

Worship

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 March 2025

Preacher: James Tang

[0:00] Disciplined disciples. That's what we're hoping for. We don't just want kind of just part-time believers. We want disciplined disciples. People who actually have, when they say they've devoted themselves to be followers of Christ, that that's what they're doing.

Students, when they are following a discipline, they are studying diligently, we hope, especially during exam time. Is that right, Ryan? Studying hard, everything that that discipline needs you to know, you're knowing.

And for some reason, we lost that art in the church. We said that we would be disciples of Jesus, but then we don't really spend that much attention following his way or studying his word. And then we wonder why we're not really getting the delight that comes from following him. It's because we don't have the desire, and it's the discipline that leads to the desire, which leads to the delight.

And that's something that we've been trying to figure out. How do we become disciplined disciples? How do we look more like him? And this week, we're going to do one, and it's going to be on the discipline of worship. Worship. When I say worship, what do you think of?

When I think about worship, I think of Ellie, Mihi, Alex, Gracie, sometimes Paul. I think of that, right? What do you think of? Let me pick on some people.

[1:14] Mr. Brown, you know he's coming to you. You know it was about time. You led us so well in those signs. You led us because you were the only one that we could see. Because bless her, Alex was so good, but she was too short.

Mr. Brown, when I say worship, what do you think of? Whoa, connection. He talks about, tell us a bit more about that. Connection to what? Expand.

What N.T. Wright said that, he says our focus here is to reflect God to his creation.

In return, reflect creation's praise back to God. So we are that connection between the two. Yeah.

So praise, worship is a really important part of that. It's not just part of our focus.

Wow, that's huge. I mean, that goes back to Genesis 1, 26, when actually what we were created for in the image of God, to basically reorder culture to reflect his glory and his beauty.

[2:14] And we're the connectors between that. That's huge. Thank you. Let's go. Let's fly over here. Well, Paul, you've got your mask on. You have led us in worship and you've led us faithfully in worship these last few, many years. What's worship to you?

Our whole lives. Our whole lives. It's about every aspect of our lives. That's something that we neglect because often when we think about worship, we think, oh, I should get there in time for worship.

What are we talking about? We're talking about the first few songs that they're going to sing. Oh, I should leave just before the worship because that's when my lunch booking is up. So we think we reduce it to karaoke. We reduce it to singing songs.

But it's so much more than that. I want to go for someone right at the very back over there. I can't see you because you're deliberately hiding. Flo is giving me the evils. So I'm just going to go with Flo. What's worship to you, Flo?

Glorifying God. What a knowledgeable, selfless, worshipful congregation we have. All these answers. I was hoping for you just to say, listening to me, he's in.

[3:19] But here we go. So we are talking about worship today. And actually, we have, I would say, if we've lost the art of being disciplined disciples, I think we've lost the art of what really worship is when it comes to church. Have you heard someone say, oh, I go to that church because I love the worship?

Have you heard that? Have you heard it when you go, oh, I like that church, but I'm not feeling the worship. The worship is kind of like a solid five and a half out of ten. And it's really, it's just, oh, I

went to that place and the worship was so good.

That singer was just, that keys player. But what does the word worship actually mean? Many years ago, actually, this was maybe my first foray into ministry and serving.

Worship was the thing. I mean, growing up in a Chinese church that Ken and I and Christina and Joe and I, we grew up in. Worship was not the priority. It was, I mean, the drummer that we had, bless him, bless his white cotton socks.

He could only play the drums in 5-4. And every song would be wrong. It just felt wrong. And, of course, we had to sing in the trilingual service as well.

[4:26] So, you know, God was not there. But, of course, you're Chinese growing up overseas. So what do you do? You learn piano. And then when you learn piano, what do you do when you go to church?

You play piano. And so you end up playing the songs and shine Jesus, shine, and shout to the Lord, we're my era. And you just ended up being part of worship. That was just kind of what we did. And so that was kind of where I first kind of cut my teeth, if you will, into serving.

And then I looked back into worship and I go, actually, where was the first mention of the word worship in the Bible? Josh here referred to Genesis, and that's where it was from. The first worship, the first mention of the word worship was a guy being called by the Lord to go worship him and how he would worship.

Actually, who knows even which story I'm going to be telling? Any ideas where the first mention of worship was from? Some of you have heard me say this. Anyway, I'll keep telling the story first then.

So the guy is being called by the Lord, and he says, hey, come up to the mountain to worship me. And the guy takes his son. And Abraham and Isaac, thank you, Joel.

[5:35] And so the guy takes his son and then takes Isaac and goes, hey, let's go. And he takes some helpers and servants with them. And then once they get to the point where they see the mountain, Abraham says the words.

He says, you guys wait here. Isaac and I are going up to the mountain to worship. Just let that sink in for a second.

He doesn't have his guitar. Isaac doesn't have a kahan. They're not going to go up and get their worship on. What's Abraham thinking when he's saying, I'm going to go up to the mountain to worship?

He's thinking he's going to be sacrificing the one thing he's asked for the whole of his life. The thing he loves the most. The thing he's ascribed the most worth to. He's saying, I'm going to go to that mountain.

I'm going to offer him up to God. Because God is worth even more than my son. That's the first mention of the word worship. We now reduce it to a few songs that we sing just before the preacher comes up to share.

[6:44] Isn't that interesting? Isn't that devastating? That we've reduced what worship truly is. The old English word for worship was worth-ship. Worth.

It's what you ascribe worth to. The Greek is *proskuneo*, which means you're ascribing worth to something to the point where you are in reverence of it. You kneel down before it and you're saying, you, this is the most important thing.

Something else that's interesting about worship, worth-ship or worth-shape, the word really is what you worship shapes you. What you worship ends up shaping you.

What you value the most is the thing that shapes you the most. So then I ask again, what do you worship or what do you think about worship?

We had Josh and Danny around for dinner the other night and we were talking about something that we ascribe a lot of worth and value to, which is the Harry Potter series. We finally met two people who love Harry Potter more than us.

[7:44] And in the first film, the Philosopher's Stone, or as the Americans called it, the Sorcerer's Stone, there's a mirror. Does anyone remember the mirror in the first film?

Yes, we have some fans. The mirror of Eriset, where Harry stumbles across this mirror. And when he sees this mirror, he is just completely engrossed in this mirror because when he looks into the mirror, what does he see?

What does he see? His parents, James and Lily Potter, alive and well surrounding him. Why? Because the mirror of Eriset would grant him the desires of his heart, would let him see the thing that he values and yearns for the most.

The word Eriset is what the mirror's name is, is basically the word desire spelled backwards. And so that mirror showed him what his heart's desire was.

Tim Keller says the true God of your heart is the one that your mind effortlessly wanders to when you have nothing else to think about. When you just sit on the couch and you just, huh, what is my life?

[8:53] And then the first thought that comes to mind, that is your life. That is what you worship the most. That is what you value the most. That is what shapes you. The Bible tells us, hey, you should worship God and God alone.

And you say, I think I do. Well, some people might just go, actually, you know, I don't even know what worship truly is. Like, I don't think I worship anything. Maybe I'm not there with God yet, but I don't really worship anything. And that's another quote that's come in that I wanted to read for us. And I've read before by someone who's actually a non-believer. Sadly, actually, he ended up taking his own life. David Foster Wallace said this about worship. It's a little bit of a long quote, but I really want to read it to you.

So just, I pray that the Lord will give you the gift to hang on every word. There is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what we worship.

And an outstanding reason for choosing some sort of God or spiritual type thing to worship is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough.

[9:55] Never feel you have enough. It's the truth. Worship your own body and beauty and sexual allure, and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally plant you. On one level, we all know this stuff already.

The trick is keeping the truth up front in daily consciousness. Worship power. You will feel weak and afraid, and you will never, you always need more power over others. Worship your intellect.

Being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. Look, the insidious thing about these forms of worship is not that they're evil or sinful. Sinful is that they are unconscious.

They are default settings. We naturally just worship things. They are our default settings. And we all worship something. The question really is, what is it that we're worshipping?

What do we put most value in? And as disciplined disciples, what we're saying is that the only thing we should worship is God. The truth is, what does that look like? And how do we even do it? And so we're going to go through scripture today, and we're going to go through Psalm 95, which actually is probably the most famous psalm when it comes to worship.

[10:58] In many, many years, this psalm has been used basically as an inspiration for liturgy, for how to worship. It is a call to worship. And in it, I think there are some really powerful truths that I'd love to draw out today.

So Psalm 95 is what we're going to read. And we're going to hold this book with reverence and in awe. And I'm going to invite you to stand for the word of the Lord, and then have Mel come up and read Psalm 95 for us.

Psalm 95. O come, let us sing to the Lord. Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving. Let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise.

For the Lord is a great God and a great king above all gods. In his hands are the depths of the earth. The heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

O come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord, our maker. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, as on the day at Massa in the wilderness, when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they have seen my work.

[12:22] For 40 years I loathed that generation and said, They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways. Therefore, I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my test.

This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, Mel. Take a seat. Thank you. We're going to break this down. Here's my proposal.

Actually, Alex led us so well, and me and the whole team in worship. You notice we only sang two songs today. The goal is actually afterwards we'll have a little bit more space, a little bit more time to take what we've learned and be able to respond to God through worship, through maybe more specifically song worship.

So that's what we're going to be doing so you can be prepared for that. I pray that as you listen to me open up this word, that actually what you'll be compelled to do, what I'm exhorting you to do, is that you would worship him with your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

It would be a whole body, whole existence experience that we're going for. So if you have the word, then you follow along with me. Verse 1, O come, let us sing to the Lord.

[13:24] So we are talking here about song. We're talking here about song worship. He says, O come. What this means is that default setting that David Foster Wallace was just talking about, we have to deliberately turn from that and go, O come.

Because if we were already there, we wouldn't have to be called to say, O come. Psalm 100 is another worship psalm. And it says, let's enter his gates with thanksgiving in our hearts. Let's enter his courts with praise.

There's an entering that's required. There's us pulling ourselves out of our daily grind, out of the things that we've just been engrossed with, that if we're honest, that we've been worshipping and saying and responding to the, O come.

Whatever your mind wanders to when you have a moment of relaxation, that's the thing that you're worshipping. And what the psalm writer here is saying, O come, come round. Worship is a deliberate, intentional decision to choose to worship.

There is no doubt about it. You cannot naturally, accidentally worship. There are moments, don't get me wrong, there are moments when you are hiking and you just see this beautiful view of dragon's back.

[14:27] You're like, I'm just filled with awe and worship. There is that. But if we're honest on the day to day, it requires us to deliberately say, no, I will worship.

I will ascribe the worth back to the king of heaven. It is a deliberate choice that we have to make to turn around. O come, O come. And it says, let us make a joyful noise.

Why are we joyful about this? It's because it's the good news. It's because we were blind, we were captive, we were deaf, and yet now we are set free. Now we see, now we hear. This is the good news.

It's been a 180. We were going to die. We were going to die in a puddle, and yet God has rescued us. We were going to drown, and yet he has saved us. So it is good news. So when you worship, the goal maybe, and this is where actually I'll talk a little bit more about it, the goal is to end up in a place where, God, I'm just so thankful for what you have done for me.

There is joy in my heart. Sometimes it's deep, deep, deep, deep, deep down in my heart, but there is joy. And it requires an intentional, deliberate act.

[15:33] To rejoice is a choice. We have to choose to do it. So he says, let us, let us, and it is joyful music. It is joyful music.

Sometimes I think maybe in the last few decades, at least the ones that I've grown up in, since the late 1900s, it's been a very emotional kind of music worship. It's very emo kind of worship.

Maybe Oceans was the song that really just sent us into this contemplative, emotive, synth pad era. And so we just reflect and we just sit and we just get our worship vibe on and just, oh, it's just the feels.

But there is joy to it. A couple of years ago, for my work with Young Life, I got the privilege of going to Africa. Whew, the Africans, they know how to worship with joy.

There we go. There we go. Oh my goodness. I mean, I can't really keep to beat, but it doesn't really matter. So you have to dance anyway. And somehow, somehow, every worship session that we had ended up in the Congo line.

[16:39] I was like, what's going on? It's like, by the fourth night, I was like, guys, come on. No more Congo line. It's just too tiring. Whereas, of course, if you worship with white people, they're already much more expressive than the Chinese people.

Don't get me started on the Chinese people, unless it's karaoke. Something unlocks with Asian people when karaoke happens. But anyway. But then the most of our worship for the rest of the world is just this kind of stance.

I mean, sometimes we sing a song, it's about lifting our hands, and we bow down, and we're just kind of like arms crossed. And I was like, oh, that's interesting. And of course, there's different wings of worship when it comes to the church.

The church is beautiful, by the way, in its diversity. The kingdom of God, the mansion of heaven is one that has many rooms. And there are those who are very loud and with the drums and just dancing nonstop. And there are ones that are just contemplative, or maybe some are more heady. And I've heard it said that actually worship songs are like take-home theology. You won't remember much of what I've said, apart from how I've made you feel in this time. That's why I'm exhorting you in your heart. But you might not remember that much I'd share with you about scripture, about theology, but worship songs, when you're in a pickle at work, you'll remember that worship song. [17 : 55] You'll remember what the lyrics are from that worship song. So that's why worship songs are actually very important. It's very important to really think through what we're actually singing and whether they are biblically sound because they're the ones that are most catchy. They're the ones that we take home and go, oh, I believe it in my head, in my heart.

So we need to be careful that actually what we're singing is actually right. And so there are so many different wings, but the Africans, I tell you, they are strong, they are powerful, they are joyful. Can we have some of that in ourselves?

And I'll say a little bit about why we struggle with that a little bit later. It says, let us, so I'm just literally going for it and just rinsing this first line just out to dry. Oh, come. It's a deliberate act. You have to go, leave yourself and you have to go into this place where you're deliberately, intentionally worshipping God. And it says, oh, come, let us. We do it together. There is community in this.

It is let us. It's not just let you. Honestly, that's why you're here, I hope. That is because you've realized over COVID that sitting at home with YouTube watching Tim Keller or John Piper speak isn't enough.

[18 : 54] Listening to a Hillsong song at home whilst you're in bed and half asleep isn't enough. It requires a deliberate action to get out of bed, to join brothers and sisters and to worship together.

Martin Lloyd-Jones, who's the one who actually, Tim Keller would say, he mentored him a lot and through a lot of his teachings would say, why would you want to have the word of God open to you by yourself? Be with people. That's how the word of God comes alive.

That's how you practice the commands of God, which is to love one another. But if you don't have anyone around you, how are you supposed to follow that command? Let us come to worship together. Martin Luther says this, at home, in my own house, there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church, when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through.

We need people. More importantly, I think we need different kinds of people. Now, I think there's something to be said for homogenous life groups where you do life together and you relate to each other and you understand each other and you're facing some of the same challenges together. That is good. But that can't be the only part of community that we have. We need to be surrounded by people who are not like us at all, who push us out of our comfort zones. Because if you look around and go, actually, the people that I'm surrounded by are just like me, sound just like me, have the same challenges, and they're in finance just like me, and they wear the same t-shirt just like me, and the Patagonia vest jacket just like me, then actually you wonder, oh, I don't have anyone showing me a different side to the kingdom of God.

[20 : 26] I have no one to show me a different aspect of God. C.S. Lewis talks about this when it comes to friendships. He says there's some friends that just bring out a side of you that someone else cannot.

And so when you meet that friend with that other friend, you get to see a different side of him that's like, oh, I haven't seen that side of you before. In some ways, that's the same as God.

When we are surrounded by brothers and sisters, we'll see different sides of God that we would have never been able to see if we were just with the same people that we were hanging out with. So this says, oh, come, let us come into worship together.

And let's be willing to sing different kinds of songs and let's be willing to sing different styles and do different things. Remember, the forms of worship are not the worship. The forms of worship are simply designed to bring us in to worship.

How we do it, let's all decide together. And if God's put you here in this community, in this city, at this time, let's discuss it together. Let's see what you can bring from your background and your preference that will help.

[21 : 29] I've always wondered, actually, if you look at just contemporary Christian worship around the world, most of the songs are written by either surfers in Sydney or just people in Bethel Redding right in just the outbacks, just rednecks people.

And you're like, that's interesting. It's only basically those two groups that have been responsible for the majority of songs. If you look at, there's a worship songs chart, by the way, in the world. I mean, it's a little bit Christian geeky here now. But basically, they track the songs that are sang around the world.

Every church is supposed to submit and say, hey, these are the songs that we're singing. If you look at the top 10 songs sang around the world, they're written by those two groups of people. And I think that's interesting because the kingdom of God is so diverse.

There are so many, so many different kinds of cultures and people. Yet somehow, why have we reduced ourselves, our worship, to just songs written by those basically. 10 people. How do we, as we're sat here, what's our form of worship?

What does that look like? And I invite you, I invite you to be involved in that. And ask, hey, how, what thought are we putting into the songs that we're singing? How are we choosing these songs?

[22 : 38] How are we playing these songs? How many times are we going to sing the chorus? Are we like the charismatics who will sing the choruses maybe 200 times? Or are we like this group that just sing it once and are done with it?

Hands in pockets and then we sit down. No form is wrong. The form isn't the worship, but it should lead us into the worship. So let us be diverse. And all of it is really, is what Josh really just talked about, is how do we bring, how do we bring connection between God and man?

How do we feel his presence? And so that carries on into verse two. Don't worry, I will speed up much more later on. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving.

So many of us who worship do feel God's presence. Put your hand up if you've felt the presence of the Lord while singing songs before. I'm not going to pick on you. There's just something about music that does it to you.

There's something about music. I've had it described to me as music is the lowest hanging fruit when it comes to intimacy. I have a couple of playlists that none of you will ever see on Spotify because some of them include Backstreet Boys songs and Dance with My Father, Luther Vandross.

[23 : 54] That's in there. I go to that playlist when I'm stressed. There's another playlist I go to which is a Chinese playlist that has I love the songs like Just those random heartbreak-y kind of songs.

I don't even know why they're there. My wife asked me the other day she saw the history that this was played recently. She was like why are you listening to those songs? I'm like baby I've just been so stressed. J-Tow just does something to me.

Just how he sings is such a high note. It just makes me feel more of a man. Music has this power over us that just brings us into a space and that's not wrong.

I want to say that again. That's not wrong. That helps us get into the presence of God but I will also say that that is the lowest hanging fruit. I mentioned the church that Ken and I and Joe and I we grew up in and worship honestly not strong, not strong.

But then at university we went to another church it was like an Aussie style kind of church that suddenly decided to sing and play in key. And I was like whoa this is cool I like how this feels and they dim the lights.

[25 : 05] This is fun. And then I'm like oh this feels so good. And of course the Hillsong era was when it was kind of really building up then I was like oh these songs they just sang so well music done beautifully.

Psalms 33 says play skillfully. There is something to playing skillfully by the way. Let's not practice and rehearse. And if you don't have the gift you don't need to sing. It's okay. I'm talking about on the

mic.

You can sing here just don't disturb and distract other people. But music is designed to bring us into the presence of God.

Psalms 22 talks about God inhabiting in the praises of his people. He dwells among why? Because these are the people that want him. These are the people that are enthroning him. Saying we worship you we want you to be here and God is here.

His tabernacle is here he dwells among us. So there is an experiential element to this which we shouldn't overplay but we also shouldn't underplay. Because otherwise we are literally just singing karaoke.

[26:05] Or we're singing in a memorial service to someone who we think is dead. That is not true. Jesus is here. God is here and we're singing to him and we're being lifted by him and our spirits are being connected to his and there's something so beautiful in that.

When Jesus was talking to the woman at the well in John 4 he's saying the Father is looking for those who worship in what? The spirit and in truth. That there is an element of just us connecting to the supernatural that our spirits are just lifted by being connected to the Holy Spirit and that is something that really just edifies the church brings us to this place where we can feel God's presence and be embraced by his love.

There is something beautiful about that. But it's a spirit and in truth. 1 Corinthians 14 Paul talks about actually I pray with my mind but I also pray with my spirit.

I sing with my spirit but I also sing with my mind. There's two parts to this. So we should keep it balanced. Now if I'm honest I think if we look at the church worldwide I think sometimes we struggle with that.

It's just part of the whole polarizing trends that we're in. Some of us sway way more to just truth and some of us sway way more to just spirit. But I look at this and I'm going Jesus is calling and he's looking for people who are willing to and not afraid of both.

[27:18] Who are yearning for his word who want to know who he is but are also just enamored by his presence and just warmed by the embrace of his love. Spirit and in truth.

And that moves us on to verse 3 to 5. Because we can't just worship using our emotions. It can't just be about how we feel. That's got to be part of it but it isn't the whole thing and this is where the psalmist really moves into why they're worshipping.

So verse 1 and 2 is come let us sing to the Lord let us come into his presence. Why? Verse 3 For the Lord is a great God and a great king above all kings. In his hand are the depths of the earth the heights of the mountains are his also.

The sea is his for he made it and his hands formed the dry land. O come let us worship and bow down let us kneel before the Lord our maker for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.

This moves in from spirit to being in his presence to talking about truth. Why do we worship? Why is he calling us to worship? Why? For God is a great God. For God is a great God and the great king above all gods in his hand are the depths of the earth and the heights of the mountains are his also.

[28:27] He's basically just thrown down truth after truth of who God is. So when we worship in spirit in his presence we also worship in truth by knowing what we're worshipping and who we're worshipping.

If we're just worshipping a God of our own doing based on our own emotions that's not true worship. But when we worship in spirit and in truth and we know who God actually is and we're declaring who he is that's when we're able to worship in spirit and in truth.

This is where actually Richard Foster talks about a lot when we talk about worship we're not initiators of worship. We are only the ones who are responding to something. We're worship in response to something and let me read you his quote.

Richard Foster says this, Worship is the human response to the divine initiative. Worship is our response to the overtures of love from the heart of the Father. Its centrality, its central reality is found in spirit and in truth.

The psalmist here is saying actually we worship God. Why? Because of who he is and what he's done. We're worshipping God because of who he is and what he's done. He is a great God.

[29:30] He is a great king above all other kings and he made this world and that's why we worship him. He is above all other gods. If you think about the culture that they were in in the ancient times there were so many other gods.

There were so many other gods that they were worshipping and what they're saying is here Yahweh, God himself. He is the only God. He is the great God. He is the great God above all the other gods. So when we worship it's responding to who he is which is he is far above everything else.

We think about the gods that they had during those times and we think about some of the gods that we have now. Whether it is the religions that we have surrounding us who are declaring the different gods or whether it's just maybe the most powerful violent gods that we have in society right now which are money, sex and power.

And you think about those gods. You think about what we ascribe worth to. You think about the things that shape us. Those are the things. If you think about all the decisions that you and I make every day so many of them are down to money, sex and power.

How do we get more money? How do we get more sex and connection? How do we get more power so we can lord it over people and rise up in the ranks of society? Those are the gods of the day.

[30:40] Those are the gods that we have to repent of every time we come into God's presence. God, those are all little G's. You are the OG. You are the only one. You are the only God.

Isaac Newton said this, the more time and devotion one spends in the worship of false gods the less he is able to spend in that of the true one. What's your God?

As you walked in here this morning, what are the gods that you had that you still have? What worship does, what worship should do as we respond to him is that it should cause us to be in a place where we remember who he is and what he's done and we realize that is far above anything else that we're struggling with and wrestling with and worshipping down here.

That is the goal of why we come and worship together and how do we do that? It's really just allows us to be in a place of gratitude as you look back and go, man, I would be down in the ditch if it wasn't for God.

In my pursuit for money I fell into so many holes and yet I'm only sat here now by the grace of God and for that I worship him. That he is gracious and compassionate. He is slow to anger.

[31:50] He is abounding in steadfast love. That's the God that I'm worshipping. And everything he's done for me. I've told you about my time when I was wrestling with God about coming over to Hong Kong and wrestling in the holiest of places in a pub in England and crying there on a Tuesday morning and that was the reminder.

It was God reminding me through a song. It was, haven't I come through for you at every turn? When have I let you down? It was God kind of turning his back to me and going, where's this mistrust coming from?

You're sat where you are because of everything that I've done. The lack of gratitude you have, my son. That was the thing that broke me and that led me into worship and song did that.

So we praise God for song. You see, sober, it's a sobering thing that really goes, we go through when we worship is because we kind of sober, not in a bad sense, but in a sense of just we are now in more, in tune with reality that I am this small, that I, without God, I'm here, but with God I'm here and everything that he's done for me.

That song we sang at the beginning, our God is a great, big God. See, when you worship with the proper heart, when you worship in spirit and in truth, you'll realize how big truly God is and what the Psalms are filled with.

[33:09] Psalm 8 is just how excellent is your name, how majestic are you in all the earth. And what happens is something beautiful. When you worship and focus on him and what he's done, your problems just shrink and shrink and shrink and shrink and you realize I've been looking at the wrong thing this whole time.

I should cast my eyes onto God and I'll have my perspective calibrated. What's the truth in your life that you need to give thanks for?

What has God done in your life? What are the altars that you kind of have to build to remind yourself of who God is and how good he is? Because if we're honest, we all worry about something. When you're young, you're worrying about your exams so you can get into the right school. Once you get into the right school, then you're worrying about the right friendship groups that you have and then after that, you get into the right university and then you're worrying about the next job. And once you get the next job, you're like, oh, I've got my dream job and I'm finally happy, God, I can worship you until you wonder, oh no, actually, one year later, I kind of want to change my job.

And so then you've got to think about that and you've got to pray, God, I just want to worship you with the right job, the one that I've been gifted and called to.

[34 : 14] Please, can you give me this one? I think this one will be the one that helps me worship you well. And then God, please, would you give me that job? And then, of course, he gives you that job and then two months later, he's like, oh, I can't do life group anymore because I'm too busy with my job.

And my job now makes me too tired so I can't worship you anymore in the same way. We always keep worrying about these things, but the moment we stop and pause and just look back at the whole trail of goodness and faithfulness that has followed us, you're like, man, I am so entitled, I am so spoiled, I am so forgetful for who God is and what he's done.

And the thing that you're worrying about now, in one year's time, in two weeks' time, you're not worried about anymore. Can you see how fickle we are, how forgetful we are? That's why we worship and that's why we worship together.

Verse six, let us worship and bow down. So we worship in spirit, we worship in truth, we worship in community and now we worship in humility. Let us worship and let us bow down, kneel.

It's our whole being. It's every part of us is how we worship and this is where it gets a little bit tricky for me and at least you'll notice for me, I have a journey which is, I grew up in a very conservative place so we worship with our hands in our pockets and then after a while you cross your arms and then you feel some emotions so you cross your arms even more because you're trying to suppress them because you're Chinese and you're like, I'm not going to let this vulnerability out and then I went to worship with other people and they're just free and expressive and I'm like, oh, there's something to that.

[35 : 49] Whoa, that guy's kneeling, bowing down. So I have a thing and you can notice this if you want to but I'm trying only to focus on God. Whenever we are singing a song that says I bow down, I'm like, I kind of need to bow down because that's what the song is saying in my head.

Now, I don't judge you for not doing it but in my own conviction and I had someone tell me this, hey, if you're just wrestling in it, just do it. Why worry? What are people going to say or think other than the fact that they think you're a little bit weird?

That's okay. So I try and follow the songs that we're singing with integrity and say, if that song tells me to do this then I'm going to do this because that's what I'm doing. There's a few of us that last Sunday we went to Macau to watch a sports game and I was just reminded of the passion of sports fans.

There's a picture that we have of Cuban and my son and I think Josh you might have been in that picture too and it's just something great happened and we all just lifted our arms and we're just like, yes!

And I was like, ah, but we don't do that in church often. But football fans, they're just, their whole body is involved in worship.

[37 : 05] And now this is where our culture, I think, we are, of course, on the more conservative side until karaoke is involved and then we just start swaying and then we bring our phones out and the flashlight and that's as expressive as we get as a culture.

But I think there's something about worshipping with your body that is important. There's something that the way you conduct yourself and the way you hold yourself is important and I'm not here saying that there is a standard.

There is no rule. There is whatever you are comfortable with and doing one step beyond that out of your worship for God. That's it. So if you are used to and comfortable worshipping your hands then I encourage you, maybe take your hands out of your pockets.

Maybe just as an act of worship to you, all you need to do is just take your hands out of your pockets. Maybe you're okay with doing the, kind of like, the holding the TV. And if you're good and comfortable with holding the TV as you challenge yourself and as you worship, then maybe lift the TV higher.

And if you're comfortable with raising your arms like you're in a football game, which is what every other fan of every other worshipper, every other thing does, if you go to, next month there'll be Coldplay and I can bet you everyone's worshipping as though with their arms out wide open, right?

[38 : 26] And Chris Martin somehow is able to do it whilst playing piano. But if that's yours, then what's the next step? The whole point isn't what you're actually doing, is where's your heart?

Are you staying within the confines of your fear or are you actually willing to step out and go, God, you deserve every part. And just know that in scripture there is precedence for the whole spectrum. I mean, most people in the Bible would worship either standing up like this, holding their hands in the Bible or literally lying prostrate on the floor.

Those are the two postures that are the most common. Those are the top two. If you look around the world now, I think the top two are arms crossed and hands in pockets. But just know that there is precedence to go, I mean, King David, he would dance in a way that was most undignified than this.

Why? Not because he was trying to get attention for himself but because he was worshipping the one and only true God that he had in his eyes. He was ascribing worth to him and he didn't really care about what anyone else was thinking. So I encourage you, whatever you're comfortable with, just take one step further.

Worship God with your whole heart, soul, mind and strength and all of this is in a sense of humility. God, I am nothing without you. I am this small. So I bow down. I kneel. I bow. Verse seven, and here's where we finish and then we'll have some time of worship.

[39:45] Someone might want to prep Alex for getting ready now. Verse seven, he says, for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. Ancient kings those days would be referred to as shepherds.

Why? Because they would wander lands together. The people would wander into lands together and they would be shepherds. They would be provided for, they would be protected by the king, the shepherd.

And here we have God as our shepherd. And then it goes this, and this is a really interesting passage. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as at Meribah and as on the day at Massa in the wilderness when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof that they had seen my work.

For 40 years, I loathed that generation and said, they are a people who go astray in their heart and they have not known my ways. What's he talking about here? He's talking about the issue of trust. When you worship, what you're saying is the God I ascribe worth to you and I trust you completely. And he says, today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. Don't be like those people in Meribah and Massa.

[40:49] Who are those people who are in Meribah and Massa? If you go back to Exodus 17, it's the Israelites. Remember, they've left Israel and they're wandering to the promised land and they get to a point where they're dehydrated.

There's no water. They're thirsty. They're hungry. And so they go to this place and they're complaining. Meribah means arguing. Massa means testing. And so what he's saying here is that don't argue and don't test.

Don't be sour. Don't be skeptical. What they were doing, what the Israelites were doing at that time, admittedly, I think quite understandable because when I'm hungry or when you're hungry or when you're thirsty, you start going a little bit crazy.

At the very least, you get grouchy. So these people were arguing and testing God and basically what they were saying is that we're not convinced that God will deliver us from this. It is better for us to go back to be slaves in Egypt. You should never brought us out into freedom.

We want to be back there. And so, of course, Moses gets angry at all of this. Have you forgotten what the plight was all those years? And so he named that place Meribah and Massa saying this is the place where you argued and tested God and you kept testing and testing him.

[41:53] And of course, he ultimately provides water through the rock. But what the writer here is saying is don't be like those people. Don't be hard-hearted. Be convinced that God will come through for you because he has come through for you every single time up until now.

What makes you think he won't from this point on? Don't test. Don't argue. Don't be skeptical. And of course, from that, we have the Prince of Egypt song, When You Believe, which really is just, that's the heart of it.

Our worship is when we go to God and go, God, I believe you. Not just for what you will do for me, but I believe that you are who you say you are and that you will do what you say you will do and therefore, I worship.

Therefore, I ascribe worship to you, worth to you and only you and I don't test you. What they have going on here in the Israelites is that there is a self-sufficiency happening.

They're like, you know what? I think if we retrace our steps and head back to Egypt and we bow down to Pharaoh, maybe he'll let us back in and maybe we can be in control of our lives again. [43:02] Yes, we had so many things oppressing us. I remember wanting to die during that time, but at least I'll be in control of it. Now I'm just subject to the weather, subject to this God who isn't giving us the basic requirements.

It's testing here, the idol here, the mini God here is self-sufficiency. Worship banquishes that. When you worship and you say, God, you are this and you've done this and I am this, self-sufficiency goes out the door because it's God that we're worshipping.

And he's saying verse 8 to 9, do not harden your hearts when your father's put me to the test. Imagine a husband constantly testing his wife. Do you love me? Can you show me your love again? That's what the Israelites were doing every time now again.

Sometimes I think that's understandable when you're really hot and hungry and thirsty. But our hearts, that's where the hardness comes. That's when it's like, actually, I'm not believing anymore. I'm not trusting anymore. Worship gets us back to that place. And it's funny because that passage there, and this is where I'll finish, is actually referred to in Hebrews, which is what I've been personally reading.

[44:13] If you turn to me, I promise I won't make you turn back to Psalm after this. The Hebrews writer quotes this Psalm and he says it in chapter 3.

basically, verse 7 onwards, therefore as the Holy Spirit says, chapter 3, verse 7, the book of Hebrews. Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in rebellion on the day of testing in the wilderness.

And he's talking about, really, he's really talking about, hey, the Moses that you follow, the law that you follow, Jesus is even greater. And so he quotes this Psalm from Psalm 95.

And he says, don't be like that. Today, God is trying to lead you into a place of rest. And that's what Hebrews 4 is about.

It's about, how do we get into this place of rest? We all want that place of rest. Well, we can just lie down from the day-to-day grind that we have and just be in a place of rest. If you ask me, how do we get to that place of rest?

[45:14] Today I will tell you it's worship. When you worship and when you remember who God is, when you take the time to reflect and to remember and to remind each other, you will enter this place of rest.

This place of rest where you know that God is with you, that he will provide everything that you need and that he has provided everything that you need up until now and he's not going to stop now. That's what worship is, that it leads us to a place of rest and it's when that comes when we respond to God's goodness.

I love who he is. That's it. William Sperry says this worship is a deliberate and disciplined adventure in reality. It is us committing to this, go on this journey of remembering, responding in worship and ending up in rest.

Do you want that rest? Do you want that place where you can just strive and enter into that rest that Jesus provided for us because he did the work on the cross for us already and that we simply just have to respond to what he did to worship him?

What's worship got to do with being disciplined disciples? Well, you have to choose. You have to choose to come, to turn from your ways to worshiping the things that you're worshiping and saying, come.

[46:32] Worshiping is a discipline thing because it requires you to come with people and people are annoying. We are often, always, Rebecca's just laughing, we are often, always, surrounded by idiots and yet there is something beautiful, beautiful, when it comes to being with people who are different to us, who like different songs to us, who sing at different volumes to us because only then, and you look around the room now and just try not to be awkward and just look at someone who you know is just so different to you and maybe just one glance so they don't know that you've just clocked in that it's them.

You look at that person who's so different from you, I mean, I'll just look at Uday, just like, with just that, with that full head of hair and that facial hair and just the whole thing is we're just so different and then I look at him and then I say, there's a side of God that I'll be able to comprehend when I spend more time with Uday, when I worship with Uday.

That's something that I want because I don't just want a God of my own preference and of my own desire. I want the God of the universe, the great God who is the high king of all kings. It requires discipline to be able to do that. It requires discipline to enter into his presence and honestly, we're all at different stages of the journey to this. There are some people here who you can worship even without music.

You can just sit inside and you just feel the goodness of God and you're just in worship to him. Or you're like 18-year-old James who really loves Hillsong and so you just needed to have some songs to help you get there, to help you articulate the words that you aren't able to articulate yourself and so someone's written them for you.

[48:23] Someone on a beach in Australia has written these words for you so that you can now feel some kind of connection. That might be a place that you're in and maybe we're all fluctuating and we're in different seasons but it requires discipline to take ourselves into that place.

God, I want to worship you. Thank you for giving us tools, low-hanging fruit like music that works but the truth is if I don't worship you, if we don't worship you, even the rocks would cry out because he is worthy of all the praise.

He is God and him alone. So it requires discipline to do that. It requires discipline to recount your steps and go, God, man, you've been so good to be. As a family, we do gratitude books every night and sometimes it's hard because we want to get everyone to sleep but there's a discipline to saying, we're going to be thankful and sometimes we don't have anything to be thankful for and then when we think that, we think, no, there is always something to be thankful for.

It requires discipline and it requires discipline to humble yourself. It requires discipline to just kind of bow down and kneel and go, submit. God, I submit to you. I surrender to you.

I trust you. I worship you. I ascribe ultimate worth to you. Why? Not because of me initiating this but because in response to you applying worth onto us to the point where you died on the cross for me and so my worship, my few songs that I'm going to sing are just a weak, flawed attempt at a response to you, God.

[49:56] this is all I have. I worship you. I'll finish with a quote and then I'll ask Alex and the team to come back up. William Temple says this, to worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.

Let me read it one more time. To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.

So Jesus, we worship you and you alone. You are not number one, you are the only one.

And may our love for you permeate and be involved in all our other loves. But you truly are the only love. And for those of us who rarely feel like that, we pray that your spirit would be the one that guides us.

We are but a vapor in the wind. We are so small. We are so sinful. We are so fickle. We are so forgetful.

[51:33] We go about our days forgetting to worship you. But the truth is you are being worshipped because even the rocks cry out. Creation itself is singing your praise and there is one day, there will come a day where all the saints and angels, all the created beings will bow down before you saying, worthy of worthy are you, O Lord.

Holy are you. So we seek to join that now. We seek to join in the angel song and creation song to sing your praise so that all glory, all your glory will be reflected in this world.

We worship you. we're going to have a slightly extended time of worship and as the team sing over us and as we join in, I pray that you would enter into that space to worship in spirit and truth.

Enter into that space where you come into the presence of God knowing the truth of God. But if you're, if it's all very overwhelming for you, then I have one tip.

Come in humility. humility. Come in humility. And let us worship. God, how great you are.

[53:11] You are the king above all kings. You are the lord above all lords. And so we come into your presence with thanksgiving in our hearts for who you are, for what you've done, for what you are doing and what you will do.

Lord, our problem seems so small when compared to you. Your greatness, your majesty, your excellence, your goodness, your faith in us.

that follows us all the days of our lives. Lord, we, how we yearn to just be in your presence all day, every minute of every day. So Lord, we worship you with everything that we have, with our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

it is you and only you that we yearn for. Lord, if we could, we would stay here to gather here amongst the saints, amongst our brothers and sisters.

There is no place we'd rather be, as the song goes, to be here in your love. But Lord, we also ask you to set a fire in our hearts, a fire that compels us not just to gather but to scatter, not to stay in this room but to leave this room and to go where your spirit leads us.

[55 : 11] Spirit, would you lead us through into that place where we can follow you where our faith is without borders, that we would bring the good news of Jesus Christ to any who care to hear it, that God is great, that there is darkness in this world but there is a light that is shining, that is already here, the light of the world that gives life.

So Lord, we seek to be that light as we go. So we conclude this time reluctantly.

But we're also grateful that our worship of you does not stop here. But we do finish now with just our eyes focus on you.

Maybe I'll ask the worship team to continue as we put a formal end to this time but those who need to leave can quietly head away and see you next week.

But for those who want to just stay in this space a little bit more, let's respect what the Lord might be doing here amongst people. If you see someone next to you who you feel compelled to pray for them, would you do that?

[56 : 42] Let us come in here and leave with our eyes on the Lord. We thank you. See you all next week.

Thank you.