

**Worship Matters Video Intensive with Bob Kauflin**  
**Session 1: The Important Things: Heart and Mind**  
**(From Chapters 1-3 of *Worship Matters*)<sup>1</sup>**  
**Transcript**

Welcome to the first session of the Worship Matters Video Intensive. In this session, we're going to be talking about the important things. This is part one, and we're going to be addressing the heart and the mind.

I've been leading music in the church since the late '70s and just as a reminder, that was before the internet existed, that was as drums were just finding their way into Sunday services and that was long before things like worship conferences, worship artists and worship companies were around. A lot of things have changed since then but in this intensive, I want to talk about the things that haven't changed, the things that are really important, the things that really matter.

**I. Worship Matters**

I called my book and this video series "Worship Matters." It's kind of a play on words. We're going to be talking about worship matters, the things that relate to worship like our songs, our meetings, our prayers. These things are important because we do them week after week.

But second, and more importantly, worship *matters* because everyone, everywhere, every moment is worshipping something or someone and when we don't realize who or what we're worshipping, it can lead us to some deceptive, dangerous and ultimately destructive places. So, worship matters.

Now, we don't need a course to teach us how to worship. You and I are already worshipping. In fact, we are great at worshipping! The question is are we worshipping God as he's revealed himself to us through Jesus Christ, or are we worshipping something else?

**II. Worship, Love, & Idolatry**

Now, someone came up and asked Jesus this question in Matthew 22: "What is the greatest commandment?" And this is how Jesus responds in verse 37:

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." - Matthew 22:37<sup>2</sup>*

While worship involves more than love, it doesn't involve less than love because whatever we love most becomes our God, whether that's for a moment, or a lifetime, or an eternity. And whatever we love, want or desire more than God becomes god to us, although it's not God, it's an idol. It's a false god.

Idols promise that they can satisfy us, that they can make us happy, that they can bring us peace and because we believe them, we think that idols can

actually do those things; they control us. They end up becoming our authority, the reason we do the things we do.

They become gods to us and sadly, non-Christians aren't the only ones who worship idols. God's people do too. The Old Testament is filled with examples of the Israelites worshipping God while at the same time worshipping idols. We see it at Mount Sinai where Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments and at the same time, the Israelites are worshipping the Golden Calf. From then on, the prophets continue to bring rebuke to God's people, telling them to stop worshipping their idols. Even in the New Testament, at the end of the first letter of John, the last verse says,

*"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."* - 1 John 5:21

So, how does this happen? How do we as Christians end up worshipping idols? We say we love the true God, but our actions and thoughts show that we love and serve other gods. Well, it's because we have a professed God, a God we profess to worship, and then we have functional gods, gods that we actually worship and serve. As Christians, we sometimes say that we worship the God who sent Jesus to die for our sins, but then we run after, we pursue the very sins that Jesus died to free us from. Idolatry is the reason why our greatest problem, our greatest challenge in worshipping God is not an ineffective leader, or a bad song or our lack of skill, or an out of tune guitar, or the people in our church, or the people around us, or our circumstances. Our greatest challenge in leading others to encounter the greatness of God is the idols we worship in our hearts, so that's where we have to begin as we're talking about how to lead others to encounter the greatness of God.

#### A. My Story

Now this may seem like familiar territory, it certainly was for me, in the mid-90's, about the time I was turning 40, I was a pastor in a church plant and, in many ways, life was going great. People were being added to the church, lives were changing, my family seemed to be in a good place, then things started to happen. People who had come with us on the church plant started to leave and they said some not very kind things as they left. The people who stayed became more vocal about their disagreements and during that whole season, my idol of people's praise was being challenged and confronted. I knew this was happening, and early in January of 1994, I wrote in my journal: "God, please do whatever you have to do to deal with pride in my life." Now, I just want to warn you—don't pray that prayer if you don't mean it. Because God did exactly that. He dealt with the pride in my life.

A few weeks later, my wife Julie and I were over at another couple's house for dinner, and I felt something odd, and in a moment, my mind snapped. I looked fine on the outside, but on the inside, my world was falling apart. In an instant, I felt disconnected from my past, and my present and my future. Nothing made sense; my mind was racing. And that night began a journey of anxiety, fear, despair and hopelessness that

lasted almost three years. I had all kinds of physical symptoms: hollowness in my chest, buzzing in my face and my arms, itching, I had tension, I had panic attacks. For three months, daily, I thought I was going to die. I was unable to control my thinking. I wanted to sleep all the time, but I couldn't sleep. So I went and got a physical to try and see what was wrong, and the physical showed that everything was fine.

But the physical couldn't measure what was going on in my heart. And what was going on in my heart was a war, and it was a worship war. I was fighting God to be god. I wanted credit that only God deserved. I wanted credit and praise for all the good things that were happening in my life. And I wanted control over everything in my life, I wanted things to work out the way that I wanted them to. I had a hard time believing that God really deserved all the credit. I thought I deserved at least a little bit. And I had a hard time thinking that God was actually in control over everything, that He was sovereign and not me. I was trying to act like God, and in His mercy, God let me experience the consequences. Now, why did He do that? Why would He do that? Well, it's because God is seeking worshippers. God's seeking those who worship Him in spirit and truth.

And specifically, I learned some things during that time about worship.

## B. Lessons Learned

### 1. We are great sinners, Jesus is a great Savior

I learned that I'm a greater sinner than I ever thought I was. And I also learned that Jesus is a greater Savior than I ever knew him to be. I remember about a year into what I now called my "pride breakdown," I met with a good friend, Gary Ricucci, whom I now serve with on a pastoral team in Louisville, Kentucky. I said "Gary, I feel completely hopeless!" Gary looked at me, and in that loving, pastoral way he said, "I don't think you're hopeless enough." And I don't know what my face showed, but inside I was going "What are you saying?! Of course I'm hopeless!" But then he went on to say this: "If you were completely hopeless, you'd stop trusting in yourself and what you can do and start trusting in what Jesus Christ has already done for you." Though I knew those words were true, I wasn't quite sure why. And over the next couple of years, I worked out why they were true. God used that counsel to help me see that the problem wasn't that I was hopeless—I had plenty of hope—but that my hope was in *myself*. I thought I was the savior, I thought I was the ultimate deliverer. And when the one I put my hope in didn't deliver, I was crushed. That's what made me feel hopeless. But when I turned my eyes to see that Jesus is the Savior, I was full of hope.

### 2. God is God and we are not.

There's another thing I learned about worship. I learned that God is God and I'm not. I have memories of getting down on the floor on my hands and knees and just crying out to God, saying: "God, you are God and I am not. You are God and I am not."

For years, I think I had had this sense that God was getting a good deal when He put me on His team. Kind of like he gathered the angels around and said, "Look at Bob—he'll be a good add to the Kingdom!" That was not the situation. I was running as fast as I could away from God, doing what I wanted to, living life the way that I wanted to, thinking that I was pleasing Him, not wanting to give Him the glory that He alone deserved. God is God, and I am not.

3. We can fully trust the God that gave his Son to die in our place for our sins.

Here's something else: I learned that I can fully trust the God that gave His Son to die in my place, for my sins. It was the gospel that set me free to be a worshipper of God. Because Jesus said this:

*"And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."* - John 17:3

I thought I knew God—and I did know Him in some ways—but God wanted me to know Him better, and since that time I've cultivated some practices that have helped me fight the idols that I was struggling with at that time. People have asked me over the years "Do you still struggle with that kind of stuff?" And I respond "Well, to a degree, but I've learned that my hope isn't me, my hope isn't the people around me, my hope is Jesus Christ." And I've tried to cultivate practices that help me with that. So, whether or not you can relate to what I went through, I think that these can help point your heart to worshipping the true God rather than idols.

### C. Helpful Practices in Battling Idolatry

I found it helpful to look for opportunities to confess my sin. Tell people things about myself that make me look not as good as I want to look, tell people things that they wouldn't know otherwise about me unless I told them. Our tendency is to tell people the best things about ourselves, to shape the facts so that we look better. How different that is from reality. This is what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:30:

*"If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness."* - 2 Corinthians 11:30

So how freeing it is, rather than trying to get people to think of how great I am, letting them know how weak and insufficient I am, so that if anything

good comes through my life people will say “Well, he’s a loser, but Jesus is a great Savior!” That’s what we want people to see: that Jesus is a great Savior.

Here’s another practice: I look for things to be grateful for. I tend to be a complainer, I tend to be critical, but I’m seeking to learn to be grateful. When we walk into a room, our tendency is to look around and try to measure ourselves up against everybody else. “Am I better than them? Am I worse than them?” How much different it would be for our souls if we looked around for the evidences of grace in people’s lives and said, “God, thank you for all of the ways that You’ve blessed me, starting with the fact that I’m not under Your wrath anymore, that I’m Your child, that You love me, that I’m dearly loved and will be spending eternity with You! And Lord, thank you for all of these blessings that You’ve given me on top of that.” Practice being grateful.

I’ve learned to seek to encourage others. To not only be grateful in my heart, but to tell them, “Thank you for doing that.” “Thank you for being that way.” “Thank you for saying this.” “Thank you for getting that job done.” To encourage evidences of grace where I see it.

And I also learned to serve people. As we seek to serve those around us, it gives us a lot less opportunity to think about ourselves.

So, some of those are the ways that I have sought to fight the idols of the heart that are our greatest hindrance to worshipping and knowing God. That’s what it’s about: it’s about knowing God truly. We don’t want to settle for vague and uninformed and culturally determined ideas of who God is. We don’t want our knowledge of God resting on our best guesses. We don’t want to see God through our experiences and our circumstances. So, while the first important thing about worshipping God is our hearts, the second important thing is our minds.

### **III. The Importance of Knowing God Truly**

That’s because to know God, to worship Him supremely, we have to know Him truly. God’s revealed Himself to us in different ways. Romans 1:20 says that “creation shows us God’s eternal power and divine nature.” We can also come to know something of God through our circumstances and through our prayers. But the only authoritative way—the only accurate way—to know God is through the way he’s revealed Himself to us, which is His Word.

Now, when we talk about worship we often equate it with music, but worshipping God doesn’t begin with music, it begins with God. Not God as we conceive Him to be, or think He should be, but who He’s actually revealed Himself to be in His Word. Because the only thoughts about God that matter, the only thoughts about God that are truly authoritative, that are going to last, are found in God’s Word. Now, you may not think of yourself as a theologian—you already are. The question is whether you’re a good theologian or a bad theologian. You’re a good theologian if your thoughts about God line up with what we find in His Word.

You're a bad theologian if they don't. So, if we're going to lead others in worshipping God, we want to know Him better through reading, and studying and meditating on God's Word.

Now people through the years have pushed back on this point, they've told me "Well, worship is more about how I feel about God. Stop distracting me with all this information. I just want to love God!" Well, let me address some of those objections, and maybe you'll find them helpful.

A. Objection 1: "I don't have time to read."

Some people say "Well, I don't have time to read. I just don't have time to read." I think you do! We all do! Life is full, yes. But if we add up all the time we spend watching TV, browsing Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, going to movies, exercising, hanging out with our friends, we'll realize we do have time to read the Bible, we just spend it doing other things. We make time for what we love. And if we want to know God better, we'll make time to read His Word. We often forget that this is a book that men and women through the centuries have given their lives for so that we could have the privilege of reading it. Many of us have *a number* of Bibles in our homes. In some countries it's difficult to get your hands on one. Whatever your situation, we don't want to take it for granted that God has revealed Himself to us in His Word. And we can read it to know Him better.

B. Objection 2: "I don't like to read."

Another objection I hear is "Well, I just don't like to read." Musicians don't always make great readers. Of course, we read about the things we care about: guitar website, a text from our spouse or significant other, email from a boss, Facebook newsfeed, a letter from a friend we haven't heard from in years. Well, the Bible is unlike anything we'll ever read. Its origin is God Himself. His message is timeless and it has power to change our lives. But it's not just the Bible we should read. It's also helpful to read books that help us read the Bible better. Bible studies, devotionals, theology books. You know, some people say, "Well, I just read my Bible, that's all I need." Well, maybe so, but Charles Spurgeon, one of the greatest preachers of the nineteenth century in England, said this, and I think it's true:

*"He who will not use the thoughts of other men's brains proves he has no brains of his own."* - Charles Spurgeon<sup>3</sup>

Amen. Being a musician is a choice. Being a theologian isn't. And if we want to be good theologians, we'll read God's Word.

C. Objection 3: "Understanding the Bible is hard."

Here's another objection. People say, "Understanding the Bible is hard." I understand. It is. But then I'll hear some of those same people rattle off details of some new software program they've come across, or a new line of music gear, or some technological issue without the slightest indication that it took hours if not years to gain that knowledge. Of course understanding the Bible is hard. God is revealing Himself to us. It will take work to understand what He's saying. Oh, but what a joyful work it is! Listen to how it's described in Proverbs 2. This is talking about the knowledge of God, and the work involved.

*"If you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God."*  
- Proverbs 2:3

There are hidden treasures in here. Are we willing to seek them, to invest the time to find out what those treasures are? Oh, I pray you are.

D. Objection 4: "I know God better through music than words."

And then a final objection that people will give: "I know God better through music than words." I understand that impulse. Music speaks deeply to our emotions. It moves us in profound and powerful ways, but we need words to explain those emotions. And without words, we have no idea who it is we're worshipping or why. Let me give you an example.

[peaceful musical interlude]

What emotion does that communicate? I've asked that of numerous groups of people over time and they'll say things like "peace, calm, tranquility" and I'll say, "You're exactly right. That's what that music was seeking to communicate. But you have no idea why I'm calm. You have no idea why I'm feeling peace, why I'm feeling tranquil. We need words to explain it or we need words to accompany it. As musicians, we can easily trust our feelings about God more than the truth about God, which is why it's so important that we get to know God through His Word and not just through music.

Now this has been a journey for me. I've sought to know God for years, I've been a Christian for over 40 years. I've developed more of a conviction about this as a result of one time when I was a pastor at a church and we were going to read through the Bible in a year. We were taking on a new translation as a church—the English Standard Version—and we were going to read through the Bible. Well, I had never read through the Bible, even though I'd been a Christian for decades, so I thought I should read through the Bible, since I was a pastor. So I took my Bible, it was 1200 pages, and I said "Well, I don't think I'm going to be able to do this, but let's say I wanted to read it in 200 days through the year." Well there were 1200 pages, I divided it by 200 pages, so, every time I was going to read the Word I was going to read 6 pages. Well, lo

and behold at the end of ten months, I'd finished reading through the Bible. I couldn't believe it! And one of the first things I wanted to do was read it again, because in reading through the Bible, I had two thoughts. 1) I couldn't believe that God had given me His Word and I had never taken the time to read through it, and 2) I couldn't believe how little I knew of God through His Word. That began a journey where I read through the Bible again, and I read through it again, and I used different Bibles studies. I used D.A. Carson's *For the Love of God, Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2*, I read through the Reformation Study Bible, I read Mark Dever's Old and New Testament Commentaries. I used different means and, sometimes, I just read through the Bible.

And here's what I learned. I learned that God is much bigger than I think He is. I learned that I didn't know God as well as I thought I did. And my appeal—my encouragement to you—is that you get to know God through His Word; that you'd not rely on your feelings, your circumstances, your opinions, what other people say, but you'd get to know Him through His Word. Because the more we get to know Him through His Word, the more we want to know Him. The less impressed we become with what people say, the more we become impressed with what God says.

#### **IV. Both Heart and Mind**

God doesn't want our love for Him to be groundless. He wants it to be rooted in His Word. He wants us to know Him for who He really is and to love Him in response because that knowledge is what leads to God-honoring worship. Worship without true knowledge leads to misguided emotionalism. Doctrinal knowledge without love, leads to rigid, harsh, lifeless orthodoxy. God never intended for our hearts and minds to be separated. And He's given us everything we need for both in His written Word, the Bible, and in the Living Word, Jesus Christ. What other response can we have the more we get to know God truly in Jesus Christ than to love Him more and worship Him more with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength?



## Session 1 Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss some common idols for worship team members. What idols have you been personally tempted to look to for peace, joy, satisfaction, etc. while leading God's people in times of congregational worship?
2. Having received the freedom of forgiveness in Christ and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, what are some practical steps you can take to battle the idols that call for your attention on Sunday morning?
3. Bob says "Being a musician is a choice, being a theologian isn't." What does he mean when he says that being a theologian is not a choice?
4. Which of the four objections Bob gives (no time to read, don't like to read, hard to understand, prefer knowing God through music) keep you from spending time in God's Word? What steps can you take to pursue God's Word more consistently and deeply?
5. How has God met you in your pursuit of his Word?

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<sup>1</sup> *Worship Matters* by Bob Kauflin, © 2008 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL 60187, [www.crossway.org](http://www.crossway.org).

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Spurgeon, Sermon #542 on 2 Timothy 4:13, November 29, 1863. *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 9 (1863); [www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0542.html](http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0542.html)