

## Worshiping in Spirit and Truth - Why truth is imperative in worship.

Truth is something we all take for granted. It is presented as fact and although we as Christians know there's a ultimate truth, we still choose to believe or not believe in it. This is why we sin. This is why we fail. Last week, I gave a working of definition of what worship is: *"Worship is a heartfelt and genuine act of glorifying God in all of his majesty and magnifying His name above all things with all of our mind, spirit, soul, and body."* What I failed to do was include an explicit statement that ensures that true worship is worship in truth. Thus, this week's evolution of the working definition (and hopefully it will be complete after this) is this: *"Worship is a heartfelt and genuine act of glorifying God in all of his majesty, through His truth given to us by the Word, and magnifying His name above all things with all of our mind, spirit, soul, and body."*

*John 14:6, John 8:32: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.", "and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

### 2 Thess 2

Paul is concerned for the people at Thessalonica who falsely that Jesus has returned. He exhorts them to not be shaken, in verse 2, by deception. And to remember, in verse 5, all the things that he taught them when he was with them. Paul is trying to prevent the Thessalonians from falling into deception and reminds them that those who fail to *love the truth* will perish (verse 9-11).

We must love the truth. *Jeff Purswell says "For worship leaders & worship team members, perhaps no one should be more aggressive in the pursuit of the knowledge of God than you."* (1 Tim 2:4 God wants all to know the truth). Not doing so is a sin in the eyes of the Lord.

### What causes us to fail?

There are many things that cause sin. The doctrine of original sin teaches us that Adam, after the Fall of Man, passed on sin from generations forth so that even now, as far as we are removed from him, we still feel the effects today. We are sinful creatures by nature which is why we need a savior to redeem us. While we all believe that "the wages of sin are death" (Rom 6:23), we still have a tendency to react to our sin in an entirely different way. If you committed a crime in which the consequences were death, I can assure you that your reaction would be different. Again, we are sinners by nature and *this is the root cause of our failure*. Unfortunately there are other things that lead us to sin. We can sin by omission. In other words, we sin by not acting on something we know is glorifying to God because we are afraid of man or do not have scripture written on our hearts. We can sin by misunderstanding too. By adhering to something other than the truth, we wander astray even though we believe there is nothing wrong. This is probably the most dangerous to our worship. *Jeff Purswell "The sinful heart will always tend to thing wrongly about God. Left to ourselves, our hearts will ALWAYS fail us." Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"*

A sinful heart (Jer 17:9), a sinful and deceitful world (2 Thess 2) - truth does not come easy.

**This is the first implication of knowing and loving the truth: it requires effort.**

The study of God (theology) and the doctrine of God (what the Bible teaches about God) is a vast subject that many people dedicate their lives to researching. Yet, it is a necessity to protect us against the evils of this world. This is why truth is imperative in our corporate worship. *Kauflin "But how do we get our arms around everything the Bible says about God? It takes thoughtful, disciplined study."*

## **The Doctrine of God. The truth of God from the Bible.**

God is like the sun. You cannot gaze into it, but you know the general direction of it, the general shape, etc. You know that when you step out of the shade it's hot. Doctrine is what the Bible teach about a certain subject.

### **Communicable Attributes of God**

Undoubtedly when we go over some of these communicable attributes something truly amazing will happen. Songs will begin to pop in your head reminding you that you have heard these truths about God before. That the attributes of God have been written and sung by many people. This is the beauty of musical worship but more importantly musical worship of and in truth!

- **God is spirit (John 4:24)**

- We must recognize that God is not limited to any spatial dimension. Wayne Grudam says, "...we should not think of God as having size or dimensions, even infinite ones." (186)
- He cannot be portrayed as anything on this earth or even in Heaven above. Ex 20:4-6 "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;". Why? Because doing dishonors God. Insults who He is.
- God is not an energy or wave.
- Bottom line: God is spirit. A special kind of existence unlike anything else in creation.
- Working definition: *God's spirituality means that God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence. 188*
- Communicable: because we are united with the Lord's spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). We are to worship him in spirit (John 2:24; 1 Cor 14:14; Phil 3:3).

- **God is Invisible (1 Tim 1:17)**

- He shows himself through visible things sometimes: theophanies.

- **Ominiscience**

- 1 John 3:20, God knows everything

- **Wisdom**

- God's wisdom means that God always chooses the best goals and the best means to these goals. Wayne Grudam
- Rom 11:33 "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"

- **Truthfulness (and faithfulness)**

- God's truthfulness means that he is the true God and that all his knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth.
- This is why we need to worship God in truth. He is perfect in knowledge (Job 37:16)
- God's truth does not conform to some standard of truth. Rather, it is the final standard of truth.
- When we lie we dishonor God's glory because we are called to be truthful. Eph 4:25. 2 Cor 4:2. Prov 4:24 Ps 19:14 speak the words that

are acceptable not only in the sight of people but also in the sight of the Lord

- **Goodness**
  - Ps 100:5, Luke 18:19
  - God is the final standard for what is good.
- **Love**
  - Love is the basic foundation for many of our worship songs. We sing about God's love because it is very communicable and there is a lot of scripture telling us of this.
  - 1 John 4:8 "God is Love"
  - Romans 5:8 "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" 1 John 4:11 "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another"
  - Matt 22:37-38 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your with all of your soul, and with all of your mind... You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Part of our working definition of worship.
    - Loving reflects who God is to the congregation and to the world
    - Singing of God's love reflects his truth.
- **Mercy, Grace, Patience**
  - Mercy is God's goodness towards those in misery and distress
    - Ex 34:6
    - Ps 103:8 *The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*
  - Grace is God's goodness toward those who deserve only punishment.
    - Rom 9:15, 1 Peter 5:10
    - Salvation: Rom 3:23-24. Rom 11:6
  - Patience is God's goodness in withholding punishment toward those who sin over a period of time.
    - Slow to anger (Ex 34:6 Num 14:18, Pss 86:15, 103:8, 145:8, Jonah 4:2, Nah 1:3)
    - Communicable because we are called to be patient as well. Eph 4:2, James 1:19, 1 Peter 2:20
- **Holiness**
  - God's holiness means that he is separated from sin and devoted to seeking his own honor.
- **Peace (or Order)**
- **Righteousness, Justice**
  - God's righteousness means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right.
- **Jealousy**
  - Ex 34:14, Deut 6:15 as cited earlier.
- **Wrath**
  - God's wrath means that he intensely hates all sin.
- **Will**
  - Necessary will & Free will
  - Secret will & Revealed will
- **Freedom**
  - God does whatever he pleases Ps 115:3, Dan 4:35
- **Omnipotence (Power, Sovereignty)**
  - God's omnipotence means that God is able to do all his holy will.
  - All-powerful
- **Perfection**
  - God's perfection means that God completely possess all excellent qualities and lacks no part of any qualities that would be desirable for him.
- **Blessedness**
  - Blessed means very happy in a very full and rich sense.

- God's blessedness means that God delights fully in himself and in all that reflects his character.
- **Beauty**
  - God's beauty is that attribute of God whereby he is the sum of all desirable qualities.
  - Same as God's perfection really.
- **Glory**
  - Honor, or excellent reputation.
  - Light emanating from God's presence.
  - Isa 43:7, Rom 3:23, sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, Hebrews 1:3, the son is the radiance of God's glory.
  - God's splendor, his brightness
  - The glory of God is a visible manifestation of the excellence of God's character. Luke 2:9 glory shone

A lot of attributes expressed in the hymn "O worship the king"

## Incommunicable

- **Independence**
- **Unchangeableness**
- **Eternity**
- **Omnipresence**
- **Unity**

## Knowability

- The necessity for God to reveal Himself to us
  - *1 Cor 1:21 "in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom"*
  - *Matt 11:27 "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him"*
- We can never fully understand God
  - incomprehensible in the sense that God is not *fully* understood
  - but very different than "unable to be understood"

Other categories relating to the doctrine of God: God's providence, the trinity, the creation, miracles, prayer, angels and demons...

Knowing God is a vast, time consuming effort.

**The second implication of knowing God is time: it will be a vast, time consuming effort.**

We have just scratched the surface of who God is. But we do know this. By meditating and singing simple truths about Jesus Christ, God the father, and the Holy Spirit, we are truly worshiping God in all that he is.

## How do we grow in truth?

- Read, read, read, read.
  - Wayne Grudem's "Systematic Theology"
  - J.I. Packer's "Knowing God"
  - Spurgeon quote in WM about Paul and "more books"

- "He is inspired, and yet he wants books! He has seen the Lord, and yet he wants books! He has had wider experience than most men, and yet wants books! He had been caught up in the third heaven, and had heard things unlawful for man to utter, yet he wants books! He has written a major part of the New Testament, and yet he wants books!"
- "He who will not use the thoughts of other men's brains proves he has no brains of his own."
- Pray, pray, pray, pray.
  - The priority of prayer, next week.
- Study with someone.
  - A partner can provide insight you might not have come up with.
- Join a small group.
- Get a discipler.
- Disciple someone.
- Work really hard. *"the world did not know God through wisdom."* 1 Cor 21 Does this imply we don't need wisdom?

Knowing God will take maturity and wisdom. But not solely.

#### **Implications 3 & 4.**

1 Cor 21 does not imply that we should not use wisdom to know God. It implies that the world did not get to know God through wisdom as a means. God made himself known to his people.

*Eph 1:17-19 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

*1 Cor 2:11-12 For who among men knows the thoughts of man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.*

**Yet still we are called to ask for wisdom (James 1:5) because we need to see how we can apply the things we learned.** Knowledge doesn't dictate application.

**We also need to be mature in our study of God.** It takes maturity to choose systematic theology over Calvin and Hobbes. It takes maturity to ask for a discipler, to disciple someone, and to lead a church in the singing of God's truth. It takes maturity to take a CE class that talks about the aspects of biblical worship, inside and out. Finally, it takes maturity to apply the first two implications: time & effort.

In summary - four implications of growing in truth:

- **time:** there will be an *extra* commitment to studying
- **effort:** it will be hard. doctrine & theology is not easy (the trinity is a good example to confuse people, so basic, yet so complex)
- **wisdom:** need to know how to apply what you've learned. Knowledge does not necessarily dictate application. Must apply wisdom!
- **maturity:** studying the nature of an infinitely holy & complex God requires a mature attitude (which is why we rarely let freshman lead/serve in major roles)

- *Jeff Purswell. (paraphrased) It's not so that you can be impressive and know a lot about God but it's so that you can have a better relationship with God.*

## Why is truth imperative in worship?

What we lead the church in singing is crucial. About 30 minutes of our worship time goes to musical worship. If our truths aren't centered on God then we are misleading the congregation.

- *Truth aligns our hearts with God's will.*
  - Lord's prayer Matthew 6:10.
  - Matthew 26:39: The Lord in Gethsemane: Not my will but your will be done...
- *Truth is timeless:* Bob Kauflin, "Truth transcends tunes."
  - This is why we sing hymns and they never get old.
- *Knowing God is important.*
  - Jeff Purswell says, it is sort of the Mount Everest of doctrine: *"If you don't get the doctrine of God right you won't get anything else right. If you don't gain clarity on who God is, you will never gain clarity on who Jesus Christ is."*
- *Truth reinforces our beliefs.*
- *Without it, we will turn God into idols.*
  - Is it dangerous to think about God though? After all our heart is sinful we might have a temptation to turn him into an idol.
  - We need to make sure that we worship Biblical truth from the beginning.
- *Truth brings our church together.*
  - Go over some examples in the church statement of faith and the "about us" statements.
- *Truth brings about true worship*
  - This is how God designed worship. It's not "oh they have a decent idea of who I am, I accept it." But it is, "I will not accept worship anything less than what I told them they should know of me."
  - This is why God is a jealous God. We cannot worship him in any other shape or form that we choose. We must know the truth about God. *Ex 34:14 Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. Deut 6:15 "for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land."*
  - True worship of God requires knowing and loving his truth. Knowing and loving His truth implies knowing and loving doctrine. Jeff Purswell.

## Our Hope

"...we'll become as familiar with the Word of Truth as we are with our instruments. Hopefully even more so. If we do, there's a strong possibility people are going to walk away from our meetings more amazed by our God than by our music." Bob Kauflin

Amen.

Appendix:

## Harvest About Us Statement

With gratitude to God for his sovereign grace which he has richly bestowed upon us in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit and in dependence upon his enabling grace to be faithful stewards of the gospel entrusted to us, we hereby declare that our mission for Harvest Church of San Diego is:

**to be** a unified body of believers, who are committed to the biblical mandates of worship, study, service, fellowship and evangelism, to the end that Jesus Christ will be exalted and God will be glorified.

**to ensure** the authoritative preaching of the whole counsel of God through faithful exposition of the Scriptures;

**to understand** the truths of Scripture and to apply these truths to practical living, that we may not be merely 'hearers of the Word' but 'doers of the Word' as well.

**to reach out** with the gospel of Christ, by bearing witness to God's call to repentance, his sovereign work in salvation, and his lordship over all of life, and by doing good to all men as we have opportunity;

**to promote** spiritual growth and maturity, encouraging one another to submit increasingly to the lordship of Christ by dying to sin and living to righteousness; and

**to encourage** regular, persistent prayer, both corporate and private, in which we confidently approach God with adoration, praise, thanksgiving, confession and petition.

## Harvest Belief Statement

**We believe** that the Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, is the inspired and inerrant Word of God, the necessary and complete revelation of His will for salvation, and is the ultimate authority for Christian faith and life.

**We believe** in the one true and living God, eternally existing in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**We believe** the triune God is the Creator, the Sustainer and Ruler of all Creation, but is prior to, and distinct from the Creation.

**We believe** that the first man, Adam, was created by God in His image, but fell from his original state by sinning against God, and hence incurred upon himself and all his posterity the guilt of sin, condemnation, and death; therefore, all humans are in need of salvation, but are totally incapable of saving themselves.

**We believe** that after the Fall, God, in His mercy and love, made provision for human redemption through the establishment of the covenant of grace with His people by the promise and the actual giving of the Savior Jesus Christ, whom to believe is justification and life.

**We believe** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, sent by the Father, begotten by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived a sinless and obedient life, suffered and died on the cross vicariously for the sins of His people who believe in Him; that God raised Him from the dead, exalted Him both as Lord and Christ, and gave Him the promise of the Holy Spirit for His Church

**We believe** that humans are saved by grace through faith in Christ in response to the Gospel preached, or otherwise presented, in the power of the Holy Spirit, through whom ransomed sinners became the sons of God and heirs of eternal life. That Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and men through Him and only through Him the believer has access to the Father.

**We believe** that every believer is a new creature in Christ, and is called to walk in the Spirit, to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness, and thereby manifest the fruit of the Spirit, conforming oneself to the image of Christ; that good works are the fruit of the Christian life, and are not ways of justification.

**We believe** that God alone is the Lord of our conscience, and that the believers are free from the commands of men, which are contrary to, or in addition to, the Scriptures in matters of faith and conduct.

**We believe** that the church, consisting of all true believers, being Christ's own and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is the Body of Christ, the invisible church; that the church is holy, universal, and one in Christ; that the invisible church manifests itself in the visible church, the local congregations consisting of all who profess to believe in Christ and are baptized; that as the people of God and a kingdom of priests, the church is called to grow unto the stature of the fullness of Christ and to fulfill her missionary work through the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, in worship, ordinances, fellowship, discipline, and services.

**We believe** in the priesthood of all believers, and the parity of the ministers and the laity.

**We believe** that in the last day, as the consummation of redemption, Christ will come again personally and visibly to the earth to judge the living and the dead; that there will be a bodily resurrection of the dead, of the believers through the Holy Spirit unto the inheritance of eternal life, and the unbelievers unto condemnation; and that a new heaven and a new earth will be ushered in.

O worship the King  
O worship the King all glorious above,  
O gratefully sing his pow'r and his love;  
Our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,  
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.

O tell of his might, O sing of his grace,  
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space  
His chariots of wrath the deep thunder-clouse form,  
And dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

The earth with its store of wonders untold,  
Almighty, your power has founded of old;  
Has 'stablished it fast by a changeless decree,  
And round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea

Your bountiful care what tongue can recite?  
It breathes in the air; it shines in the light;  
It streams from teh hills; it descends to plain;  
And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,  
In you do we trust, nor find you to fail;  
Your mercies how tender, how firm to the end,  
Our maker, defender, redeemer, and friend!

O measureless might! Ineffable love!  
While angels delight to hymn you above,  
The humbler creation, though feeble their ways,  
With true adoration shall lisp to your praise.

Sir Robert Grant 1833 (based on Ps 104)