

40 Days of Purpose Worship: Planned for God's Pleasure

²⁸One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

²⁹"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. ³¹The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these."

³²"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. ³³To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

³⁴When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Last week we looked at some of the ways that people try to find out what their purpose in life is. Richard told us that there are all sorts of theories on what we should do with our lives. But if we know our real purpose then the best person to ask is the person who made us, our creator, God.

I remember one of the first things I ever made in woodwork at school. Seeing the object for the first time, you would be forgiven if you didn't know what it was for. But I know exactly what it's for because I made it. I can tell you how it was made and the tools that I used and I remember the effort that went into making it. And when I look at it I think 'I did that' and that makes me proud.

It's actually a rack to put cassette tapes in (that's what music used to be stored on in the dark ages). It doesn't look like much, and it's not even the most well made object in the world. It was supposed to hold 10 tapes but I think it actually holds 11 and there is too much space at the front. But it kind of works and I am proud of it all the same, because I made it.

How many of you have ever made something or perhaps done some DIY or even perhaps done something in the garden and you can look back at it and say 'I did that'. I'm not talking ladies about that dodgy shelf that falls down and you say 'oh, my husband did that!' I'm talking about things you are proud of.

It is the same with God. He made us and he is proud of us. Because when he looks at us he sees the thing he has created and so he can't help but love us.

Today we're looking at worship. Worship is our response to the love God has for us.

In the passage we read this morning, Jesus was having a debate with some Sadducees (Mark 12:18-27) and hearing how well Jesus had answered, a teacher of the law asked him "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" (v28)

Of course, Jesus reply was ²⁹"The most important one is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. ³¹The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these."

Jesus was saying if you don't understand anything else, understand this; the thing God wants you to do most of all is to love him. That is God's number one purpose for us, that we love him.

Let's have a look at that in a bit more detail.

Love the Lord your God **with all your heart and with all your soul.**

Hosea 6:6 says "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings." (NIV)

The New Living Translation puts it like this:

"I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings." (NLT)

Or The Message version of the Bible puts it like this:

"I'm after love that lasts, not more religion." (MSG)

I wonder how much you do for God in the week. Perhaps you feel you do a lot. You might answer me by saying "well, I get up at 5:00 every morning and spend an hour reading the Bible, then I pray that God will bless me and my family. I go to all the prayer meetings, I go to house group and I go to church twice on a Sunday." That's all great but God says, that isn't really what I'm after. I don't just want you to fill your time with activities. I want a relationship with you. I love you and what I really long for is for you to love me back.

1 John 4:19 says "We love because he first loved us."

The love we have in us, especially the love we should have for God is a response to the love God has for us.

To worship God with all our **heart and soul** is to give ourselves completely to God. We use the term 'heart and soul' to mean everything don't we? When we say we've put our heart and soul into something, what we mean is that we have given it everything we have got. All that is within us.

Heart and soul is about having a passion for God. So if your relationship with God is a little lifeless then maybe you need to **bring back the passion.**

God wants us to get to know him better. He wants an intimate relationship with us. Over the past few weeks we've heard that the way to get to know God better is to spend time with him. We need to look into his word, to pray to him and to listen to him.

[Matthew 10:30](#) says "the very hairs on your head are all numbered".

I guess in my case it doesn't take him so long to count these days but God loves you so much that he notices every detail about you. He can't take his eyes off you. Some people think that's because he's waiting for you to trip up so as he can punish you. But that isn't true at all.

[For I know the plans I have for you,](#) declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:10-12)

That doesn't sound like a God with thunder bolts poised ready to throw them at you does it?

So let's not be scared to get close to God and love him with all our heart and soul.

Secondly, Love the Lord your God... **with all your mind**

Maybe you sent a valentine's card to someone this week, but even if you didn't, I'm sure most of us at some point have sent someone a card to say 'I love you' or perhaps you've written to someone to say thank you or to say 'I'm thinking about you during your difficult time'. Or maybe you just phone someone up to let them know that you still care about them.

A phrase we use in the UK is **“It’s the thought that counts”**. The trouble is that most of us don’t think. We’re too selfish for that. We are too busy with ourselves to worry about anyone else but Paul says **“offer your bodies as living sacrifices” (Rom 12:1 NIV)**

Or in other words, give yourself completely to God. Make God your number one priority. Put him above yourself.

Exodus 20:3-5 says:

“You shall have no other gods before me

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God...” (NIV)

This is repeated again in Exodus 34:14: **“Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.” (NIV)**

We are to put God above everything else in our lives. Isn’t that what true love is all about. If you love someone you put them first don’t you. This is often clearly seen with mothers and their children. You will often see mothers putting themselves out because they want the best for their children. You very often see moms and dads going without things so as they can afford to give to their children. That’s what love is about isn’t it? It’s putting someone else above yourself.

As we looked at earlier, God watches us constantly because he loves us so much. He is interested in you. It’s like when Ruth comes home from work and I ask her ‘how was your day’. It’s because I’m interested to know if she had a good day today or maybe she didn’t have a good day and needs someone to cheer her up. That’s what God is like with us. He’s interested in your well being.

One of the important things about a relationship is spending quality time together. In a marriage it’s really important to set time aside to spend together, just the two of you. Jesus said **“when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Mat 6:6 NIV)**

Notice there that Jesus says “go into your room and close the door”. Part of that is a contrast to people who make a show of praying. I’m sure we’ve all known people who say long impressive prayers that seem to be aimed more at impressing the people around them than genuine prayer requests to God. Those kinds of people were around in the Bible times too and Jesus is saying here ‘Don’t be like them’.

But also going into your room and closing the door means that you won't be distracted. I know some people who have a special place where they spend time with God. I heard of a man who had a loft conversion and dedicated part of the roof space to an area for spending time with God.

Jesus often did this. Many times in the gospels we see Jesus slipping away from the crowds to find a place where he could be alone with his father.

“After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,” (Mat 14:23 NIV)

We need to make time for God in our lives and put him first. **It's the thought that counts.**

Finally, all of that should make us want to do something physically about it. Love the Lord your God... **with all your strength**

Worship is far, far greater than singing songs.

Paul says to the Romans “¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.” (Rom 12:1)

So worship is about offering yourself to God. It's loving God in response to the love God has for us and **living it out.**

Paul says this is our spiritual act of worship. There should be physical signs that we love God. When two people are in love, you often see them holding hands. They are proud to be associated with one another. They want everyone to know. And so we should be proud of our relationship with God and we should want everyone to know. It's what we call witnessing.

Colossians 3:23 says: “**Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,**”

The way that we do our day to day work can be the biggest witness for God in the world. The way you handle day to day tasks will be far more effective than anything you say.

I found working in a large office that people notice things. The way you work can be a good witness or a bad witness depending on how you do it. The way to be a really good witness for God is to worship

him through your work. Paul says to the Colossians, 'Work with all your heart as if you were working for the Lord.' Then people will see God at work in you.

God gives us all different abilities and so a good way to worship God is to use those abilities for him. Have a think about the abilities that you have and how they might be used for God.

So worship is...

- A response to God's love.
- Passionate– giving ourselves completely to God
- Thoughtful – Spending quality time with God
- Practical – Using our abilities to serve God.

The Bible tells us that we are very special to God. He created us and he loves us. We were created for his pleasure.

Many people respond to this with only their heads but God wants us to respond with our hearts as well. Not just to go through the motions of coming to church, even reading our Bibles but let's actually engage with God, let's get to know him and love him and let's serve him in our everyday lives.

Or as Paul puts it: ["So we make it our goal to please him" \(2 Cor 5:9 NIV\)](#)