

My Worship

Worship: Beyond the Ritual series

by Bill Aumack

Worship. If you've been around church at all, you've heard people talk about their personal worship, their time with God, right? And maybe you've even kind of felt like this is something that is really important that you have to do. And if you don't have a personal worship time, you're doing it wrong. You're not being a good Christian. And how many of you have heard something like that? Anybody heard, you know, you gotta have your personal worship. Only two of us have. Oh, a few. Ah, now the hands are going up. Yeah, right.

And so you've got to have this personal worship. And if you try and do this personal worship, a couple things can happen.

- One, not everybody's a morning person, right? If you struggle to put together a coherent thought before 10am, a 6am worship is rough, right?
- Not everybody works a regular work schedule either, right? You might work nights or you might have some kind of rotating schedule. I remember for a while I was working, I was trying to get to work about 4am because I was working with east coast folks. And that's when they were wandering in, was between 7 and 8 their time, that was 4am here. So half hour drive, I gotta leave the house at 3:30. It takes a few minutes to get ready. You got to get up at 3. You want to do personal worship, you got to get up at 2 or 2:30 in the morning. Oofta. Try that a few times. That's a whole bunch of. I'm falling back asleep, right.
- And you know, maybe some of us even wonder about this personal worship thing, you know, what is it? How do I do it? Do I have to do it? Is that just extra credit for the A students? You know, what are we doing here? And if you really want to be cynical, and I'm not saying you should be, but if you really want to be cynical, why does God need my worship all the time? What is he like an egomaniac or something? He needs me to worship him all the time.

So you know, we have these thoughts and all this going on. So let's look at this personal worship thing today.

Number one, does the Bible tell us to do it? Is it a good idea? If it is a good idea, how do we do it? All right, so first question. **Does the Bible instruct us to have personal worship? No.** Because I would love you to turn to the verse that says thou must do personal worship every day before thou doest anything else. Sorry, my King James isn't that great. There's no text in the Bible that says that. There's no text in the Bible and if you know where it is, please point it out. I'd love to see it because I haven't been able to find it. So how did we get to the point of there being this personal worship? And we gotta do it in the morning, right? It has to be in the morning.

So the Bible does talk about spending time with God, but it might not say exactly what you think it says. Okay. And I'm all about following what the Bible says, not about what tradition says. Amen. All right, so we're go through a lot of verses today. We're not have time to look at them all, but I put them all in your notes so you can go home and double check my work. Always double check my work. Don't believe what I'm talking. Sometime I'm going to put something in it's not quite right. Just to see if anybody notices. Yeah, a couple people are like, what? I don't know if I'll do that or not, but that's a good threat. All right, so double check the work.

All right, let's start with Jesus. Jesus is our example, right? We know Jesus went off to pray quite a bit. I think Jesus prayers were quite a bit different than the way we pray. We'll talk about that here in a few minutes. But we know that Jesus did that. In fact, in the gospels, the four gospels, we have nine times it's recorded that Jesus went off to pray.

Okay, so let's look at a couple of those. Open your Bibles with me. Start out Luke 5:16. Now I know that Jesus went off to pray more than nine times because of what it says in this verse. Luke 5:16. Give me an amen when you get there.

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

How many times did Jesus do this? Often? This was regular for him. Okay. This was part of his natural thing. Now does it say he did it first thing in the morning? Doesn't say that.

In fact, Mark 1:35 says *very early in the morning while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place where he prayed*. So he did it sometimes in the morning.

But Luke 6:12 says *one of those days Jesus went out to the mountainside to pray and spent the night praying to God*. Now, if you read the gospels carefully, it talks about Jesus going out before he dealt with the crowds and after he had dealt with the crowds. He just did this a lot of times and it wasn't always necessarily at 6am or whatever time. This was just part of his regular schedule.

We know that in Mark 14:32, he goes to Gethsemane to pray at night before he's arrested and tried. Okay, so we know that Jesus often did this.

Daniel prayed three times a day. We know this.

When Daniel learned that the decree had been published. Remember the decree that you couldn't worship anybody but the king? *He went home to his upstairs room where the window was opened towards Jerusalem. Three times a day, he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to God, just as he had done before*.

How many times a day did Daniel pray? At least three. Now, when did he do that? We don't know. Right. It doesn't say 6am, 12 noon and 6pm it could have been 10am Noon and 3pm we don't know. But we know that he had a regular habit of prayer. Okay, regular habit of prayer.

Okay, let's turn to Matthew 6. What is Matthew 6 part of. Remember, we've talked about this before. Sermon on the Mount. A+. Whoever said that? Was that? Yes. All right, Good job. Sermon on the Mount. Always remember Matthew 5, 6 and 7, Sermon on the Mount. So we're right in the middle of the Sermon on the mount. In Matthew 6, Jesus is talking, and this is what he says. *When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners. Why are they praying? To be seen by others. Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward in full. When you*

pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. When Jesus went to pray, where did it say he went to pray? Lonely places, desolate places. By himself. Okay, so that tells us something. Okay.

And you know, in the Old Testament times, it was very common for them to pray standing up. And they would pray. Excuse me. They would pray with their hands lifted, maybe swaying back and forth, sometimes even walking around would be how they prayed, normally prayed. And they would draw attention to themselves versus it being between them and God.

Now, that tells us a little bit about some of the the hows, not too much about the whens, other than it seems to happen all during the day. But there's something else that the Bible kind of tells us about in the New Testament and the Old Testament, and that's this idea of continual prayer.

So starting with Psalms chapter 1, verses 1 and 2, *Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that the sinners take or sit in the company of mockers. But. But whose delight is in the law of the Lord. And who what, meditates on his law?* How often? *Day and night.* Day and night. Okay, so this was an Old Testament thing as well as a New Testament thing.

Turn with me to 1st Thessalonians 5:16 through 18. 1st Thessalonians 5:16 through 18. Give me an amen when you're there. That one's harder to find, huh? 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 18. It says, *Rejoice always, pray continually.* Some translations say, pray without ceasing. You may have heard that. *Give thanks in all circumstance, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

What's God's will? Rejoice to pray continuously and give thanks. People say, I don't know what God's will is. Did you read it? Because that's what God's will is, Right? That's what God's will is. He wants us to pray continually, to pray without ceasing. One more.

Romans 12. Romans 12 is an amazing chapter. We're going to talk about it here in a little bit, coming up. But Romans 12 is just maybe the most densely

packed chapter of goodness in the whole Bible. I mean, every sentence is a banger.

But we're going to look at the first 1. Romans 12:1. It says, *Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.* What's the end say? *This is your true and proper worship.*

What's your true and proper worship? To offer your whole body. What does that mean? How do I do that? That's a little bit unusual, right?

So we can see that the Bible tells us to have personal worship, to talk to God, to spend time with God, to get to know God. Does it say you have to do it at 6am if you struggled to do it at 6am don't feel bad, you're okay. But find some time to do it. Okay? Find some time to do it. All right.

So now I tried to look for some studies to see how many Christians were doing this. And there's a couple studies out there on this. And the numbers generate or differ wildly. And so I don't know what the answer is, but I know as many as two thirds of Christians do not have personal worship each day. Two thirds. Now, I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand if you're one of those two thirds or not. And researchers don't believe that number. And I'm going to be politically correct to not use the word lie. Christians exaggerate about this because we know we're supposed to have personal worship. And so when we get asked, we say, yeah, I do that. We don't do that. And the researchers know they don't do it because of the answers they give to the other questions. Do you do personal worship? Yes. How often do you read your Bible? Seldom. Wait, those don't match up. Right. So we don't want to be that. Right. We want to be doing this. And the Bible's calling us to do this. And it's more than just a five minute thing.

You guys have seen those devotion books, little devotion books you get where you read one page each day. It's got a little Bible verse at the top and then there's maybe three paragraphs. You read about it. How many of you have seen those? Most of us. Don't raise your hands. Have you ever tried that and it didn't work? I can tell you why it didn't work because it's impersonal. You read a Bible text and it's a great Bible text, and then you read somebody else's experience with that Bible text. Somebody tells you a story that they

have that goes with that text, and you don't wrestle with the text. You don't think about what that text means to you. You don't think about how you have to change your life because of that text. You read about what somebody else did. Now, we can learn from other people, but that's not the best way to learn. Teachers, do we learn math from the kids sitting next to us? No. We call that cheating. Right. So if you've ever done that and it didn't work, that just shows that somehow you knew you weren't doing it right. And I don't want to throw shade on anybody that reads those or anybody that writes those. They're better than nothing. This much better than nothing [small distance between fingers]. Maybe. Okay? But that's not really what the Bible's calling us to do. Because a lot of times what that is is I can check a box. I got up, I spent five minutes, I read my book, check. What do we do the rest of the day? Right? That's not what the Bible's calling us to do. Is that a living sacrifice? Is that praying without ceasing? No, that's five minutes.

Imagine if you spoke to your spouse for five minutes a day. Now, some of you would go like, whew, that's up two minutes. Right? How well Would your relationship last if you spoke five minutes a day and then didn't talk the whole rest of the day? That's no bueno, right? Newlyweds don't do that talk more than five minutes a day. Okay, so we have to do that. So let's see.

So what does that look like? How do I do it? If I decide that this personal worship thing is real and I want to do it, how do I do it? Right? How does it work? And so maybe we can take some examples from our corporate worship here and figure out what we should do. Pastor's going to talk about corporate worship next week. Corporate worship is anytime we all come together. So it's church, it's Sabbath school, it's women's ministry, it's men's ministry, it's small groups, it's Bible study. Anytime where a bunch of us are gathered together, that's corporate worship. Okay, and all those look different, right? The men's ministry meeting on Wednesday isn't the same as the women's ministry meeting on Wednesday, isn't the same as small groups, isn't the same as church. But let's look at church and see if we can learn anything from that.

So what are the things we do at church? We start out, we have a welcome. I don't need to welcome myself to my own personal worship. I think we can skip that. Okay, what's next?

We have a prayer. Be good to start with a little prayer. Maybe before we start our worship.

The next one is going to divide us. The music. Because some of you are going, ain't no way I'm singing, man. You can just cross that off the list right now. You don't have to sing. Maybe you can turn on a YouTube or Spotify and listen to a song. It could be a hymn, it could be a modern song, whatever, you know. But music I think is optional in your personal worship. I think it's great if you want to do it. I'm not sure that it's mandatory, but music.

After that we have our big kneel down prayer. Of course, that's always good to have a prayer, but maybe we could move that a little bit in the service.

Next is the sermon. I'm not going to preach to myself during my devotion, but maybe that's the time I use to study to read my Bible or maybe read something else. I think it's okay sometimes to read other Christian books. Maybe you're reading a book on prayer or something else, you know, I don't know. But typically you'd be reading your Bible there.

After that, we have some more music.

Oh, I forgot the children's story. I think we can skip the children's story. I don't need that in my personal worship.

So what do we end up with? Our personal worship might look like?

We start with a little prayer. Kind of a welcome God, you know, hi, I'm here.

Be with me. Maybe optionally, we do a little bit of music. We have a study time, and we have a time of prayer. That looks pretty good, right? How many of you think that looks good? How many are afraid to answer because you're wondering what I'm going to say next? A couple honest people. It does. I think that looks pretty good. But I think if you sit and stare at it a couple minutes, something is missing. And I haven't given you a couple minutes to stare and think about it, but I think something is missing.

When do we listen to God? Now, listening to God is a little bit weird, a little bit of a developed skill. And if you haven't been listening to God, you've got to work your way into that. It's just like if you were a couch potato and you wanted to run in the LA marathon. You don't do that overnight. Right.

It's going to take you a while to get into shape and be ready to do that. And I think you need to go hang out with Luisa and Hernando. And they run it. Right. You guys ran it last year. Yeah. Congratulations to you. Right? Anytime I try and run, my body says, why is somebody chasing us?

But when do we listen to God? We got to take a moment and we got to try and listen. See what he says. When you go to God and you say, God, I don't know what to do. I've got this decision to make. Should I do this or should I do that? Amen. And you hop up and run away. Even if he was ready to answer, you didn't give him time to. You got to learn to listen. And it's a challenge. It's a challenge. You can't just say, tomorrow I'm going to listen to God and sit down on your couch and go [waiting]... What do we make? 15 seconds, right? And then you're looking at your phone, you're wondering what's going on. If you're old like me, you fall asleep. I don't know what it is. I always wonder why old guys always fell asleep when they sit down. And then you get old and you sit down and you fall asleep. It's a thing I don't know...

I saw this video clip with Terry Crews. You guys know who Terry Crews is? Comedian, actor, muscly guy. He's in high school, I think college. He was a football player. Did he play pro? I don't think he played. Did he played pro? A little bit. He's the host on AGT right now. And anyway, he was on this podcast and he was talking about some Christian convention he had been to or something. And Mother Teresa was there. And Mother Teresa was talking about her Christian faith. And, you know, they were talking about her work, you know, in India with the sick and the dying, and, you know, it was difficult work. And they said, well, how do you keep going through that? She said, well, you know, I just try and pray all day long as I'm going about my work and, you know, try and be in communion with God. And he goes, well, what does that look like? What are you doing? She goes, well, you know, I'm mostly listening for God, listening to see what he's going to say. And the interviewer said, well, what's God doing? He's listening too.

Well, that changes everything. That changes everything. If I'm listening to God and God is listening to me, what's happening? So many times we think of a conversation as one person talks and one person listens, and then this person talks and this person listens and we go back and forth. What happens if we both just listen for a while? You have a good friend that you spent time with, thousands of hours with. You don't have to talk the whole time you're with them, right? You can just hang out. That's fine. And when something happens, you know what they're going to say, right? Because you spent the

time with them. You finish each other's sentences. What if we were in a relationship like that with God?

I don't know how many of you are following our social media, but you all should be. It's amazing. This was on it this week. It's A quote by A.W. Tozer, who was a Christian writer and author and thinker. And he says, every person is as close to God as they want to be. Oh, that hits hard. Everybody is as close to God as they want to be. Sometimes we look at people and say, look at that person. They have such an amazing relationship with God. I wish I had that. And what did you do about it? You went back to your old life and didn't do anything about it. They don't have any superpower that you don't have. They just wanted to be closer to God than you do. And that hits hard. That's.... ooft may. Maybe that hits hard.

So how close do you want to be to God? Nothing stopping you except you.

Our reflection today. How is your personal time with God? Is it non existent? We need to get started. Is it okay? Could be better, could be worse. Is it great? Maybe you're knocking it out of the park, hitting home runs. Doesn't matter where you are on that scale, could it be better? Yes. We're never going to reach perfection this side of heaven. So it could always be better. So what can you do to make it better?

The challenge this week is to improve your personal worship. Baby steps. Don't try to go all in. Right? Start slow, make steady improvements. Okay? Do not try to go from, I haven't been doing personal worship and I'm gonna read my Bible for an hour, pray for an hour and listen to God for half an hour. It'll be two and a half hours. I guarantee you will fail. I guarantee it. Just like I have no business trying to run the marathon tomorrow. Okay? Guaranteed fail.

Okay? You work into it. Start slow. Start slow and let it build. When you look at your relationship with your spouse or your boyfriend or girlfriend or wherever you are, did that just. No. The newlyweds are going. Yes, it did. No, it didn't. It takes a minute. It takes a minute. Okay. Where are you at? Let's work on improving.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much. Thank you so much for what you tell us about having a relationship with you that we should be praying, not just presenting a long list of, I want this, I need this. Please be with this person. But a conversation with you and an opportunity for you to talk back. An opportunity for us to listen and hear what you have to say. Lord, give us the patience to know how to do that. Give us a little bit of determination to work on it and help us to grow and see improvements in our spiritual lives. Be with us now. In Jesus name, Amen.