



The View From Here

May 2011 Volume 12, Issue 8

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

George Barna surveyed thousands of churchgoing Christians. The question was asked: 'Have you ever experienced God in a worship service?' Only one-third said they regularly experience God in church worship.

It is safe to say that true, life-changing encounters with the living God are missing from many of our churches. We desperately need a life-changing glimpse of the greatness, the awesomeness, the wonder, the power, the mercy, the goodness and the lovingkindness of the God we serve.

The word *worship* conjures up all kinds of images in people's minds. Simply said: Worship is declaring the worth of God. The word *worship* comes from the Old English word that means "worthship." So with that definition in mind, we don't worship God for what we get out of it, but to give God the honor that is due Him, recognizing His worth, His value, His place in our church and His claim on our lives.

Worship, therefore, *is not* a weekly pep talk to rally the troops and win the contest. Worship *is not* a motivational seminar to make us feel good about ourselves. Worship *is not* the Christian alternative to a Saturday night rock concert or a Beethoven symphony.

Worship occurs when people encounter the God who loves them and desires a relationship with them.

Worship is a meeting between God and His people.

Worship does not lead to an encounter with God. *It is an encounter with God.*

May you have the opportunity for authentic worship in the days ahead

ARE YOU A FOLLOWER OF JESUS?

It's the most important question you will ever answer. Perhaps you've been asked this question before. Because it's so familiar there is a tendency to dismiss it. Not because it makes you uncomfortable. Not because it's especially convicting. The question is

dismissed mostly because it feels redundant and unnecessary.

Most Christians in this country tend to fall into one of two groups.

1) The "Jesus fish on the back of my car" group.

You are serious enough about your faith that you shop in the Christian bookstore. In which case when I ask you "Are you a follower of Jesus?" it seems rhetorical. You recognize that this is an important question for many to consider, but asking you? Well, it's like walking into a Boston pub and asking, "Who cheers for the Red Sox?" It's an important question, but you're so sure of your answer that your mind quickly dismisses it. You've already dealt with it. Asked and answered. But before you move on too quickly, let me clarify what I am not asking. I am not asking:

- ◇ Do you go to church?
- ◇ Are your parents or grandparents Christians?
- ◇ Did you raise your hand at the end of a sermon one time?
- ◇ Did you repeat a prayer after a preacher?
- ◇ Did you walk forward during a twelve-minute version of "Just as I am?"
- ◇ Do you own three or more Bibles?
- ◇ Have you ever appeared in a church directory?
- ◇ Did you grow up going to VBS and/or church camp?

- ◇ Is your ringtone a worship song?
- ◇ When you pray are you able to utilize five or more synonyms for God?

I can keep going, seriously I can.

- ◇ Have you ever worn "witness wear?"
- ◇ Is the KJV the only real version of the Bible?
- ◇ Have you ever kissed dating good-bye?
- ◇ Under "religious views" does your Facebook page say "Christ follower?"
- ◇ Did you dog *Harry Potter* and rave about *Lord of the Rings*?
- ◇ Did you get a purpose driven life in 40 days or less?
- ◇ Did you say "Bless their heart" before speaking badly about someone?
- ◇ Do you understand phrases like "traveling mercies" and "sword-drill?"

Here's my point—many of us are quick to say, "Yes I'm a follower of Jesus," but I'm not sure we really understand what we are saying. To quote Inigo Montoya, "I do not think that means what you think it means."

One of the most sobering passages of the Bible tells of a day when many who consider themselves to be followers of Jesus will be stunned to find out that he doesn't even recognize them. In Matthew 7 Jesus tells of a day when everyone who has ever lived will stand before God.

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CONTINUED: ARE YOU A FOLLOWER OF JESUS?

On that day many who call themselves Christians and identify themselves as followers will stand confidently in front of Jesus only to hear him say, “*I never knew you. Away from me.*” If you’ve just assumed you’re a follower of Jesus—I encourage you to confirm that confidence or reevaluate your relationship with Jesus and reaffirm your commitment to follow him.

There are many who assume they are followers of Jesus, but the truth is they have never heard the unedited version of what Jesus taught about following him. Some will follow and some will walk away—just as they did in the Gospels.

So where do you start in determining if you are really are a follower of Jesus? How do you decide if this is even something you would want to consider? Let’s start by having a D.T.R. talk with Jesus. Some of you will recognize what these letters stand for. If not, let me give you a hint. For a young man involved in a romantic relationship—these letters are often enough to strike fear into his heart. He likely dreads the D.T.R. talk. In fact, many young men will postpone, run away from, and put off the D.T.R. for as long as possible. Guys have even terminated the relationship when they sensed that the D.T.R. talk was imminent.

D.T.R stand for **Define The Relationship**. This is the official talk that takes place at some point in a romantic relationship to determine the level of commitment. You want to see where things stand and find out if what you have is real. It can be awkward. It can be uncomfortable. But eventually every healthy relationship reaches a point where the D.T.R. talk is needed. Is it casual or committed? Have things moved past infatuation and admiration and towards deeper devotion and dedication? You need to intentionally evaluate the state of the relationship and your level of commitment to the person.

How do you do that with Jesus? If he sat down with you—chances are he would get right to the point. He would look you in the eye and say, “*It’s time we define this relationship.*” He wants to know how you feel about him. Is your relationship with Jesus exclusive? Is it just a casual weekend thing or has it moved past that? How would your relationship with him be defined? What exactly is your level of commitment?

Whether you’ve called yourself a Christian since childhood, or all of this is new to you—Jesus would clearly define what kind of relationship he wants to have with you. He wouldn’t sugarcoat it or dress it up. He would tell you exactly what it means to follow him. He will give you the unedited version of what kind of relationship he wants with you.

Then the question, “*Are you a follower of Jesus?*” becomes a little more challenging to answer.

Once you honestly evaluate your relationship with Him, it may be that you are not a follower of Jesus after all, but a fan. A fan is defined as, “*an enthusiastic admirer.*” And I think Jesus has a lot of fans these days. Fans who cheer for him when things are going well, but who walk away when it’s a difficult season. Fans who sit safely in the stands cheering, but they know nothing of the sacrifice and pain of the field. Fans of Jesus who know all about him—but they **don’t know** him!

But Jesus isn’t interested in having fans. When he defines what kind of relationship he wants, “enthusiastic admirer” isn’t an option. A lot of churches in this country have gone from being sanctuaries to becoming stadiums. And every week fans come to the stadium where they cheer for Jesus—but have no interest in truly following Him.

One of the biggest threats to the church today is fans who call themselves Christians but aren’t actually interested in following Christ. They want to be close enough to Jesus to get all the benefits—but not so close that it requires anything from them.

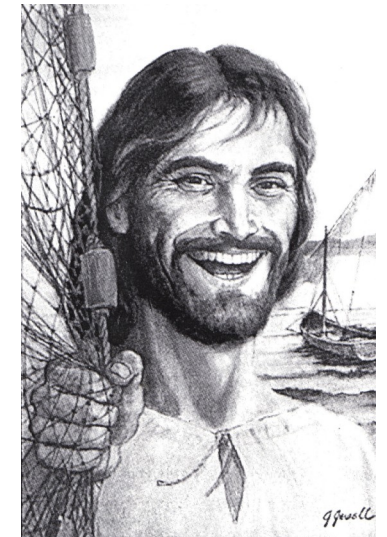
So. ***Are you a fan or a follower?*** How does Jesus define what it means to follow him? The Gospels record many examples to people having the D.T.R talk with Jesus. In each encounter the person finds themselves in a position where the question “Fan or Follower?” has to be answered. Some are shown to be true followers—others are

revealed to be nothing more than enthusiastic admirers.

Fans often confuse their admiration for devotion. They mistake their knowledge of Jesus for intimacy with Jesus. Fans assume their good intentions make up for their apathetic faith. One of the core symptoms of “fandom” is that fans almost always consider themselves to be followers.

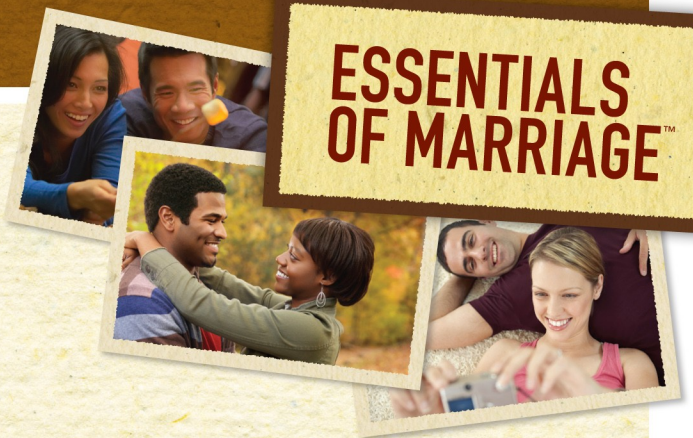
I will discuss some of these encounters with Jesus in future newsletters so we can have a more honest assessment of ourselves. Are you ready for the truth?

(excerpted from *Not a Fan* by Kyle Idleman)



SEE YOUR MARRIAGE THROUGH GOD'S EYES

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Beginning May 1 @ 9 AM, in the Faith Café, Pastor Jack will present the Focus on the Family series, “*Essentials of Marriage*.” Key foundational biblical principles, advice, tactics, and tools will be presented for anyone, any age, who may one day be married, is engaged to be married, or is currently married. Our goal is to build stronger, more godly, enduring marriages. Join us!



The Word of Truth

POWER FROM ON HIGH

May 1	ELDER BOB LAPIERRE PREACHING	<i>Romans 7 & 8</i>
May 8	POWER FROM ON HIGH	<i>Who is the Holy Spirit?</i>
May 15	POWER FROM ON HIGH	<i>The Person of the Holy Spirit</i>
May 22	POWER FROM ON HIGH	<i>The Holy Spirit and the Bible</i>
May 30	GUEST SPEAKER	<i>Jack is on vacation</i>
June 5	POWER FROM ON HIGH	<i>The Holy Spirit's Work in the Old Testament</i>
June 12	POWER FROM ON HIGH	<i>The Holy Spirit and Jesus</i>
June 19	POWER FROM ON HIGH	<i>The Holy Spirit and the New Age</i>
June 26	POWER FROM ON HIGH	<i>The Work of the Holy Spirit before Conversion</i>
July 3	POWER FROM ON HIGH	<i>The Work of the Holy Spirit in Conversion</i>