



WORSHIP: GOD TRANSFORMS

Part 11 of Doctrine

Pastor Mark Driscoll | June 15, 2008

You are listening to Doctrine, a sermon series where Pastor Mark Driscoll covers the basic beliefs of Christianity. This series also serves as a prerequisite for membership at Mars Hill Church. For more audio and video content, visit MarsHillChurch.org.

Well, howdy, Mars Hill. Happy Father's Day to all the daddies, like me – good day for us. I was gonna do a special Father's Day sermon, but we decided to stay with Doctrine, what Christians should believe, our series – talking about worshiping God. Because truly, for dads in particular, worship is job one. Worship God, set the pace and tone for your family, your wife, your kids, and by worshiping God you're beginning a legacy that the rest of the family will follow in. So we'll get to that in just a moment. Before we do, I wanted to give you a quick update.

Our budget year runs from July through June, as so as we're ending our fiscal year I wanted to give you just some brief reports. Here's where we are financially: We're about half a million dollars behind budget for the year with a couple weeks to go in our budget year, at least budgeted dollars. Our actual deficit is roughly \$400,000.00, because we've pared back, we've cut expenses, we have let some people go. We've trimmed back, quite painfully in some areas, to be quite honest with you. Trying to just keep it lean especially going into the summer season, when occasionally the sun comes out as it has today, and people, you know, take vacations and go do things. And so attendance for us tends to level off, giving tends to level, and so we're kind of at that pain point going into the summer.

Unless something miraculous should happen and we end up making budget, this would actually be the first time in the 11-year history of Mars Hill that we don't make projected budget. And so just be in prayer for your church. For those of you who are Christians, please do remember us throughout the course of the summer months and continue giving to your church. Even if you can't come, your debit card still can, (Laughter) and just keep up. And as well, if you're not a Christian, don't give. We love you. You're our guest; glad to have you.

As well, this leads into our membership process. We are a church that has members, and by members, we don't mean members in, like, a country club or a civic organization, more like members of a family. Or to use the language of Paul in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, the church is like a body and different Christians are parts on it – fingers and eyes and ears and toes and hands and feet. And everybody's got something very vital to do, so it is very important for us to have church members. This Doctrine series is the prerequisite for church membership, and so we would like you all who are a Christian to become members of our church.

And we've had to redo how we do membership because, if you can believe it, two years ago we were one church in one location, here at Ballard. And since that time we've become a multi-campus church, beaming in the sermon via television satellite to Shoreline and Wedgwood and West Seattle, and Belltown, and the East Side, and we just continue to expand. And pray for the East Side campus. They are moving from Redmond into Bellevue to accommodate more growth. Shoreline is doing very well – three services. West Seattle's at two services, looking at going to a third in the fall. Wedgwood is at two, looking at going to a third. Same thing with Downtown and so, you know, we praise God for the ability to minister to multiple locations, and now our next location will be Olympia, that we'll be opening up in the fall.

And so that being said, as we've gone to multiple locations we've had to not have people just be a member of Mars Hill Church globally, but become members of Mars Hill Church locally at various campuses. And so where we are at present is 1,091 total members of the church out of probably 10,000 people that call the church home, to be honest with you. And so it's actually a fairly low number. And those who are in process, meaning they're finishing up the online information through The City, which is our social networking tool online or some of you waiting for this series to finish up are about 800 people. And there's three kinds of people. Some of you were members and need to re-up. We would say please go ahead and finish that up. Some of you are in the process, and we would say thank you and finish up. And some of you are brand new and we want to get you plugged in.

Now, the way to do that is to let us know who you are, okay? You should find on your seat this card that says "Become a Member." You'll never guess what this is for. It's for becoming a member, and to do that all you need to do is just fill out the back: name and e-mail. And then drop it off at communion or one of the information desks on your way out, and we will follow up with you. Also, if that doesn't work, there are people with clipboards wearing big "Become a Member" t-shirts. Just grab one of them and say, "Hey, let me give you my e-mail address," and we'll send you an e-mail this week. Or you could stop by the information desks. Or you could log into The City at one of the computers, and we'll get you started in the membership process, get to know you, be able to send you information – communicate to you.

And if all of that doesn't work, we're gonna do it again next week, and we're gonna keep doing it. We're gonna wear you down through attrition – that's our plan. Because we love you so much, we refuse to let you go. So it's not stalking. We're not like those people who send boys on bikes with

white shirts to your house. We're not gonna go that far, but we'll just keep handing you one of these until you fill it out. And so please do. And I know last week you all meant to, and the reason we put it on your seat is 'cause you forgot. And so we love you. We'll do it again next week, and the week after that, and the week after that. And our goal is just to get to know you and get you plugged in.

So I think that's all I have insofar as announcements are concerned, other than – oh, yes, one more slide. Here are the number of members we have by campus, kind of let you know how we're doing. Downtown is about 105 members presently, and they're running 400, 500 people. East Side is 110 members, they're running 700, 800 and moving into a new building to grow. Wedgwood is about 117 members, they're running about 400-plus people. Shoreline is 126 members, running 500, 600, 700 depending upon the week. West Seattle runs 700, 800, 900 depending upon the week. 159 members. Ballard runs anywhere from a couple thousand on up, 474 members.

So percentage-wise, not huge, and that is indicative of weakness for us. You can imagine if 15 to 20, 25 percent of the people who call the church home are actually members plugged in, that we have a way of communicating with, it's really hard to keep up to speed with everyone and find a way to serve them. And we don't yet have data on Olympia. They're officially now a core group as of this week. It's about 80 people down in Centralia, _____, Olympia area, and they will be Mars Hill Olympia officially commencing this fall. So we're getting to know those people and figure out who's actually there.

So that being said, I'll pray. We'll get to work. It is good to see both of you on this very nice, sunny day. Happy Father's Day again to all the daddies, and we will have a good time studying a very important doctrine together today. And I'm really excited, actually, to teach it to you. So I am grateful for all of you who have joined us.

Father God, we begin by acknowledging that you are Creator and that we are created to worship. It gives us joy and passion and pleasure and purpose. God, we confess as well, through sin we worship people and things that we shouldn't. We worship people and things other than you. And so, God, we thank you for Jesus, who has come to worship you with a sinless life and to save us so that we might worship you in joy forever, together as your people. As we study it is my request that I would serve you as an act of worship, that those who have gathered and would listen online and elsewhere would be well-served by the Scriptures. And that, God, we, by the power of the Holy Spirit, would worship you according to the pattern of Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

As we get into this subject of worship, sadly what some people think worship is, is an event that happens on Sunday, like a service at our church, or a style of music. And worship is big enough to include both of those things, but it is so much bigger and broader than just an event or a style of music. In some regard, worship is all of life, every aspect of it, connected to God or disconnected from God. And so that being said, as we get into this sermon you will hear threads from the entire Doctrine series woven together culminating in the doctrine of worship. And to do that we'll answer five questions.

The first is, where does worship originate? If you go back with me and remember the sermon that I preached on the Trinity, I told you that according to the Bible there is one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Spirit – co-equal, co-eternal in every way. And that community of God is perfect in love, in joy, in unity. And God has worship within his own essence. The Father, Son, and Spirit, from eternity past through eternity future continually, unceasingly pour themselves out in love, in praise, in communication, and in joy.

Some religions teach that God made us so that he could be worshiped. That's not true. God has perfect relationship, worship, adoration, joy, praise, communication with his own essence and nature, his own self. That the Father, Son, and Spirit are continually, unceasingly pouring out, one to the other. And so God is a worshiper, God is a worshipping community of one.

That being said, in the image sermon where I talked about the fact that we're made in the image and likeness of God, I told you that that means in part we were made as worshipers. We were made worshipping. We were made to worship. And so we ceaselessly pour ourselves out. We give ourselves away – our heart, our mind, our money, our devotion goes somewhere, to someone, to something. Everyone who has ever lived, everyone who does live, everyone who will ever live is a worshiper. We're chasing someone. We're pursuing something. And that's the way that God made us. It's a good thing.

But as we studied in the fall sermon, because of sin our worship tends to be directed toward things other than God, people other than God, the result being that we continue to worship but we worship wrongly. The question is not will we worship, but who and how do we worship.

Then we looked at Jesus, the fact that God became a man, in the incarnation series – that Jesus is God. That he substituted himself – we looked at, on the cross sermon, where Jesus died in our place for our sins. We looked at the resurrection sermon, how Jesus conquers our enemies of Satan, sin, and death, and how he gives us reconciled relationship with God so that we might again participate in the love and the joy and the praise and the adoration that the Trinitarian God has within himself. That we would be invited into relationship with that God to not just worship, but worship rightly, in a way that gives God glory and gives us joy. And those two are inextricably connected. As a Christian, when God gets glory, we get joy. When God is worshiped, he is glorified and we are satisfied. That's what he made us to be and to do.

Now that being said, that leads to the next question, what is worship? We have to define – very important to define this. One of my favorite definitions is in Romans 11:36 – 12:1. I use this section of Scripture a lot. If you've been here for any length of time, you've undoubtedly heard it. But it's so important that I need to reemphasize it. "To him" – that is, to God – "be the glory forever" – we'll talk about glory – "amen." Amen means "Yes, God, I agree with you. I believe what you say. I am like-minded, like-hearted with your will." It means, "Yes." "I appeal to you therefore, brothers" – speaking to Christians – "by the mercies of God" – Christians are people who understand the mercy of God toward them in Jesus – "to present your bodies as a living sacrifice" – we'll talk about that – "holy and acceptable to God." Not holy and acceptable to you, not holy and acceptable to culture, not holy and acceptable to someone or something else, holy acceptable to God. One of the best things you can do when you go to make decisions is simply ask this

question: Is this holy and acceptable to God? He goes on to say “which is your spiritual worship.”

So we'll put these together. What is worship? Well, it is glory and sacrifice – that's what worship is. So let me explain these two ideas. Glory means weightiness, heaviness, prominence, preeminence. Whoever or whatever is in the position of glory in your life is that person or thing that centers your existence. It's the treasure that you cherish most deeply. It's where your passion, your longing, your yearning, your desires, your enthusiasm – it's where they reside. Who or what is in the position of glory? Most important person or thing in your life.

And what happens, then, because we're finite, created beings, we only have limited resources; so much time, so much money, so much energy. We can't divest ourselves of these resources unendingly, so we make decisions. “I won't do this so that I can do this. I won't give money or time or energy to these people or these causes or these activities, and instead I will make sacrifices for them so that I can worship, I can glory in, I can ascribe supreme value to someone or something else.” We make these kind of decisions all the time, and they're worship decisions. They show up in our day planner. They show up in our Outlook calendar. They show up in our inbox. They show up in our budget. Our life is about not doing something so that we can do things that we find to be more glorious.

And what he says is, “This is our spiritual act of worship.” Someone or something is in glory. We sacrifice for the glory of that person or thing. That is, by definition, worship. Now, that being said, this is a definition of worship that works for Christians and non-Christians alike. And it includes everyone.

I'll give you some examples. Paul has an interesting line in the New Testament where he says that some people has as their stomach, God. That God is their stomach, or he says their stomach is their god. Now, you hear that, you go, “That's bizarre. What a weird thing, ‘your stomach is your god.’” But just think about it – makes perfect sense. If your stomach is in the position of glory, and you think about food all the time, and you eat food all the time, and you plan to eat more food later. And you always have within arm's reach a snack and a beverage and a drawer full of candy at work, right? What you're saying is, “I glory in food, and I go to the fridge like a temple to worship, or maybe the buffet, or maybe the restaurant.” These are all, for some people, temples. You go to the grocery store and covet, right? Walking up and down, “Oh, I gotta get me some of that. I don't even know what that is, but it's crunch. I need it.” (Laughter) So you put it in the cart.

Now, what happens is, if you glory in food you make sacrifices. You sacrifice money – it gets really expensive. You sacrifice health. All of a sudden you've got weight gain, ill health, high blood sugar levels, start to develop all kinds of health-related illness. What do you sacrifice? The length of your life, your quality of living, your energy levels, your blood sugar levels. You say, “But that's okay. I will sacrifice those things because my stomach is my God. And I glory in food. And food for me is an act of worship,” right? If your stomach is your god, maybe one way you could tell is you look at it right now and say, “How big is God? How big is God? And how big was God last year? Oh, boy. I've been worshipping a lot.” (Laughter)

Now, how about – take the example of alcohol. Some of you say, “I have a drinking problem.” I would submit to you that you don't. I would submit to you that you have a worship problem. This undergirds all of our biblical counseling at Mars Hill. We work on something called a Worship Model, that the root of the problem is always you're worshipping someone or something other than God. And it can result in food, alcohol, sex, shopping, anger – whatever it is. And you can pull all the weeds, but if you don't grab the root it always come back.

Let's say you have a problem with alcohol. You come here and say, “I drink too much. I'm an alcoholic.” Well, what that means is alcohol is in the position of glory for you, right? It's God. You're sad? You run to the bottle for consolation. You're happy? You run to the bottle for celebration. Whatever happens, you go to the bottle. When you're alone, you drink to console yourself. When life goes good, you drink to celebrate with your friends. If that's the case, what do you sacrifice? Well, it's expensive. You could sacrifice a lot of money. And you could sacrifice your health. And you could sacrifice your job. And you could sacrifice, if you're married, your marriage, your relationships. You start speaking out of drunkenness, acting out of drunkenness. Now you're negatively affecting those that are in relational community with you. What happens? You're taking all kinds of people and things and you're laying them on a proverbial altar and you're slaughtering them. You're sacrificing them so that alcohol might be worshiped as God.

See, no one really has a food problem, they have a worship problem. No one really has an alcohol problem. They have a worship problem that manifests itself in food or alcohol. This is how we see things at Mars Hill Church.

I'll give you one peculiar example. I've shared it before, but this is an example that really could be repeated hundreds of times at Mars Hill. I've had this conversation literally at least 100 times. Young woman came up to me, said, “Okay, I'm a Christian. I belong to Jesus. I worship Jesus. And I know I'm not supposed to be dating, living with, sleeping with a non-Christian guy, but my boyfriend's hit hard times. So I moved him in with me and I'm looking after him, and we're together. I think we're married in our hearts, and one day we'll be married, you know, legally. So I don't know why it's a big deal. I love Jesus, and this is just one thing in my life that's not quite right.” She says, “Why do you think it's such a big deal?” I said, “Because he's your God.” She said, “No, no, no. My boyfriend's not God, Jesus is God.” I said, “No, no, no. The boyfriend is God to you. You had to choose between the boy and Jesus. You chose the boy. You chose between being close to the boy or being close to Jesus. You chose to be close to the boy. Between obeying the boy or Jesus, you obeyed the boy. Between inviting the boy into your house or Jesus into your house, you invited the boy.” I said, “You worship the boy.” She says, “No, I don't.” I said, “You present your body as a living sacrifice. That's what you do. You lay yourself down like a sacrifice to the glory and obedience of the boy, at the expense of Jesus.”

I said, “Why do you do that? What do you want?” She said, “Ultimately I want him to become a Christian.” I said, “You cannot worship him and then convince him that the most important thing is to worship Jesus. You can't do it. You can't say, ‘Jesus is my greatest treasure, but I worship you as God instead. And when it comes down to you and Jesus, eh, I worship you.’” And I told her, I said, “You need to move out as an act of worship, or he

needs to move out as an act of worship." I said, "There is no way that this boy will ever understand the significance of Jesus if you're willing – if you're willing to disobey Jesus to worship him as God." She didn't have a cohabitation problem, she had a worship problem.

I said, "The other thing is," I said, "Jesus is a far better God. This guy's a taker. Jesus is a giver. This guy uses you. Jesus serves you. This guy defiles you. Jesus makes you clean. Jesus will draw you closer to God the Father. This guy is pushing you away." I said, "The truth is, Jesus is a far better relationship. Even if you should never get married, you'd be better off with just Jesus than a guy like that."

If you start to see everything in your life as worship you'll approach it differently. Instead of just saying, "I gotta drink less. I gotta eat less. I need to date somebody else," _____ say, "I need to worship God."

Let me explain this to you a little more thoroughly. Next question is, what is idolatry? One of the best ways, I think, to understand worship is to contrast it with idolatry. The opposite of worship is idolatry. Again, we're all unceasing worshipers going after someone, going after something, pouring ourselves out. And if it's not God, it's not that we cease, it's that rather we are misdirected towards someone or something other than God. That's idolatry.

And when I say idolatry I know that some of you wrongly think, like I did as a new Christian, "Oh, aren't those people that make, you know, animal pictures and then bow down to them – very primitive?" Well, it can be, but it can be far more subtle and complicated than that.

I'll give you an example from Romans 1:25. "They" – those who commit idolatry, worship someone other than God – "exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen." So we looked at in the Creator sermon – creation sermon, God made the heavens and the earth and God made us. And we are worshipers, to be participating in relationship and community with God. And because we continue to worship with sin, we exchange truth for a lie. We exchange worship of Creator for worship of creation.

And this happens in two ways. We either worship what God has made, or we worship things that we have made. I'll give you two examples. First, things that God has made. Say, "What do you mean, that people worship creation?" How about the environment? Say, "Well, shouldn't we recycle and reduce our carbon footprint?" Sure, great. Feel free. My family drives very little, recycles very much. That's fine. But when you call earth Mother, she birthed us. We're part of the cosmic wholeness – no. (Laughter) No, we don't worship the earth. We worship God by being good stewards of the earth. You can be a steward of the earth who worships God, but worshipping the earth? You say, "Well, I'm, you know, the circle of life. Hakuna matata, baby. We're all, you know part of the" – no, we're not. We're not. No, we're image-bearers of God made to steward the earth, not worship the earth. So we need to take good care of what God has entrusted to us, but to say it's God, to participate in divine living through being radical, green – no. No.

What else can you worship that is made by God? Well, what about a pet? I love pets. Pets are great. Say, "Is it a sin to have a cat or a dog?" No. "Well, don't you like cats?" Well, I like dogs. Sure, you know? (Laughter) "But are pets a sin?" No, no, no! God made animals and we're supposed to love them, take good care of them, not abuse them, be good stewards – absolutely. But should we worship our pet? You say, "People don't worship their pets." Sure they do. Sure they do. Doggie daycare? Doggie therapy? You know, doggie vacations? I mean, it's crazy. It's crazy. Say, "Well, shouldn't we love our pets?" Sure, but you can worship your pet to the degree where the pet determines where you live. The pet determines where you work. The pet determines when you work. The pet determines whether or not you can go to church. The pet determines whether or not you can go on vacation. The pet determines whether or not you can go to Bible study. We call that a God. It's Lord. It's four-legged Lord, and it's ruling and reigning, and you're under its jurisdiction.

I'll give you one bizarre example. Early on in Mars Hill a couple started coming. He had been a youth pastor and she had been a youth leader, and all of a sudden they stopped coming to church. The church was small enough at that point I knew everybody, so I call them up, I said, "Hey, we haven't seen you at church for a long time. What's going on?" He said, "Oh, we don't have time anymore. We can't go to church." I said, "Why?" He said, "We started raising these purebred dogs, training them for dog shows. The dog shows are always on Sunday so we can't go to church anymore." I said, "Ever again?" "Yes. We're trying to get ribbons." I'm like, "Interesting. If you show up, I'll give you a ribbon. How's that?" (Laughter) You know, I mean, "I'll make up ribbons if that makes you happy. You can line your house with them," you know? "First-place attender – you know, whatever you want. I don't care." (Laughter) And all of a sudden it's like, is it a sin to have a dog? No. Is it a sin to raise a dog? No. Is it a sin for a dog to be in a dog show? No. Is it a sin to say, "Dog or Jesus? Ha-ha! Dog?" Yes, right? 'Cause dog's not God – even if you're dyslexic you gotta get that straight. Dog and God are different. (Laughter) That's pretty good. (Laughter) I made that up as I was going.

So they just stopped going to church. They just stopped going to church – and got divorced. And the big war was who gets the dogs. I said, "No, that's not good." That's not good. I've seen people introduce me to their pet, saying, "This is my baby." And I've told you this before. My answer is always, "That is not a baby. I've had five and none had a tail. That is not a baby." (Laughter) That's not an image-bearer of God. It's great. It's a pet – great, praise God, love the pet. But it's not – it's not – it's not an image-bearer. That's not a baby. It's not gonna grow up and get a driver's license and betray you. That's an animal. (Laughter) It's totally different.

And in the context of Romans 1, truthfully here's what happens. It says in Romans 1 if you're gonna worship creation, it's not uncommon to end up worshipping the physical body because the body is the pinnacle of what God has made. So you worship the body – all of a sudden you're perverted into all kinds of sexual sin and nudity. Why? Because you're worshipping creation rather than Creator. We're to enjoy creation. We're to steward creation. We're to use creation as an opportunity to worship God, but creation itself is not our object of worship. It may be one of our means of worship, but not our object of worship.

Secondly, it's not just worshipping things that God has made, it's worshipping things that we have made. You may be building a career – praise God! But you can worship it, and you can sacrifice your health, your Sabbath, time in a community group, attending church. You could sacrifice your marriage,

your children, to what? To worship your career.

You could buy an old house and be refurbishing it, and be determined to renovate the house perfectly – always working on the lawn, always working the house, always working on the furnishings. Say, “Is it bad to have a house with a nice yard?” Not at all, but if you worship it like a God, all of a sudden all your money, all your time, all your energy is going to create your little piece of heaven on earth. All of a sudden, then – I’ve seen guys who yell at their kids for playing in the yard because they’re messing up the grass.

You don’t sacrifice your children to worship your yard. You don’t sacrifice your family to live in the perfect house. You don’t sacrifice those you love to make more money, to advance your career. Yes, you want to work as worship. You want God to be worshiped in your home. You want to have people over to your house and enjoy your possessions and your property to the glory of God. But it can become absolutely out of focus in every way. You start worshipping things you’ve made.

~~I’ve seen guys worship their kids and friends and the things parents do for their children. It~~

becomes epidemic. The human heart is an idol factory, and if we’re not careful things that God has made or things that we have made take the place of God, and everyone and everything gets sacrificed to the glory of that person or thing.

Leads to the next question, which will be perhaps the most painful. How can I find my idols? I’ll ask a series of questions, but first let me share with you this Scripture, which I find very helpful: 1 John 5:21, “Keep yourselves from idols.” Now in context, this is the last line of the book of 1 John. So John writes a whole letter and in the end he says, “Keep yourselves from idols.” And the question is, “What, is that just a bizarre little spiritual statement that he throws on the end?” No. Say, “Well, isn’t a pastor supposed to say things like, ‘Hey, don’t be a glutton and eat too much,’ and, ‘Don’t be a drunkard and drink too much,’ and, ‘Don’t be a thief and steal,’ and, ‘Don’t be a coveter’? You know, ‘Don’t murder anybody.’ Isn’t a pastor supposed to give good, moral council?”

Well, that’s it, ‘cause if you keep yourselves from idols, you keep yourself from being a glutton or a drunkard or a thief or a liar or a coveter or a murderer. Because all of that is fruit – idolatry is root. What he’s saying is, “Keep yourself from idols.” Make sure you keep your shovel. Go deep. Dig the idols out. You won’t have to worry about all the weeds. There’s different kind of weeds, but ultimately if you don’t get the roots, it doesn’t really matter. Keeping ourselves from idols is the way we really put the shovel to the root.

Idolatry is always the issue. Again, we don’t have a worship problem – we do have a worship problem, rather, and what we don’t have are just symptomatic problems. People walk into a church like this all the time. “I want a better marriage.” “I want to be happy.” “I want to be a better employee.” “I want to be a better parent.” “I want to stop drinking so much.” “I want to drop 20 pounds.” “I want to balance my budget. How do I do that?” “Tell me what to do. Where’s the class on that?” There’s the answer – one thing. Keep yourselves from idols. If you worship God you won’t end up doing those things because you won’t be worshipping false gods like food or power or money or fame or comfort or sex. You’ll just worship the real God, and those will be opportunities, means by which he can be worshiped.

I’m gonna ask you some painful questions. As I ask them, consider them. You won’t be able to write them all down, so they’re on my blog this week at MarsHillChurch.org. You can download them. If you’re married, talk to your spouse. If you’re here with roommates, talk to them. If you’re in a community group, this is what you’re gonna talk about this week. And if you’re not in a community group, sign up and join one and then you can talk about it. Here are the questions.

Who or what are your external idols? The stuff out there that is God – glory – to you? How about this one? Who or what is Lord that rules over your life? Say, “No, no, Jesus is Lord.” Really? Truly, does Jesus make the decisions that guide your life, or does someone or something else?

I talked to a guy not too long ago – give you an example. I said, “How come you don’t get much time with your kids?” Say, “Well, I gotta work a lot of hours and I gotta commute a long way to work.” I said, “Okay, your wife is really unhappy. You guys are at a pain point. Why?” “Well, I gotta bring my laptop home and my cell phone, and I’m all the time so she gets a little angry.” “Well, what do you do on your day off?” “I work.” “What happens when you go on vacation?” “I take my laptop, take my cell phone. My job requires that I’m always available.” I said, “So your job is God.” “No, no, no. Jesus is God.” “No, no, no. Jesus isn’t Lord – the job is. Jesus says, ‘Love your wife.’ You can’t do that ‘cause the job says no. Jesus says, ‘Raise your kids.’ You can’t do that ‘cause the job says no. Jesus says, ‘Sabbath.’ Can’t do that ‘cause the job says o. Right now the job is Lord – supreme, preeminent.” I said, “You know what? There’s other jobs.” I said, “It’s time to pray about another job. It’s time to look for another job. It’s time to consider another job. If it’s two, three hours in the car everyday, if it is working seven days a week, 365 days a year, if the requirement is when the cell phone rings and you’re eating dinner with your wife and kids, well, then you have a different God than Jesus.”

And I’m not saying that we shouldn’t work. And I’m not saying we shouldn’t work hard. And I’m not saying that there aren’t inconveniences. I’ve got a job like that, too. But truly, who or what is Lord? Who or what calls the shots? Who or what sets the schedule? If it’s not Jesus, you can change. Who is judge, the judge you are seeking approval from? See, Jesus says in places like John 5 that he’s the judge that will stand before him and give an account for our life. But what can sometimes happen, we put people in the place of judge. “As long as my parents are happy, that’s all I care about.” “As long as my spouse is happy, that’s all I care about.” “As long as my kids are happy, that’s all I care about.” “As long as my boss says, ‘Hey, you’re doing a great job,’ that’s all I care about.”

And when you stand before Jesus, will he say, “Well done, good and faithful servant”? Or will he say, “You were living for the approval of people other than me, and as a result there was a lot of idolatry and sin”?

How about this one? Where do you give your first fruits – your first money? The Bible talks about first fruits. Is your first money to God, or is it to

someone or something else? Right now if I gave you \$10,000.00 – and I'm not – but hypothetically, if I did (Laughter), first thing that comes to mind: "Well, I'd go get that," or, "I'd go do that," or, "I'd go experience that." That may be your idol.

See, Jesus says, "Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is." If you want to know where your heart is, you follow your budget. And it's not just how much you give, it's what you give first. You say, "Well, I got all these other things that are really important. And if there's anything left I give to Jesus." And there usually isn't, so he gets jack. So there's jack for Jesus – that's my tithe plan. (Laughter)

Or do you give first? Do you give first of your money? Do you give first of your time? Where do you put the first fruits of your time – your best time, your best energy, your best clarity? Does it go to Jesus? Do you use that to read Scripture, to pray, to serve, to do ministry, to care for the people that he's brought into your life, like spouse or kids, family or friends? Or do the people that Jesus has given you to serve, do they get last and worst?

How about this one, what do you plan and pray for? Some of you have plans right now. Some of you are planners. You write things down. You type things up. Some of you are less organized. They're just plans in your head. But what do you plan for? That may be indicative of where your heart and your idol _____. And what do you pray for? Some of you get very frustrated with God because you've got a plan, you're praying for something, and ultimately you want to get your idol, so you're asking God to give you the idol, and you're frustrated when he says no.

Just so you know, God's not a God who likes to give out idols. So people get very disappointed with God, very angry with God, very unhappy – "You're not a good God. I told you what to do! You're the piñata, prayer's the stick. I did it. Where's the stuff? I'm supposed to be healthier, married or have kids, or get a better job, or lose weight, or at least have pants that fit – anything! I asked you for some stuff and you didn't answer – very disappointed." What happens then is that some people go into a real spiritual funk and darkness because God is thwarting their idolatry. Just so you know, God will sometimes withhold even good things if you're using them in evil ways.

Couple more. Who or what are your internal idols? Not the stuff out there that everybody sees, but in your heart? What false beliefs do you hold about God? Some of you right here, right now, you say, "I know what the Bible says about God. I don't believe that." Are you a Christian? "Yeah. I know it says God loves me, and when I'm talking to people I tell them God loves them, but I don't think he really loves me. I know the Bible says that Jesus can forgive all sin and I tell that to people, but I don't believe that for me. I know that God's in control, but every time something bad happens I freak out. I flip – lose it, because I don't think God's in charge. I don't think he's in control, and if I'm not in control, I go out of control."

Those are lies. John 8, Jesus says that Satan is a liar, he's the father of lies. He's lying to you. And as an act of worship you need to believe God and renounce lies. Your view of God greatly matters, and it's not just what you teach others or profess to others, but what you actually believe. And only you know your heart. If you're a Christian, do you really believe that Jesus is God? Do you really believe that he loves you? Do you really believe that he forgives all sin? Do you really believe that he is in ultimate control of your life?

How about this one? What Scriptures do you deeply doubt or even disbelieve? There are people – I meet them all the time, they're Christians. They're like, "Oh, I know that's what the Bible says, I just think it's wrong." Now, you might not come right out and say it like that. "But ladies, respect your husbands." Ha-ha. That's an old book. Yeah, that's not – not today. That's an old book and respect – nah. "Husbands, love your wives." Oh, ho-ho. Nah. That dude never met her. She's a piece of work.

Some of you would never outwardly say this, but your devotional time is like this. _____ (Laughter) "What are you doing?" "Devotionals. _____." (Laughter) "I don't believe that. I don't believe that. That's outdated. That's cultural. That's this. That's that. That's – ah, that's not right. No, I went to college." (Laughter) Right?

What parts of Scripture do you just say, "I don't believe them"? "I don't like them so I don't I don't even read them." "Paul's a misogynist" – big word, you know? "Oh, the Old Testament – that God gets angry. Unacceptable. He needed Paxil and a therapist. He really needed to get it together." See, we live in this culture where it's almost sort of hip and cool to disagree with at least some part of the Bible, even if you're a Christian. Are you a Christian? "Yeah, I totally am but, you know, there's a couple things in there, that – I'm sensitive and enlightened and highly educated and live in Seattle and have a blog so, you know, there's parts that I – ha-ha – don't really believe." (Laughter)

Right? That's idolatry. That is worshiping your mind, your thoughts, your culture, your ideas, your opinions, your perspectives, your preferences, your team, your crowd, your degree, your authors – not Jesus.

Who or what do you love, treasure, long for the most? The center of your heart, the center of your life – who are you going after? What are you going after? Some of you say, "I'm not going after anything. I go to bed, I pull the covers over my head and I ignore everybody." You're going after comfort, that's your idol. We all have them.

Are we done yet? No! (Laughter) No. I love you so I'm gonna get you.

Who or what mediates between you and God? I think it's 1 Timothy 2:5. Paul says there's one mediator between us and God, the man Christ Jesus. God became a man to take our away our sin and to reconcile us, mediate between us and God. And what can happen is this: We wrongly, in idolatry, use people and things as false functional mediators. We do. Some churches, it's a liturgical worship style and they can't worship God unless they have this order of service. Others: "You can't take away those songs. If we don't sing those songs, how will I be close to God?" Answer: Jesus brings you close to God the Father.

Who or what other than Jesus do you use to get closer to God? How many of you really think, "If I could hang out with that person, if I could be disciplined by that person, if I could meet with that person, if I could be friends with that person, I would be closer to God." That's idolatry. That's guru-

ism. "Oh, they're a guru. If I get close to the guru, the guru's closer to God than me, and if I get close to the guru I'll be closer to God." No. Family, friends, church, spouse – the goal is that we would encourage you toward Jesus, but ultimately Jesus is the only one who can get you close to the Father. He's the only mediator. It just amazes me how some people wrongly think that if they get close to someone who's close to God, they'll be closer to God. You want to get close to God? Hang out with Jesus.

Who or what, if taken from your life, would cause you to not walk faithfully with God? "God, if I get cancer, you get the finger. Just so you know, that's the deal." "God, I got kids. If one dies, I'm done with you. Your job is to keep us all safe, and if you fail, I'm done." "God, if this marriage falls apart, I'm telling you, I'm not gonna worship you. I'm not gonna follow you. I'm giving up. I'm tapping out." "God, if I get sick, if I get ill to the point of death, if I lose my job, if I foreclose on my home, just so you know, I'm not gonna be happy with you. I'm not gonna speak well of you. I'm not gonna trust in you. I'm not gonna sing to you. I'm not gonna pray to go, because you will have failed me. And I'm using you to get someone or something else. And if you won't give it to me, then I'll get it myself. I'll go find a false God, a functional server, an alternative mediator – I'll get a demon if I have to. I'll pick a new religion. I'll get what I want."

I see some of you saying, "I would never say that." Ah, but you know your heart. I've asked myself hard questions. What if one of my kids died and I had to preach their funeral? Would I get up and say, "God is a good God"? What if my wife got sick and was battling with cancer for years? What if I got hit by a car and couldn't feed my family anymore? See, truly, if you think that someone other than Jesus gets you close to God, when that person or thing goes away or fails you, you're in crisis when you need Christ the most.

Couple other questions. Where is your functional heaven? This one's – this one's mind bending, if you think about it. Some of you say, "I believe in heaven. I read the Bible." No, no, no. Not that heaven, the other one that you made up. We each have in our mind our proverbial functional heaven, right? Usually it's the cover of some travel brochure. "Oh, look at that. There's a huge glowing thing in the sky. I would love to see that. (Laughter) There's a white sandy beach. There's a hammock. And all the people on the island are mute, and they just bring drinks and they shut up. Oh! (Laughter) I need to go there – heaven." Heaven. And you get there, it's never heaven. It isn't. They lose your luggage. You got jet lag. You eat the fish in Mexico, you can't retain any liquids. You're dehydrated. You go to the beach, you get bit by the sand fleas. The heavysset American tourist wants to be your friend and they keep talking, and you're trying to nap. (Laughter) The summer's coming, and so is that experience.

So here are the questions. When daydreaming about escaping this life, what does your functional heaven look like? What is your – right now, you're thinking, "If I could just go there, I would be happy. Oh, I would be so happy there." Sunny place, wintry place, nice place, quiet place – on earth, where do you run for safety or comfort as your hiding place? You just think, "If I could just go there – if I could just get home and sit in my chair and pull the Holy Ghost lever and recline. (Laughter) If I could just do that I would be fine. I don't need Jesus. I need a chair with a lever. That's what I need!" Or you say, "You know what? I've had a rough day. I'll go home. I'll open the fridge. The kind of glory will shine forth. I'll see that great glowing light, and I will worship my gods of Häagen and Dazs and Ben and Jerry's. We'll have a Bible study of gluttony. We will all get together and it'll be wonderful." Right? This is what happens.

You know what's curious, too? Next time you're at the store look at the magazine rack. The cover of every magazine is some picture of heaven. There's dog heaven, and cat heaven, and knitting heaven, and organized home heaven, and car stereo heaven, and cool car heaven, and six pack abs heaven, (Laughter) and beer cooler-sized gut heaven, and hunting heaven, and fishing heaven, and getting married heaven, and having babies heaven, and getting divorced heaven. There's all kinds of heaven, and each portrait on each magazine is, "Here is heaven. Buy the magazine. Read the articles. Worship the false gods, functional saviors. Do what this Bible magazine says, and you will live in heaven." And it's all an illusion.

That's why we trade one idolatrous pursuit for another. And ultimately, even if we get a bit of happiness, we die and go to hell, and we're not happy. The real heaven is not a place as much as it is a person, whose name is Jesus. If he is our highest treasure, if he is our greatest joy then heaven is being with Jesus, which means heaven on earth is being with Jesus. Say, "Is it a sin to have a nice TV and want to watch it?" No. "Is it a sin to eat food?" No. "Is it a sin to have a hobby?" No. "Is it a sin to get a new car so you don't feel like you're dying when you're driving to work?" No, it's fine. But just know, the car ad is false, right? Heaven there is lush, leather seats and a back warmer so amazing you could toast biscuits on it, and a car stereo and a sunroof and air conditioning. Oh, if you just had that car then you'd be in heaven! (Laughter) It's not like that. If you're not with Jesus, you're not in heaven. That's the truth.

And again, what tends to happen is we tend to see the idols in other cultures very easily. In our culture, "Well, that's entertainment. That's a restaurant." No, if a worshiper of God from 4,000 years ago dropped into our city they'd look at sports stadiums and say, "Those are temples where people go to worship." They'd look at restaurants and say, "Those are temples where people go to worship."

And see, I experienced this as a little boy. I remember going to my friend's house in our neighborhood. His family was Hindu. He was East Indian. And I walked in and all the chairs and all the seating in the living room was facing a little shrine. And in the little shrine there was what they thought – their house God. And there was a little candle there, sort of flickered so that light emanated from the little shrine. And there was money and food and incense that was there for the false God. And I thought, "That is so silly, that the whole family gathers around the little glowing box to worship the false god." And I went to our house, and all the chairs were facing the TV. It's like, "Our god plugs in. Would you look at that?" (Laughter)

And right now – you need to know this – is it a sin to watch TV? No, but in America there are more TVs than people – true story. And how many people sacrifice their family to worship the god that plugs in? All the chairs face that god, not one another. And if someone should talk, "Shut up! The game is on. God is playing. He's talking! Shut up!" And we ignore one another. And we don't communicate with one another. And we don't connect with one another. We don't touch with one another, even in our own families. Why? God is on the throne. And he is speaking. And we are paying homage. We give him time and energy and money and health and relationship and devotion. We're worshipping here.

You need to see this. You can worship a sports team. You can worship a hobby. You can worship food. You can worship a relationship. And we can and do worship anything and everything, it seems, other than Jesus. And that's the problem.

Who is your or what is your functional savior? Last few questions. If you have a picture of hell and you have a picture of heaven, you need a functional savior to get you out of hell, to get you to heaven. If you're single and don't want to be single, what's heaven? If hell is single, marriage is heaven. Functional savior? Fiancée, boyfriend, or girlfriend – relationship. If being married and not having children is hell, and having children is heaven, then fertility or adoption is functional savior. Say, "Are you saying it's bad to get married and have kids?" No, I'm married with five kids. But marriage, children, jobs are opportunities to worship God, not objects of worship in place of God. How much pressure is it to demand that your spouse or your kids or your job or your church – that they be for you functional savior? "Make my life worth living. Give me passion, value, and purpose. Make me happy. Satisfy me. Bring me closer to God. Get me out of my trouble." That's a lot to expect, and it leads to devastated relationships because we're expecting people to do what only Jesus can do: save us, save us.

Last series of questions. What good thing has become a God thing? And again, we tend not to worship bad things. We tend to worship things that initially are good and they become over-elevated from a good thing to a God thing, which is a bad thing.

Which idols, when stewarded correctly, are means or worship that have become objects of worship? Christians are notorious for doing this with marriage and children. I've met guys. I say, "Why do you live the life you do?" "Well, I get up and I work hard to feed my family, set a good example for my kids" – oh, wait. Don't do it for the glory of family. Do it for the glory of God. If you want to work hard, cool – Bible talks about that. You want to be a good stewards, good – praise God. You want to be obey God, great, great, great. Why? The why really counts 'cause I love the Lord and I want to worship him as a husband, a father, a wife, a mother, a worker, a church member, a friend, a family member – I want to worship God. But if we do it for people, if we do it for someone or something other than God, if we do it for the glory of someone or something other than God, we've taken a good thing, we've made it a God thing. We've taken a means of worship and made it an object of worship.

You want to destroy a kid? Worship him. Worship him. Everything you do is for their glory. You want to have a spoiled, bratty, disastrous, indulgent, pressured child? Make him into a little God. Make them the center of the universe. Have the marriage and the life and the home and the budget and the schedule be nothing but the service, the adoration, the sacrifice for the child. You'll raise a small demon. See, our homes, our marriages, our families, our lives, they need to be Christ-centered and other-friendly, not others-centered and Christ-friendly. Not welcoming in Jesus to make the people and things we care about the most better, but inviting the people and things that we care about most to honor and glorify Jesus. It seems very subtle, but it's very important. It's very important.

Last question. How can I nurture my worship? In our biblical counseling we'll talk a lot about our worship model, and let's say you're addicted to drugs, alcohol, sex, you've been abused – something of that nature. You will hear language here called the redemption model. Say, "It's not the recovery model?" No, no. We don't want to recover the way of life you had before Jesus. (Laughter) We're hoping not to recover that. We're hoping to redeem, which is not going back to recover what you had, but to move forward to experience what you've never had: new life, redeemed with Jesus.

Redemption model comes out of Exodus. Here's the story in Exodus. God's people are in slavery and bondage and tyranny in Egypt under a cruel taskmaster named Pharaoh. He is just overbearing. He is mean. He absolutely devastates people. There is no love or grace in him at all. God comes, crushes Pharaoh, liberates his people miraculously, does signs, wonders, miracles, parts the Red Sea – it's amazing. All of that is prototypical of Jesus, that Satan is our Pharaoh, that our life is in slavery and bondage to sin and death. Jesus comes and crushes Satan, our Pharaoh, and ultimately redeems us. And the redemption in Exodus is that we would be free to worship God, to worship God.

And initially they do, led by a woman named Miriam, but pretty soon, what do they start doing? Grumbling, whining, complaining. "God, you kind of stink at this being God thing. God, we don't like the food you give. We were hoping for better incomes, nicer homes. We're wandering around the wilderness. We're following you, but it's not very fun. It's kind of disappointing." And they start grumbling against God – complaining, whining.

And then they go into this delusionary period of talking about the good old days. "Oh, you remember the good old days when we were slaves in Egypt and we'd get whooped for breakfast and whooped for lunch, and when we had to make bricks without straw and then we'd die? Yeah, I miss those good old days before God redeemed us." And what can happen, even with a Christian, is we have very short memories of what life is like before Jesus. We start talking. "Do you remember the good old days when we'd go out drinking?" Really? Think about it. Were those good old days? "Do you remember the good old days when we'd just go hang out with our friends, and we didn't have responsibility and jobs, and didn't have to go to Bible study and church? We could just do what we wanted." Was it really good old days? Did you wake up with a clear conscience? Were you closer to Jesus? Did you really have joy down deep in your depths? Were you satisfied? Were you encouraged? Were you hopeful? "No." Well then, you're believing a demonic lie.

And so in the midst of all of this, God speaks to these people. He speaks to them in Exodus 20 and he gives them the Ten Commandments. "And God spoke all these words saying, 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.'" First thing he says is, "You were slaves. Let's just start with reality." And you and I were all slaves to sin. We can't stop sinning, and because of sin we all die. And we may exchange one sin for another, but we're enslaved to it – to Satan, sin, and death. And he says, "I'm the God who redeemed you. I'm the God who got you out of slavery. I'm the God who changed your life. I'm the God who got involved. I love you. I'm here to help." He says, "Don't ever forget that." This is the same with Jesus. We're in slavery to Satan, sin, and death. Jesus comes and he redeems us, he liberates us, he frees us. He says, "Don't forget that, otherwise you want to go back to the good old days, which are disastrous."

And then he gives his first two of the Ten Commandments. "First, you shall have no other gods besides me" or "before me" – depending upon your

translation. Number two, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in the heaven above or on the earth beneath” – that’s idolatry – “or that is in the water under the sea. You shall not bow down to or serve them.” Service is worship. “For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.” You say, “I wish God wasn’t jealous.” No, because he loves you, he is jealous. You could be a freakishly jealous spouse, but you could be a biblically jealous spouse. For example, if I came home and some guy was sitting in my chair, talking to my wife, hanging out with my kids, uh-huh, Old Testament, that’s how it’s gonna go because I’m jealous – not freakishly jealous, but biblically jealous. Likewise, God loves us, and he’s in a relationship of fidelity and covenant with us, and we’re not supposed to go whoring around with other gods. He gets jealous.

And if we do, he says, “It will visit the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me” – so there’s implications for your kids, grandkids, and legacy – “but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.” God says this: “You people have been liberated to worship. You’re grumbling and whining and complaining.” And what did they ultimately do? They built a golden calf. They all got together and said, “Okay, we’ll keep Yahweh, but we’re gonna need some other gods ‘cause Yahweh doesn’t do what we tell him to do. We told him to get us to our promised land, he hasn’t done it yet. We told him we wanted something else to eat, and he didn’t give it to us. We told him we’re sick of walking around in a circle, and he doesn’t seem to really listen to us. He seems to think he’s in charge. Doesn’t he know he’s a short order cook, and we give an order, we need it quick? So we’ll keep Yahweh. We’re gonna get a few other gods. The first one will be a golden calf. It’ll cost us a lot and we’ll worship that god, and then maybe that god will give us what we want.”

And God says, “No, here’s how you live. You live by faith, knowing that I’m the only God, and here’s the first two commandments: there’s just me, and you worship me alone.” You say, “No, no, but there’s other commandments. Don’t steal, don’t murder, don’t commit adultery, don’t lie.” Yeah. You say, “Well, isn’t – there’s one God and you worship him alone – aren’t those just two of the Ten Commandments?” No, actually those are the means by which you obey the other commandments. There’s more than 600 commandments in the Old Testament just in the first five books alone, the Pentateuch. So how are you gonna keep 600 laws? Very simple. There’s one God, and you only worship him. If you only worship the one God, you won’t worship sex and commit adultery. You won’t worship stuff and steal or covet. You won’t worship your image in the eyes of others and you won’t need to lie. You won’t worship anger and violence, you’ll not murder.

Say, “Why do you tell me this, Mark?” Here’s why. We love you. We love you. We at Mars Hill, we hate morality. We hate spirituality. We hate just telling you, “Here’s good things, here’s bad things. Do good things, don’t do bad things. Best of luck.” You will end up like the Israelites, wandering around in a circle for your whole life, grumbling against God, worshipping idols, hoping that they’ll do what you want. And the answer is worship God. Worship the God of the Bible alone as God, as that for which glory is your definition.

It just kills me that people want to stop drinking, they want to stop smoking, they want to stop stealing, they want to stop losing their temper, they want to stop lusting, and you know, the real point is this, friends. The goal is not to stop doing those things, but to start worshipping God. And if you start worshipping God, you’ll stop doing those things. But if you just try and stop doing those things, you’ll substitute them with other sins, like pride or religion.

See, you can’t cheat on your spouse, steal from your friends, tell lies, and worship God. If you worship God you will, as 1 John 5:21 says, keep yourselves from idols, keep yourselves from idols.

So what Moses had them do, is he actually took their golden calf, ground it down, and made them drink it. The point is it needs to go away, and you need to realize how sick and stupid it is to have any god other than the God of the Bible. Some of you are here today and you need to grind down your idols and you need to drink them. Say, “How do I do that?” My last question: stages of renewal. I was hanging out with a pastor named Rick Warren in California a few weeks ago, and he gave this lecture. And I thought it was brilliant. It was helpful.

Here’s what I want for you today. First thing: personal renewal. This is you loving Jesus. They came to Jesus, they said, “Okay, there’s 600 commandments. Which one counts the most?” He said, “Love God.” Love God! Personal renewal. This is you and Jesus – not false functional saviors, false mediators, running to false heavens instead of – this is you going to Jesus, when times are bad for help, and when times are good for celebration. This is you going to Jesus.

And you know what? This means some of you need to turn off your iPhone, your iPod, your computer, your e-mail. And you’ve gotta spend some time just reading the Scriptures to hear from God. And you need to spend some time in prayer talking to God. Some of you say, “I don’t have the time.” Well, then, redeem your commute. Say, “Instead of listening to talk radio, I’m gonna pray,” or, “I’ll listen to the Bible on iPod,” or whatever it is. Personal renewal – every day, time with Jesus, growing in loving relationship. What happens then is, if you have personal renewal and you’re connecting with Jesus and your love relationship with him is growing, you’ll have relational renewal. His love will come into you and you’re gonna want to love some people.

Now you can do the second commandment that Jesus said was greatest, and that’s to love others. And it starts with your spouse if you’re married. You love your spouse. You love your kids. You love your family, friends, community group, coworkers, extended family – all the way to your enemies.

That leads to the third thing, missional renewal. You’ll get excited about Jesus. And you’ll want to see people meet Jesus. And you’ll want to see churches get planted, and new campuses get planted, new community groups get started, new ministries flourish. You’re gonna want people to meet Jesus ‘cause you’re so excited about him.

Number four, that’ll lead to church renewal. You’ll love Mars Hill. You won’t just use Mars Hill, you’ll love Mars Hill. You’ll come early to meet people. You’ll stay late to meet people. Without being forced, you’ll open up your home and your life to entertain. You’ll join a community group.

You'll start praying for people and getting to know them and pursuing them for relationships. And when we get together we'll all sing because our voices will coalesce as our hearts already are.

What happens then is that leads to structural renewal. We're kind of in the season of that, where the growth of the church has been renewed to the degree that we have to organize you by members according to campus, and plug people in according to campus. And that's the whole point of this series and the membership campaign.

And lastly, it leads to institutional renewal. Eventually denominations and seminaries and governments change, but they're the last to change because they exist to safeguard the change of a previous renewal. So in that way they're the trunk, they're not the new limbs and the new branches and the new converts and the new ministries and the new campuses and the new members, that bear new fruit and new ways of doing things. That's out on the limbs.

Here's my fear for you. If you don't have personal renewal, it'll affect your relationships, the mission to our city, the health of our church, and our future. Furthermore, you will start blaming people in your life and this church for your lack of enthusiasm and holiness for Jesus. "My friends, my spouse, my church, they're not working for me. They're not doing it for me. I'm not growing. I'm not being fed. I'm not maturing. And it's their fault!" I love you. It's between you and Jesus. Your family, your friends, your church – we can exist to encourage you toward Jesus, but ultimately personal renewal is between you and Jesus. You've gotta get with him. You've gotta be with him. You've gotta hang out with him. And ultimately everything begins there. It begins there.

So my final question to you is this: How is your worship? How's it going? How's it going? If you're not a Christian, you need to confess your sins and become a Christian today. Ask Jesus to forgive you, to save you, to redeem you so that you can start worshiping God instead of false gods. If you're here today and you're a Christian and you have Jesus plus some other functional savior, mediator, false god, lies, idolatry, grind it down, drink it, repent. When you're ready you can take communion remembering the body and blood of Jesus. You can give of your tithes and offerings, which is part of your act of worship. And I'm gonna invite my dear friend Pastor Tim out, and you guys are gonna sing. Hang out. Spend some time together, praying, repenting, renewing your own soul in worship together so that, as we leave, we leave as worshipers to continue our worship out of this place. I'll pray.

Father God, I thank you. I thank you for an opportunity to teach the Bible. And God, I confess, even in studying this, I'm convicted – sin and idolatry and expectation in my own life that is unbiblical, people and places that I run to for comfort that I should instead be seeking you. And God, I pray for my friends, that they would have the courage to really name their idols and to grind them down and to drink them. And God, I thank you that we're worshipers. And I thank you that through Jesus we could be worshipers of you. And God, we confess that there is no God who loves us, who serves us, who cares for us, who dies for us other than Jesus. So, Lord Jesus, we come to worship you, by the grace that you give, through the power of the Holy Spirit, participating in the life of the Trinity, in whose name we pray. Amen.