



LOVE GOD WORSHIP GOD

SPIRITUAL OUTCOME DEFINED

Honors, reveres and adores God above all else and lives life devoted to His praise and glory.

"Worship does not satisfy our hunger for God - it whets our appetite."

- Eugene Peterson

SPIRITUAL OUTCOME DESCRIBED

Everybody worships. It's in our very DNA to be worshippers. Part of being human is to long for something greater, to behold with awe and wonder the one thing that fulfills every craving. Since the fall of mankind, humanity has become incessant scavengers for the things that will satisfy their deepest desires. And, once we think we've found it, another "greater" thing pops into its place. This is because we were made to worship God alone. As St. Augustine prayed, "Thou has made us for Thyself, oh Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee."

To worship God is to be at rest in our souls. To worship anything other than God is to be fretful and incessantly ravenous after that which never satisfies. The prophet Jeremiah described this futile pursuit as abandoning living water that God supplies for "broken cisterns that cannot hold water" (Jer. 2:13). These are cisterns we dig ourselves; we labor over dreams and desires that leave us thirsty and emptier than we were before, while God is holding out for us water that brings abundant life! The sad thing is, we can be so distracted by these lesser delights that we remain blind to the beauty and richness that is right before our eyes.

C.S. Lewis highlights this irony:

It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased. - The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses

Our understanding of worship is not limited to the songs we sing on a given Sunday, but encompasses all of life. In Christ, every step we take, every word we speak, every thought we think, has the opportunity to be a pleasing offering of praise to the God who made us. As the Apostle Paul explains, we are to "offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to the Lord- this is your true and proper worship" (Romans 12:1). And, for the child of God, nothing will produce more delight, more joy, or more rest than to honor and adore the One who made us. He longs for this, not because He needs this from us, but because He knows we need it for our own flourishing and satisfaction.

EVIDENCE OF THIS SPIRITUAL OUTCOME IN A PERSON'S LIFE

- Speaks often of the good things God has done.
- Is experiencing an increasing value and delight in God and His desires above all else.
- Seeks to live in a way that brings God glory.
- Whole-heartedly participates in corporate worship services.

GUIDANCE

Read each passage multiple times. Then write your observations about the passage and any thoughts you have from the discernment question. What do you notice in the passage, and what does this reveal about your life?

2 CHRONICLES 20:1-34

Observations:

Discernment Question: Jehoshaphat and his army entered into battle with worshippers leading the way. What do you do when life's battles war against you? What would it feel like and be like to enter life's battles in a spirit of worship? How could you do this authentically?

PSALM 27 (ESPECIALLY 27:4)

Observations:

Discernment Question: David's "one thing" (his most central desire) was to "gaze upon the beauty of the Lord." What's your "one thing?"

PSALM 73:25

Observations:

Discernment Question: Do you desire God as this psalmist desires God? Why or why not? If not, what is it you desire (worship) above God?

ISAIAH 29:13

Observations:

Discernment Question: How well are your words about God a reflection of your heart toward God?

JEREMIAH 2:2-13

Observations:

Discernment Question: How do you satisfy your soul's thirst?

LUKE 24:50-53

Observations:

Discernment Question: Does Jesus inspire worship from you? Why or why not?

JOHN 4:13-24

Observations:

Discernment Question: Could your current relationship with God be described as a relationship that quenches your thirst or a relationship that makes you thirsty? How?

ACTS 2:46-47

Observations:

Discernment Question: How much do you value gathering with other followers of Christ, in both small and large groups, to praise God as a community? Is this value reflected in your practices?

ROMANS 12:1-2

Observations:

Discernment Question: How do the actions of your life display worship of God?

COLOSSIANS 3:15-17

Observations:

Discernment Question: Do you celebrate God? If so, what does that look like? If not, what keeps you from it?

HEBREWS 12:28-29

Observations:

Discernment Question: Do you revere God? Does He regularly inspire awe in you? If so, what does that look like? If not, what keeps you from it?

REVELATION 22:8-9

Observations:

Discernment Question: Are there any people or things you effectively bow down to in a way that should be done only with God?

Before moving on to the **next steps**, consider taking time to worship God, express gratitude to God, or celebrate God in a way that is genuine for you.

NEXT STEPS

What are practical next steps you will do based on what you have discovered in this survey of Scripture about worship? Include insights offered from others in your Life Group that could be applied in your own life, as well.

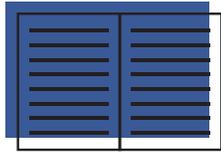
MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE

Psalm 27:4, NIV

One thing that I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.

Hebrews 12:28, NIV

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.



READ

LOVE GOD

WORSHIP GOD

MORE

More. I want more.

More of what?

I don't know.

You don't know?

I don't know. I just want more.

How can you want more when you don't know what it is you want more of?

I don't know.

You just want more?

That's right.

How much more?

A lot more. More than the mind can imagine.

You want a lot more of something, but you don't know what it is you want more of.

That's right.

More of it?

More of *IT*.

More of *IT*. Not more of *it*?

That's right.

More pleasure?

Yes... no.

More sex?

Yes... no.

More adventure?

Yes... no.

More acceptance?

Yes... no.

More food?

Yes... no.

More drink?

Yes... no.

More admiration?

Yes... no.

So you want more money, sex, adventure, acceptance, food, drink, admiration? You want more of all that?

I want more *than* all that.

More *than* all that?

Yes.

You're hard to please.

Silence.

I'm impossible to please.

Impossible to please?

Yes, it feels that way.

HEART HUNGER

We are a hungry people. We move through life in search of something. We rifle through thing after thing. We like these things, but they're never quite enough.

What is it we're after?

What are we searching for?

Why do we enjoy things only to grow bored with them and discard them?

What can we do with this insatiable hunger for more?

SOLOMON'S QUEST

If there was ever a person who understood the insatiable hunger for more, that person was Solomon. The place he recorded his thoughts and discoveries about this hunger is a portion of Scripture we call Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes opens with an identified purpose:

I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens... (Ecclesiastes 1:12-13)

The pages that follow this stated purpose chronicle Solomon's quest to "study and explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven." In other words, Ecclesiastes is a journal. It's the journal of a person who lived long ago who went on a quest to understand life. This journal has stood the test of time, because of its powerful and profound insights, and maybe most pointedly, because of Solomon's honest and raw pursuit to satisfy his own insatiable hunger for more.

Solomon's quest took him to numerous stops.

He tried pleasure...

I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. "Laughter," I said, "is madness. And what does pleasure accomplish?" I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly — my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives (Ecclesiastes 2:1-3).

Pleasure left him wanting.

The insatiable hunger for more proved to be greater than pleasure and folly could deliver. Did he have fun? Yes, he had fun, but did it satisfy the longings of his heart? The answer is proved not just by his words but by his actions. He left this way of living in search of something more.

He tried achievement...

I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well — the delights of a man's heart. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun (Ecclesiastes 2:4-6, 8, 11).

Achievement left him wanting.

As with pleasure, the insatiable hunger for more proved to be greater than the greatest achievements he could attain. Did he achieve much? It is said he was greater than anyone who had ever lived in Jerusalem (Ecclesiastes 2:9). Was this greatness great enough to satisfy the insatiable hunger for more? Here again, the answer is proved not just by his words but by his actions. He moved on to other things.

He tried education...

Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom, and also madness and folly. What more can the king's successor do than what has already been done? I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness. The wise have eyes in their heads, while the fool walks in the darkness; but I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both. Then I said to myself, "The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?" I said to myself, "This too is meaningless." For the wise, like the fool, will not be long remembered; the days have already come when both have been forgotten. Like the fool, the wise too must die! (Ecclesiastes 2:12-16)

Pleasure didn't do it.

Accomplishment didn't do it.

Education didn't do it. Wisdom left him wanting.

The result? "*So I hated life...*" (Ecclesiastes 2:17).

That's strong. He hated life.

Why?

...because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun...
(Ecclesiastes 2:17-18)

Extreme? Maybe.

Honest? Very.

SOLOMON'S OBSERVATION

So what did Solomon do with this? He's passing through life, he's trying this and trying that, but everything leaves him wanting. What did he learn?

Midway through Ecclesiastes, Solomon makes an observation easily missed but profoundly important: "*...God has set eternity in the human heart*" (Ecclesiastes 3:11a).

Our hearts are designed with a hunger not just for something big, but for something infinite, something eternal.

God has set eternity in the human heart.

That's our condition.

That's our longing.

There's something in our design that longs for The Infinite, The Grand, The Eternal.

We look for IT in work.

What do we discover?
Not IT. Just it.

We look for IT in life's pleasures.

What do we discover?
Not IT. Just it.

We look for IT in accomplishment.

What do we discover?
Not IT. Just it.

But God has set eternity in the human heart.

We don't just want it. We want IT.

EVERYBODY WORSHIPS

Consider a thought: *Everybody worships.*

We doubt this. We don't think everybody worships, because not everybody goes to church, not everybody likes to sing, and maybe most importantly, not everybody believes in the existence of God. Some people worship, but not everybody.

But this misses something.

What if worship isn't the singing of songs? What if worship isn't a weekly service? What if worship could be these things, but is much more than these things, and what if these things are often done in a manner that is anything but worshipful?

What if worship has much more to do with our insatiable hunger for more than it does with what we do for an hour on Sundays?

Consider this carefully.

We worship that thing, that person, that opportunity that is at the center of our passion, our desire, our heart. Most worship does not feel stereotypically religious. Most worship feels highly secular. Worship is pervasive; it's just not always worship of God.

Solomon worshipped pleasure, then he worshipped achievement, and then he worshipped education. The worship of these things left him wanting, but he did benefit in one powerful and important way.

He recognized that the insatiable hunger for more was not satisfied by pleasure, achievement, and education, because the insatiable hunger for more was searching for something eternal.

Everybody worships, but not everybody worships God.

ONE THING

Ever read a statement so shocking you're not sure if it's true? Maybe it's a statistic. Maybe it's another person's conviction. Maybe it's a perspective on life.

David made a shocking statement. It's easily missed but must be carefully considered. We'll take it slowly, in two parts.

David writes, "*One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek...*" (Psalm 27:4). One thing. Just one thing.

With one hand on this statement and the other on our insatiable hunger for more, how can we understand this man's desire for just one thing? Is it possible to say we really just want one thing? Truly, if his pen were in your hand, would you be able to authentically complete the statement? Might you scratch it out and write, Three things I ask of the Lord? What could be your one thing? God grants you a wish. What do you wish for?

Let's put the pen back in David's hand and discover his one thing.

One thing I ask of the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.
(Psalm 27:4)

David wants one thing. He wants God.

When we lay this statement alongside Solomon's quest, we discover something profound. Solomon rifled through life's many offerings, and these offerings left him wanting. This led Solomon to the realization that his heart would never be satisfied with the offerings of this world, because his heart wasn't longing for something in this world. His heart was longing for something that transcends this world, something eternal.

That puts David's statement into important context.

Take note that the reason David gave for his one thing is the desire for beauty. He wants to "gaze upon the beauty of the LORD." Consider the common pursuit of beholding beauty in creation. We travel long distances, climb tall mountains, walk long trails, and seek secluded meadows.

Why? There are numerous reasons, but no doubt one of them is this: We long for beauty. The rugged mountain climber and the delicate gardener have this in common: the pursuit of beauty. One pursues beauty by gazing upon the vastness of the mountain range from the vantage point of the highest peaks; the other pursues beauty in the delicacy of the petals of a tiny flower from the vantage point of a quiet corner garden. It is not a man-thing or a woman-thing; beauty and pleasure touch something deep within all of us. David longed for beauty. We all, in one way or another, long for beauty as well.

Which raises a question.

Why want God? Why not write, "One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek, to gaze upon the beauty of a vast mountain range?" If it's beauty he's after, this would make sense. Why not ask for countless sunsets, bountiful gardens, or star-filled nights?

Only David can speak for David, but common experience and complementary Scripture give a few clues. The beauty that surrounded David, as profound as it was and still is today, not only satisfied a hunger of his heart, but no doubt it also created a hunger *in* his heart. The experience is quite common. What happens when we taste food we love? We want more. A hunger for that food is simultaneously satisfied and created. What happens when we take in the beauty of a lakeside mountain? We want more. A hunger for the beauty of creation is simultaneously satisfied and created.

In speaking of creation, David wrote something profound and intriguing...

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge (Psalm 19:1-2).

David looks upon the stars, the heavens, and he says they declare the glory, or we might say, beauty of God. When he looks to the heavens, when he considers the vastness of the skies, they do not just proclaim their beauty within

themselves, but they point to a Creator, and they pour forth speech about that Creator. They say something about God.

You might say they *worship* God.

They declare not just the beauty of creation, but the implied beauty of the Creator. David sees the vastness of the skies and the heavens, and he shakes his head in wonder, "*God must be marvelous! God must be wondrous! God must be astounding!*" The beauty he beholds simultaneously satisfies a hunger and creates a hunger, and David instinctively knows something.

He knows the deep hunger for beauty will not be fully satisfied by seas or sunsets.

He knows the deep hunger for beauty, because it's an eternal hunger, will only be fully satisfied by an eternal God.

To put it another way...

David *loves God with all his heart, soul, and strength* because to satisfy his passion for beauty in any lesser thing, to love a lesser thing with all his heart, soul, and strength, will just leave him wanting. God must be ultimate in his love, ultimate in his pursuit of pleasure. All else will only partially satisfy because that is what all else is designed to do. The creation is designed to *point* to the Creator, to *worship* the Creator, not *be* the Creator.

The beauty that surrounds us is designed to simultaneously satisfy hunger and create hunger. Only God, and God alone, will bring complete fulfillment to an eternal longing. Seek to fully satisfy that deep hunger for beauty through the many beautiful things that surround us, and we will be frustrated by the *tastes* of beauty rather than allowing them to point us to the ultimate Satisfier of our heart's desires. David longed for one thing, and that one thing was God, because he was convinced God and God alone would finally and fully deliver the complete satisfaction for which his heart longed.

GIFTS OR GODS

If this is the case, if we are to direct our hearts to God in hopes of satisfying our eternal longing, what do we do with the stuff of life? What about good food, deep sunsets, and vast mountain ranges?

Solomon offers another profound observation that must not be missed. What does he say concerning the stuff of life? These are “the gift of God” (Ecclesiastes 3:13).

The “gift” of God. Gifts not gods.

The human design is one that longs for The Eternal. Solomon is making a distinction. It’s critical. Might it go something like this:

Let gifts be gifts and God be God.

When we expect a gift to be God, we will ultimately be frustrated or disillusioned with those gifts as they fail to satisfy the eternal hunger of our hearts. When we let gifts be gifts, we can enjoy these gifts for what they are rather than despise them for what they are not.

God gives gifts, but He never intended them to deliver what only He can deliver. He is *The Eternal*.

Work is not *The Eternal*.

Human relationships are not *The Eternal*.

Brownie fudge pie is not *The Eternal*.

Money is not *The Eternal*.

Sex is not *The Eternal*.

Baseball is not *The Eternal*.

Spouses are not *The Eternal*.

Children are not *The Eternal*.

God and God alone is *The Eternal*.

When asked what is most important in all of Scripture, Jesus didn’t hesitate...

‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37-38).

Let’s adjust the language a bit to pull this all together.

Love *The Eternal* with all your heart, soul, and mind because God has set eternity in the human heart. Our hearts were designed for something infinite, something grand, something eternal. All else will prove frustrating when vainly attempting to be The Eternal.

SOLOMON'S DISCOVERY

Is this what Solomon discovered? We've yet to hear how it all turned out. What was the end of his quest? Where did it lead him?

Solomon reveals his discovery in the final chapter of Ecclesiastes.

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Solomon points to a day. It's the day we will stand before The Eternal. Much may happen between now and then, but Solomon is crystal clear on the matter. He will not live for the fleeting pleasures of this world. He has set his sight, and directed his heart, to the day he will stand before The Eternal.

WORSHIP

As we consider our passions, our desires, our worship, consider the second commandment:

You shall not make for yourself an image 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 (Exodus 20:4-5a).

Translation?

Don't worship lesser things. Lesser things will frustrate your heart. The heart is designed for *The Eternal*. Worship God and God alone. Yes, you will do this in song, but let the songs simply be a way of tuning your heart for what you must do with your life. True life is found in the satisfaction of our deepest desires, and our deepest of all desires, is a longing for The Eternal.

Don't waste your life expecting gifts to be God.

Let gifts be gifts and God be God.

Live for God.

Worship God.

Love God.

PART 2: BE FILLED WITH REAL LIFE

Instead of drinking out of a broken well that will never satisfy, God invites you to be filled by Him. Listen to God's invitation to you from the following verses:

*“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;
and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.
Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare”
(Isaiah 55:1-2).*

*Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,
but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.
Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a
spring of water welling up to eternal life”
(John 4:13-14).*

*“Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him”
(Psalm 34:8).*

Reflect on and answer the following:

1. What in the above passages stands out to you?
2. How do these passages differ from drinking out of a broken cistern?
3. How willing are you to let Christ fill you to overflowing? Do you believe He's able to fill every crevice of your soul and to let it overflow onto those around you?
4. Is there a lie you need to renounce that makes it hard to trust Him to fill you?

PART 3: WORSHIP THE GIVER, NOT THE GIFTS

We are all tempted to let a good thing become the main thing. In Ecclesiastes 3:13, we learn that eating, drinking, and pleasures are a gift from God. It's here that we can start to get it backward and let the gifts of God become more important than God Himself. When we expect gifts to be God, we will ultimately be frustrated or disillusioned with those gifts as they fail to satisfy the eternal hunger of our hearts. When we let gifts be gifts, we can enjoy them for what they are rather than despise them for what they are not. God gives gifts, but He never intended them to deliver what only He can deliver.

Consider the following: **God is The Eternal**

Work is not The Eternal.

Human relationships are not The Eternal.

Brownie fudge pie is not The Eternal.

Money is not The Eternal.

Sex is not The Eternal.

Football is not The Eternal.

Spouses are not The Eternal.

Children are not The Eternal.

God and God alone is The Eternal.

Jesus knew we might be tempted to get things backward, so when asked what is most important in all of Scripture, He said:

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38).

We could simplify it and say, "Love God first, then appreciate the gifts." Our hearts were designed to love and be loved by something infinite, something grand, something eternal. We were designed to worship and be filled by God.

1. What are the things you are worshipping / looking to as a god to satisfy you eternally? Are you willing to fire these "objects of worship" from their position as gods?

2. Write a "termination" letter to each "object of worship" you are needing to fire from the role of playing god in your life. Example...

- Dear food, this is your notice that you are fired, effective immediately, from the role of being god. You have failed miserably in meeting the deepest longings of my heart by..."
- "Dear sex, ..."
- "Dear job, ..."

3. Write a surrender letter to God asking Him to be the One True God in your life and to be the only One to fully satisfy your soul.

Example...

“God, I’m sorry I have turned to so many other false objects of worship or false gods. They have all failed miserably at being god or satisfying my soul. I want You to be the recipient of my worship and I want to worship You with my life.”

PART 4: WORSHIP GOD WITH YOUR LIFE

Worship is so much more than singing songs to God on Sunday mornings. We can worship God in an infinite number of ways. We can worship God through our work by working heartily unto Him. We can worship God in our fun by inviting Him into our adventures and enjoying Him as we play together. We can worship and honor God by obeying what He’s calling us to do. Worship cannot be contained to the box we have previously held it in.

How can you enlarge your picture of worship?

How can you worship God in your work this week?

How can you worship God in your family this week?

How can you worship God in your fun/play this week?

How can you worship God by your obedience this week?

How can you worship God with your creativity this week?

How can you worship God with your mind this week?

What are other ways you can worship God this week?

