

## **Made to Worship**

### *Part One: What is Worship?*

June 7, 2015

#### **Introduction**

- Today we begin a four-week journey in to the study of worship. We'll ask:
  - What is worship?
  - Who do we worship and why?
  - How do we worship?
  - Here from some people.
- Story: Luke hero-worshipped David Beckham.

#### **What is worship? (A definition)**

- Worship is the attention, affection and devotion we give something we deem worthy of these things.
  - "The word 'worship' means, literally, worth-ship: to accord worth, true value, to something, to recognize and respect it for the true worth it has" (Tom Wright)
  - When we say "worship" we mean more than just singing.
  - So, if worship is about worth – what *can* we worship?

#### **What can we worship? (under this definition)**

- What can we worship?
  - Another person (romantically, maternally/paternally, platonically, celebrity).
  - Ourselves (comfort, pleasure, leisure, satisfaction, our own image).
  - Pursuits or endeavors (vocational, academic, social, financial...really a sub-pursuit of self-worship).
  - Higher powers or thinking (philosophies, ideologies, religions).
- We can worship many things but here's the rub - *when we worship something, regardless of whether or not it has any, we give it power.*

- We worship something when we give it the power to order and govern our lives – *and* inevitably we look to what we worship to give us meaning, purpose and fulfillment.
- Ultimately, worship is simply the life-style or action that flows from the value we place on what is worthy.
  - Jenny worships her career.
  - Phil worships Jenny, romantically.
  - Gary worships videogames.

### **Who are we?**

- I describe these fictitious individuals not merely to highlight *what* we can worship, but how *what we worship* shapes and molds us. When we ask *what can we worship?* We're immediately led to another question, *who are we?*
- *Who am I?* is an important question when it comes to worship because what orders, governs and brings fulfillment to your life is what you worship.
- And so what we worship ends up defining us. Over time our identity becomes rooted in what we worship.
- And so, when it comes to worship, the root question is really: *Who are you?*
  - I'm Jenny, and I'm a successful, driven, diligent businessperson.
  - I'm Phil, and I'm a devoted, besotted, love-lost boyfriend.
  - I'm Gary, and I'm a gamer.
  - My name is Luke and I'm a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - What comes first to mind when you fill in that space?
- Worship is truly about how we define ourselves – or what we choose to be defined by. It betrays our sense of belonging, meaning and purpose.
- So, if what we worship is really what we deem worthy of defining us – the question *then* becomes what or who is worthy enough to do that?
  - Our job? Our relationships? Our political or social views? Our sexual orientation? Our hobbies? Our marital status? Our passions and interests?
- And so the question morphs yet again from *what can we worship, to who are we,*

*to who or what is worthy of our worship?*

### **What or who is worthy?**

- What is worthy of your attention, affection, devotion, life?
- Is God worth it?
- In his letter to a church in Philippi, Paul talks about his previous identity and life before meeting Jesus. In essence, he lists what he thought was worthy of his affection, devotion and life – his worship:
  - He mentions his ethnic identity. He put great stock in his nationality and was defined by it.
  - He mentions his social status within his nationality.
  - He describes his early loyalty from childhood to strict religious practices.
  - He lists his job and it's prominence in his life, directing and governing his every move.
  - He even describes his passion and drive within his job and his ability to do it better and cleaner than anyone else.
  - Then he says something absolutely absurd. Something no self-respecting, first century Jew would say – especially one like Paul.
  - Philippians 3.7-9
    - *7 I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. 8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ 9 and become one with him.*
  - What made Paul consider everything worthless, his national and religious pride, his social status, his zealous career focus, his entire worldview and identity, in comparison to Jesus?
  - Paul met the living God in the person of Jesus. He had an experience

of, a knowledge of, a revelation and understanding of the Creator God through Jesus. An unshakable, undeniable experience.

- It isn't that some of the things we devote ourselves to are bad or negative, or undeserving of affection and attention – in fact we can worship God *though many of these things* - but to Paul *everything* pails in comparison to be known by, knowing and being defined by the *one who made him*.
  
- If we're asking the question "is God worth it? Worth my affection, devotion, attention, my life?" and hesitate in our answer, is it time to experience God in a new way? We can't worship what we don't know and haven't been absolutely taken with.
  - "If your idea of God, if your idea of the salvation offered in Christ, is vague or remote, your idea of worship will be fuzzy and ill-informed. The closer you get to the truth, the clearer becomes the beauty, and the more you will find worship welling up within you. That's why theology (study of God) and worship belong together. The one isn't just a head-trip; the other isn't just an emption." (Tom Wright)
- What we're hoping to uncover in this season is the truth that we are *made to worship*. Not only that God is worth our attention, affection and devotion, but that we're most fulfilled and human when we worship him!
- That we become aware of our true selves or purpose, and discover true beauty and truth through a definitive experience and understanding of God.
- Which I believe, we are all looking for.
  - One more worship definition.
  - "What is worship? I think that part of worship is learning how oddly natural it is to walk with a supernatural God."
  - When we begin to appraise what we worship, we will eventually happen upon not a thing or idea, not a finite relationship, but a God who made us.

- What if a life of worship to God is the best life possible? What if it's what we've been looking for all along?
- Matt 13.44 *"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field. 45 "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. 46 When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!*
- Let our prayer be like Paul's words later in Philippians: *"I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead"...*
- Next week, we'll do just that as Doug shares about *who* we're worshipping.

**Discussion Questions:**

- What do I worship?
- Ask God: *Who are you?*