



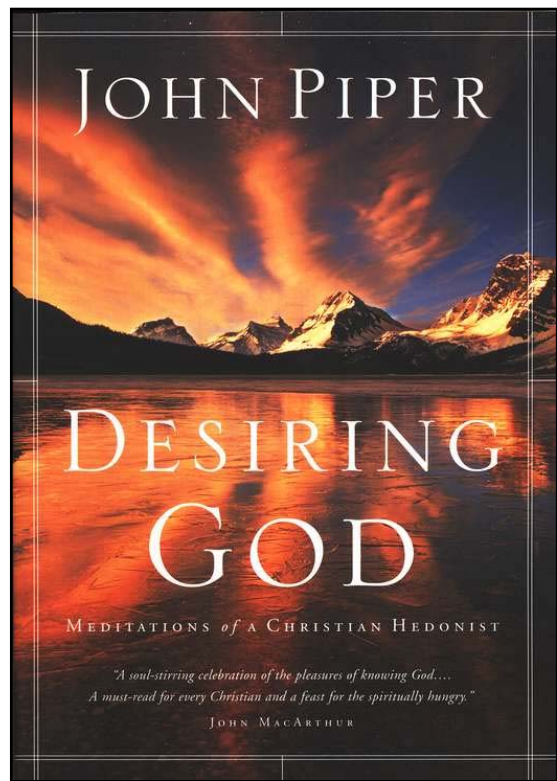
DEAN WELCH – TEACHER



WEEKLY SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

APRIL 18, 2010

LESSON #3 FROM THE *MASTERWORK* SERIES STUDY OF:



PLAYING CHURCH
WORSHIP – MARK 12:30

The Taj Mahal—one of the seven wonders of the world—is one of the most beautiful and costly tombs in the world. It was built in the 1600s by Mogul Emperor Shah Jahan. Without doubt, The Taj Mahal ranks as among the most perfect buildings in the world, flawlessly proportionate, built entirely out of marble over a period of 22 years. Although there are many legends about the Taj Mahal, there is one that haunts.

After the death of his favorite wife, Shah Jahan was devastated and resolved to honor her by constructing a temple that would serve as her tomb. Her coffin was placed in the center of a large parcel of land, and construction of the temple began around it. No expense would be spared to make her final resting place magnificent. But as the weeks turned into months, the Shah's grief was eclipsed by his passion for the project. He no longer mourned her absence. The construction consumed him. One day, while walking from one side of the construction site to the other, his leg bumped against a wooden box. The prince brushed the dust off his leg and ordered the worker to throw the box out.

Shah Jahan didn't know he had ordered the disposal of the coffin—now forgotten—hidden beneath layers of dust and time. The one the temple was intended to honor was forgotten, but the temple was erected anyway. Difficult to believe? Perhaps. But eerie nonetheless. Could someone build a temple and forget why? Could someone construct a palace, yet forget the king? Could someone sculpt a tribute and forget the hero? You answer those questions. But answer them in church. Look around when you go in and see if you can tell WHY people are there? Is it to see friends and catch up on the week's events? Is it to hear the choir and sing? Is it to hear a great sermon from the pastor?

Today, we wrap up Week Three of our Bible study from John Piper's *Desiring God* about worship. So, let's think about worship.

Some of you might have questioned the meaning of the title on the board today. As you think about that, I want to remind you first of our memory verse from Week One: **PSALM 37:4 (NIV)** says, *"Delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart."* Can someone share a moment when you found **joy** in God this week—true delight?

In order to encourage others, let me share something special. As I was planning this lesson on worship and delighting in the LORD, I thought about the beautiful sunrises over the ocean I get to enjoy each morning as I spend time in God's Word. These times are so special to me that even my wife and children know how much I enjoy them—it's like standing in the presence of God each morning as I wait to see what He will paint across the sky for me that day. As a matter of fact, I brought this book that one of my children gave me for my last birthday—called *"Inlet Paradise."* I am so blown away by what God does in the sky each day that I keep my digital camera handy and take a picture or two most mornings. Well, this book contains 20 pages of **my pictures** that one of my children downloaded from my camera, then put them together in this book with a scripture verse accompanying each one. You'll notice the cover is an awesome sunrise from my back deck and the scripture passage chosen was from **JOB 37:14**, *"Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God."* WOW!

How can you not worship the one true living God when you experience something like this each and every day. Look at this one on Page 15—a bright sunrise over an apparent high tide. The verse chosen is from **PSALM 111:2-3** which says, *"Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. Full of honor and majesty is His work, and His righteousness endures forever."* **Anyone else want to share a moment that you found joy in God this week?**

As we talk about worship, please remember the words from **JOHN 4:23-24 (NIV)** that you read this week in your Bible study about the woman at the well: *"²³Yet a time is coming and has now come*

*when the true worshipers will **worship** the Father in **spirit** and **truth**, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴God is spirit, and **his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.**"* Let me ask you what it means to worship God in spirit and in truth? Why do we need both? What is the difference? (THE LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE COMMENTARY EXPLAINS IT THIS WAY: "IF WE ARE NOT WORSHIPING "IN SPIRIT," OUR WORSHIP WILL BE DRY AND LIFELESS. WORSHIP NOT DONE "IN TRUTH" BECOMES DECEITFUL OR IRRELEVANT. "IN SPIRIT" REMINDS US WHO WE ARE WORSHIPING. "IN TRUTH" EXPOSES THE REQUIRED GENUINENESS OF THOSE DOING THE WORSHIPING. TO PARAPHRASE JESUS, "TRUE WORSHIPERS WORSHIP TRUTHFULLY." BY CONTRAST, FLESHLY OR FALSE WORSHIP WOULD BE: PRETENDING TO BE SOMEONE OR SOMETHING WE ARE NOT; DISPLAYING PREJUDICE TOWARD OTHERS WHO ARE ALSO MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE; PRACTICING SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS BY DENYING OUR CONSTANT NEED FOR GOD'S MERCY AND GRACE; WORSHIPING IN IGNORANCE OR SUPERSTITION WITHOUT KNOWING THE REALITY FOR OURSELVES; BLINDLY WORSHIPING OUT OF HABIT WITH NO HEARTFELT DEVOTION."]

Look at the title of today's lesson on the board and let me ask you what your thoughts were when you read those words—**playing church**? Have you ever felt as if you were just "*playing church*"? When was the last time you decided to stop "*playing church*" and start really worshipping? Chuck Swindoll says that if the truth were known, many believers don't have a clue what worship is. He says we wonder: "*Does **worship** mean that I have to hold my hands up when I sing and pray, like some Christians do? Does **worship** mean I need to close my eyes and envision something heavenly, lest I become distracted by something earthly? Or, does **worship** mean I have feelings that are a little bit ecstatic, maybe bordering on the supernatural?*"

The memory verse I gave you this week is one most of you already know, from **MARK 12:30 (NLT)**, which says, "*And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength.*" **So, with that in mind, what exactly is worship? And is it all that rare? How can we define it?** [WORSHIP IS AN ACTIVE RESPONSE TO GOD WHEREBY WE DECLARE HIS WORTH. IT'S NOT PASSIVE—BUT IS PARTICIPATIVE. IT'S NOT SIMPLY A MOOD; IT'S A RESPONSE. NOT JUST A FEELING; IT'S A DECLARATION.]

Think of the relationship with your spouse for a moment. Suppose that every morning your spouse tells you that he or she loves you dearly and that you are the world to him or her. But beyond that, nothing! Zippo! No praise. No adoration. No encouraging words. Nothing. What would be wrong with that idea? Yes, if we truly love someone, it will be expressed in our actions, attitudes, words, expressions and very being. That's what God wants and if we're not doing that, we're playing church.

We've become pretty good at that today. We learn how to dress, learn how to sit, and learn how to look. We even learn the words of the songs. But what about our focus as we sing them? While we sing, "*A mighty fortress is our God,*" we're thinking, "*Why did she wear a dress like that?*" Or, "*a bulwark never failing,*" Did I turn the lights off on my car? We can do that and not even change our expression. That's not worship—that's playing the church game. When I am truly lost in wonder, love, and praise, I have to tell you, there are times that I don't even know my name.

I hope that you too have been in meetings where the worship has been so, for lack of a better word, *thick*, so thick with His presence, that you lack the means to care for anything or anyone else, including yourself. You're completely lost in the praise of your God! That's what we're talking about this week in the *feast of Christian hedonism*. It's about delighting in Him—He is enough.

An old man walks down a Florida beach. The sun sets like an orange ball on the horizon. The waves slap the sand. The smell of saltwater stings the air. The beach is vacant. No sun to entice the sunbathers. Not enough light for the fishermen. So, aside from a few joggers and strollers, the gentleman is alone. He carries a bucket in his bony hand. A bucket of shrimp. It's not for him. It's not for the fish. It's for the sea gulls. He walks to an isolated pier cast in gold by the setting sun. He steps out to the end of the pier. The time has come for the weekly ritual. He stands and waits.

Soon the sky becomes a mass of dancing dots. The evening silence gives way to the screeching of birds. They fill the sky and then cover the moorings. They are on a pilgrimage to meet the old man. For a half hour or so, the bushy-browed, shoulder-bent gentleman will stand on the pier, surrounded by the birds of the sea, until his bucket is empty. But even after the food is gone, his feathered friends still linger. They linger as if they're attracted to more than just food. They perch on his hat. They walk on the pier. And they all share a moment together.

Got the scene? Now put it on the back burner for a few minutes as we spend a few minutes on our primary scripture passage from **JOHN 4: 5-30 (NCV)**. As I mentioned earlier, we spent several days this week studying the relationship between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. So, turn to this passage and let's read verses 5-30 (NCV). *⁵In Samaria Jesus came to the town called Sychar, which is near the field Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there. Jesus was tired from his long trip, so he sat down beside the well. It was about twelve o'clock noon. ⁷When a Samaritan woman came to the well to get some water, Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." ⁸(This happened while Jesus' followers were in town buying some food.) ⁹The woman said, "I am surprised that you ask me for a drink, since you are a Jewish man and I am a Samaritan woman." (Jewish people are not friends with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus said, "If you only knew the free gift of God and who it is that is asking you for water, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."*

¹¹The woman said, "Sir, where will you get this living water? The well is very deep, and you have nothing to get water with. ¹²Are you greater than Jacob, our father, who gave us this well and drank from it himself along with his sons and flocks?" ¹³Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks the water I give will never be thirsty. The water I give will become a spring of water gushing up inside that person, giving eternal life." ¹⁵The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so I will never be thirsty again and will not have to come

back here to get more water.”¹⁶ Jesus told her, “Go get your husband and come back here.”¹⁷ The woman answered, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right to say you have no husband.¹⁸ Really you have had five husbands, and the man you live with now is not your husband. You told the truth.”

¹⁹The woman said, “Sir, I can see that you are a prophet.²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place where people must worship.”²¹ Jesus said, “Believe me, woman. The time is coming when neither in Jerusalem nor on this mountain will you actually worship the Father.²² You Samaritans worship something you don’t understand. We understand what we worship, because salvation comes from the Jews.²³ The time is coming when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, and that time is here already. You see, the Father too is actively seeking such people to worship him.²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

²⁵The woman said, “I know that the Messiah is coming.” (Messiah is the One called Christ.) “When the Messiah comes, he will explain everything to us.”²⁶ Then Jesus said, “I am he—I, the one talking to you.”²⁷ Just then his followers came back from town and were surprised to see him talking with a woman. But none of them asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”²⁸ Then the woman left her water jar and went back to town. She said to the people,²⁹ “Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did. Do you think he might be the Christ?”³⁰ So the people left the town and went to see Jesus.

Unfortunately, this story is too familiar to most of you. I wish you were hearing it for the first time. For if you were, you’d be wide eyed as you waited to see what Jesus did next. And what response the woman gave to Him. The encounter began when Jesus was traveling through Samaria. The people of Samaria were enemies of the people of Israel. Both sides thought they were the true heirs of the covenant with Abraham and each thought only they truly

worshiped God the right way. Jesus stops to get a drink from a well (not just any well, but one that Jacob had dug about two thousand years earlier.) He meets a woman there and begins a conversation with her. That alone was incredible. She had two strikes against her – being a Samaritan and a woman. But Jesus was that way . . . accepting and different than others of His day. In the midst of their conversation, it becomes apparent to the woman that Jesus is a great prophet. Then she asked the question that revealed the gaping hole in her soul. Look at verse 20 again.

“Where is God? My people say he is on the mountain. Your people say he is in Jerusalem. I don’t know where he is.” As Max Lucado says, I’d give a thousand sunrises to see the expression on Jesus’ face as he heard those words. Did his eyes water? Did he smile? Did he look up into the clouds and wink at his father? Of all the places to find a hungry heart—Samaria? Of all the Samaritans to be searching for God—a woman? Of all the women to have an insatiable appetite for God—a five-time divorcée? And of all the people to be chosen to personally receive the secret of the ages, an outcast among outcasts? The most “insignificant” person in the region?

Remarkable. Jesus didn’t reveal the secret to King Herod. He didn’t request an audience of the Sanhedrin and tell them the news. It wasn’t within the colonnades of a Roman court that he announced his identity. No, it was in the shade of a well in a rejected land to an ostracized woman. His eyes must have danced as he whispered the secret. “I am the Messiah.”

The most important phrase in the chapter is one easily overlooked. Look at **verse 28**, “Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ‘Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?’” Don’t miss the drama of the moment. Look at her eyes, wide with amazement. Listen to her as she struggles for words. “Y-y-y-you a-a-a-are the M-m-m-messiah!” And watch as she scrambles to her feet, takes one last look at this grinning Nazarene, turns and



runs right into the burly chest of Peter. She almost falls, regains her balance, and hotfoots it toward her hometown.

Did you notice what she forgot in **verse 28**? She forgot her water jar. She left behind the jug that had caused the sag in her shoulders. She left behind the burden she brought. Suddenly the shame of the tattered romances disappeared. Suddenly the insignificance of her life was swallowed by the significance of the moment. "God is here! God has come! God cares ... for me!"

That is why she forgot her water jar. That is why she ran to the city. That is why she grabbed the first person she saw and announced her discovery, "I just talked to a man who knows everything I ever did ... and he loves me anyway!" The disciples offered Jesus some food. He refused it—he was too excited! He had just done what he does best. He had taken a life that was drifting and given it direction. He was exuberant! Jesus transformed this woman. He changed her life.....he changed her life totally.

God wants to change us this morning. He wants to save us if we are lost. And he wants to transform the way that we worship. Some go to church to take a walk. Some go to church to laugh and talk. Some go to church to meet a friend. Some go to church, their time to spend. Some go to church to meet a another. Some go to church, a fault to cover. Some go to church for speculation. Some go to church for observation. Some go to church to doze and nod. The wise go there to worship God. (Author Unknown.)

Without using the word *worship*, this passage from John 4 defines it. **Worship is when you're aware that what you've been given is far greater than what you can give.** Worship is the awareness that were it not for his touch, you'd still be hobbling and hurting, bitter and broken. Worship is the half-glazed expression on the parched face of a desert pilgrim as he discovers that the oasis is not a mirage. Worship is the "thank you" that refuses to be silenced.

We have tried to make a science out of worship. We can't do that. We can't do that any more than we can "sell love" or "negotiate peace." Worship is a voluntary act of gratitude offered by the saved to the Savior, by the healed to the Healer, and by the delivered to the Deliverer. And if you and I can go days without feeling an urge to say "thank you" to the One who saved, healed, and delivered us, then we'd do well to remember what the old man on the pier did. He couldn't go a week without saying "*thank you.*"

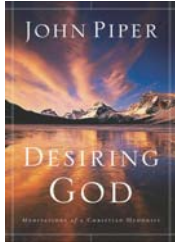
His name was Eddie Rickenbacker. If you were alive in October 1942, you probably remember the day that he was reported missing at sea. He had been sent on a mission to deliver a message to Gen. Douglas MacArthur. With a handpicked crew in a B-17 known as the "Flying Fortress," he set off across the South Pacific. Somewhere the crew became lost, the fuel ran out, and the plane went down.

All eight crew members escaped into the life rafts. They battled the weather, the water, the sharks, and the sun. But most of all, they battled the hunger. After eight days, their rations were gone. They ran out of options. It would take a miracle for them to survive. And a miracle occurred. After an afternoon devotional service, the men said a prayer and tried to rest. As Rickenbacker was dozing with his hat over his eyes, something landed on his head. He would later say that he knew it was a sea gull. He didn't know how he knew; he just knew. That gull meant food ... if he could catch it. And he did.

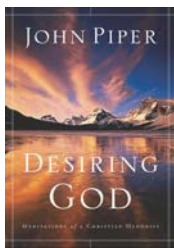
The flesh was eaten. The intestines were used as fish bait. And the crew survived. What was a sea gull doing hundreds of miles away from land? Only God knows. But whatever the reason, Rickenbacker was thankful. As a result, every Friday evening this old captain walked to the pier, his bucket full of shrimp and his heart full of thanks. We'd be wise to do the same. We've much in common with Rickenbacker. We, too, were saved by a Sacrificial Visitor.

We, too, were rescued by One who journeyed far from only God knows where. And we, like the captain, have every reason to look into the sky ... and worship.

Let's Pray!



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SESSION THREE
APRIL 18, 2010

PLAYING CHURCH

1. **JOB 37:14**, “_____ still and consider the wondrous works of God.”

☀ **PSALM 111:2-3** says, “Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who _____ in them. Full of _____ and majesty is His work, and His righteousness endures forever.”

2. The Life Application Bible Commentary says: “If we are not worshiping “in spirit,” our worship will be _____ and _____. Worship not done “in truth” becomes _____ or _____. “In spirit” reminds us who we are worshiping. “In truth” exposes the required genuineness of those doing the worshiping.”

3. **MARK 12: 30 (NLT)**: “And you must love the LORD your God with all your _____, all your _____, all your _____ and all your _____.”

☀ Worship is an _____ response to God whereby we declare His _____

4. We learn how to dress, learn how to sit, and learn how to look. We even learn the words of the songs. But what about our _____ as we sing them? While we sing, “A *mighty fortress is our God*,” we’re thinking, “*Why did she wear a dress like that?*” Or, “*a bulwark never failing*,” Did I turn the lights off on my car? We can do that and not even change our expression. That’s not worship—that’s _____ the church game!

5. The most important phrase in the chapter is one easily overlooked. Look at **verse 28**, “Then, leaving her _____, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ‘Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the _____?’

6. Worship is when you’re aware that what you’ve been _____ is far greater than what you can _____.