



PART 2

ACT Like Jesus

What Should I Do?

PARAPHRASED FROM *THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS* by Randy Frazee:

The key beliefs covered in the first 10 chapters of *BELIEVE* drive the outcome of who we become. However, there is a difference between believing something as the right answer and believing something as a way of life.

- > Growth begins by understanding spiritual beliefs in our mind but it cannot stop there.
- > We must embrace these beliefs and truths in our heart.
 - < When these beliefs take up residence in our heart, they will help form who we become, because we live from our heart.

How do we turn biblical beliefs from thinking to actions?

- > Primarily it is through commitment in putting into action *biblical practices*. Paul views these practices as spiritual disciplines.
 - < As a believer engages in them routinely and consistently, transformation occurs day by day.

We cannot bring about inner transformation on our own.

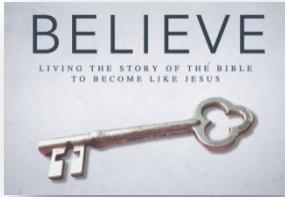
- > The living presence of the Spirit in our spirit gives us power as we yield to his influence.
 - > Because he resides in our spirit, he bypasses all the layers of our complex lives, where excuses and rationalizations creep in, and speaks directly to our heart.
 - > The presence of God moves us toward action.
 - > Right beliefs in the mind become outward expressions from the heart.

As we begin the next ten chapters of *BELIEVE* we will be introduced to the top ten key practices of the Christian life. Together we hope to answer the question, “What should I do?”

Spiritual exercise can be as challenging as physical exercise, but the outcome is undeniably beneficial. Paul offered these words of inspiration to Timothy, a young pastor.

Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.

-- 1 Timothy 4:8-9



CHAPTER 11

Worship

KEY IDEA

I worship God for who he is and what he has done for me.

KEY VERSE

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. — Psalm 95:1 – 2

BEGIN BY RECITING THE KEY VERSE AND THE KEY IDEA TOGETHER AS A GROUP.

LESSON

INTRODUCTION:

One of the first times Biblical Worship is found in the Bible is in Genesis 22:5. Abraham's act of worship is to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Abraham takes all he has, his son, and lays it down on the altar before God in an act of worship. He lays all he has out before God as an offering in an act of worship.

> Abraham had to die to himself in order to offer up what was nearest and dearest to his heart in an act of worship to God.

> Just as with Abraham, the Word teaches us that only when we die to self can true Biblical worship take place.

What does the phrase "die to self" mean to you?

DEFINITION(S) OF WORSHIP

1. Worship is to attribute value and worth in giving divine praise and service.
2. Worship is the believer's response of all that he is: mind, emotions, will, and body, to all that God is and says and does.
3. Worship is pure adoration, the lifting up of the redeemed spirit toward God in contemplation of His holy perfection.
4. Worship is direct acknowledgement of God, of His nature, attributes, ways and claims, whether by the outgoing of the heart in praise and thanksgiving or by deed done in such acknowledgment.
5. Worship is to honor with extravagant love and extreme submission. (Webster's Dictionary, 1828)

Write your own definition of "Worship."

Worship is the way we acknowledge God's worth in our lives.

Worship is not an earthly event we attend, but rather a heavenly activity in which we take part.

- > We are attributing worth to God, and to him alone.
- > We do this regardless of the method of praise, singing, speaking or any physical expression used.
 - < A worshipping community binds the diversity of our cultures, education and backgrounds, and brings us together into a corporate expression of thanksgiving.

Do you see the combining of diversity into unity in your church? How?

CREATURES OF WORSHIP:

Humans are instinctively worshipping creatures. We see this expressed in Psalm 42:1} *"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God"*.

- > As far back as the first century B.C., it was observed that religion, regardless of its form, was a universal trait of man.

Do you agree that humans are instinctively worshipping creatures? Why/why not?

Christ commanded that true worshipers worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

- > The apostle Paul explained that we worship by the Spirit of God (Philippians 3:3), meaning that true worship comes only from those who have been saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and have the Holy Spirit living in their hearts.

- > Worshipping in spirit also means doing it with the proper heart attitude, not simply maintaining rites and rituals.

To worship in truth means worshipping according to what God has revealed about Himself in Scripture.

- > In order for our worship to truly be biblical, it must not go beyond that which is authorized by the Bible (Leviticus 10:1;1 Corinthians 4:6)

- > It must remain within the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9; Revelation 22:18-19).

- > True worship involves only the instructions given in the Bible and nothing else.

- > Just because worship is offered does not necessarily make it acceptable.

- < God is to be the object of man's worship (John 4: 24).

- < He deserves our adoration. (Ps. 149)

- < God also desires our worship (Jn. 4: 23).

^Since God is the object of our worship, He has the right to specify and stipulate what kind of worship He accepts.

Worship which God rejects:

Ignorant Worship: God is unknown.

> In Acts 17 we see the story of the Athenians who were ignorantly worshipping the God of heaven. They had included one god in their pantheon with the inscription "To the Unknown God."

< God was unknown to them because they had rejected knowledge of him (See Rom. 1:22-25).

> In John 4 Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman saying in verse 22 "*You Samaritans worship what you do not know,*". He then tells her in verse 24, "*God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.*"

Vain Worship: Worshiping God through the teachings and doctrines of men.

> In Matthew 15: 9 Jesus is speaking with the Pharisees and teachers when he quotes from Isaiah 29:13. He tells them, "*These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain, their teachings are but rules taught by men.*"

< The Pharisees knew a lot about God, but they didn't know God. It is not enough to study about religion or even to study the Bible. We must respond to God himself.

TWO SITUATIONS OF WORSHIP:

Public/corporate Worship: Worshipping with a group of like believers.

> It is evident from scriptures that the early Christians participated in public worship. (Acts 4:23; Hebrews 10:25).

> They came together in "formal worship" to celebrate using five public acts of worship.

< The first-century church engaged in several devotional acts in their worship services. It is from these acts that we determine what makes up a truly biblical worship service. The five acts were:

1. Communion/Last Supper was observed (Acts 20:7)

} In our worship Communion commemorates Jesus' as we remember His resurrection until He returns again (1 Corinthians 11:25-26). The early Christians made this significant addition to their Jewish worship.

< Jesus had instructed His disciples to remember Him through partaking of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). The Jewish tradition of animal sacrifices gave way to remembering the one perfect sacrifice of the Jesus Christ the Lamb on the cross (1 Peter 1:18-19).

} But there was a problem: the Lord's Supper could not be added to the synagogue service, yet it was still to be celebrated as the Lord had commanded.

< The solution for the Jewish Christians was to partake of the Lord's Supper at a separate time and place than their worship in the synagogues.

< While it appears that many of the first Christians continued their traditional Jewish worship on the Sabbath, they came to realize the appropriateness of partaking of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, the day Christ rose from the grave. Thus it was apparently common for the Jewish Christians to gather early on the Sabbath for worship, and then again on Sunday for celebration of the Lord's Supper.

NOTE: Several secular writings of that time record the custom of gathering on the first day of the week.

2. Prayers were offered up (1 Corinthians 14:15-16)

} Prayer must also conform to the divine pattern taught in the Scriptures.

< Our prayers should be directed only to God (Nehemiah 4:9; Matthew 6:9).

< We are not instructed to use devices.

< Most importantly, our prayers must be in harmony with the will of God.

3. Songs were sung to the glory of God (Ephesians 5:19)

} Singing was utilized in worship.

< Paul wrote *“speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Ephesians 5:19-20).

< Singing to the Lord and to one another conveys truth set to music as a form of teaching (Colossians 3:16)

^ Sing with both the spirit and the mind in order to produce understanding on the part of those involved (1 Corinthians 14:15-16).

4. A collection was taken (1 Corinthians 16:2)

} Part of true biblical worship is giving an offering, as Paul instructed the Corinthian church: *“Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made”* (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

< Our regular giving for the support of the Lord's work is a serious responsibility and is part of true biblical worship.

^ Our giving should be viewed as a blessing, not a burden (2 Corinthians 9:7).

^ Giving is the only authorized method for financing the work of the church of Jesus Christ.

5. Scriptures were read (Colossians 4:16), and the Word of God was proclaimed (Acts 20:7).

} Preaching and teaching are major parts of true worship.

< Our teaching must be the Scriptures alone, the only means of equipping believers for life and godliness (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

< Our preaching and teaching must be from the Word of God and rely on the Spirit of God to do His work. *“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction”* (2 Timothy 4:2).

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe” (Hebrews 12:28-29)

> Public worship must be orderly and reverent. (1 Cor. 14:40; Heb. 12:28)

< God's word must be allowed to govern worship.

Private Worship Corporate worship is not the only means of worshipping. Each Christian can and should worship God in their daily and individual lives. The Christian who strives to teach others the gospel is doing an act of worship.

- > It is in the witness of word to another.
- > It is in the witness of a kind action to another.
- > It is an act of obedience to the civil law.
- > It is in living a life of holiness.
- > It is in private prayer.
- > It is in Bible reading/studying.

Any way we strive to bring honor to God is an act of worship. God doesn't intend that worship be connected only with a place, it is also connected with the attitude of the heart.

What are some of your specific ways of private worship?

SOME BIBLICAL WORSHIP HISTORY

Early Jewish Worship:

After leaving Egypt, God gave the people of Israel the Law and then commanded that a tabernacle be constructed. The tribe of Levi was set aside to serve as priests for God and His people.

- > The OT books of Exodus and Leviticus provide specific instructions about the manner in which worship and sacrifice was to occur, about what was to be sacrificed, and the reason for the offerings.
 - < While the people of Israel were clearly commanded to worship God, little is given regarding the specifics of worship during that time.

Worship in the Temple

After its construction by Solomon, the temple in Jerusalem became the prominent focus of Jewish worship. It seems that the emphasis of worship in the temple was primarily on sacrificial offerings and praise to God through music.

- > For the music, various instruments and vocal choirs were used. (2 Samuel 6:5; 1 Chronicles 16:4-6; 1 Chronicles 25:1; 2 Chronicles 5:12-14; 2 Chronicles 29:25-30; There are numerous references to singing and the playing of instruments in worship to God throughout the Psalms: 33:1-3; 68:4, 25, 32; 81:1-3; 87:7; 92:1-3; 95:1-2; 98:1-8; 104:33; 105:2; 135:1-3; 137:1-6; 144:9; 149:1-6; 150:1-6.)

Worship in the Second Temple

Following the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian exile, the people of Israel returned to Jerusalem in 539 BC to rebuild. The OT books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell of the work in repairing the damage that was done; and of their worship at its completion. (Ezra 2:41; 3:10-11; Nehemiah 12:27-43; 12:44-46)

Worship in the Synagogues

The destruction of the temple and the Babylonian exile led to the development of a new aspect of Jewish worship. The lack of a temple in which to worship and sacrifice resulted in the creation of the synagogue (a word which, somewhat like our word "church", is used to refer both to the congregation and to the building in which they met).

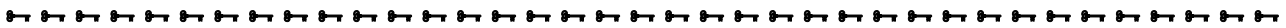
> The people of Israel would gather around the elders to listen to the word of God, to receive instruction, and to worship. This way was continued even after the return from the exile, and it became a normal part of Jewish religious life.

> Even after the rebuilding of the temple, synagogue worship flourished.

< By Jesus' time there was at least one in every town. (Acts 15:21)

< Scripture records times when Jesus taught in the synagogue. (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 12:9; 13:54; Mark 1:21, 39; 3:1; 6:2; Luke 4:15ff, 44; 6:6; 13:10; John 6:59; 18:20.)

What should our worship be? This brings us to our key question.



KEYQUESTION: How do I honor God in the way He deserves?

When we worship God for who he is, we are simultaneously expressing all the convictions of the Key Beliefs that were studied in the first 10 chapters of BELIEVE.

> There is a deep intertwining of the key beliefs with the practice of worship.

> Worship is the first spiritual discipline of a follower of Christ that helps the Key Beliefs move from our head to our heart.

THE HEART'S INTENT

Worshiping God for who he is and what he has done for us can be expressed in many different forms and diverse environments, but it's the heart behind the actions that matters to God. Throughout Scripture we see how God's people worshiped him on towering mountain tops, inside homes with dirt floors, at a lavishly adorned temple and in dark prisons. They demonstrated their devotion to God with singing, dancing, sacrifices and public and private prayer. What's most important to God is not the way that we choose to worship him; it's the motivation that directs our actions.

In Psalm 95 see a hymn of worship. The members of the congregation singing these verses invite one another to the great privilege of worshipping the Lord.

PSALM 95:1-7

¹Sing joyful songs to the LORD! Praise the mighty rock where we are safe. ²Come to worship him with thankful hearts and songs of praise.

³The LORD is the greatest God, king over all other gods. ⁴He holds the deepest part of the earth in his hands, and the mountain peaks belong to him. ⁵The ocean is the Lord's because he made it, and with his own hands he formed the dry land.

⁶Bow down and worship the LORD our Creator! ⁷The LORD is our God, and we are his people, the sheep he takes care of in his own pasture.

Listen to God's voice today!

In his commentary, Jon Courson stated that Psalm 95 is one of the “Coronation Psalms”. It was one of the psalms that was compiled for the dedication of the second temple built after the Jews’ seventy-year exile in Babylon.

> Although the Jews had previously asked for a king in order to be like the nations around them, the compilation that included this psalm seemed to reaffirm their understanding that the best way for the nation to be ruled was to acknowledge God as King.

In this psalm, the writer tells the people how they should praise the Lord and why he should be praised.

> It is meant for communal praise rather than individual, although both are important.

> It shows that praise should be joyful and enthusiastic with total focus on the Lord.

NOTE: The verb “come” in verse 2 means “to go to meet God face-to-face, to be in his presence.”

Why should we praise God?

> The psalm says it is because God is a great God and above the false gods of this world.

> Nothing can separate God’s love from those He loves.

> He is the creator of the universe and controls all things.

< The depths of the ocean and the heights of the mountains and earth belong to him, and he knows what is going on.

During Old Testament times, worship involved animal sacrifices. Instead of leaving his people with no recourse except to face their punishment for sin, God, in his mercy, allowed his people to sacrifice the best animal from their herd as a payment for their disobedience. The animal had to be without defect, since a defective sacrifice could not be a substitute for a defective people. This practice was intended to be accompanied by repentance. The worshipper confessed their sin and laid hands on the animal; then the sin was symbolically transferred away from the sinner to the sacrifice.

Unfortunately, over time the Israelites’ sacrifices became meaningless rituals. God was angry and heartbroken. The people brought him an abundance of sacrifices, yet their character and conduct were anything but pleasing to him.

Isaiah 1:11-20 (CEV)

¹¹ “Your sacrifices mean nothing to me. I am sick of your offerings of rams and choice cattle; I don’t like the blood of bulls or lambs or goats. ¹² “Who asked you to bring all this when you come to worship me? Stay out of my temple!

¹³ Your sacrifices are worthless, and incense is disgusting. I can’t stand the evil you do on your New Moon Festivals or on your Sabbaths and other times of worship. ¹⁴ I hate your New Moon Festivals and all others as well. They are a heavy burden I am tired of carrying. ¹⁵ “No matter how much you pray, I won’t listen. You are too violent.

¹⁶ Wash yourselves clean! I am disgusted with your filthy deeds. Stop doing wrong ¹⁷ and learn to live right. See that justice is done. Defend widows and orphans and help those in need.”

¹⁸ I, the LORD, invite you to come and talk it over. Your sins are scarlet red, but they will be whiter than snow or wool. ¹⁹ If you willingly obey me, the best crops in the land will be yours. ²⁰ But if you turn against me, your enemies will kill you. I, the LORD, have spoken.

One of the saddest facts of Isaiah is that this group of rebellious people were also a religious people.
> They worshiped at the Temple, bringing their sacrifices to the Lord, but their hearts were far from God.

< This made their worship hypocritical.

^ Sacrifices alone could never please God. God prefers obedience to sacrifice.

< God preferred no sacrifices, no festival and Sabbath worships if they were not going to be obedient and sincere in their desire to Worship the true God in the Truth he demanded.

FROM JON COURSON'S APPLICATION COMMENTARY

Sometimes we wonder why our prayers aren't answered. We go to church regularly. We lift our hands in praise. We lithe. But God says all of that is irrelevant if we're harboring sin in our life. If we're compromising, if we're trying to be righteous through our own efforts or energy, if we're failing to realize our need to come before God in brokenness, God's won't answer our prayers—not, because He's mad at us or because He doesn't like us anymore, but because He's saying, 'There's something wrong in your relationship with Me. If I continue to answer your prayers, you will persist in those things and they'll destroy you. So you're not going to sense My presence. You're not going to have answers to your prayers in order that you might seek Me.'

What are your thoughts on Courson's quote?

But God does not give up on this people. The invitation to come to Him remains open, but now it is the people who need to approach God in true Worship.

> *JON COURSON: The people (in this passage) were full of blood and sin, apathy and iniquity—and yet God says, "My blood will wash you clean if you'll just come before me and admit your need of My work and mercy in your life."*

In the New Testament, those who failed to worship and honor God properly received some harsh words from Jesus. This was especially true for the religious leaders whose layers of religious exercises and rituals hid a weak and shallow faith. As a crowd gathered to listen to Jesus' teachings, he warned them about the influence of these hollow religious leaders.

FROM Matthew 23:1-28

23 Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: ² The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law are experts in the Law of Moses. ³ So obey everything they teach you, but don't do as they do. After all, they say one thing and do something else.

⁴ They pile heavy burdens on people's shoulders and won't lift a finger to help. ⁵ Everything they do is just to show off in front of others.

To them, ministry meant handing down laws to the people and adding to their burdens.

> The Pharisees were harder on others than they were on themselves.

< Jesus never asks us to do anything that He has not first done.

> With the passing of years and the addition of more and more laws, the rabbis could not lessen the burden without overthrowing the whole system.

...⁷ And when they are in the market, they like to have people greet them as their teachers. ⁸ But none of you should be called a teacher. You have only one teacher, and all of you are like brothers and sisters. ⁹ Don't call anyone on earth your father. All of you have the same Father in heaven. ¹⁰ None of you should be called the leader. The Messiah is your only leader. ¹¹ Whoever is the greatest should be the servant of the others. ¹² If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honored.

¹³⁻¹⁴ You Pharisees and teachers of the Law of Moses are in for trouble! You're nothing but show-offs. You lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. You won't go in yourselves, and you keep others from going in. ... You travel over land and sea to win one follower. And when you have done so, you make that person twice as fit for hell as you are.

FROM LIFE APPLICATION STUDY BIBLE

The Pharisees' converts were attracted to Pharisaism, not to God. By getting caught up in the details of their additional laws and regulations, they completely missed God to whom the laws pointed. A religion of deeds puts pressure on people to surpass others in what they know and do. Thus, a hypocritical teacher was likely to have students who were even more hypocritical.

¹⁶... You are supposed to lead others, but you are blind. ... you neglect the more important matters of the Law, such as justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These are the important things you should have done, ... You wash the outside of your cups and dishes, while inside there is nothing but greed and selfishness. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of a cup, and then the outside will also be clean.

²⁷ You Pharisees and teachers are in for trouble! You're nothing but show-offs. You're like tombs that have been whitewashed. On the outside they are beautiful, but inside they are full of bones and filth. ²⁸ That's what you are like. Outside you look good, but inside you are evil and only pretend to be good.

Jesus uses a simile of tombs. Tombs are made beautiful on the outside, but on the inside there are only bones and decaying corpses.

> Jewish people were careful not to touch dead bodies or anything relating to the dead, because this would make them ceremonially unclean.

> The term for tomb probably indicates a burial ground rather than an individual monument or coffin. It was the custom to mark tombs with white chalk to make them publicly conspicuous so that passersby, unfamiliar with the area, would not come in contact with a tomb and be rendered unclean for seven days. (Num. 19:16)

The teachers and Pharisees had the wrong concept of righteousness.

> To them righteousness meant outward conformity to the Law.

< They ignored the inward condition of the heart and had a false concept of ministry.

^ To them, ministry meant handing down laws to the people, which added to their burdens.

Jesus' resisters also had a false concept of greatness.

- > To them, success meant recognition and praise from the people.
 - < They were not concerned about God’s approval.
- > Jesus tried to convey that true greatness is found in serving others, not in forcing others to serve us. This is a part of our worship.
 - < True greatness comes only from God, it cannot be manufactured.
 - < If we exalt ourselves, God usually finds a way to humble us. But if we humble ourselves, God will exalt us. (1 Pet. 5:6)

Jesus condemned the Pharisees and religious leaders for outwardly appearing saintly and holy but inwardly remaining full of corruption and greed.

- > We must not live our Christianity merely as a show for others. When our faith and worship are genuine, people will see.

UNASHAMED WORSHIPERS

When God calls us to love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, he is demanding that we hold nothing back from him. A commitment to worship God is a vow to be bold and unashamed of our love and devotion to him.

BELIEVE gives us three examples of “Unashamed Worshipers.”

- I. After their escape from the Egyptians, Moses and Miriam led the Israelites in a song of praise.

FROM EXODUS 15:1-21

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: “I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea. “The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.

... Who among the gods is like you, Lord? Who is like you — majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? “You stretch out your right hand, and the earth swallows your enemies. In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.

“The Lord reigns for ever and ever.”

Music was important to Israel’s worship and celebration.

- > Singing was not only an expression of worship, it was a way to pass down oral traditions.

II. *While Moses and Miriam expressed their praise vocally, bold worship can also be displayed with very few words. Take Daniel, for example. His quiet refusal to worship anyone or anything but the one true God was a risky decision because King Darius dealt harshly with disobedience in his kingdom. Unlike the songs of Moses and Miriam, it was Daniel’s actions that did all the talking.*

In Daniel 6:1-27 (or pages 180-182 in *BELIEVE*) we have the story of Daniel in the Den of Lions

THE STORY:

When the lions’ den event occurred, Daniel was in his 80s. Through a life of hard work and obedience to God, he had risen through the political ranks as an administrator of the Babylonian kingdom.

> Daniel proved himself to be honest and hardworking. The other government officials--who were jealous of him and wanted him out--could find nothing accusatory enough to remove him from office. So they tried to use Daniel's faith in God against him.

< They tricked King Darius into passing a decree that during a 30-day period, anyone who prayed to another god or man besides the king would be thrown into the lions' den.

< This was a political maneuver directed at Daniel exclusively for his demise.

> Daniel learned of the decree but did not change his habit. Just as he had done all his life, he went home, knelt down, faced Jerusalem, and prayed to God.

< Those who hated him caught him in prayer to his God and told the king.

< King Darius, who loved Daniel, tried to save him, but the decree could not be revoked.

> At sundown, Daniel was thrown into the den of lions. At dawn the king ran to the lions' den and asked Daniel if his God had protected him. Daniel replied, "My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king." (6:22)

III. In the book of Acts, the boldness of Paul and Silas got them thrown into jail; and then as they lifted their voices in prayers and singing hymns of worship during the night, a sudden earthquake resulted in their release.

In Acts 16:16-35 (pages 182-183 in BELIEVE)

THE STORY

Paul was going to a place of prayer where he met a slave girl who was demon possessed. She was able to tell people what was going to happen in the future. Her owners used her in order to make money.

> As she followed Paul and the others around, the demon in her recognized who they were and shouted, "These men are servants of the Most High God who are telling you the way to be saved."

> This went on day after day. Paul one day finally turned around, and in the name of Jesus commanded the spirit to come out of her, and immediately the evil spirit left her. But she could no longer foretell the future.

> Her owners could not use her anymore to gain money for themselves so they became angry with Paul, who they blamed for ruining their lucrative fortune telling business.

> They grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities, accusing them of causing an uproar and teaching against their way of life. This stirred up the crowd and the judges ordered them to be beaten and thrown into prison, with their legs placed in chains/stocks.

> The jailer who was to guard them was threatened with death if they escaped.

The amazing part of this story is that, while in this situation, Paul and Silas began to worship God through prayer and hymn singing. Even the other prisoners were listening.

> Suddenly there was an earthquake that shook the prison so greatly that the doors fell open and the chains fell off. But nobody even tried to escape.

> When the jailer woke up and saw the doors opened, he knew it was his death sentence, so he thought he would hurry the consequences by taking his own life.

< Paul shouted for him to stop. The jailer could not believe that his prisoners did not take advantage of the situation to escape.

< This was such a witness to the jailer that he asked Paul and Silas to tell him about the plan of salvation.

^ After listening, the jailer was saved and baptized, as well as his household.

> The next day Paul and Silas were released.

We see in this story that Worship can come at any time, and may be particularly needed in dismal situations.

> After being annoyed by a demon, unjustly accused and brought before magistrates; then beaten, thrown in jail and placed in chains/stocks illegally; Paul and Silas chose this time to worship.

> In God's infinite knowledge, he chose these two men, this time and this situation, to speak to the heart of a sinner who repented and became a part of the Family of God.

> Had Paul and Silas not gone through this difficult time, the jailer and his family may have never known the saving grace of God through Jesus the Christ.

"For the most part, prosperity only creates jealousy. But when those around you hear you singing in the day of adversity, like the jailer they will say, "What must I do to be saved?" -Jon Courson

WORSHIPING TOGETHER

As stated earlier, a relationship with God can be both a private and a personal experience, but much of worship is meant to be practiced in community. God is a community within himself (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and his Word encourages us to gather with other believers to encourage one another, pray together and remember God's love for us. After the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus, the dynamics of communal worship changed drastically. Animal sacrifices are no longer required to restore a relationship with God. Jesus' blood, shed as a voluntary sacrifice, now has the power to remove the sins of all who repent and receive him.

Hebrews 10:19-25 CEV

¹⁹ My friends, the blood of Jesus gives us courage to enter the most holy place ²⁰ by a new way that leads to life! And this way takes us through the curtain that is Christ himself. ²¹ We have a great high priest who is in charge of God's house. ²² So let's come near God with pure hearts and a confidence that comes from having faith. Let's keep our hearts pure, our consciences free from evil, and our bodies washed with clean water. ²³ We must hold tightly to the hope that we say is ours. After all, we can trust the one who made the agreement with us. ²⁴ We should keep on encouraging each other to be thoughtful and to do helpful things. ²⁵ Some people have gotten out of the habit of meeting for worship, but we must not do that. We should keep on encouraging each other, especially since you know that the day of the Lord's coming is getting closer.

In the OT the most holy place in the temple (The Holy of Holies) was hidden from the view of the people by a curtain. Only the high priest could enter this place, only one time a year, on the Day of Atonement.

> It was on the Day of Atonement that a special sacrifice was made to reconcile the people of Israel to God.

> But upon the death of Jesus this curtain in the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom, to represent that God's presence with the people was now accessible to everyone.

> We now have significant privileges that come with our new life in Christ.

< We have personal access to God through Christ and can come near to him in worship without the elaborate OT system of sacrifice.

< We can grow in faith, overcome doubts and questions, and deepen our relationship with God.

< We can enjoy encouragement from one another.

< We are to worship together.

The Lord's Supper essentially replaced the practice of animal sacrifice in the New Testament church. When believers gather to pray, sing and learn, they break bread and share the cup as a way of remembering Christ's love for them. Jesus introduced this new practice to his disciples the night before his crucifixion.

Luke 22:14-20

¹⁴ When the time came for Jesus and the apostles to eat, ¹⁵ he said to them, "I have very much wanted to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ I tell you that I will not eat another Passover meal until it is finally eaten in God's kingdom."

¹⁷ Jesus took a cup of wine in his hands and gave thanks to God. Then he told the apostles, "Take this wine and share it with each other. ¹⁸ I tell you that I will not drink any more wine until God's kingdom comes."

¹⁹ Jesus took some bread in his hands and gave thanks for it. He broke the bread and handed it to his apostles. Then he said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Eat this as a way of remembering me!"

²⁰ After the meal he took another cup of wine in his hands. Then he said, "This is my blood. It is poured out for you, and with it God makes his new agreement.

This setting was at Jesus' last Passover Supper while on earth. Passover was celebrated annually by the Jews in recognition of God's rescue of them from Egypt. Here Jesus institutes what the Christian church calls "Communion" or "The Lord's Supper."

> This was Jesus' last commandment. It was to be done in remembrance of Him until he would return.

FROM JON COURSON'S APPLICATION COMMENTARY

... we see Christians all around the globe...eating of the same loaf and drinking of the same cup. We may never agree on end times, the work of the Spirit, or all points of doctrine. But we will find unity at the Lord's Table, at the foot of the Cross.

Of Communion, Jesus didn't say, "Teach it." He didn't say, "Think about it." He didn't say, "Try to fit it in." He said, "Do this."

Believers can also honor Jesus' sacrifice every day in the way that they choose to live. From under house arrest in Rome, Paul wrote to the Christians in the city of Colossae. He encouraged them to throw off their old, self-centered way of living and commit to live their new lives solely for the purpose of worshiping and serving God. Paul's instructions were not addressed to individual worshipers, but to the worship community as a whole.

Colossians 3:1-17

³ You have been raised to life with Christ. Now set your heart on what is in heaven, where Christ rules at God's right side. ² Think about what is up there, not about what is here on earth. ³ You died, which means that your life is hidden with Christ, who sits beside God. ⁴ Christ gives meaning to your life, and when he appears, you will also appear with him in glory.

⁵ Don't be controlled by your body. Kill every desire for the wrong kind of sex. Don't be immoral or indecent or have evil thoughts. Don't be greedy, which is the same as worshiping idols.

⁶ God is angry with people who disobey him by doing these things. ⁷ And that is exactly what you did, when you lived among people who behaved in this way. ⁸ But now you must stop doing such things. You must quit being angry, hateful, and evil. You must no longer say insulting or cruel

things about others. ⁹ And stop lying to each other. You have given up your old way of life with its habits.

¹⁰ Each of you is now a new person. You are becoming more and more like your Creator, and you will understand him better. ¹¹ It doesn't matter if you are a Greek or a Jew, or if you are circumcised or not. You may even be a barbarian or a Scythian, and you may be a slave or a free person. Yet Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

¹² God loves you and has chosen you as his own special people. So be gentle, kind, humble, meek, and patient. ¹³ Put up with each other, and forgive anyone who does you wrong, just as Christ has forgiven you. ¹⁴ Love is more important than anything else. It is what ties everything completely together.

¹⁵ Each one of you is part of the body of Christ, and you were chosen to live together in peace. So let the peace that comes from Christ control your thoughts. And be grateful. ¹⁶ Let the message about Christ completely fill your lives, while you use all your wisdom to teach and instruct each other. With thankful hearts, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷ Whatever you say or do should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks to God the Father because of him.

The central theme of Christ in Colossians is evident as Paul writes to believers who know that Christ is their life.

> Perfection in glory will be theirs when Christ returns.

FROM JON COURSON'S APPLICATION COMMENTARY

I am thoroughly convinced from watching people and studying the Word that the people who are truly content are those who constantly realize that this world is not where it's at. On the other hand, those who try to find happiness here are perpetually frustrated. The possessions they purchase are never quite what they were supposed to be. The relationships they form are never as satisfying as they thought they would be. The dreams they pursue are never as fulfilling as they hoped they would be. Nothing is ever quite right until we realize, "Hey, it's not here!" I believe this is why the Lord constantly tells us in the Word to set our hearts on things above.

Paul tells his readers to put their old life to death. We have come to a circle now. The first act of worship, as stated in the beginning of this lesson, was putting to death a sacrifice (Abraham and Isaac). Now, as Christians we have put to death our old life for a new life in Christ.

> The language of putting to death indicates that Christians have to take severe measures to conquer sin.

> Sin belongs to the old life and have no place in our new life in Christ.

< Setting our hearts on things above means striving to put heaven's priorities into daily practice.

< Setting our minds on things above means concentrating on the eternal rather than the temporal.

This new life in Christ is given to anyone who takes Jesus as their savior. The Christian Church should have no barriers to nationality, race, education, wealth, gender, religion, or power.

> Christ breaks down all barriers and accepts all people who come to him.

Christians should also live in peace. To do this does not mean that suddenly all differences in opinion are gone, but it does require that loving Christians work together despite their differences.

> Such love is not a feeling, but a decision to meet others' needs.

> To live in love leads to peace between individuals.

To do all in the name of Jesus means bringing honor to Christ in every aspect and activity of daily living.

What kind of impression do you think you make on people who know you? Do you bring honor to God?

This brings us to our Key Idea.



KEY IDEA: I worship God for who he is and what he has done for me.

When Jesus met a woman from Samaria their conversation went to the subject of worship:

“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ... a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.” From John 4:19-24

> Jesus stated that true worship is not about being at a precise geographic location, but rather about having an intimate spiritual longing. God seeks worshipers who, through the power of his Spirit, will attribute worth to him in any location and for the right reasons — because he is truth.

The psalms refer often to our worship of God for who he is and what he has done, below are a few passages:

- > *Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. 29:2*
- > *Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. 95:6-7*
- > *With my mouth I will greatly extol the Lord; in the great throng of worshipers I will praise him. 109:30.*

Worship is a deeply personal matter, but the practice is an ongoing activity of the church. Individual hearts can unite and work together to create a cathedral anywhere!



FROM *THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS* by Randy Frazee

KEY APPLICATION: What difference does this make in the way I live?

- We daily acknowledge God for who he is and what he has done for us.
- We worship God, privately and corporately, with the songs we sing, the words we speak, and the way we live our lives.
- When we attribute worth to God as a child of God, unmerited worth is attributed to us.

Since the fall of mankind in the garden of Eden, our greatest struggle is wanting to be our own god. While most of us would not wish to have the responsibility and burden of calling the shots for the entire world, we *do* want to be the god of our own lives — to do what we want, when we want, where we want, with whom we want.

Do you see this as a common problem with people today? Why?

When we engage in the practice of worship, we crawl off *the throne* of God, where we do not belong, and crawl onto *the altar* of God, where we do belong. The quite amazing exchange when we surrender control and attribute worth to God is that he, in turn, attributes his worth back to us as his children. Worship expresses the relationship we have with God — and the stronger the relationship and the deeper the intimacy, the greater the worship. This then causes a deeper love for God.

With many denominational lines drawn today over expressions of worship, we often place too much focus, and at times even judgment, on how much or how little someone outwardly displays their praise. We must first understand that worship is about how much love and devotion exist in our minds and hearts for God. Someone in quiet meditation can be just as deep in adoration of God as one whose hands are lifted and voice is singing — and vice versa.

True worship is simply a reflection of the heart of a believer. In closing, consider these questions.

- To whom or what do you attribute the *most* worth in your own life?

- Is the location of your worship confined to a geographic place, or is your worship freely displayed, in the power of his Spirit and in accordance with truth, anywhere?

When we stand in the presence of a holy God our hearts will be quick to give him the authority and the honor he deserves. The growing practice of worship will then create an overarching hunger for greater depth in all the other practices.

