'd like to look at the first two verses. And this is going to kind of help us to understand how we can live our lives with authenticity and in relationship with God. Okay, Romans 12. Starting at verse one, we're just going to focus on the first two verses of this chapter here today. Okay, we all there?

All right. It says, *therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as what a living sacrifice, holy meaning, to be set apart and pleasing to God. This is your true and proper worship.*

What we're to set aside our. We're to make ourselves to be set aside, to be different.

Verse 2. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. And then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is. His good and pleasing and perfect will.

And so I think if we were to focus on verse one, it's specifically referencing a burnt offering. If you are kind of new to the faith or you're trying to have questions and you need some answers on this particular topic, Paul's referencing the burnt offerings that took place in the temple, where sometimes it would be a daily thing or it would be something that a special occasion or a holiday. And if you look at, if you were to go to the book of Leviticus, chapter one, it kind of shares what were the sacrifices. It could be a young bull from the herd or a sheep or a goat or a turtledove, a young pigeon. And scripture also says that the bigger animals had to be a male with no defects. It had to be good.

And why would God ask us to do this? Well, before Jesus, it showed that it was commitment to God and a way to honestly confront and recognize that you had done wrong, that you had sinned. It could also have been an act of praise and worship. It was a reminder, though, that sin has what consequences? Your actions sometimes have consequences. And it showed that this animal died in the place of that person. Did forgiveness come at a cost?

And so if we're going to be very honest, somebody would place also their hand, as Leviticus says early on in chapter one, place their hand on the animals confessing their sins and essentially admit that what you had done in the past was wrong and you needed God's forgiveness. Sometimes people gave offerings as a form of gratitude. Maybe God helped them through a difficult time. But years later, what happens on the cross? Jesus becomes what? The ultimate sacrifice. And so they did away with the sacrificial system.

But now Paul is writing, hey, offer yourself up as a sacrifice. That is true worship. Offer your life as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing. This is your true and proper worship. But verse two then talks about, well, you're living in this world. Don't be so influenced that it pulls you away from who, from God, but allow God, allow the Holy Spirit to transform you to change. How y' all feeling

right now? Maybe feeling a little overwhelmed, right? The seriousness, the gravity of this, I looked up what does it. What does the definition of transformation say? And the Cambridge dictionary says, a complete change in the appearance or character of something or someone, especially so that that thing or person is improved. Did God not desire us to be able to grow in God, God's love, God's teachings, God's character? And is that something that just happens? We were talking a little bit about this earlier in Sabbath school and the fact that, number one, we have to allow God to be able to change us. But I think that there also has to be an intentionality of. I don't think we can change without desiring to what? Want to be changed not because we have to, but because we want to. And in that change and that transformation, is that a wonderful, awesome experience, hopefully. But when you change. Is change always easy?

The older I get, the harder it is for me to want to change, because I like what was comfortable. You know, I long for a time where things were so much simpler, when I wasn't being told this or that or so many things, trying to vie for, trying to grab my attention, being pulled so many different ways. Life was simpler even 30 years ago. Amen. Not long. I missed that time, but we're here now. In fact, somebody once told me, you know, life doesn't get easier. You just get more stuff added to the plate, but you learn how to handle and juggle it better. And I found that to be very true. I'm glad that person told me that.

But I think sometimes it also causes. We have to ask God, lord, help me to change and be willing to undergo that transformation, be willing to be a disciple for Jesus, be willing to reflect Jesus. Amen. So sometimes, you know, transformation, it's not. Maybe it requires change, and it's not always easy, and sometimes it can be painful.

And as you reflect back on your life, where you're headed, and reflect on the lessons and the choices that you have made. And one of the things that I try to do now is I try to document because I learn from what I acknowledge. It's easy to lie to ourselves that we want to do this, we want to do that, or, I didn't do this, I didn't do that. True ownership is acknowledging where you went wrong, but then deciding, you know what, I'm going to give this to the Lord because I want to change.

To be transformed means we need to live for God, not for ourselves. How would that affect our relationship with others? How does that affect. Maybe even our job? How is that going to affect our attitudes? Will it affect how we. How we relate to other people? To be transformed means allowing to be transformed by God. And how do we do that? We'll talk more about this in the next couple of weeks.

But obviously, the scriptures, the Bible, through prayer, maybe through music, through conversations, or just maybe God is just gonna. The Holy Spirit is gonna work and convict on your heart.

What are some daily rhythms that you can set apart? Bill's gonna talk about personal worship next week, and then the following week we're gonna talk about corporate worship. The last week we're going to talk about is worship as mission. What does that look like? So I'm planting seeds in your minds now.

The next passage now, okay, I'd like to go to. Is Colossians 3, verses 15 through 17. Let's go to Colossians 3, verses 15 Through 17.

Colossians 3:15-17. All right, let's go. Let the what? The peace. Not the anxiety, not the fear, but the comfort, the confidence, the joy.

Let the peace of Christ do what in your hearts rule. Allow God to lead and direct you. Since as members of one body you were called to peace. We're called to peace in this church, this group, to share peace and to be what? Thankful.

Is it easy to be thankful right now? Sometimes it can be a challenge, right? Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit singing to God with what gratitude in your hearts and whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. When we choose to allow God to come into our hearts as God is knocking on our hearts and Revelation 3, we're allowing God to come and clean shop and to be changed, to be transformed. And sometimes again, like I said, transformation, change can be difficult, but we go with an attitude of thankfulness and gratitude.

I think it's possible in most areas where you can try to find the good in everything. Okay, maybe you didn't get that job promotion. Take time, you

weren't ready. Ask how can I get better? Okay, maybe a diagnosis is painful, but it brought you back or restored and you were able to find reconciliation with somebody. Try to find the good in everything that is happening.

And then if we jump over a couple of verses to verse 23, it says whatever you do, work at it with all of your what heart? It's not a half hearted effort, it's a full hearted effort as working for the Lord, not of human masters. Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward, it is the Lord Christ you are serving. I love this because it's encouraging us to give ourselves everything to God.

When we surrender to God, we don't partially surrender. We don't partially surrender just our arms or our feet, but the whole thing from the toes to the hair on your head.

And so I think I want to pose a question. Are there areas in your life where you feel like you're hesitant to surrender and commit wholeheartedly? Okay, one thing I do want to ask is what are you willing to commit? And there are a couple of areas in your life that I think it's important that we commit to God. Okay.

But also as I... sorry, I meant to show this earlier, but surrender don't just surrender sometimes, but surrender daily. In fact, in Luke 9, Jesus says, to what? Take up your cross? How often? Daily. Okay. It's not just a one and done, but you're living and being transformed by God daily as we do so. Commit to God. Your relationships, your decisions, your time and your resources, all of these things are going to be affected by your relationship with God. Do you regularly ask God to help you make the right decisions? To stay on the path that you're on, that you're called to follow and lead? Are you willing to surrender your time? Do you use it in a manner that honors God? What relationships in your life do you have? Maybe your spouse, your children, your neighbors, boss, workers, parents, friends? How can you be a positive influence in their lives? What resources has God blessed you with? The car, the home that you sleep in, the clothes on your back. Everything comes from where it comes from God.

And another passage I'm just going to read. We brought this up, actually. So funny. Mario brought this up in Sabbath School. It's 1 Corinthians 10:31. So whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the what?

The glory of God. Whatever you do, may you honor God with your time, your resources, your decisions, and your relationships.

I'm going to ask a question now that made me think you squirm a little bit. Is this. Is there anything in your life you are afraid to surrender to God? What's something, perhaps that's on your heart that you're not quite ready to let go? Because maybe it brings you a measure of control, maybe it makes you feel better. But if you truly want to be changed and desire to find peace and joy even in hardship, you have to surrender all to God to be a living sacrifice. So this week, this week, I want you to do a surrender audit. What is that? I want you to write down three areas where you're not presenting yourself as a living sacrifice, where you're holding back from God. Okay, I want you to choose one of these three things, and I want you to make a plan and take action to surrender it to God. Not just this week, but maybe now. Surrender today. Maybe as you go home, maybe at lunch with your spouse or your kids, or maybe you're gonna meet friends this week. Share openly. What are some areas that you think you can grow in? Get feedback from people that you trust. But my heart and prayer my heartfelt prayer for you all is that you allow to God work in your life. Surrender everything to God to be a living sacrifice. This is your true act of worship and this is just the foundation of what we're going to talk about in July.

So I hope and pray at the end of the day. Number one, you will draw closer to Jesus. Number two, not just draw closer but to be impacted and thirdly, to want to go out and make a difference for the Lord. Amen. So may God bless you as we go forth.

Father in heaven, thank you for you are good in all that you do. Help us Lord to lean on you, to give ourselves wholeheartedly, to surrender ourselves to you, to be transformed by you. And Lord, there are gonna be bumps and bruises and challenges along the way. There may even be heartache. But help us to stay close to you, to draw close to you and to help us in all that we do. Thank you for your goodness. We love you Lord. In Jesus name everybody said Amen.

Grace and peace. Everyone.