

PLANNED FOR GOD'S PLEASURE

Week 2

Last week we talked about how we were created to be loved by God. This week we're looking at the flip side, the first purpose of our life, which is God wants us to love Him back. One day Jesus was walking down the road and a man came up to Him and said, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. [Matthew 22:36-38](#) God says if you don't get anything else, here's what you're supposed to do in life: you're supposed to learn to love Me back, because I made you to love you and I know you.

Now, there's a word for this. It's a word we misunderstand and misuse. It's the word **worship**. Worship is knowing and loving God back. Our first purpose in life is to worship God. It's our primary objective. It's our highest priority. It's our number one purpose in life. Now there are a lot of ways to worship God and we are going to look at them this week. We're going to look at what it really means to worship. Probably the best verse that defines worship, is found in [Romans 12:1](#), [Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.](#)

First, worship is our response to God's mercy and love. Worship is the way we respond, to God when He loves us. You see God always takes the initiative. God always makes the first move. He creates us. He saves us. He forgives us. He blesses us. He protects us. Then because of all these things, we worship. And notice what we do - we "offer" ourselves. The word "offer" describes worship. Second, worship is giving back to God. He gives to us, and we give back to Him. And whenever we give back to God, whenever we offer anything to God, that's called worship. And that brings pleasure to God.

Now, the question is, when it says, "offer" - what are we supposed to offer? What do you give a God who has everything? Finding Christmas presents is hard enough for some people? But what do you give a God who's got everything? He made the world. He made us. He made the universe. What do you give Him? Well, we can give Him your love. And He's very specific about how we should give it. Jesus tells us in [Mark 12:30](#) to, ['Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'](#)

God wants us to love Him in three ways:

- 1) ['with all your mind'](#) - He wants us to worship Him thoughtfully, know and love Him thoughtfully. Not just do it without thinking.
- 2) ['with all your heart and with all your soul'](#) - He want us to love Him passionately, because He passionately loves us.
- 3) ['with all...your strength'](#) - He wants us to worship Him with all our abilities, to worship Him practically.

1) Worship is **focusing my attention** on God

This is focusing my mind, my thoughts, my attention on God. It takes energy. It takes getting our mind focused on God. Not just going through the motions, but really, really thinking about it. Why does God want our focus? Because He is focused on us. [Psalm 139:1-3](#) says, [O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.](#) God pays constant attention to us, He never takes His eyes off of us. He never stops thinking about us. The reason is He made us is to love us. He made us to give us His attention.

Remember the first time you fell in love? You just couldn't get that person off your mind You thought about them when you woke up in the morning. You thought about them all day long. That's infatuation, but it wears off. However, God's love for us is eternal. He is always focused on us, and He wants to teach us to focus our heart and our attention on Him. And that's difficult sometimes. The easiest thing to do in life for us as human beings is to lose our focus. And there are two things that distract us from focusing our attention on God. First, we are self-centered by nature. And the second thing is, we live in a self-centered culture. [Romans 8:7](#) says, [the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.](#) So we have to decide to focus on Him. [Romans 12:2](#), [Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.](#) We must choose to stop thinking about some things which are bad for us and start thinking about God.

Now, how do we do that? First of all, we can start by establishing a daily time with God. We just need to find a place - our car on the way to work, somewhere in the garden, a corner of our living room where we can focus on God. A few minutes during the day where we decide we're going to stop everything else and just be with God. Talking to Him, reading His Word. The Bible talks about that in [Matthew 6:6](#), [But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.](#) Just be there as simply and honestly as we can manage. No ceremony, no fancy words. We don't have to try to look spiritual, we just have to try to get to know God better. Then the focus will shift from us to God, and we will begin to sense His grace.

Secondly we can develop a constant conversation with God. The Bible tells us in [Psalm 105:4](#), ...[seek his face always](#). We should think about Him throughout the day. And we have to decide to do that. Focusing on God has incredible benefits in our lives. When we focus on ourself, the inevitable result are thoughts of worry, insecurity, anxiety, guilt, fear, discouragement. But when that focus shifts from us to God, all of a sudden, we begin to sense gratitude and hope and confidence and love.

2) Worship is [expressing my affection](#) to God

This is loving God with our heart and soul. And for some of us, this is difficult because we might have grown up in families that weren't really affectionate, weren't really expressive, didn't say "I love you" a lot. Do you remember the first time you ever said I love you to somebody? It probably scared us to death. We had sweaty palms, our stomach was in a knot. We were all nervous...are they going to accept it or are they going to reject it. And so it's risky to say, "I love you." But the great thing about God is He's taken away the risk. He said it first. God said it first to us. God said, "I love you." God has said it in a thousand ways. He created you. He's taken care of you. Even when you didn't know it, He was showing love to you. And God has said over and over and over to you, "I love you." So you don't have to worry about who is going to say it first.

1 [John 4:19](#) says, [We love because he first loved us](#). In many religions, God is this angry tyrant, and you have to appease God and you have to avoid God, and you have to be afraid of God. But that's not the real God. The Bible says God wants to be loved. Have we ever said, "I love you" to God? God wants that from us. Notice this verse in [Hosea 6:6](#), God says, [For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings](#). You see, the most important thing we can know in life is that God loves us. And the most important thing we can do in life is to love Him back.

So how can we express our affection to God? Well, if we have never done it before, we can start by just saying "thank you." Start looking around at everything and start thanking God. Everything we look at is here because of God. Everything we look at is a gift from God. So just start by being thankful. We could all probably think of hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of things just to start thanking God more for. That's a good way to start expressing our love to God.

Of course, the greatest way to express affection to God is by giving our life to Him, by yielding ourself to Him. At a wedding you see two people stand up in front of each saying their vows - remember that? They say, "I do." What were they doing? They were saying I give you my life. I surrender myself to you. I'm committing myself to you. Why? Because that's the essence of love. You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. You have to give. So when we say, "God, I want to express my love to You," we say, "I give You my heart. I give You my soul. My soul is in Your hand. I want You to take my life." That's the greatest way to express our love to God. [Romans 6:13](#) says, [...offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life...](#) Again, remember, it's always a response. God gave us life, then He gives new life in Jesus. He says I want you to give yourself completely back to Me.

3) Worship is [using my abilities](#) for God

This is loving God with all our strength. He wants us to serve Him with our strength. [Colossians 3:23](#) says, [Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men...](#) Many people compartmentalise their life saying, "Okay, here's my worship. I go to church once a week. Maybe I go to a small group once a week, and maybe I have a daily time where I'm reading a little bit every day about God and trying to learn from Him, and that's my worship. And then over here, I've got my career and then over here I've got my social life." NO! God says I want you to invite me into every area of your life. I want to be involved in all of it, invite me into the whole thing. In life it's not what we do that matters; it is WHO we do it for. So all of our work can be turned to worship. And then we're worshipping God 24 hours a day. Not just in church. God doesn't want worship to just be a church thing. He wants it to be our whole life. And when we do that, then our life becomes an act of worship. You see, real worship is a lifestyle.

The truth is everybody worships something. We were wired to worship by God. He put it in our DNA. We couldn't stop worshipping if we had to, because it's part of being a human. Everybody worships something. That's why you can go to any culture in the world and find people worshipping. If we don't worship God, we're going to find a substitute really quickly, even if it is just ourself. The greatest mistake we can make in life is to miss our primary purpose. So let me ask a question, "What do we think about most?" Because whatever we think about most is what we love the most. Whatever that is, is what we worship. Our bank statements and diaries can tell us a lot about what we love, because the way we spend our time and the way we spend our money shows what we love the most. The Bible says we were planned for God's pleasure. We were made to know and love God.

So I challenge us all to make the No.1 goal of our lives, before everything else, getting to know and love God, because that brings Him pleasure.