



I and the lad will go yonder and worship. *Ge. 22:5*

## Created for Worship

*Based on a message preached by Paul Lloyd*

**D**o you believe that we were created for worship? Revelation 4:10-11 tells us, “The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

At a recent homeschool convention, I was blessed by one of the workshops. Not many people were at this particular workshop. The workshop was called “Understanding Biblical Worship in an Age of American Idolatry.” I guess not many people thought that such a theme applied to them or that it was pertinent to their life. But worship does pertain to all of us.

What do you think of when you think of worship? What comes to your mind? Probably singing. If I talk about a “worship service,” what do you think of? We usually think of singing, praising the Lord; and that is worship. But I want to show that worship is so much more than singing. In fact, worship is something that we do continually.

We were created for worship, but to get the point, let me say it this way: We were created as worshippers. Everyone in this room is a worshipper. Do you believe that? Whether you are a saved person or whether you are lost: you are a worshipper! You were created a worshipper, and you cannot not be a worshipper.

### The question

It’s impossible that you not be a worshipper. Worshipping is a part of your spiritual DNA. The question is not whether you are a worshipper; the question is *what* are you worshipping? In our society, we have the idea that worshipping is going to church. If you talk to the average person on the street about worship, he is going to be thinking, “Well, that’s church stuff.” He is likely to tell you, “I don’t worship anything.” So with that conception, people tend to think that worship is something that people do as a religious thing. But I want to show you that *everybody* is a worshipper, *all* the time.

We are not just worshippers when we attend church meetings on Sunday morning. We are worshippers every day. We can’t help it! We were made that way!

### What is worship?

Let’s go to the Word of God and see what God has to say about worship. The first time the English word “worship” is used in the Bible is in Genesis 22. Actually, the Hebrew word is used two times before this, but it is translated “bow down.” In fact, the Hebrew word is translated to English many times that way in the Old Testament.

We have in Genesis 22 the well-known story of Abraham sacrificing his only promised son. Abraham had waited many years for this son, but there came a day when God said something incredible to him. God told Abraham (verse 2): “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” The dearest thing in Abraham’s life, the thing he had waited for for so many years!

I can’t imagine all the things that Abraham might have felt. But it says here that “Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for

the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and **worship** and come again to you.”

What a statement ... I will take my son and *worship*!

We know the story. Abraham took his knife and was ready to slay Isaac when God spoke to him and said, “Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”

The first time that “worship” is used in the Bible, it is in the context of giving something very costly. When God called Abraham to sacrifice his son, Abraham responded by telling someone that he was “going to worship.” What he said was, “I am going to *bow down*.” This refers to our heart bowing before another person in honor, respect, and reverence. In our culture, we do not literally bow before others, but other cultures still practice a literal bowing before authorities.

The word “worship” comes from the Old English word “worthship.” In other words, worship has to do with *worthiness* to receive admiration and praise.

## Full-time worshippers

Like I said above, we all worship all the time. We are all saying—to something—that *this or that is worth me, my time, my money, my life*. Every day we say, by our actions, what it is that we deem to have worth. We have put the idea of worship into a religious box, and this hinders us from really grasping what worship is. Worship is not an event that takes place on a Sunday morning. No, we are “programmed” to find value in something and to give ourselves to that.

## Worship and service

In the Old Testament, worship and service often go together. In Exodus 20 we find evidence that we are all worshippers of something by nature. If we were not all worshipping something, why would God have to command us not to worship? The issue is not about worshipping or not worshipping, but rather *what* we are worshipping. God said (verse 3-6): “Thou shalt have no other gods before

me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself [note: “bow down”

equals “worship”] to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”

What does it mean to “serve” an idol or God? *Serving* consists of the things we do, the sacrifices we make to an idol or to

God. The bowing down is what happens in our heart, the sacrifices are the things we do.

## Fish don’t “go swimming”

We can compare worshipping to swimming. We humans go swimming. I am not a fish; water is not my native habitat. So I say, “I am going to go swimming.”

Now, when you think of fish, do you think of them as “going swimming?” No! That is what he just does. That is where he lives. He doesn’t “go swimming,” he is swimming all the time.

The problem with worshipping is that we tend to think we are like a man that goes swimming, instead of realizing that we are a fish; we are worshipping something all the time. Worship is not something we do on occasion; it is what we are doing all the time by default.

## Misguided

Another illustration is like these new automatic grass cutters that have come out. These are lawn mowers with GPS units in them. You program them to the perimeters of your yard, and they then mow everything within those perimeters.

Now suppose that the GPS unit in one of these grass cutters got messed up. Would that grass cutter suddenly turn into a toaster and start making toast? No! It would still cut grass, but it would maybe cut the grass in the neighbor’s yard or go meandering off down the road.

So it is with man. Man worships something. He was made to worship. The problem is not that man sometimes quits worshipping, but that he worships the wrong thing.



Fish don’t “go swimming”!

We need to tell ourselves, day by day, “I am a worshipper.” The question is, *what* are we worshipping?

In Romans 1:21-25 we find Paul saying, “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.”

Here we see another example of people who did not stop worshipping. However, they simply lost their way and started worshipping the wrong thing. They were deceived. It is like an atheist who declares, “I don’t worship anything.”

He is deceived!

We all worship *something*. We all value something and give it worth. *Something* is worth my money and my time. Everybody is a worshipper.

## Idol worship

Is idol worship more prevalent in Ghana or in the USA? Let’s look at the definition of idol in Webster’s

1828 Dictionary: “An idol is any thing which usurps the place of God in the hearts of his rational creatures.” Another definition is, “Any thing on which we set our affections; that to which we indulge an excessive and sinful attachment.”

Based on that definition, I say that idol worship is just as prevalent here in the USA as it is in Ghana. Yes, over in Ghana it is a little bit more open or blatant. We don’t worship our idols here in quite the same manner as they do over there. We don’t literally bow down before a wooden statue and make a food offering to it. The heathen in “heathen” countries bows down before his idol and makes an offering, saying, “You are worthy of this sacrifice as an offering ...”

What about idol worship in the USA? We generally don’t have wood or metal idols that we literally bow down to.

In the New Testament I have found three direct commands against idolatry. One is found in Colossians 3:5: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” Clearly, idolatry is more than worshipping a statue. Covetousness is idolatry. We need to look to God for financial security. That is His place, and when we look to other places for financial security, we become idol worshippers. We are giving to money what belongs to God alone.

## Whose Pleasure?

A professional baseball player turned pastor said the following about sports. Do you see anything unbiblical about this statement?

“You know what, if something pleases me, and it’s not out of balance ... God made me to be pleased by this thing, and I might as well celebrate that; I’m not going to fight my humanity.”

The first foundational error of the above statement is this: God did not make man for man’s pleasure. God created man to bring glory to His name. Idolatry begins when man begins to live for his own pleasure rather than for God’s glory. And idolatry ends when man ends his pleasure seeking and begins to make decisions based on glorifying God—on pleasing Him.

The other fundamental error of the above statement is the common crossless Christianity of today: not “fighting my humanity.” Man’s humanity is in direct opposition to God’s holiness. It is only when our humanity is crucified that Christ can live within. Our whole life as a Christian is a lifelong warfare against the natural passions of our humanity. To not “fight my humanity” is to let it control my decisions and values. They who live after the flesh shall die spiritually.

Either we bring our body (and soul) under subjection, or our body (and soul) will bring us under subjection.

To be “born again” is to begin a new life, a life where our humanity is conquered by the character of Christ. A life that springs from the righteous principle of glorifying God ... and not pleasing oneself! ~M.A.





Colossians was written to Christians, not “heathen.” This admonition against the idolatry of covetousness is for us.

In 1 John 2:15-16, we read John’s exhortation against loving this world: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” This world is a dangerous place, because all around us are things that tempt us to worship them. It is not wrong to enjoy the things God has created. For example, I enjoy good-tasting food, yet, food can be an idol. People seek from food what they should be seeking from God. People even talk about having a “comfort food.” When they need comfort, they turn to a certain food, and that is idolatry ... something taking the place of God. That is the reason why I say that this world is a dangerous place; we are tempted to take something good and turn it into an idol.

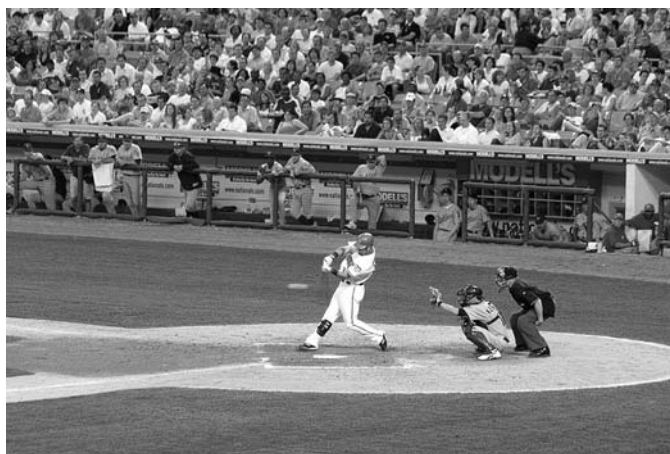
## The idolatry of sports

I grew up with sports. We were very religious about our sports. I can remember the thrill of being in Veterans Stadium for the Eagles game and watching the team score and 50,000 fans erupt in united praise together. It is actually something that is transportive; it makes you feel great ... a rush, a high. That is the offering of 50,000 people to an idol. It costs money to attend those games, \$50 or even \$100 per seat. And it is fun!

Yet most of those people would not say they are worshipping. They say, “I am just enjoying it; it’s just fun.” But that is the same thing the Moabites probably said in their immoral worship of idols: “It’s just fun!”

I can remember being in a Phillies game in the bottom of the ninth when “Downtown” Ollie Brown came up to the plate. He hit the ball with a tremendous whack, and the roar of the crowd began to get bigger and bigger until the ball went over the fence ... and that place erupted in worship! I could feel it again just while saying those words! It was worship, and we loved it!

Do you think we enjoyed the fellowship after the “service”? We did! “Wow, did you see how he hit that ball!” “Wasn’t that great?” “That was good!”



He hit the ball with a tremendous whack ... and that place erupted in worship!

We were very religious. Some liked to come early for the “service,” for the “prayer meeting,” often called the “tailgate party.” You drop the tailgate and bring out the grill and cook up some burgers and get ready for the game. And what are you thinking about and talking about at the tailgate party? The “service”! And of course, the

first thing you thought about when getting up in the morning was the game. You were already worshipping. And when you went to church meeting that morning, you couldn’t pay any attention to that service, because your mind was so wrapped up in the other “service.” You know ... “This preacher is soooo long-winded. I wish he would hurry up and get this thing over with ...”

That was life. That was the way we lived. It was exciting! With all the announcements, 7<sup>th</sup>-inning stretches, etc, we ended up having a three hour “service.” And it was fun! I am not going to tell you that it is not fun to go to a professional sports game. Because it *is* fun. It’s a rush, a thrill.

It is worship.

## My last game

I can’t forget the last Philadelphia Eagles game I went to, about 20 years ago. I had gotten saved and was living in Colorado and came back to visit family. My nextdoor neighbor had season tickets, and he offered to take me and my brother to the Eagles game. I thought, “Hey, this is great. This will be fun.” So we went.

But something was different; something in me had changed. I felt uneasy, sitting in those bleachers when everyone would scream for their team. Before, I would jump up right with them and yell just as loud.

Something felt bad to me. And I realized, “This is foreign ground.” I was a pretty new Christian, but I knew something was wrong.

You know, I purposed in my heart when I left there, “I am never going to do this again.” I believe God showed me that this was idolatry, false worship. I cannot go there anymore and give that worship to some man.

## The safeguard

I have said it before and I will say it again: the greatest safeguard against idolatry is to enjoy the Lord and rejoice

in Him. That is why we are commanded so many times to “rejoice in the Lord.” If we are not rejoicing in Him, guess what? We *will* find *something* to rejoice in.

Worship to God can be compared to marriage. The greatest safeguard against adultery is to be happily ful-



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filled in your marriage, to feel like “I couldn’t be more blessed with anyone else than with the spouse that I have.” The one who “falls” into adultery is not the one who is fulfilled in his/her marriage, but the one whose marital relationship is troubled. It is the same in the spiritual realm: the unfulfilled are susceptible to idolatry. The greatest safeguard against idolatry is to be madly in love with God.

### Lusting for meat

In 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, Paul writes about the idolatry of the Israelites in the journey to the Promised Land. In this case, the thing they lusted after was “meat.” Now meat is not a bad thing, yet because of the manner in which they desired meat, it became idolatry, and God called it an “evil thing.” They were putting something in front of God, something was in God’s place, something that God gave: birds, or bird meat.

This happened to people who had not too long before been delivered from Egypt through the Red Sea. They were not being fulfilled in the Lord, and so they went

looking for something else to meet that worship need, that need that we all have.

### The cross

The reason we so easily turn to worshipping other things rather than God is because it is so much easier than worshipping God. Idols do not require of you what God does to worship Him. In much of idolatry, you can do your sacrifice, go through the ritual, and then go do your own thing: there is nothing requiring a death to self. But God does require applying the cross to self. The reason why idol worship is so attractive is because it doesn’t cost you everything! But to worship God will cost you your life, your will. Jesus said that he who wants to keep his life would lose it.

That is the reason why idolatry is so attractive. God brings up something in our life, something that He wants to touch, and we just shrink back saying, “Lord, I don’t know if I can handle that ... don’t touch that, it’s too much!”

Can we enjoy the Lord when we respond with a “No, Lord, don’t touch *that*.” We then become dried up anemics, spiritually, and suddenly other things begin to look attractive. *Things* look like they may be able to satisfy us.

### Fleeing idolatry

In 1 Corinthians 10:14, Paul tells us to “flee idolatry.” Probably very few who read this message have ever knelt down before a wooden statue to worship it. But all of us have worshipped something other than God. We have all “usurped the place of God in the heart,” “set our affections on other things,” or “indulged in an excessive and sinful attachment” to *something other than God*.

We are all worshippers. You are a worshipper; you have been one from the day you were born and will be one until you die. No one is a nonworshipping being.

The question is not “Are you worshipping?” The question is, “*What* are you worshipping?”~

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Ps. 51:17

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