

Worship Matters Video Intensive with Bob Kauflin
Session 4: Our Task (Part 2)
(From Chapters 9-10 of *Worship Matters*)¹
Transcript

Welcome to Session 4 of the Worship Matters Video Intensive. We've begun to unpack this definition of a worship leader:

*A faithful worship leader
magnifies the greatness of God
in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit
by skillfully combining God's Word with music,
thereby motivating the gathered church to proclaim the gospel,
to cherish God's presence, and to live for God's glory.*

In the last session we talked about magnifying God—magnifying his greatness and helping people see how great God really is. In this session we want to dig a little deeper into how that's done: in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I. ...In Jesus Christ...

We can see the greatness of God in a variety of ways:

- In the diversity of nature
- In the vastness of outer space
- Providential circumstances
- In the beauty of music and art

There are a number of places we can go to see God's greatness, but the Bible is clear that his greatness, glory, and goodness are most clearly seen—they've been most clearly revealed to us—in Jesus Christ. Listen to what Paul says:

"For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." - 2 Corinthians 4:6²

What we are saved to see, what we are saved to pursue, and what we are saved to treasure is God's glory in Jesus Christ.

But how are we to treasure Jesus? What should move us about him? What should astound us, and comfort us, and amaze us about Jesus? There are so many places we can go! We could highlight his sovereignty, his mercy, his compassion, his love, his power, his authority, his tenderness, and more, but Scripture directs us to one event in particular when it comes to glorying in Jesus Christ. See if you can pick it up from these verses:

"For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." - 1 Corinthians 2:2

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.” - 1 Corinthians 15:3

“But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” - Galatians 6:14

A. The Cross and Worship

Scripture seems to direct our attention to the place where Jesus died. One institution that Jesus gave the church is the Lord’s Supper, communion, by which we are to remember his death until he comes. That death took place on the cross and when Paul speaks of boasting in nothing but the cross, he using that word as shorthand for all Christ accomplished through his death at Calvary. The cross takes into account who it was that was on the cross: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who existed in glory with the Father and Spirit before anything came to be, who came to earth as a man, who lived a life of perfect obedience, who died on the cross and then was raised from the dead, ascended to the Father’s right hand and is presently reigning and interceding for us, and who will one day return for his Bride with whom he will live forever!

All that is summed up in the phrase, “the cross.”

Now there’s always a danger of using "cross" language mindlessly or as a means of checking it off the list. “Yeah, we sang songs about the cross, I talked about the cross, I used the word cross.”

And emphasizing the cross doesn’t mean we ignore or minimize the resurrection. If the resurrection didn’t happen, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:19, we are of all people most to be pitied. The cross and resurrection cannot and should not be separated, but at the heart of our relationship with God is the substitutionary death of the Son of God, apart from which nothing else makes sense.

Scottish theologian P.T. Forsyth wrote,

“Christ is to us just what his cross is. All that Christ was in heaven or on earth was put into what he did there... You do not understand Christ till you understand his cross.” - P.T. Forsyth³

Now I understand that people will respond by saying, “Well, yes, but there’s so much more,” and yes, there is so much more, but at the heart, at the center, is the death of Jesus Christ for sinners. So we will not understand Christ until we understand his cross and we will not understand worship until we understand his cross.

So let’s look at why Paul told the Corinthians he was “determined to know nothing among them but Christ and him crucified.” Why is Jesus’ death on the cross so important to our worship of God? Here’s the first reason:

1. Jesus and his work on the cross give us access to God.

When Adam and Eve first sinned we were cut off from God's presence and his gracious rule, but God provided a means of approaching him through sacrifice.

Along with daily, weekly and annual sacrifices, one day every year, the Day of Atonement, the holiest man from the holiest tribe offered the holiest sacrifice in the holy of holies for the holiest people on earth, and that's how we were able to approach God.

Fast forward to Jesus Christ, who is our new temple, our new High Priest, and our full and final sacrifice and this is how the writer of Hebrews describes what he did for us:

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." - Hebrews 10:19–22

For centuries, God had been saying to his people, "Don't come near unless you come through the priest that I have ordained. Don't dare come near or you'll die!" And people were very aware of the holiness of God and their inability to draw near to God apart from those sacrifices.

And now, God is saying, "Come! Come near! Yes, my son, Jesus Christ, through his flesh, through his death on the cross, now you can draw near to me and come into my presence freely, boldly! I've removed the hindrances!" It's amazing! That means we are under NO pressure to bring people into God's presence. You can't do it! It's an incredible reality that every second of our lives, if you are a Christian, you are in the presence of God because of Jesus' death on the cross which gives us access to God. And so we sing songs like:

*My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know that while in heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart*

We have access because of what Jesus did 2,000 years ago on the cross.

Here's a second reason why what Jesus did is so crucial to our worship:

2. Jesus and his work on the cross make our worship acceptable to God.

How good do our offerings of worship have to be before they are finally acceptable to God? How many notes do we have to play? And how well? How sincere do we have to be? Can we ever be sure we're sincere enough?

Our worship isn't accepted by God on the basis of *our* promises and performance. It's accepted on the basis of *God's* promises and *Jesus'* performance. Peter tells us,

"You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." - 1 Peter 2:5

This is such great news. I remember when this first came clear to me. God showed me it's not what you do that makes your offering of worship acceptable; it's what Jesus has done.

God doesn't accept our worship because we *feel* worthy or because we *feel* close to him. He accepts us through faith in what Jesus Christ did 2000 years ago. That's how we have acceptable offerings of worship because of what Jesus did.

Here's a third reason why Jesus' work on the cross is so important to our worship:

3. Jesus and his work on the cross most fully reveal the glory of God.

Puritan John Owen who lived from 1616-1683, one of the finest theological minds England ever produced, said this in his book *The Glory of Christ*:

"In Christ we behold the wisdom, goodness, love, grace, mercy, and power of God all working together for the great work of our redemption and salvation. The wisdom and love of God are in themselves infinitely glorious. But we cannot see how glorious they are except in the redemption and salvation of the church which is achieved only in and by Christ." - John Owen⁴

Here's some of the things that we can see:

- God's **justice** requiring a perfect payment for sins committed against a perfectly holy God
- God's **holiness** acting to judge our sin by pouring out his wrath on his own Son
- God's **mercy** providing a substitute for rebellious, helpless sinners

- God's **wisdom** providing a solution for a seemingly impossible dilemma

We see all that and much, much more in the cross. Theologian David Prior insightfully said,

"We never, therefore, move on from the cross of Christ, only into a more profound understanding of the cross." - David Prior⁵

In the cross we most fully and clearly see the glory of God.

One more reason the cross is so crucial to our worship:

4. Jesus and his work on the cross are eternally significant to God.

When God the curtains of heaven are pulled back in the book of Revelation, we see what is taking place there. What do we learn about worship? What is the focus? What's the theme?

"And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.'" - Revelation 5:9–10

Nothing impresses God more than the substitutionary, sacrificial death of His own Son. And you know what? Nothing should impress us more either.

We have this tendency to move on from the gospel because it's so simple. We move on to things that are more profound, more spiritual, more amazing, more transforming, like social justice, spiritual gifts, strange manifestations, whatever. Those are fruitless pursuits. The Son of God left his throne in glory to redeem a people for his Father who would forever enjoy his love. It just doesn't get any better than that. There is nothing more profound. There's no better story to tell. All the stories we tell, all the fiction we read is all derived from this story, the true story of how the Son of God came to die in our place so that we might enjoy God forever.

II. ...through the Power of the Holy Spirit...

So that is something of what it means to magnify the greatness of God in Jesus Christ. But we do this, we must do this through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Confusion abounds as to what it means to worship God through the power of the Holy Spirit. So we're going to get into this topic more thoroughly later on when we talk about God's presence so let me just say a few things now.

I was leading once at a conference of about 3000 people and the power went out and so I ended up trying to lead through a bullhorn. I say “trying to lead” because I’m not sure it was successful it was. It certainly was humbling. Most of us can recognize when the power goes out, when the electrical power goes out, we’re not so perceptive when the spiritual power goes out, but it’s far more serious and that’s what we’re talking about.

A. Worship by the Spirit

Just as we can’t worship God apart from Jesus Christ, we can’t worship him apart from the Holy Spirit. Paul says in Philippians 3:

We are those “who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—” - Philippians 3:3

Now for years, I thought that the phrase “worship by the Spirit” referred to things like unplanned moments, or heightened emotional experiences, or certain gifts of the Spirit. I think Scripture allows for and encourages those things, but I don’t think that’s what worshiping by the Spirit of God means. When we talk about Magnifying God’s glory in Christ through the power of the Spirit, it means at least three things:

1. We put no confidence in the flesh. (Scripture and prayer)

That’s what Paul says in Philippians 3:3, we put no confidence in the flesh. One of the reasons we get nervous when we lead is that we are depending on something other than the Spirit to get the job done – whether that be our experience, or our practice, our preparation, our skills, our leadership, our song choices. Anxiety rises in our hearts when we think that what we’ve done won’t be enough to affect people or that God somehow won’t “show up.”

I talked to a prominent worship leader a number of years back about this very thing and he was saying how every time he stepped up he just felt nervous. He didn’t know whether God was going to show up. God doesn’t want us to be like that. Worshiping God through the Holy Spirit means that we are trusting God alone to do the work that only he can do – to direct people’s eyes to Jesus Christ, to convict them of sin, to assure them that they belong to him, and to transform their hearts. Only God can do that. We don’t need to bear the burden of that. We don’t have that responsibility.

Now the primary ways we show our dependence on God’s Spirit are through submitting to Scripture, God through his Spirit has spoken to us, and for asking for his supernatural activity in prayer. Praying before, during, and after a meeting is a significant way we express our dependence on God and turn from relying on our flesh.

2. We expect God to act powerfully when we gather. (Faith)

Our meetings aren't like civic clubs or a random group of individuals who just happen to show up on a Sunday morning. And we aren't simply moving through the details of our liturgy, checking things off. We're God's people gathered in God's presence beholding the glory Christ. We are being changed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. So we can expect great things to happen, not because of who we are, but because of who God is and because of what he's promised. There are no normal Sundays.

And God acting doesn't always look a certain way. God's Spirit can work through very ordinary means—songs, scripture readings, sermons, as well as spontaneous ways—prophetic impressions, prayers for healing, encouraging exhortation. In every instance we can expect God to do far more abundantly than all that we can ask or think, through his power at work within us, Ephesians 3:20 tells us.

Another way we can worship God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit is to:

3. We respond to his direction. (Responsiveness)

God is always eager to reveal his greatness and goodness when we meet, but he typically uses means, and those means are us. How often has a thought popped into mind when planning for a meeting? Has it ever happened when you're actually leading the meeting? Maybe you think, "Oh, we should sing a different song here" or "maybe we should repeat that verse or that song" or maybe it's a prayer, a scripture, maybe it's a burden for a particular group of people, you think we should pray for them but you don't do it. You don't do anything. You quickly dismiss it because it's out of the ordinary or worse, it might put you at risk, it might make you look foolish.

Well over the years I've learned to think of those moments as a win-win situation. If I act on an impressio—now if I do that, I want to make sure that my pastor is behind that, that he trusts me enough to do something like this—but if I act on it and people are encouraged and blessed, that's a win because God has used me to encourage the church. That's great! You know, if I do something spontaneously and the pastor comes back to me later and says, "That was not good," or it's evident that it just really didn't work out well, well then I'm humbled, and 1 Peter says that God gives grace to the humble, so I receive grace as a result, and I'm blessed. So, that's a win too! So you really can't go wrong in seeking to faithfully respond and humbly respond to senses that

you might get in planning or leading a meeting that are meant to encourage God's people for the glory of Jesus.

Over the years I've found it helpful just to think of ourselves as mailmen. We're faithfully delivering the mail—God's Word and the gospel—to those we serve. Now, we don't know how we're going to affect people, just like a mailman. He's going around putting things in people's boxes. He doesn't know if it's a check for a thousand dollars or if it's a letter for a dear friend, or if it's a payment due. We don't know. We just deliver it. We're just faithful to deliver it. We don't have to make a big deal about it. We don't have to try to get people to think, "Oh I can hear the Spirit like you can't." We don't have to any of that. We're just seeking to be faithful. Who knows what God might do through our faithful, humble responsiveness? Might we see more of the situation like what Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians 14, when he says the unbeliever comes in, he hears everybody prophesying,

"He is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you." - 1 Corinthians 14:24-25

May we have many such experiences in our churches through the power of the Spirit in the name of Jesus for the glory of the Father!

Session 4 Discussion Questions:

1. What things, other than the cross, compete for your attention when you lead?
2. What are practical ways you can remind yourself and your church that Christ and his work on the cross give us access to God?
3. How could remembering that Jesus makes our worship acceptable to God change the way you think about your performance as a musician/singer?
4. What things are you tempted to depend on to get the job done rather than the Holy Spirit?
5. What are some practical ways you can express your dependence on God?
6. How can you personally grow in responding to the Spirit's guidance and direction during worship leading?

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³ Taken from *The Cruciality of The Cross* by P.T. Forsyth, p. 44-45. Published by Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1909.

⁴ Taken from *The Glory of Christ* by John Owen © 1966, p. 25. Published by Banner of Truth UK. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

⁵ Taken from *The Message of 1 Corinthians* by David Prior © 2014, p. xxxiii. Published by InterVarsity Press, Westmont, IL. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.