

Worship (8) The Secret of Worship 3 - Illumination of His glory.

1Cor. 2:9-14 *But as it is written:*

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.¹³ These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Illumination is one of the key secrets of worshipping God. Without illumination, worship becomes an exercise in human futility.

Imagine organising a birthday celebration for someone you have not seen, heard or met. You don’t know how old he or she is, what they like or don’t like, what music, colours, atmosphere they want.

Now you have four choices:

- 1) Do what has always been done as far as birthday celebrations go. *That’s tradition.*
- 2) Just do what works for most people – find something as broadly popular as possible. Liven it up as much as possible. *That’s entertainment.*
- 3) Make it as grand and impressive as you can. *That’s elitism.*
- 4) Just be enthusiastic, no matter what you throw together. Your enthusiasm for them will surely overshadow anything you do that doesn’t fit their personality. *That’s emotionalism.*

That is very much what is happening where Christians are not experiencing *illumination*. They are supposed to celebrate Someone Whom they have not seen. One section of the church will say, “We know this is unreal to us now, but it has worked in the past, and so it’s best to just keep doing it.” They just keep chanting the chants, repeating the liturgies.

Another section of the church says, “We’re bored. God isn’t real to us. So let’s liven it up.” So they try to do this, not by seeking Him, but by doing the things which you do when you try to liven up any event in the secular realm. Church becomes entertainment.

Another section of the church says, “Let’s be aesthetically perfect; that will restore the beauty. We hear that God is grand, so let’s be as grand as we can be.” They might achieve a measure of success, but it is still cold; beautiful, but not loving.

Another section of the church says, “Let’s be zealous, let’s just seek as much zeal and emotion as we can possibly get out of this experience.” Their zeal without illuminated

knowledge becomes either unwise passion or, after a while, plain and simple insincerity and hypocrisy.

And what would solve this? *Illumination* would.

When 100 pianos are tuned to the same tuning fork, they are tuned to each other. When we have been illuminated, we come together and understand what we are saying about God; we even understand how we ought to say it.

No true worship can take place without it – so we will not fulfil our design instructions, not be fulfilled and useful as believers. Worse – we won't look forward to heaven.

What is illumination?

The Experience of Illumination

The Bible is so clear that illumination must take place that we could not take the time to examine all the Scriptures that teach this. The most important one we saw in Lesson 7 is **I Corinthians 2:9-14**. In this scripture it is clear that eye and ear have not perceived God's truth, but His Spirit communicates it to our spirits. That's illumination.

In one sense, Jesus is the illumination of the Father's glory, and the Spirit illuminates Christ's glory.

John 16:14-15 *He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you*

What exactly is it?

It is when the Spirit of God, takes the truth about the glory of Jesus Christ, and makes it as real as it is true to your spirit.

Did you ever meet someone in person of whom you had only read, or seen in pictures or on television. Then you see them in person. You return to others and you say something like "They're shorter than I thought; they're really very down-to-earth." 'Really' means real; in reality. The truth I knew about that person was real.

When the Spirit illuminates you, He takes what you know to be true, and shows it to you, so that it becomes present tense, personal and fresh.

God speaks through that which He has spoken. And when He does that, it is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ Himself.

The Spirit of Jesus opens your eyes to the fact that Christ is here. You knew He was here in theory, but now you realise – He is here.

The Spirit opens your eyes to the fact that Christ is active. You knew He was active, but now you see He is working in you, around you, for you, through you. You see His will, His purposes, and His ways in a fresh way.

The Spirit of God opens your eyes to the fact that Christ is glorious. You knew that He was glorious, but now you see the sparkle, the excellence, the majesty, the beauty, for yourself. You see His attributes, His nature, and His character. You see Him with eyes of faith.

It happens in our spirits.

Ephesians 1:17-19 *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power*

Illumination is something that happens in the spirit – affecting our mind, will and emotions. Our spirit is like the antenna that can receive the broadcast of the Holy Spirit. Abstract truths are made actual; you see the validity of truth and gain assurance and humility; you see the beauty of truth and gain joy and peace, you see the responsibility of truth and gain urgency.

It is part of the truth from **John 4:24** that worship happens in the spirit. *God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*

It happens in The Truth

The truth about Jesus Christ is what the Spirit illuminates. The Spirit does not illuminate you simply because you clear your mind, or sit quietly in a cross-legged position. He illuminates truth about God.

Now this might happen in four ways I can think of:

- [It might happen directly as you meditate on the Word. As you read dependently, seeking God, He can open your eyes to the beauty and validity and urgency of the truth.
- [It can happen as you hear the Word preached. The Holy Spirit can inflame your heart and give you a fresh glimpse of Christ and His glory during a sermon.
- [It can happen as you go about your day and seek to obey Christ. In other words, as you take the truth and seek to put it into practice, God may make the truth of that truth known to you. You may believe that ‘*God will meet my needs*’ is true, as per **Phil 4:19** and **Matt 6:33**. But then as you go about trusting Him right to the very last withdrawal from the bank, when you know it is empty, and you see someone has made a deposit into your account. The truth of God’s provision just became illuminated to you.
- [It can also happen as we look around and see God’s *works*. What are God’s two greatest works? *Creation and redemption*. Now when an unsaved man looks at creation, he will not experience illumination. He experiences a certain amount of revelation – God has said some things through that creation. But

only when you are saved, do you have Scriptures like **Genesis 1** and **Psalm 19**; **Isaiah 40** and **Job 38 to 41**, telling us about God's glory in creation. As such, we can receive illumination of the Word, as we look at His work of creation. Likewise, as you see God's work of redemption in your own life, and see it happening in the lives of others – God is illuminating you to His work. As you witness to another person, and perhaps God draws them through the Gospel you share, and you see them coming to faith in Christ – what do you experience? You experience the joy of beholding God's work of redemption. You knew the truth – God is calling people to Himself. But now the truth is as real as it is true.

When we are informed by the truth, we see the truth around us and the Spirit can illuminate us there.

That is what illumination is and where it happens.

Illumination is necessary. God seeks that we be illuminated. God is not hiding Himself. His Son is *the Word*. He wants to communicate Himself to us. Having saved us, His desire is not that we remain strangers to Him, but that we experience him – **Ephesians 1:17-19**.

Why doesn't it happen to all?

The answer is partly found in **Matthew 13:15** - *For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.*

When hearts are hard (thick, fattened) and hearing is dull (hard of hearing) and the eyes are closed (closed eyes), I believe this corresponds to two areas of life – *how we seek God* and *how we hear and obey God*. Hearing and obeying are always lumped together in Scripture. The one who hears with a view to obeying will see God. The one who does not, will not. So, if in these two areas, we are like this, then we will not be illuminated.

How we seek Him. As a rule in life, the measure and the way that we seek God is the way we will find Him.

If we seek Him with indifference and laziness– not really caring if we find Him, we are sure to miss out on illumination.

Think of courting someone – you plan to meet them for coffee, but you don't really care if you find the place or if you get there on time. Is it likely you will find them? Even if you do, is it likely they will want to be in your company?

If we have not made up our minds that we must find Him, then our hearts are still divided. We still have too many toys to fill up the gap in our lives – our TVs, our Internet, our husband/wife/children, our job, our homes etc.

Someone who is indifferent and lazy is only so because they don't believe this thing is urgent or indispensable.

How should you seek Him?

- [*Pray for a Circumcised Heart*
- [*Seek Understanding, not merely knowledge*
- [*Read with a view to adoring, agreeing (confession & consecration) and asking (specific petitions)*
- [*Believe His promises of love, justification and rewards for the seeking, patient heart.*
- [*Remember that Christ is the Word and the Light. Seeking Him is the heart of the Word, and to seek Him is to seek what the Spirit will illuminate.*
- [*Seek, plead, wait, yield, and apply.*
- [*With diligent Devotion*

Devotion: Devotion speaks of love – of personal loyalty. To be devoted to someone is to give yourself wholly to them, to be *for* them. In your seeking, in your hearing, in your obeying, be doing it out of devotion to a Person. Let it be for love of Christ. It is to be personal. Not just that you take the Scriptures ‘personally’ – but that you seek a Person in the Scriptures.

Love reveals itself to love.

Pro 8:17 *I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me*

Jam 4:8 *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.*

Be devoted. Seek Him – not just His things. Long to speak with Him, to commune with Him.

The church at Ephesus made the mistake of seeking to do His work, to know His doctrine, to bear up His name, to expose people who denied Him – but they had left their first love. It was no longer about devotion. Love reveals itself to loving hearts.

Yet this devotion is not slack, half-hearted or apathetic. It is a diligent, wholehearted loving pursuit.

God reveals Himself to those who seek Him diligently. **Heb 11:6, Jer 29:13, Proverbs 2:1-6.**

Love reveals itself to love. And love is always zealous for its love. Love gives exceptional amounts of attention to its beloved, it gives exceptional amount of time to its beloved; it is extravagant in its gifts, committed in its service. It is lavish in its praise. Love is not half-hearted when it is healthy.

How we hear and obey Him.

God has spoken. That is one of the most important facts in the universe. God has spoken. If God had said nothing – it wouldn’t matter about your hearing. But since He has said something – how you hear is crucial.

Luke 8:18 *Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.*

In other words – how you hear determines if you get more of the same, or lose even what you do have.

Think of the difference between a recorded message and a live operator. You can be inattentive, and press the button to repeat the message. A recorded message will not get tired of you; it will just keep repeating things, because it is not a person. The live operator will come to a point where he/she will not repeat what they have said if you do not listen to them. They are speaking to you and expect you to listen, or they will not speak again.

God's Word is not a dead recording. It is a conversation with a Person. And if you don't listen, the words will be just words. God does not illuminate you if you aren't listening. Eventually, as **Luke 8** tells us, He takes away even what we do have – the words we do have begin to lose their meaning and lustre.

If you don't read His Word – you are not listening. If you read it and do not listen to what it says by way of meditating on it – you are not listening. If you do not listen to the Word preached or taught with a view to understanding or retaining it – you are not listening.

But working hand in hand with hearing His Word is obeying His Word. The two can never be divorced from one another.

How we obey Him.

There is a second time that Jesus says those words, this time in **Luke 19:26** - *For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.*

This time it is not the parable of the soils, it is the parable of the stewards. The parable of the soils is about hearing the Word of God. The parable of the stewards is about what you do with the Word of God – your obedience. It is about stewardship – God entrusts you with the truth – what do you do with it? And the idea is – if you obey, more is given, if you disobey, less is given; and you even begin to lose what you have.

An illustration from family life would be - Jimmy sits on Dad's lap and asks 'What do you want me to do today, Dad?' Dad gives him instructions. He does none of those things, and even the opposite in some cases. The next day, He sits on Dad's lap and says, 'What do you want me to do today, Dad?' Perhaps Dad will repeat yesterday's instructions. He will probably not give him any new ones until he gets those right. And he will be even less inclined to begin to tell Jimmy about himself, about life, about things close to his heart – because Jimmy isn't serious about pleasing his father. God wants to *illuminate* us. But He does not do that to entertain us. He does it to change us. And if we live in an independent spirit – not submitting to God - we will find God says 'You need to get right what I have taught you thus far.'

How should we hear and obey Him?

With Dependent Discipline

Dependence means you are not self-sufficient and you need help. In your seeking, in your hearing, in your obeying, do it dependently. Recognise God must help you seek Him, and help you hear Him, and help you obey Him. You cannot do it independently.

Have you ever tried to teach someone who kept interrupting you or correcting you? Try coaching someone swimming if they thrash in the water and ignore your teaching. Try teaching a foreign language to someone who keeps correcting you or racing ahead and making all kinds of mistakes.

God cannot reveal Himself to us unless we cooperate with Him - not only in our hearing, but in all of life.

Walk in the Spirit; lean on Him for all things. Be humble, teachable, be completely dependent on Him.

Yet this dependence is to enable something. It enables following Christ – being a disciple. Did you ever think that, in the Christian life, discipline and submission mean essentially the same thing?

What word is the word ‘discipline’ quite similar to? *Disciple*. They are from the same root. A disciple is one who learns and follows. Every Christian is a disciple.

You and I are to be “disciple-lined.” Ours is not self-control, but Spirit-control. We are to submit ourselves to the training of God. We must come under His order for our lives.

Jim Berg says discipline is sustained subordinated effort. You are not trying to control yourself – you are coming under God’s control. It is subordinated effort

In your seeking, in your hearing, in your obeying – you must be disciplined. You must do what you do, not to follow your own will, but His will. That’s discipline – seek to please Him and avoid the things that displease Him.

John 14:23 *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

That’s an alliterated thought that might make it easier to remember – how to do your seeking, hearing and doing – diligent devotion, dependent discipline.

You might say, ‘Well – all this for illumination?’ That sounds like the whole Christian life! Answer – because illumination is in many respects – the state of your whole Christian life. Illumination is what is going on between you and the Saviour. It is the health of your relationship. It is the conversation you are having with God. And if very little is going on illumination wise, then very little is going on at all.

And if very little is going on, then very little worship is going on – which is what you and I were created and saved to do. Let us seek to see Him for ourselves, that we might come and unite our voices and hearts in corporate joy in God. Re-dedicate yourself to devotion to Him, to dependence on Him, to discipline under Him and to diligence for Him.