## Lesson 10: Becoming True Worshipers

Real prayer partnership with God grows in our experience until it is completely identified with our life. We can't pray any better than we live or live any better than we pray. In prayer we bow down and offer Him our bodies in sacrificial worship (Ps. 95:6-7; Rom. 12:1-2).

God is not seeking people who will worship Him once a week while the pastor prays, preaches an inspiring sermon and the choir sings. God is seeking single minded worshipers who keep their heart exclusively for Him at all times. Prayers of worship open our hearts to let Christ reign there. A godly worshipping pastor will share Paul's commitment:

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy. For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

**(2 Cor. 11:2)**

Pure worship reaches God's ear and brings heaven into our homes and churches.

In his book, From Grace to Glory, Murdoch Campbell tells of a godly Highland minister who was married to a stubborn self-willed wife:

He sat one day in his room reading his Bible. The door opened and his wife entered. Her hand snatched the Book from him and threw it into the fire. He looked into her face and quietly remarked, "I never sat at a warmer fire." It was an answer that turned away her wrath and marked the beginning of a new and gracious life. His Jezebel became a Lydia. The thorn became a lily."[1](https://www.praywithchrist.org/leaders-becoming-true-worshippers#endnote)

This man had obviously dealt with the problem of sin at its very root. I'm not suggesting that he was sinless, but that his inner man was insulated from the sudden storms and pressures of this sin cursed world. He reminds me of a certain spider who lives inside an air bubble under water. He is in the water yet sealed off from it. We all need something like this...a spiritual "bomb shelter" for our inner man.

Most of us fail to find such a sanctuary because we only deal with surface sins and never come to grips with the root of all sin.

## The Root of All Sin

Is there a single issue of truth and righteousness which touches the fundamental root of all right and wrong? I believe there is. This basic issue is summed up in the first commandment "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3). Or, to state it positively, "Thou shalt worship the LORD thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Mt. 4:10).

We need to think deeply about the full meaning of this commandment. It is not only first and foremost but it is also the sum and substance of man's duty. If you are right here you will be right all the way through. If there is only one God then all of man's duty is to Him alone. God is to have an exclusive personal relationship with you which overshadows everything else in your life.

To visualize this basic truth, picture yourself standing on earth and God in heaven. Now draw a line straight up from you to God. This is the trunk, the relationship which governs all other relationships in life. Now draw a crossbar. This is the branch that goes from you to others. If you are treating God right, you will be right in your dealings with all men. The God-man relationship is the great thermostat, regulator or trunk line that controls man-to-man relationships.

## The Key to Order

Today we desperately need to recover the truth, not only to find the secret of inner peace that the godly Highlander had discovered, but also to save our families and ultimately our nation from ripping apart at the seams. Because we do not really see the full meaning of man's trunk line relationship to God, we have lost all sense of order in the home.

Militant women's libbers charge that the family is just a trap led by tyrannical husbands who have deceived unsuspecting females into letting the male be the head. Even good Christians are sometimes fuzzy on the divine order of leadership and authority in the home, the church and society in general.

With the loss of order in the home, love has lost all meaning. Take, for example, the liberal seminary students who viewed films of gay life and exclaimed, "those homosexuals really love each other!" And how about the mother of six children who wrote "Dear Abby" that she had nothing against her husband but since she had gotten involved with another man, she was ready to leave her family for him because she explained, "this is my last chance for real love."

I'm convinced that the first commandment holds the secret of inner peace no storm can disturb and gives order to all our personal relationships as well as definition, meaning and reality to love. For that reason I invite you to take a closer look at this basic commandment and consider its full meaning.

## Three Exclusive Claims

The exclusive personal relationship called for in the first commandment can be explained by looking at three exclusive claims God makes upon us. Two of these are addressed to our inner man. First, we are to love God with all our heart, soul and mind. (Mt. 22:37-38). Second, we are to fix all our hopes and expectations in life on Him alone (Ps. 62:5-8). The third test governs our outward conduct. Every word we speak and every action we take must be said or done as a service to God alone. (Col. 3:22-4:1).

## Love God with All Your Heart

One time in family devotions, my children thought they had me stumped on that first test. "If you love God with ALL your heart, how do you have any love left for mother?" was the way they put it. That's a good question, but my love for my wife, or anyone else for that matter, can only be a branch of my love for God. That's why love for your neighbor is the second and subordinate commandment (Mt. 22:39). That brings us face to face with what love really is.

The only way you can love a great unlimited person like God is to obey Him. John wrote, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (I John 5:3). He also said, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments" (I John 5:2).

If love is obeying God, then love has a definite order. For example, when Jonathan surrendered all his claims to his father's throne to David, that was love. It would not have been love for David to insist that Jonathan keep his throne rights because God had ordered that David (not Jonathan) take the throne after Saul. In the same manner, it is love for the wife to let her husband be her head, but it is sin to reverse the order. If a couple really love their children, they will put the husband-wife relationship first and the parent-child relationship second (Gen. 2:24).

Love also has a clearly defined meaning and character. Homosexual acts are sin, not love. A woman forsaking her family is leaving love behind. She will not find true love in adultery.

Love for your marriage partner is a peculiar love which cannot be shared with any other human being. Failure to give your child proper discipline is a sign of hatred. The way to love lazy Christians who refuse to work is to politely tell them you will no longer feed them (II Thess. 3:5-12). How do you love a stubborn rebellious brother who is living with his father's wife and refuses to forsake sin? Paul committed him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit might be saved in the end (I Cor. 5).

Love is not the flimsy, flabby, sentimental, spineless, characterless, easy going thing folks sometimes think it is. Love is willingly obeying God and treating your fellow man as God commands you.

Notice very carefully that we owe ALL our love to God. This is really the key. The godly Highlander must have understood this. He treated his wicked wife with perfect love, not because she deserved it, but because God deserved it. His treatment of her was an act of love to God. He gave all his love to God and she benefited from the overflow.

## Trust God Only

How about trust? How is it possible to trust God only? Aren't we supposed to trust anyone else? Actually, we should only trust others as a subordinate part of our trust in God. All our trust should be in God. "My soul, wait silently for God alone" (Ps. 62:5a) expresses a searching test of our exclusive tie with God.

Failure to do this may leave you bitter. A minister who had passed through a deeply disturbing trial that left him badly shaken told me, "People let me down." Indeed, they do. But why does that disturb your soul's composure? Isn't it because you were not trusting in God alone?

All of our expectations and hopes in life must be fixed on God alone. Our trust in people should be subordinate to our hope in God. Let me use an illustration that will explain what I mean. When I went to a banker to borrow money to build a church, he did not want to loan money to our congregation because we had no credit record. He asked me to get a group of wealthy business men to co-sign the note. He made it perfectly plain that he was depending on those wealthy men to pay back the loan. He would loan us the money, but his trust was really in them (We didn't borrow the money, but I'm sure you see the point.)

Human relations are built on trust as well as love. We trust each other when we share life in a church or in certain business associations. When a man and woman give themselves to each other in marriage they completely place their whole life and happiness in one another's hands.

But your marriage partner is only human. Suppose he (or she) lets you down? And what if your Ahab or Jezebel remains a thorn in the flesh all your life? John Wesley's wife did. Either you can become bitter or you can trust God to co-sign the note. If you trust God to co-sign the note, then He will see that the relationship works together for your good even though people let you down. (Incidentally, before you enter a marriage or business partnership, it would be well to ask God if He will co-sign the note, but if you were already married to a "hard to live with" partner before you learned this truth, then trust God to meet the need where you are.)

Underneath our trust in people must be our total trust in God who promised us to use even their evil for our good and whose eternal reward makes all our love and trust worthwhile (Rom. 8:28; Gen. 50:20 and I Cor. 15:58). Wait only on God; let all your expectations be from Him and you will never be disappointed.

## Serve God Only

Such love and trust insulate our heart in the midst of the stormy waters of life (remember the spider in the air bubble?). Armed with this insulation for our inner man, we are ready to serve God only (Matt. 4:10), so that whatever we say or do to men is first offered as a sacrificial service to God. We can become like the godly Highlander who counted on God to do him good through his wife's rudeness and in turn treated her with all the love and kindness that God Himself so richly deserves. That kind of life is living in heaven while still walking around on earth. It is simply out of this world though we are still in the world. It is true separation to God from an evil world.

All of us want that, but when the good news reached us we were already bound into all kinds of relationships that hinder such a life. Maybe you are saying, "I'm all for it, but I'm married to a very demanding husband, and you don't know Harry! I'm not free to serve God only." Or perhaps a tough profane boss stands over you at your office. Sometimes Christian young people have a cruel tyrant for a father and a hysterical neurotic for a mother. So you cry, "How are we going to get these people off our back so we will be free to serve God only?"

The answer is found in Paul's words to the first century Christian slaves toiling under the cruel whip of cursing heathen masters (Col. 3:22-25). You start by taking your eye off of the one on earth who is over you and look straight up to the Lord who rules over all. Now remember this Lord once endured an unfair trial, suffered shame and spitting and finally died a criminal's death for you. Today He is asking you to fulfill your duties to those over you and around you as a service of love to Him. "Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically; consider it as a service rendered to the Lord and not to men" (paraphrase of vs. 23 by Bruce). You are to keep in mind that the Lord will see that you are properly rewarded in the end and that your only real boss is the Lord Christ (vs. 24). You serve under men on orders from Christ and render to them the high quality of service which Christ deserves. Endure insult, ingratitude and unfairness for Him who endured so much for you. You will get your reward and they will get what they deserve (vs. 24-25). (Of course, there are times when you need to leave a job when the boss is a tyrant.)

Sometimes the shoe is on the other foot and you have to be a gracious, fair boss to a contrary employee, or a nice husband to a nasty wife, or an even tempered parent to an ugly child. But this also is to be rendered as a divine service.

For the dedicated believer all of life is elevated to the level of divine service. At the kitchen sink, wash the dishes as a service to God ONLY. Let this rule govern all you say or do (Col. 3:17, 23). And all your relations with men will be enriched with the abundance of God's grace in your heart.

## How to Enter In

But let's face it, to enter into such a life calls for definite steps which you must take now.

First, you must make the decision to wholly dedicate yourself to the Lord (Rom. 12:1-2). This is a once in a lifetime decision like the man who volunteered to be a slave forever (Ex. 21:1-6). Such a man might become a runaway slave or a half-hearted one, but he can never take that decision back. He will always be held accountable for it. I have hanging on the wall of my study a plaque painted by a friend which says, "Rev. Oliver W. Price, bondslave of Jesus Christ." This is a total commitment to which my ear has been nailed forever. The claims that spring from this are constantly brought to my mind by the Spirit. God faithfully holds me to it. But really this is the basis for encouragement when we are threatened with failure. There is no turning back so I must learn to overcome failure.

This is the second step, learning to deal with failure. Even though we wholly trust the Lord for grace to fulfill this dedication, our conscience (growing ever more tender) constantly pricks us because of slippage from such a high standard. Do not be disheartened. Confess your faults. Trust God to restore you and thank Him for faithfully alerting you to your sins.

Third, I have found it helps me to draw a little square like the one shown below, to memorize and meditate on the verses that go with it and imagine that this is the place where my life is hidden with Christ in God. Constantly review these verses plus others in a similar vein.

Fourth, you need to get into a prayer group (or start one) where everyone agrees to meet with Christ present and actively in charge as you unite in seeking to perfect your faith, love and obedience to Him. You must be accountable to one another. Each time you meet honestly share your progress and your failures. Give each other the freedom to tell you things they believe you need to do to advance toward your goal.

Fifth, memorize verses like I Thessalonians 5:22-24; Hebrews 13:20-21; and Jude 24-25. Let these verses soak into your mind until you develop strong confidence that God has purposed to perfect this dedication in you and He has sealed this purpose with the blood of the everlasting covenant. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

You may want to draw a little square like the one below, memorize and meditate on the verses that go with it. Use this to remind you that your life and the lives of your prayer partners are hidden with Christ in God.

## Points for Discussion

* According to this chapter, what does it mean to truly worship God?
* Why is worship such an important aspect of prayer?
* How does worship cast its light on your whole life?
* What is the root of all sin?
* Draw a line like the trunk of a tree straight from you to God, and then draw branches growing out of this trunk.
* How does the principle visualized in the above drawing help explain that all human love, trust, and obedience should grow out of our love, trust and obedience to God?
* How does this principle make Christian love, trust and obedience completely different and far more secure that love, trust, and obedience outside of Christ.
* What are the three exclusive claims God makes upon us in the first commandment?
* Name two other people you could invite to start praying with you, claiming Christ's presence and active leadership.

## Research for Instructor

* Make a list of gods and things that are commonly given the place that belongs to the real God in America today.
* Make a list of people in the Bible, in Christian history, or in our day who put God first at great personal risk and sacrifice. Daniel, Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego....
* See if you can find the biography of Borden of Yale, heir to the Borden milk fortune, who gave his wealth and his life to missionary service. You may be able to find the story of the five young men who lost their lives trying to reach the Auca Indians with the gospel.

## Endnotes

1 Murdoch Campbell, From Grace to Glory, (London), Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), 149.