

How to Worship God 24/7

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Worship as a Lifestyle Series

John 4:21-24

In this new year I want to begin a new series on worship that I've titled "Worship as a Lifestyle." Worship is a subject that I have not taught on for a number of years. And I've been feeling for some time that with the growth of this church and the number of new people we have, plus the fact that folks tend to forget even what they've been taught in the past, this church needs significant teaching and training on worship.

Now, if we were to do some Freudian free association and I just mentioned the word "worship" to you, I know that the vast majority of you would come up with words like: sing, church, worship service, a few of you might come up with the word "boring." But I'd venture to say that 99% of you, when you hear the word "worship" you are thinking about what goes on for the half an hour or so on Saturday night or Sunday morning here at church – the singing part of our services. A few of you might include the teaching, or offering, or ministry as part of it.

A very few of you, when you hear the word "worship" because of your background – maybe you've come from a Roman Catholic or Episcopalian – might also include in your free association about worship, the Eucharist, or communion.

But invariably I would bet that when you hear the word "worship" you are thinking about public worship – what a church does when it gets together in its public meeting place. And what churches do when they get together in their public meeting places is probably the one factor that creates more division in the Christian world than any other factor. I don't believe that the major difference in churches is around doctrine. A very high percentage of churches generally agree on most of the fundamental issues regarding the Christian faith.

But what we really see different in churches is their practice of worship – what goes on in their public meetings. If you have had the opportunity to visit different churches, you will experience very different things, all of them called worship. In some churches you might sing an opening hymn, and then there will be an invocation by the pastor; then, perhaps, a choir piece or a soloist; another hymn in which the music minister calls your attention to the specific words of verses 1-3-5 and explains the meaning of those words before you sing them. Then, maybe, there will be another choir piece before the pastor gets up and prays and preaches.

In other churches, the only instrument might be an ancient pipe organ. And the church might follow a very ancient liturgy in which the congregation kneels, sits, or stands in response to the words of a priest. There might be lots of priests walking down the aisles swinging incense holders, spreading the smell of incense throughout the church. Or they walk down the aisle carrying an icon of Jesus, or a saint, or Mary – with the capstone of the service being the consecration of the Host and the serving of the Eucharist.

If you were to go into other churches, they might be completely non-instrumental and every song would be sung acappella in four-part harmony. And then you might go to another service in a storefront that lasts 3 to 4 hours where people are shouting, speaking in tongues, prophesying, and falling on the floor. Still at another service you might find people with large banners, and they are waving them around, dancing down the aisles and clapping. At another service, it might be very, very reserved. Another service has lots of percussion and an African kind of beat. Another sounds Caribbean.

Here's the funny thing: If you talk with individuals in these various churches, everyone would say that their particular church does worship right and they can't imagine how anyone could believe that they are worshipping God by singing three-four hymns, or falling on the floor, or waving banners, or not using instruments, or using instruments, or using incense and candles.

The way that a church does public worship is at once the most divisive issue in the Christian world today, and one of the major ways that people select a church. And I will add that, not only is worship a dividing line between churches, but even within the church.

The poor music minister, or what we call here at Vineyard Columbus the worship pastor, has to serve generally in the role of referee and traffic cop, dealing with the 100 (or in our case 6000) different opinions about what ought to go on in the half an hour of singing. And in our church it is which worship band is someone's favorite and least favorite, and the sound quality, and the song selection, and whether we get to occasionally have a choir or not a choir. And so the poor worship pastor becomes this lion tamer with a chair and a whip, keeping the various factions apart.

Now, I want to start this series "Worship as a Lifestyle" by saying as plainly as I can to you that I do not believe that the Columbus Vineyard has come up with the perfect formula for worship, or the only biblical approach to worshipping God, or that our particular approach to worship is the most anointed, the most pleasing to God. The fact is, like most churches, our particular form of public worship proceeds out of our understanding of scripture and our philosophy of ministry. And it is just our understanding of scripture. It is one church's interpretation and one church's philosophy of ministry.

For example, we here at Vineyard Columbus believe in all of the biblical gifts of the Holy Spirit. We believe not only in the gifts of preaching and leadership, administration, evangelism, but also in the gifts of prophesy, tongues, words of wisdom, words of knowledge and healing. We believe the gifts of the Holy Spirit have never been withdrawn, but have always been available throughout the church age and are available to the church today.

However, because the Bible says that we are to test and weigh prophecies, and because that is often an impossibility when several thousand people gather together as we do here at Vineyard Columbus every weekend, we have decided that as a general rule, our practice of prophecy and tongues will generally occur in home fellowship meetings where words can be weighed, discerned and judged.

We also desire here at Vineyard Columbus the kind of public worship where anyone of you could feel comfortable in inviting a family member who rarely goes to church, or a roommate, or a boss without wondering whether something is going to happen that will be radically off-putting to your boss, or sister, or roommate. Now, of course, some people are offended by any expressiveness or emotion. Some have very narrow boundaries while some people can tolerate anything. Fall on the floor, dance on your seat, march around the church – “Hey, that looks like fun. I want to run up and down the pews.”

Here’s our approach to public worship. And again, it’s not the only approach. It’s not necessarily the most anointed approach. It is just where we have landed as a church. I’ve taught this illustration for years. But you can compare public worship to the serving of a meal. Imagine if you were a guest in someone’s home, and they were having dinner. During the whole dinner no one spoke to you, you sat in a really uncomfortable straight back chair, and most of the conversation took place in Hungarian, and things that you considered to be really, really weird, like raw monkey brains, were being served, as Hungarians tend to do. When they spoke in English, they told inside family stories about people you didn’t know. “How is Emma?” “Remember the summer we spent at the lake?”

Imagine if you were a guest in someone’s home and they made no effort whatsoever to include you. Imagine from beginning to end, you were shut out from any ability to enjoy the meal.

Well, some churches are like that, friends. There’s lots of religious language that people don’t understand. Folks are being asked to do a whole bunch of things for which a guest would have no reference point – kneel, stand, say this. There are things that a guest might look at and say, “That’s just completely unintelligible. Why is that person swinging a glow wand or whirling down the aisle?” There are lots of inside jokes.

Here's an honest story for you. I went to church for the first time when I was eighteen. I had never set foot in a church building until I was eighteen. I was raised in a Jewish family. I was never in a church building for a funeral, for a wedding, for Christmas, Easter – for nothing, not even to visit. For my first church service ever, Marlene, who is now my wife but was then just my friend, took me to her little church. We sat on these hard wooden pews that I had never seen before. We sang an opening song. And then an older woman, maybe around fifty five – very nice, very sweet, stood up and said, “Do we have any newcomers here today? Please raise your hands.”

Marlene elbowed me and I raised my hand. I was the only newcomer in this little church. She said, “Would you come up here now?”

I didn't know what she wanted to do with me, if I was supposed to say something or sing for the crowd, or know something, because I sure didn't know anything. But when I got close to her, she grabbed me and hugged me. And she said, “What's your name?”

I said, “Rich.”

She said, “Let's sing Rich our welcome song.”

And while this woman hugged me and put a pin on my shirt that indicated to everyone that I was a visitor, they sang me the welcome song: “There's a welcome here. There's welcome here. There's a Christian welcome here.”

Now, it was all very sweet and very well intentioned. And because I was so grateful to Jesus for coming into my life, I accepted it. But it was very weird.

We have made a deliberate choice here at Vineyard Columbus to not be the church of the weird in our public worship services. We want to be welcoming and understandable to our guests.

Now, some churches target the entire service to their guests, from beginning to end, if a guest wouldn't like to sing for twenty minutes, we are not going to do it. We are not going to teach for very long out of the Bible. The services end in forty five minutes. I call those types of services “Guest Targeted Services.”

Between “Guest Unfriendly” and “Guest Targeted” is where we land at Vineyard Columbus. Again, it is not the only place to land. Churches do this a million different ways. But here, friends, is our philosophy of public worship. We are here at the church like a big family that's going to sit down and have a meal. Whether you are a guest here or not, we are going to eat. But we recognize every week that we have something like 150-200 guests in our midst. We are going to eat anyway. We are going to do what we do – sing, teach the Bible,

minister – but, we want our guests to enjoy the experience. We want to include them in our journey. We want what we do to be generally understandable. We want people to encounter Jesus. We want to accommodate the Holy Spirit. And we want it to be intelligible for the average church person and the average guest.

Do you get it? We want to have a great dinner that feeds the church and welcomes guests all at the same meal.

Now, we have particular meetings, here at the church, that are entirely devoted to guests – various outreach events. And from beginning to end, they are all about our guests – the Fall Festival; Women's Breakfasts; Men's Luncheons. And we have events here at the church – Renewal Services, Worship and Healing Nights, Home Fellowship Groups - that are virtually all about the church. Depending upon the event, dinner is different. Sometimes we serve up monkey brains and sometimes we just run it right down the center of the main and the plain.

Do you understand? Now, listen. I've said all of that to say this. If the only thing that comes to your mind when you think of the word "worship" is what a church does in the hour or two hours or three hours or however long a church gets together on Saturday night or Sunday – if that's the only thing that comes to mind when you think of the word "worship," then you are not thinking of worship in a biblical way.

The series I am going to do is titled Worship as a Lifestyle. Today I want to talk about how we get beyond the one day a week public worship mindset. I've called today's talk, "How to Worship God 24/7." Let's pray.

John 4:21-24

Jesus said, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet 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. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and truth."

Now, real quickly, the setting for this incredibly important discussion about worship is a conversation that Jesus had with a woman by a well in Samaria. Samaria is an area in Northern Israel. And the Samaritans were a group of people who likely resettled Northern Israel after the Assyrian invasion of 722 BC. They were Jews of a sort, but they were politically and religiously independent of the main bulk of Jews. We'll talk about that in a moment.

But just parenthetically, the whole of John 4 illustrates how extraordinarily sensitive Jesus was to the leading of the Holy Spirit and to the voice of God in

every situation he found himself in. For Jesus, chance meetings with people were not just seen as random occurrences. Jesus had his ear continually turned to the Father, and he lived in an awareness that some of the people who crossed his path were divine appointments sent to him by God the Father.

That's just a parenthetical point here, but let me ask you a personal question. When was the last time you just knew that a person who happened to cross your path – someone you just bumped into at Starbucks, or you were seated next to on a plane flight, or the person who is doing your hair, or who is in your study group at school, who was waiting at the preschool to pick up their daughter – maybe they were a customer, a patient, a client. When was the last time you just knew that this person whom you bumped into was an appointment set for you by Almighty God? When was the last time you knew absolutely, without a shadow of a doubt, that you had a divine appointment? Last week? Last month? A year ago? Never?

Jesus had divine appointments all the time. Could it be that you and I also have divine appointments all the time, but that we are too spiritually dull to recognize that an interruption, a chance meeting, may be an appointment set for us by God?

Let me ask a different question. When was the last time you prayed in the morning, "Father, today I give you my time. I give you my schedule. I put every moment of today in your hands. Father, today give me divine appointments. Let me see a person for whom I can be an instrument of your mercy. Let me be somebody who can be an encourager to another person. Send someone across my path today who needs your mercy. Send me someone who needs salvation."

Friend, I tell you worship 24/7, worship as a lifestyle, begins when you turn your day over to God, and you turn your schedule over to God in the morning, and you say, "Lord, make an appointment for me today. Use me as your instrument. Grant me today a divine appointment."

Well, Jesus recognized the leading of God in this seemingly accidental meeting with the Samaritan woman. The conversation begins to veer towards the woman's relationship with God. When you talk with Jesus, he is probably going to eventually talk with you about your relationship with God. The woman begins raising various smoke screens, as people do when a conversation gets a little uncomfortable or very personal. And so she says in verse 19:

Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem. Jesus declared, "Believe me woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem."

The main bulk of Jews in Jesus' day decided that the place that God had chosen for worship was Jerusalem. The Samaritans, because they rejected all of the Old Testament outside of the Pentateuch, decided that the place where God wanted to be worshipped was Mt. Gerizim, where blessings were pronounced.

Jesus is saying something enormous when he says, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem." Negatively, he is saying that as a result of his coming, and, in particular, as a result of his death and resurrection and the gift of the Spirit, worship is no longer going to be tied to a certain place – a building, a temple, a mountain. Not on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem. Jesus is saying there are no longer sacred places that you must make a pilgrimage to in order to meet with God. And I would add, not only is God not tied to certain places, but God is not tied to a certain day of the week – Sunday. Or having your favorite songs played by your worship leader in the style that you want that song to be played.

God is bigger than buildings. He is bigger than days. He is bigger than the worship leader. He is bigger than the style.

Now, Jesus is saying something new has happened as a result of his coming into the world. It is a first in the history of religion. God is not linked to a location – an altar, a city, a sacred stone, a temple. Every religion in the world has historically linked God with a place – Jerusalem, Mecca, the Ganges River. New Agers talk about these spiritual vortexes, these spiritually alive places like Stonehenge in England or Glastonbury or Boulder, Colorado.

And every religion has linked God with a day – whether it is the Sabbath, or Friday for Muslims, or Sunday. Even Christians will wrongly talk about church buildings as houses of God. You see the sign over the door that says, "You are now entering the house of God. Enter reverently." People think that they are going from secular space – from work, the barbershop, school – into sacred space.

Or people think that certain days are holy days. Jesus is saying negatively something huge, and it opens up the whole understanding of worship as a lifestyle. He is saying a new day is dawning on the earth as the result of my birth, my life, my death, my resurrection, my ascension, my gift of the Spirit. No one place is going to be marked out anymore as uniquely sacred – not Jerusalem, not Mt. Gerizim, not Mecca, not Stonehenge, not a church building, not the altar in the church.

And I would add not one day, no set of externals, no worship team, no worship style, no worship leader is more filled with God.

But even more important, positively, Jesus says God is spirit and his worshippers must worship him in spirit and truth. Because God is spirit, Jesus is saying

wherever God is, wherever God dwells, that place is sacred. Listen to this. This is revolutionary. In the history of religion, what Jesus is saying in this little text is absolutely radical. He is saying that in the past people used to go to sacred places to meet with God, but now, because God's spirit is everywhere, everywhere where God is, that place is sacred.

Do you get it? Bible scholars, wanna-be Bible scholars, let me ask you a question. Where is God today? Where does God dwell today?

You say, "Well, God's place is heaven. Heaven is the dwelling place of God."

Yeah, but where else? Where is the dwelling place of God on earth? It's not a building. It's not a golf course, unfortunately. Not the mall. Where's the dwelling place of God on earth?

The dwelling place of God on earth is the Christian believer. It says later on in John 14, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him." Christian believers who love God and have received the Lord into their lives, they become the dwelling place of the Spirit.

Do you understand it? If you are a Christian believer, and you have received God's Spirit into your heart, wherever you are is sacred space. You don't go to sacred space, you bring sacred space with you. You walk into your home, your bedroom, school, workplace, apartment, or health club, holiness is brought in. All week long, 24/7, sacred space is happening.

Or another way to put it, according to the apostle Paul, Christian believer, you are the temple of the Holy Spirit. You are the house of God. When we gather together in this building on Saturday night or Sunday morning to worship, we are not going to the house of God. We have 6000 houses of God squeezed into this building. 6000 temples fit into one big room and lots of little rooms around this church complex. We have tall temples and short temples and fat temples and thin temples. And some little bitty temples that can barely talk.

Where do you worship God? Wherever you are, there is God. In the car, in the grocery, when you are waiting for a red light, when you email a friend, there is God.

I go over this because, friend, when you hear the word "worship" I want you to primarily think in your minds not of the ½ hour, hour and a half, of our public meeting. I want you to primarily think of private worship 24/7. Worship each week doesn't start at a certain time, 6:00 p.m. on Saturday night, and last until 6:30 p.m. Or 9:15 and 9:45. Our public gathering, what we do in this building, is the continuation of a thousand private meetings that you have over the course of the week with God. A thousand times a week when there is no worship band,

when there are no other people around, when your favorite songs are not being sung the way you think they ought to be sung, a thousand times a week you are making a decision in your heart to meet with God.

Now, how do you worship? Jesus says in verse 22:

You Samaritans worship what you do not know, but we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

Jesus is saying that the Samaritans' knowledge of God, because they rejected the entire Old Testament outside the Pentateuch, is very inaccurate. But on the other hand, the Jews, who embraced the whole of God's revelation, God's entire written revelation up to that point, had a true and accurate view of who they were worshipping. You see, you can't worship what you don't know. If you think of God as being like your dad, and your dad was distant, or sat in a chair all the time brooding, or spent his whole life working and felt that his contribution to the family was just bringing home his paycheck, or he was abusive or irritable, and you think God is like that, well then you aren't going to love and worship a God like that 24/7.

The true God, the God that is revealed in the Bible, is a God who is infinitely patient, infinitely available, very near, and ready to receive anyone who runs to him in repentance. Worship is a response to a true revelation of God. The more you know of God, the more you will love God. Do you know God just a little? Then you will love him just a little. Do you know God a lot? Then you are going to love God and adore him a lot.

And the more you love and adore him, the more he will show himself to you and the more you will love him and will know of him.

Now, this phrase "for salvation is from the Jews" is one of the most important in the whole gospel of John. I haven't the time today to really cover it fully, except to say that at the most fundamental level, Christians need to understand that what we call Christianity is based on Judaism. And without Judaism, Christianity makes no sense. Everything about Christianity makes sense, only in terms of the long history of God's promises to the Jews. Without Judaism and the Old Testament, Christianity is without context; it is without rooting; it is just a millimeter deep.

Think about this with me for just a moment. We've just gone through the Advent and Christmas seasons. We sing, "O come, O come Emanuel, and ransom captive Israel." Every line of *O Come, O Come Emanuel* shouts out to us that Jesus is the fulfillment of all the longing, all the hope of captive Israel.

Or how about the Christmas carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem"? The song only makes sense because Bethlehem was the city of David where not only King

David, but King David's descendant, the Messiah, was to be born. The song just doesn't work if you sing, "O little town of Westerville, how still we see thee lie." Or "Oh little town of Arlington"...or Chicago...or any other city in the world.

Christianity is Jewish down to its toes: the Eucharist that we celebrate, the Passover meal where we remember that Jesus is our Moses, that he is our liberator from a greater slave master than the Egyptians ever were. Jesus liberates us from ourselves, from our self-interests, from our sin. When Jesus was crucified, he was crucified under a sign that read in three languages, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

What does all of this mean? In the history of Christianity, whenever the church has lost the fundamental truth of verse 22, that salvation is from the Jews, Christianity becomes this abstract, philosophical, other-world religion. People start becoming Greek in their approach to God, not Jewish. Greeks were very dualistic. They separated out the body from the soul. They were anti-this world. They were very abstract.

Jews, by way of contrast, were very concrete, very holistic. They loved this world. They were concerned not just with the salvation of their souls, like the Greeks, but with the resurrection of their bodies.

Friends, our futures are not as bodiless souls floating invisibly on a cloud. Our futures, as Christians, are going to be spent in our resurrected bodies. Bodies like the Lord Jesus' resurrected body, living not in some floating heaven somewhere, but on a new earth.

What does all this have to do with worship 24/7? How does salvation being from the Jews impact our worship? Worship is not just some abstraction, some philosophical approach that you take in your mind. Jews, because they were so concrete, so this-worldly, worshipped God with their bodies. They didn't just say, "I have good thoughts of God. I'm thinking true things about God, therefore, I am worshipping."

Most of the Hebrew words used in the Bible for worship actually deal with positions of the body: to bow down, to kneel, to lie prostrate on the floor. The point is, friends, when you worship God, because salvation is from the Jews and not the Greeks, you come to God in a very concrete, very this-world approach that involves your body: your hands, your knees, your mouth and your feet.

Do you understand that? Worship is more than bodily. You can sing, dance, jump up and down, shout in tongues, have your hands raised. Or you can kneel, lie down on the floor. You can lie on your face. You can walk around. But your heart can be a million miles from God. Jesus said in Mark 7, "These people worshipped me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." Sitting in a

church building doesn't make you a true worshipper, neither does singing really loud.

I've watched lots of folks do the church smile thing for years, and then go out in the parking lot and fight with their spouses. I don't mean once or twice, but that's their regular practice when they move away from sacred space, sacred activity and the church space.

How we worship God is with our bodies, but, in addition, Jesus says in verse 23-24:

A time is coming, and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit and his worshippers must worship him in spirit and truth.

Since God is spirit, and he is not tied to a place, or day of the week, or to a certain worship band, or to the singing of your favorite songs, God is looking for private worshippers who worship him in spirit and truth. What does that phrase mean – worship in spirit and truth?

Some commentaries suggest that worship in spirit may refer to worship in the Spirit – the Holy Spirit. It refers to charismatic worship, to prophecy, to tongues, to revelatory gifts, or worship that is made alive and possible by the Holy Spirit, that's animated by the Spirit. And that's all true. We can't worship God privately; we can't worship God publicly, apart from the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

I think it is most likely that when Jesus talks about worshipping in spirit, he is not talking about the Holy Spirit here, but worshipping with the human spirit, with the deepest part of your being. He is contrasting externals, place and time and circumstances, songs, and all the aids and props that people have – he is contrasting all of that with worship with your heart, with your internal being, with your inner thoughts, with your true person.

God is looking for people who worship him 24/7 with the deepest part of their being, in truth, and in spirit. What's that? It is that you more and more get a grip on the truth about God. Who is it that we are approaching? The Samaritans didn't know who they were approaching. More and more, you need to feed on God's Word and listen to healthy teaching, so that you know who God is, because the more you know him, the more you will love him and adore him and worship him.

When you worship God in truth, it is not only the truth about God, but the truth about yourself. Friend, what God wants from you in worship is genuineness, authenticity. He wants you to take off your religious mask. Take off your church face in church. Take off your church face when you are alone. Stop avoiding the

ugly, raw, infected parts of your person and instead bring that ugly stuff into his presence. Stop trying to fake God out, but come into his presence 24/7 and say, “You know, I’m just going to be utterly, spiritually naked before you, God. This is who I really am. This is what I really think. I’m hurt. I’m envious. I’m angry. Here’s where my thoughts are going. I’m ambitious. I’m self-absorbed. Here’s my heart, Lord, just as I am.”

God is seeking, God is longing for authentic, genuine worshippers, who connect with him in the deepest part of their being in private.

So, practically, how do you worship God all week long and not just Sunday to Sunday, but Monday through Saturday in spirit and truth? Certainly, you need to set aside some time each day for devotions, a fixed regular time to read the Bible, to pray, to gain a deeper knowledge of the God whom you are worshipping. You need to set aside a time every single day to specifically say “thank you” to God for the blessings in your life. To ask him for divine appointments, to sing worship songs.

One of the practices that makes the greatest difference in a person’s life is the practice of devotions. But I think this text takes us way beyond a ½ hour or an hour devotions each day. This text is communicating to us that all week long, wherever you are, there is God and therefore you can direct your heart to God everywhere.

How do we do that?

There was a man named Brother Lawrence who was a poor monk in a French monastery from about 1666-1691. And he wrote a spiritual classic that we have on sale here at the bookstore called “Practicing the Presence of God.” The copies that we have on sale here also include the writings of another man, Frank Laubauch, who is very good. But if you just wanted to read Brother Lawrence’s *Practicing the Presence of God*, it’s only about sixty pages. It’s very short and is an easy read.

This little book has turned out to be, other than the Bible, and maybe John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, the most widely read Christian book ever written. Brother Lawrence’s spiritual secret was simply to stop wasting your time thinking about nonsense. But all day long, 24/7, to direct your thoughts to God, to converse with God, to confess to God, to adore God, to thank God, to meditate on God.

Principle #1: Direct your thoughts to God all day long.

Principle #2: Do everything unto God – whether you are cooking a meal, or sweeping the floor, or meeting with people, or having lunch with a client, or changing a diaper – do every thing unto the Lord as an act of love to God.

You say, "How can I do this? I have three kids under the age of five."

"I work ten hours a day."

"I run a busy office."

"I have a full load at school and I'm working thirty hours a week waiting tables."

"I have a mother who has Alzheimer's."

Let me bring this down for you in closing. All day long every day there are times when you are just vegetating. That's what one of my kids says when I ask them what they are doing. They say, "Nothing...just vegetating." In other words, "I'm doing just the bare minimum to keep biological life going. I'm breathing and my blood is circulating through my body, but that's about it." All day long, when you are just vegetating, you are waiting around, and your mind is thinking about whatever, you are waiting for the coffee to brew, you're in the shower, you're in the car driving to work, you're in line at the bank, or you are doing some mindless activity like loading the dishwasher, or waiting for your clothes to dry at the laundromat – instead of daydreaming, or worrying or dwelling on some hurt in your life, or some imagined conversation that you are going to have with a person who ticked you off, or planning for your next purchase or listening to the radio – if you just took all your vegetating time and directed your thoughts to the Lord, and friend, I would just say if your mind is undisciplined, this is going to take some real work, to grab hold of your thoughts and direct them to the Lord; if you are used to having a mind that wanders everywhere, this is going to take real work to get your thoughts directed to God, but so what if it takes real work? Real work won't kill you. Your mind needs to be disciplined, if you are ever going to move forward with God.

All day long, what you do is say, "Here I am Lord, as I am; I want to keep super short accounts with you. I just confess to envy. I confess to anger or judgment, or to saying something a minute ago that I shouldn't have said." All day long you are carrying on this dialogue with God. You are focusing on God. You are loving him. I will tell you, friends, this will revolutionize your life. Do this for just one day. Take your thoughts and just present yourself to God all day long – whenever you have vegetating time. In a day, I'll guarantee you that you will be more peaceful. You will be less depressed. You will be more joyful. You'll be more sensitive to God. You'll feel more liberated and feel like you will be able to spiritually breathe. You will be less tempted. Just keep directing your thoughts to the Lord, not to your circumstances, not to the problems that you have. Just keep directing your attention to the Lord and feeding off of him, and responding to him. And do everything from emailing to balancing your checkbook consciously, a hundred times a day, say, "I just want to do this well unto you." "I want to be a courteous driver and do this well unto you." "I want to take this time that I'm meeting with this person and do it unto you, Lord."

Practice God's presence not just at church, not just when someone is leading a worship song. That's how you worship 24/7. Let's pray.

How to Worship God 24/7

Rich Nathan

January 5-6, 2002

Worship as a Lifestyle Series

John 4:21-24

I. Worship: Public and Private

II. Worship: Where and When (John 4:21)

Neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem...

A. Negatively

B. Positively

III. Worship: How and Why

Salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22)

A. Worship With Your Body

Worship in Spirit and Truth (John 4:23-24)

B. Practicing God's Presence