

Worship (6) The Secret of Worship (1) – The New Birth

Magnets attract iron. That is how they are made. If man was made to worship God, why doesn't he automatically do it? Why doesn't the world worship God?

We saw a few weeks ago the basis for worship. God is glorious – by far the most beautiful, noble, majestic, enjoyable, Being of all. If we were created to worship – why doesn't it happen? So why then isn't man attracted to God? What is the secret of worship?

Some say it is man's ignorance of God's glory, brought about by The Fall. Man does not know how glorious God is. This is partially correct. Man is described as blind to the glory of God.

2 Cor. 4:4-6 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

He is blind to God's glory.

But the Bible tells us the problem is far deeper than that. The problem is that man's fall into sin has not just affected his ability to see God's glory; it has corrupted his desire for God's glory. Man does not want to worship God. The problem is not only one of ignorance, it is one of rejection.

Consider perhaps the most stinging indictment of man as told by Jesus Himself in **John 3:19-21** - *And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹ But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God*

Notice this:-

- [Man sees the light, that is, the testimony of God in sending His Word, His Son and His Spirit. The problem is not that man hasn't seen the light of God's glory in a general sense. The problem is in what he loves. The problem is with his desires. He desires darkness. "*Loved darkness rather than light*". He desires to live his own way away from God.
- [Man actually hates the light, because it will expose him as evil and self-worshipping. So, to avoid this conviction, he knowingly and deliberately avoids the light so as to feel justified in his evil.

This is the true state of the human heart. It knows of the glory of God. But it refuses to worship, because it delights in its evil. Its desires are away from God. Romans 1 makes it very clear that man has had, and continues to have light about God: and rejects it.

v18 - *revealed*

v19 - *may/can be known; manifest (plain); God has showed it to them.*

v20 - *clearly seen; understood/clearly perceived.*

v21 - *they knew God.*

v28 - *they know the righteous judgement of God and that they who do such things are worthy of death.*

So what does the Bible then say the problem was?

V18 - *suppress.*

V21 - *they did not glorify God, nor were thankful.*

V23, 25 - *they exchanged i.e. they had it and they swapped it – glory for images, truth for a lie*

V28 - *they did not want to retain God in their knowledge (acknowledge). (John 3, Romans 1)*

V32 – *not only did them, but delighted in those who did them.*

The problem is in man's desires.

Question: Why doesn't man worship?

Answer: Because he doesn't want to. He does not *desire* it. The problem is not that if he saw more, he would worship God, it is that the little that he does see, he despises. The light that man does see, he rejects.

John 6:36-37 *But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*

This makes him blind to further truth.

Now this is a seemingly impossible problem to fix. It is like if you hate the colour blue, and yet blue is what you need, showing you more blue is not going to help you like it. Man hates the glory of God. He needs to worship the glory of God. Showing him more of the glory of God is not going to help him worship.

Jesus spoke of this problem in **Matthew 6:19-23**. The context is that He is speaking about money, and that leads him to speak of the desires. "*Where your treasure is – there your heart will be also*". Then he uses the eye as a metaphor for the desires (**Matt 6:23**).

The eye is the organ which receives light about the world, and processes it for the whole person. When the eye is bad – cataracts, myopia, severe retinal problems – all of that information is tainted by the eye. The whole person exists in darkness, or a lack of clarity.

Jesus is using the eye as a metaphor for your desires. In the same way, the desires are the filter for all information about the world. If the desires are corrupt, it will filter in all information through those corrupt desires. Everything about the world, including the glory of God goes through those desires – what you enjoy, what you think is good, beautiful, valuable, or enjoyable. When the desires are corrupted, everything which enters is corrupted. It will see something like the glory of God as boring and irrelevant and oppressive, and it will see its sin as good and enjoyable and valuable. We saw that in Romans – a delight in evil, a suppression and rejection and exchange of God's glory.

Isa 5:20 *Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.*

This is why we speak of the total depravity of man. Man's sinful nature has been corrupted by sin in every part of him. His understanding is darkened. His will cannot submit to God. His mind is blinded. His desires are twisted. He is a willing slave to his sinful nature.

Now – how do you get such a man to worship God? His desires are against God and for himself. How do you cause him to want to worship God?

Let me put it this way – ‘*How do you tempt a sinner with God?*’ If I hate boiled eggs, how do you tempt me with more boiled eggs? You cannot tempt me with boiled eggs – I have no appetite for them. How do you tempt a sinner, through his desires, to desire God, when he does not desire God? You would have to somehow change my makeup to like boiled eggs to get me to want them. And so, something needs to change in the sinner to cause that sinner to want God.

What is needed is a new heart – or what the New Testament calls the new birth. The only remedy for this is a new heart which savours the glory of God.
(Ezek 11:19-20; 36:26-27, Jer 32:39).

Moving into the New Testament, Jesus makes it very clear:

John 3:3 *Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

The new birth is the fundamental secret of worship.

God must not just provide light, He must replace your eyes, so that you will enjoy and appreciate that light. God does not just allow the fragrance of His glory to be diffused; He replaces your smell and taste so as to regard that smell as beautiful.

The new birth is a miracle. It is an act of creation. God says again, “*Let there be light*” He says “*I say unto you, arise*”. And in that moment, He changes the heart from the old stony heart that could only love itself, to become a fleshly heart which has an appetite for God.

2 Cor. 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

It is an event. You aren't born with the new birth, as Jesus makes clear to Nicodemus. You don't get it by being baptised as an infant or as an adult. This miracle happens simultaneous to our acts of repentance and faith **(John 3:15-16)**.

On that day, we are transformed from people with no desire for God to people who now, naturally, as it were, from the inward man – desire God. And this is the fundamental secret of worship.

This truth has a number of practical implications for the way we approach evangelism to the unsaved, and how we approach corporate worship for the saved.

1) You must evangelise because you want the unsaved man to truly worship.

We have said before that we were created to worship, we were saved to worship, and we will spend eternity worshipping. Our goal in evangelism then, is to see rebels turn into worshippers.

The unsaved man can worship. But he cannot worship Christ in Spirit and in truth. And this is our desire in evangelism.

We don't just want more moral people. We don't just want people 'on our side'. We don't just want more people to believe we're right.

Our goal is not primarily to increase numbers, or to save people from misery, or to be obedient to the command to evangelise. These are not wrong reasons.

But the main reason is that God have more worshippers. This is our highest goal in evangelism – that God would do the miracle of conversion and create more worshippers for Himself.

The most loving thing you can do is to push a sinner away from worshipping themselves and towards the fullness of joy of worshipping Christ.

Worshippers are always looking for companions. Worshippers are rejoicing and calling on others to echo their joy. So they evangelise (**Psalms 95**). I believe the believers and churches who worship God most will evangelise best.

Evangelism and missions are amplifiers for worship.
We want our glorious God to be worshipped.

This whole transaction is a miracle. God-rejecters are turned into God-lovers. Unbelievers are turned into believers.

But if this is a miracle done by God, what is the point of our evangelism?

We are tools which God uses to work a miracle. We've been looking at Jesus' miracles, and often he uses others as means, to accomplish the final miracle. At Cana, he had the servants fill the water pots – but who did the miracle? The men who brought their friend to Jesus broke open the ceiling and let him down – but who did the miracle? Peter cast his net into the sea, but who did the miracle? People brought blind or deaf or demon possessed people to Jesus, or they brought Him to those afflicted. In the same way, we are those means. We fill the water pots, we bring people to Jesus, or we bring Jesus to people, we cast our net in, but God does the miracle. We preach a clear Gospel of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and God does the miracle of saving those who believe.

Worship is the goal of evangelism.

But many in the modern church have got it backwards. They are saying evangelism is the goal of worship. In other words, let us change our worship so as to evangelise the lost.

2) Never change worship to cater for the unsaved man.

We've just seen from the Bible that the unbeliever's problem is not ignorance, it is rejection. An unbeliever does not worship, an unbeliever will not worship, and because of his corrupt desires, an unbeliever cannot worship.

1 Cor 2:14 *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

Now, it is not wrong for worship to serve as evangelism. It often does. When the unsaved see a people satisfied in their God, exulting in Him, then this can be used by God to draw them. They are attracted to something different. We see something of how worship can serve as evangelism in **I Corinthians 14:24-25**: *But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.*

There you have an unbeliever present in one of the services, who is so convicted by God's Word that he recognises God is amongst the church.

It's not wrong to want our worship to be somewhat understandable to the unsaved. The unsaved are like curious eavesdroppers in our services, and it is not wrong to use certain formats which they can understand.

Evangelism is not the goal of worship. Worship is an end in itself. And worship is primarily an internal affair. It is about those who have experienced the miracle, delighting in their God.

And as such, we must not try and dress God up in a way that will make Him exciting, relevant or desirable to the sinful nature. In other words, we must not change our worship for the misguided purpose of evangelising the unsaved with things they relate to.

In the same way, when a sinner hates the notions of worshipping God, submitting to Him, serving Him, it is wrong to cover that up with entertainment, amusement, and false promises. It is wrong to try and dress the Gospel up in a format which communicates sensuality and worldliness so as to get people to want God. It is wrong to use things which appeal to a sinful nature to try and make God more palatable. It is wrong to use sensual entertainment, it is wrong to use materialism, it is wrong to use non-confrontational preaching, it is wrong to use an atmosphere friendly to a selfish life and basically concealing the true message of the Gospel, and the glory of God, to get people to bite.

You cannot 'tempt' an unbeliever to worship, without compromising the nature of worship.

You see, this whole seeker-friendly philosophy understands that man acts on his desires. They partially understand that man does not desire God. So they think – ‘let’s appeal to some other desires [fun, good music, sense of well-being, uplifting talks, friendship], associate them with Jesus, and then they will desire Jesus’.

To illustrate, if I hate boiled eggs, but I like chocolate, it is not right of you to cover a boiled egg with chocolate, and then tell me it is a chocolate Easter egg, to get me to bite into that boiled egg. That is deceitful of you.

But that is wrong. Man will not desire God because you appeal to some other desires. He will go for fulfilling those other desires and, like a cat which sniffs out the tablets in its food, will eat right around it and leave those untouched. The unsaved man is quite capable of coming to your church, feasting on all the entertainment and religious activity you give him, and leave worshipping Christ completely untouched. Worse, he will probably even think he is saved because he enjoys your entertainment which you give him in the name of Christ.

He needs a new birth to desire God. The seeker-friendly movement misses the fact that man’s desires for God can only be given by God.

Therefore, our mandate is not to hide the call of the Gospel and veil it behind entertainment, amusement and fun. Our mandate is to declare the glory of God to sinners. We are to show forth what a beautiful, loving, holy and powerful God He is. We are to show how relevant this is to their lives. As we faithfully declare the Gospel, God will save sinners. God will convert hearts. *Faith comes by hearing; and hearing of the Word of God (Rom 10:17).*

When we as the church act on this ‘seeker-friendly philosophy’, we lose our heritage of worship.

That is exactly what has been happening for a long time now. In an attempt to make our songs and music attractive to the unsaved, we have turned our backs on a huge heritage of glorious music. What we are left with is something the unsaved man doesn’t want – because it has too much Jesus in it, and something which the devoted believer doesn’t want because it has too much worldliness in it.

It is like a mother who is so focused on entertaining guests, on what outsiders think of the home, the children go unfed and ill-clothed.

The church has been so focused on winning the lost that it has neglected its own. We’ve lost tremendous riches because our focus has made worship almost exclusively external – toward the lost, instead of internal toward the redeemed. Worship is in fact mainly internal – it is a regenerated people who can enjoy God doing just that. In that act of enjoying God, of magnifying His glory – they provide an external witness to the world.

Worship has three priorities in this order:

1. Glorify God.
2. Edify the saved.
3. Testify to the unsaved.

When you place the last one first, you will end up compromising the nature of worship, and displease God, harm believers and confuse the Gospel to unbelievers.

Worship is for believing hearts - all of it. Worship may be used as evangelism – but never tailor your worship to reach an unbelieving heart.

3) Use true worship as a test for genuine conversion.

How do you know if someone has been saved? In one sense, only God knows. Coming to church, saying they believe, changing some behaviour, quoting an experience – all of this can be done by an unregenerate heart.

The best test is if the desires have changed. Is there a love for God? Is there a delight in Him, a desire for Him? Is there a new-found appetite for God, a relish for Christ? Does God suddenly seem sweet, and wonderful, and desirable? Is there an internal motive to please God, to know Him, to be in church, to serve God, to make Him known to others.

If so – then a new heart is in place. Regeneration has happened. You now love the light; you love the glory of God.

On the other hand, when there is no relish for God Himself, no interest in His things, boredom around His Word speaks of an unregenerate heart (**John 8:42, (43-44), 47; Romans 8:28; 1 Corinthians 16; Matt 10:37**).

When a new heart is present, new desires are present. The whole motive of the life is to enjoy and please God – to glorify Him. This is true conversion.

The modern church says – ‘Our worship has been successful if the unbelievers like it, so it’s evangelistically powerful. We’re being relevant; we’re meeting people where they are.’

The Bible says – ‘Your evangelism has been successful when unbelievers come to truly worship in spirit and in truth, because their desires have been changed by God. The new birth is in place.’

In conclusion, you can train people to ‘act’ like they are worshipping Christ. Unbelievers could come in to a church meeting and learn how to sing the hymns, say the right things afterwards, and generally behave like one of us. But that would be a tragedy – to have a person who does not desire Christ, coming to a service and acting like they do. But spontaneous, true worship is a result of the miracle of the new birth. That’s why we need to preach the Gospel. That’s why we must hold the Biblical teaching, *‘Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’*.