

# The Worship God Wants

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Isaiah 29:13-16  
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Well, we're going to begin a conversation tonight about worship. And worship to many of you may not mean a whole lot. You come in if you're new to church, if you're new to Joshua House, you may be walking in and thinking, why is there a half hour of music in the beginning of the service, you know? Is that just sort of to spice up the night a little bit? A little musical performance. No, that's worship. That's what we do here in the context of the church. We gather together to focus our hearts and our minds on God, to create space, to do nothing else but to elevate God, to lift him up, declare his praise, his worth, to tell him that we love him, to sing to him in song. Now, singing songs is by no means the only way that we worship. Worship is a massive term that encompasses far more than just singing songs. In fact, it's the purpose of life. It's why you and I were created by God, was so that we could worship him. And you know John Wimber was the founder of the Vineyard movement, of which we're a part here, and he passed away a number of years ago, sadly, but he said this:

**SLIDE:**

Becoming true worshippers is the chief assignment God has given us in this lifetime. –John Wimber

Your main task in life is to become a true worshipper of God. That you would bring glory and honor to the name of Jesus Christ. And that you would please the living God of the universe with your life. And so John Wimber used to say that, you know, the chief, the first priority of the Vineyard movement is worship. We have a number of priorities. We prioritize sharing the gospel of Jesus with others. We prioritize growing in our faith, becoming more like Jesus. We prioritize justice, doing ministry to the poor, sharing what we have with those that don't have any. But, what John Wimber said was that the FIRST priority of the Vineyard movement is worship, is worship. And this is one thing that as I began to pray when I was offered the job of pasturing Joshua House, and I began to pray about God, what would you have us do as a community? What direction, what kinds of things are on your heart, God? I had a profound encounter with God where I felt the Spirit of God speak to my heart and say, prioritize worship. And it's been a wonderful thing to see what God has done in developing the worship teams and the songs here in our community. And that's been a great thing to see and I just really think that God has so much more for us as a community in worship.

Now the word worship in the Bible means to surrender and to attach our lives onto something or someone else. In the context of the Bible, it's God. But, you know, we can do this in all kinds of ways though. It's not just Christians that worship. Everybody worships. Everybody worships something. Everybody is surrendering and submitting their lives, attaching their lives onto something or someone. Now, it may be a relationship, it may be money, might be music, might be cars, I don't know. It can be anything that you're into. It could be your lifestyle choices that you're making. There could be certain things in your life that you're spending all of your time and energy and money on this thing. It could even be buckeye football, I don't know. But anything that we place in our lives, when we're attaching our lives onto something, is worship. And what the Bible tells us is that God wants our worship. That he's jealous for our worship. In fact, there's a scripture in Exodus, chapter 34, verse 14 that says:

**SLIDE:**

**Exodus 34:14**

Do not worship any other God, for the Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God.

The Lord whose name is jealous is a jealous God. God wants our worship. He doesn't want our worship going to all sorts of other things that take chief priority in our life. He wants that place of priority. He wants our lives to be surrendered and submitted and attached onto him. And so we're going to begin to talk about what it means to worship God.

And you know, when we talk about worship, we're talking first of all, there's the worship that we want. And the worship that we want is all about us. It's all about what we desire. Our desires, our agenda, at the time and place that we desire to have it. If you're like an insane fan of a rock band, I don't know, Aerosmith, ok? Just to pick one randomly. And you're, you have like the wall of all of their stuff. You get to pick. It's all about what you like. You like that type of music when it's convenient for you, you want to go to their shows, it's all about what you want. The worship that we want is all about us. It's about our preferences, our agendas, our desires, and our convenience. It's when we want it.

But, there's another kind of worship, and as we gather together as the church, we want to worship God the way that God wants to be worshipped. We want to give him the worship that he wants, not just what we want. But, the worship that he wants. And there's a Bible scholar, great Christian thinker, named N.T. Wright, that say this about the point of church, of us gathering together is about worshipping God. He says:

**SLIDE:**

From time to time, the church should take stock of that which is most central, most important, and most vital in our common life together. Though we sing with tongues of men and angels, if we are not truly

worshipping the living gong, we are noisy gongs and clanging symbols. That we organize our services so beautifully, if it does not enable us to worship the living God, we are mere ballet dancers. Though we repave the floor, reface the stonework, that we balance our budgets and attract all the tourists, if we are not worshipping God, we are nothing. –N.T. Wright

And so tonight we want to talk about what it means for us to worship God in the way that he wants. I've called tonight's talk, The Worship God Wants. Let's just invite the Lord's presence to be with us and ask him to speak to us through his word. Let's pray.

Well, we're going to look at a text tonight out of Isaiah, chapter 29. Isaiah was a prophet in the Old Testament. And if you've got your Bible, why don't you open up to Isaiah 29? So, Isaiah, chapter 29, it's roughly in the middle of the Bible. And this word from Isaiah is, God speaks to the kingdom of Judah and the king, Hezekiah at the time. And the kingdom of Judah and King Hezekiah are facing enemies that are attacking them. And they're not trusting in God to save them, but they're plotting and they're scheming and they're trying to figure out ways of what they can do to save themselves. All the while, they're still going through the motions of worshipping God. And so to them, God says this:

**SLIDE:**

**Isaiah 29:13-16**

The Lord says, "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of men is based merely on human rules they have been taught. Therefore, once more, I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder. The wisdom of the wise will perish. The intelligent of the intelligent will vanish. Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the Lord, who do their work in darkness, and think, 'Who sees us? Who will know?' You turn things upside down as if the potter were thought to be like the clay. Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'You did not make me?' Can the pot say to the potter, 'You know nothing?'"

So in this passage, we're going to see a number of things that give us an indication of the kind of worship that God wants. And we're going to see the kind of worship that God doesn't want, that doesn't do anything for God. And so the first thing that we can see that God wants out of worship, is God wants worship that is from the heart. Worship that is from the heart. And we see this in verse 13.

**SLIDE:**

**Isaiah 29:13**

The lord says, "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

God is continually after our hearts. He's after our hearts. You know the Bible talks about our heart more than seven hundred times. That's a lot. And what the Bible means by our heart isn't just the muscle pumping blood that's in our chest. What the Bible means when it uses the word heart is it's talking about the real core of who we are. The seat of our governing will and our decision making in our inward self. A way to think about it is the real you. Your heart is the place underneath all of the facades, underneath the cool clothes and the make-up, and the whatever we do to make ourselves look like we're ok. Our heart is underneath that and our heart is where we actually are. The condition of our real self, inside.

And this is the thing that God is always after. God wants our hearts and a great example in scripture of this is when the prophet Samuel has been told by God to go to Jesse and one of Jesse's eight sons is the next King of Israel to replace the first king of the unified monarchy of Israel, who was Saul. And Samuel, while Saul is still King, Samuel the prophet hears from God that God is replacing Saul because Saul was disobedient. And so God says go to Jesse and one of his sons I will point out to you is going to be the next King of Israel. And so Samuel goes to Jesse and he says, let me see your sons and his sons are presented before him and the first son that he sees is Eliab. Samuel sees Eliab and it doesn't give us a description of Eliab, but he must have been, probably was a very stately looking man, a guy that really, he looked kingly, he looked like a leader. Samuel looks at this guy and says surely that's him. Surely Lord, that's the next King. This is what God says in 1 Samuel 16:7:

**SLIDE:**

**1 Samuel 16:7**

<sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

The Lord looks at the heart. God sees straight through all of the things that we try to do to make ourselves look better, look more acceptable on the outside. God sees right through it. We can't just clean ourselves up on the outside and think that we can be ok with God. God sees right through it. And so what does it mean then that God desires worship from our heart? Well, the first thing is that worship has to be internal before it's external. We can't just do the external kind of motions of worship without it being connected to what's really going on inside. There is an attitude of our heart that has to be yielded over to God for it to actually be worship. That's foundational. That there's no way to worship God unless on the inside, in our hearts, the real place where our actual self is, that has to be surrendered over to God and God's will and God's ways before it turns into worship, before God can receive whatever it is we're doing, as worship.

And the second thing is that Worship then becomes not just singing of some songs, but worship has to become a kind of a lifestyle. Worship has to encompass all aspects of our life because it has to do with the inside, what's going on in our heart, not just what's going on when we come to church once a week. That because God is after our hearts, because God is looking at our hearts, it means that we can't live six days a week living lives of outward rebellion toward God, doing whatever we want to do and not caring at all about what God wants and then come before him and then say, Ok God I worship you. Because the condition of our heart is not yielded over to God. That it doesn't matter what we do if our heart isn't right before him.

And so God is looking at our heart and this doesn't mean that we need to be perfect. It has nothing to do with how well we're performing for God. It has everything to do with whether our heart is soft and yielded to God. That we're saying, "God, your will be done in my life. I surrender to you. I give up. I give my life over to you. You are boss. You get to tell me how to live. I yield my heart over to you." So God desires worship from the heart and the second thing that God desires is worship that honors God. Worship that honors God. Now we see this in that same verse, verse 13

**SLIDE:**

**Isaiah 29:13**

The Lord says, "These people come near to me with their mouths and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

Now, as we look at this, there's three things going on here and we're taking them in reverse order. So, first we're talking about the heart, now we're talking about honoring God with their lips. Now the first two lines there, "these people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, BUT, their hearts are far from me." So, what God is not doing here in this statement is saying, "I don't care at all about you honoring me with your lips." God's not saying that. God's saying that without the heart being attached to these external things, they mean nothing. But, God, there's a pattern of scripture of God using this kind of an argument and we see this—Jesus does this in Matthew 23 when he's speaking with the teachers of the law and the Pharisees and the Jews. And Jesus says, in Matthew 23:23, he says:

**SLIDE:**

**Matthew 23:23**

<sup>23</sup> "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former.

And here it is, Jesus says, "You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former." Jesus is bringing fierce rebuke to these Pharisees, these

teachers of the law, who were only doing the external things, but their heart was not connected to anything that they were doing. But they were doing the things that they were supposed to be doing, the things that were required by the law. And Jesus says, "I see straight through that. You have neglected the weightier matters of the law—justice and mercy and faithfulness. But you've kept the outward things of the law. You still are tithing correctly with your garden herbs. Good job." But what Jesus doesn't say is stop that, just focus on justice and mercy and faithfulness. He doesn't say that. He says you should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former. And you know he says this earlier in that chapter, 23, in verse 1 it says:

**SLIDE:**

**Matthew 23:1**

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: <sup>2</sup> "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. <sup>3</sup> So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. <sup>4</sup> They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

Notice here, God is saying, be careful to do what they tell you to do, you still have to keep the law, there's still religious leaders sitting in Moses' seat, and this is, I'll just remind you, in case you're getting confused, Jesus was a Jew. He practiced Judaism. He kept kosher, and he did all of the things that he was supposed to do. Now he would run up against some of the interpretations of the law, but he kept the law. And it's only in the death and resurrection of Jesus and the new covenant that is established where now we don't need to keep the law anymore, but people in Jesus' day needed to keep the law.

And Jesus was saying, I see that there are hypocrites, and that there is corruption at the highest levels of the religious institution, but that doesn't let you off the hook. You still need to keep God's law, because they can't change God's law. They're corrupting it and they're accountable for themselves. So don't do what they do, but you better do what they say. What this means for us is when we see hypocrites in our midst, people that are not practicing what they say, they say one thing and they're doing another thing. People say this about Christians all the time. And God doesn't let us off the hook about what his word tells us. That God's given us his word, the Bible, for all of us to live under. And so just because someone might be in a position of prominence and telling you things about the Bible and then their life ends up to be radically different than that, it doesn't mean that we all don't need to still follow the Bible.

And with worship, God wants us to honor him with our lips. He's not saying in Isaiah 29:13, don't honor me with your lips, he's emphasizing that your heart has to be connected to the honoring of God with your lips. But the honoring of God with our lips is one of those things that we're supposed to do. Psalms is all about

this, the whole book of Psalms, all about giving praise and honor to God. Psalm 29 says:

**SLIDE:**

**Psalm 29:1-2**

<sup>1</sup> Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

<sup>2</sup> Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;  
worship the LORD in the splendor of his [\[a\]](#) holiness.

I just love that word, ascribe. It means God, I am going to credit you with glory and worth and value. I'm going to attribute it to you. I'm going to ascribe it to you. It doesn't matter what place I'm at in life. It doesn't matter how well my life is going. It doesn't matter if I'm on cloud nine or if I'm in the depths of serious depression, I'm going to ascribe to God honor. When we come to church, and we have a time of worship, this is not a time to inwardly self-reflect about how we're doing in our life. This is a time to worship God, to ascribe honor and glory and majesty to God. To tell God how much you love him, how grateful you are for him. God desires that we would honor him with our lips.

And we can do that all the time, all the time. It is not a requirement of honoring God with our lips that we just feel inside like this amazing just, oh God's so incredible, I just love....you know? We can feel down. You can have an emotional kind of a load on you that you just feel like life is weighing on you, it's pressing down, it's grinding you, and you come before your God and you say, Lord I am making a decision of the will, to honor you with my lips. To honor you. So God desires worship that is from the heart, worship that honors him, and thirdly, worship that draws us near to God. And we see this again in verse 13:

**SLIDE:**

**Isaiah 29:13**

The lord says, "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

This is yet again something that God is saying I desire this, but only if your heart is connected to it. You can't come near to God without your heart. You can't check your heart at the door, put up all of your walls and then come and actually think you're going to get near to God. It's the same way in relationships. It's no different with God. If we're totally walled up and we keep somebody at arms length, they're never really going to get close. If we don't take a risk and open up our heart in relationship with our close friends, with your girlfriend or boyfriend, with your husband or you wife. And with God. Coming near to God is something he desires. You know, one of my favorite verses in scripture is James 4:8. It says:

**SLIDE:**

**James 4:8**

<sup>8</sup> Come near to God and he will come near to you.

I've said that thing to myself so many times in my life. That's just one of those verses that it's just, you know, draw near to God and he'll draw near to you. Come near to God, he'll come near to you. This is a promise of scripture that we can know that when we draw near to God, that he's not going to just stonewall us. God isn't capricious, he's not moody. We're not going to...God's having a bad day, and so whoa he's taking it out on me. Come near to God and God will come near to you.

And this is, this is really like what I'm going to talk about tonight of the first stage of intimacy, is coming near to somebody. You can't have intimacy with somebody if you don't come near. You know, long distance relationships are possible, but you've got to talk a lot because if there's three thousand miles between you and your sweetheart, it's going to be difficult to feel close. And if you don't feel close with somebody, intimacy is going to be impossible. Intimacy, what does that mean? Intimacy means you're opening up who you are, you're getting vulnerable and exposing your heart to someone else. Intimacy with God is the same thing. You're opening up your heart to God.

And many of us feel like if we've had hard things happen in our lives, and we kind of blame God for them. You know? Maybe things have happened in your past. A lot of us carry a lot of distrust for God. God, how can I open up my heart to you and get vulnerable? How can I get near to you when you let my sister get in a car accident? You know, my best friend has a disease. I didn't get into the school that I wanted. God, I lost my job. How can I trust you with my heart if I can't trust you with this thing in my life?

And that question is a difficult one for us to wrestle with. There isn't like an easy answer about how to get through all of the difficult things in life. But, it is a lie when we say God, you are not trustworthy because something's happened in my life. The scriptures tell us and if you talk to any mature Christian...this is why it's great to have someone in your life who's over 50 that's been following Jesus forever that can say...it's one thing for me to say, God's always faithful. God is trustworthy, he has been in my life, even though I've gone through difficult things, God has been trustworthy. It's another thing to talk to somebody that has lived a lot more life and to hear somebody say it's not just an empty promise of scripture, that as I look back on my life, going through difficult things were terrible, they were hard, but God was with me. God did not abandon me and God helped me through it. And so I can trust in God.

So intimacy stage one is closeness. Both in relationships, you need to be close with somebody, but also with God. The first stage of intimacy with God is drawing near to God. There is no way you're ever going to have an intimate relationship

with God if you don't draw near to him. And this involves time, there's no way around that. You have to spend time with God to develop a closeness with him. Ok, so intimacy stage one. And then the next thing that God desires in worship is that worship is authentic and not manufactured. And we see this in the last part of verse 13.

**SLIDE:**

**Isaiah 29:13**

The lord says, "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based merely on human rules they have been taught"

Their worship is based merely on human rules they have been taught. Worship is not a style of music. Worship is not, you know a program or the way that a church runs their service. You got to churches across America, churches across the world worship God in vastly different styles. And they're all valid, equally. Nobody has the corner on worship music. You may like a particular version of worship music. You may have preferences about...you're listening to songs and you're like, I don't really like this son very much, oh this is my favorite, I'm so glad that they played this song this weekend. And that's fine, but realize that goes into the category of what I want out of worship. Not what God wants out of worship.

If we really care about god and what God wants in worship, we can worship to any style of music. We can walk into any church that professes the name of Jesus Christ and give glory and honor and praise to God. You may not be as comfortable as the church, the style that you grew up with, but that has to do with us and our preferences, it has nothing to do with the worship that God desires. God desires all kinds of worship. Part of the heart of God in his creation of the world was he made everything totally different. There is such an abundant diversity of everything in creation. It's mind-blowing. In nature, there are like billions of different types of insects. That's not an accurate statement, don't quote me on that, I'm just exaggerating. But there's a lot of different things in the world and as we see in cultures, why did God make so many different cultures? Why did God make people with all different colors of skin? It's because he desired it. It's because he doesn't have one favorite type of worship music. He likes it all. And he wants it to sound differently. He wants an eclectic blend. If you listened to God's ipod, it wouldn't just be rock and roll, ok? It would be every kind of musical genre imaginable. God loves diversity. So, he wants worship that is authentic, not manufactured.

Worship has nothing to do with coming and just going through the motions, that because you come to Vineyard Columbus, we do church this way, so you just come and you do what we do here. You sing these songs and you know, this is worshipping God. No, God wants something that's authentically coming from your heart. Now when you come to church here, we have to pick a kind of

worship, we have to do things a certain way. And so there are vehicles for you to worship God, but what God wants is the authenticity of your own expression of worship. God wants to hear your voice sing. And I don't care if you sing on pitch or not. God wants to hear you. Everyone else doesn't really want to hear you, but God really wants to hear you. Ok, last point. Worship, God desires worship that is open and honest before God. Look at this next verse. I think this is key. Verse 15:

**SLIDE:**

**Isaiah 29:15**

<sup>15</sup> Woe to those who go to great depths  
to hide their plans from the LORD,  
who do their work in darkness and think,  
"Who sees us? Who will know?"

This is what I would call stage two of intimacy. Being open and honest with God, not hiding, not hiding yourself. Not hiding all of the black dark areas of your heart and only showing God the good stuff. See, in relationship, closeness is stage one. You can be close, you can spend all the time together, you know, you and your girlfriend or boyfriend, you're just around each other all the time and you do everything together, but you're always putting on your best front, right? You know? You get yourself done up every time you want to hang out and you keep conversation steered toward happy things. You don't really want to open up and get honest about your life.

And stage two of intimacy is when you open up and you get honest. And you stop hiding. And you say, God, this is where I'm at. This is who I am. I'm not the church lady. Ok? I'm not, I don't have it all together. I don't have my life direction figured out. I don't have my relationships with my friends figured out. I don't have my relationships with my family figured out. I don't have my sexuality figured out. God, I'm a mess. I don't know what I'm doing. But this is who I am. This is where I'm at. God, I'm struggling with this. I'm struggling with alcohol, drugs. I'm struggling with, you know, your word tells me to control my tongue, and I have a real issue with anger, with not talking about my friends behind their back, with jealousy about people. Any number of things that you're struggling with, I don't know what you're struggling with, but I have a foundational, kind of assumption that you're struggling with things if you're a human being, you have some issues.

And all of us have to come to a place before God where we say, ok, Lord it's time to get honest. We can pretend with each other all we want, you know, you can go a really long time in a place like this with lots of people, you can pretend for a really long time. You can be close, you can be plugged into a small group, you can be around people a lot, be hanging out with people a lot, but nobody really knows you yet. You've never really opened up and said you know what? I am really dealing with this in my life.

And the worship that God desires out of you and out of me is worship that is honest and open, where God isn't looking down into our hearts and saying, why are you hiding from me? See, God will find us, but like Adam and Eve in the garden, what we don't want is God to come strolling through the garden in the heat of the day and say, Adam and Eve why are you hiding? What God wants is for us to come out in the open. And say God, here I am. Here I am. And that, when we begin to do that, we're getting real close to the heart of worship. We're getting so close, when we open up our hearts to God, when we draw near in closeness and then we open up and get honest with God about where we're at in our lives, and then God really can hear our worship. He receives it and he delights over it. This is why you and I were created—to worship God, to bring glory to his name and to please his heart. And the way that we do that is by getting honest with him.