

Doctrine - Christian Living

Sign Title: Christian Living

November 7, 2010

Good to see you this morning! My name is Kurt and I am one of the pastors. If you are new, I would like to welcome you. This fall, we are in a series of studies called, "Doctrine - What do we believe?" The purpose of these studies is to review the basics of our faith. This week, we are talking about *Christian Living*. While the new EFCA Statement of Faith uses the phrase *Christian Living*, I am going to pull a little bait and switch this morning. Instead of talking about Christian Living, we are going to talk about worship. The reason our new Statement of Faith uses the phrase *Christian living* instead of worship is because when most people hear the word worship they think about a particular music style, a church building and an event that happens on Sunday mornings. Truth be told, while what happens on Sunday is a worship service, worship is much more than just this morning. It is all of our life. It is our Christian living. So, this morning, we talking about worship but in the broad sense, in what it means for how we live our life. We will use a few questions to guide us through this.

Where does worship originate?

If you remember the first week of this series, we learned God exists as a Trinity. That means we have one God, who exists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The three persons of the Godhead have always existed in eternity past and they will continue to exist everlastingly through eternity future. We also learned that within the Trinity, there exists perfect community as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit relate to one another. That means there is perfect

love between them, perfect relational joy between them, perfect subordination and unity between them. God is the origin of worship because it exists in his essence continually flowing between the members of the Trinity.

Some religions teach God created us so he could be worshipped. That is not true. God has worship, adoration, joy, praise and love existing within himself between the persons of the Godhead. God is a ceaseless worshipper. He worships himself. Some of you are going to say, that sounds egotistical. If you are God, it is not egotistical, it is essential.

That being said, remember we were created in the image and likeness of God. Part of that means we were created to be worshipers. We were made to continually pour ourselves out and give our heart, thoughts and loyalty to something. God created us to worship.

The problem is that because of sin, our worship gets focused on people and things instead of God. Because we are built to worship and we are sinners, we worship the wrong things. So the question is not, "Will we worship?" It is always, "Who and what will we worship?" Everyone is pouring themselves into something or someone.

Along comes Jesus. He dies on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. He rises from the grave to conquer the power of Satan, sin and death. He creates in us a heart of flesh rather than a heart of stone and he quickens us so we can worship God, the one we were created to worship. Because of Jesus, we now have the capacity to worship rightly.

I know this sounds very philosophical but why is it important? It is only when we worship God that we will find joy. It is only when God is glorified in my life that I can be satisfied. We will come back this theme a number of times this morning.

What is worship?

I want to give you a great definition of worship right from the Scriptures.

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Romans 11:36–12:1 (ESV)

For from him and through him and to him are all things - God created everything. God is the big bang. He spoke and bang, it existed. He didn't just create this universe and our planet and our lives. He is the one who holds everything together like glue. The reason you were not hit by a truck this morning while driving here is only because of God's grace. He holds our lives together moment by moment. *To him are all things.* Because God created everything and holds everything together, who should get all the thanks, worship, praise and adoration? God!

God deserves two things because of his identity. He rightfully deserves *glory* and he deserves *sacrifice*. Ascribing glory to something and making sacrifices for something are the way we worship something and someone. Let me explain this to you.

Glory means weightiness, heaviness, prominence, preeminence. Whoever or whatever is in the position of glory in your life is the person or thing that centers your existence. Its the treasure you cherish most deeply. Its the

most precious passion, its your desire, your enthusiasm. Who is in the position of glory in your life? What is the most precious and important thing to you?

I know most of us think the most glorious thing in our life is Christ, but is it really? Since we are finite creatures, we can't give glory to everything. We only have so much time and energy so we choose to say no to some things and yes to others. In other words, we make sacrifices. We sacrifice giving glory to one thing so we can give more glory to another. We make decisions on what to give glory to and what to sacrifice all the time. Just look at your Outlook or iCal calendar. What's getting the glory? What's getting sacrificed?

I know this is a tough one to swallow so let's talk about this in a more humorous, but still completely serious, way.

My God is my Stomach.

In Philippians 3:19, Paul talks about people whose God is their stomach. That is what they worship. That is where they glory, that is what they make sacrifices for. Now I know some of you think it is bizarre to think of people worshiping their stomach. If you think about it, it makes perfect sense. If your stomach is in the position of glory in your life, you think about food all the time. You eat food all the time. You plan to eat food later. You always have a snack within reach. You steal your kids Halloween candy when they go to sleep. What you are saying is, "I glory in food and the temple where I worship is my refrigerator." Another temple you go to is the all-you-can-eat Pizza Ranch buffet. When you leave, you know they lost money on you. Maybe you go to the

Fareway grocery store and can't help yourself but you covet everything that has sugar salt or a crunch.

What is happening? You are glorying in food. To glory in food, you make sacrifices to do it. Your food bill is huge. Your health is in question. You gain weight. You have high blood pressure. You snore like a grizzly bear. But these sacrifices you are prepared to make because you worship the God of the stomach.

I know some of you are think this is crazy. It is not crazy. It is biblical. Some of you are going to look at your stomach tomorrow in the mirror and realize you attended a lot of worship services at the refrigerator this year because your god is bigger this year than he was last year and the pin-up poster over your tool box in your garage is a picture of Jabba the Hut.

My God is my alcohol.

Let me give you another example. Alcohol. Some of you say you have a drinking problem. I don't think you have a drinking problem. You have a worship problem. People come into my office all the time for counseling and they need help with their marriage or their drinking or their sexual addictions and the problem is not their marriage, their alcohol or their sexual addiction, it is what they are worshipping.

People want me to give them marital and psychological band-aids to cover theirs problems, but it won't work. It is like trying to get rid of Dandelions. You can cut the top of the weed off but until you get to the root, nothing ever changes. The root problem is not a spouse, it is not drinking, it is not too much

testosterone, it is their worship. The wrong thing is the big heavy in the center of their life. The wrong thing is what they are sacrificing their life for.

Let's think about this with alcohol. Say you come into my office and say, "I drink too much." Well, that means alcohol is in the position of glory. It's your God. You're sad, so you run to the bottle for consolation. You're happy, you run to the bottle for celebration. When your alone, where do you run? To the bottle to console your loneliness. When life is good and you want to celebrate with your friends, where do you go? To the bottle to celebrate. The bottle is in the position of glory.

What are you sacrificing? Well, it's expensive. You sacrifice your health. You sacrifice your job. If you are married, you might end up sacrificing your marriage. You start speaking to those you love out of drunkenness. You start acting out of drunkenness. You slaughter your family on the proverbial altar of the bottle in your act of worship to what is most glorious in your life; the bottle.

Nobody has a food problem, nobody has an alcohol problem. We have worship problems. If you start to see things as a worship problem, you will approach everything differently. Instead of saying, I have to eat less or I have to drink less, it is I have to worship God more. God is the one thing I am suppose to worship. God needs to be the heavy object in the center of my life that I joyfully make sacrifices for.

What is idolatry?

Let's hit this from the opposite angle? What is idolatry? Idolatry is the opposite of worship. Remember that we are all unceasing worshippers going

after something or someone. If we are not pouring our energies, affections, thoughts, dreams and devotion to God, because we are created to be worshippers, we will pour those energies, affection, thoughts and dreams into something or someone else. That is called idolatry.

If you are like me, I grew up thinking the people in the Old Testament were weird because they kept worshipping idols and sticks and artwork on a cave wall that resembled a finger painting. I kept thanking God I was much more sophisticated. But if you look at idolatry a little closer, it starts to get uncomfortable.

because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. Romans 1:25 (ESV)

Idolatry is any time we exchange the worship of our creator for something in creation. We do that either by worshipping what God made or by worshipping what we have made.

Worshipping what God made

Let me give you two examples. How about the environment? Everybody is into going green. Reduce the carbon footprint. Use low energy bulbs and recycle. Drive to Sioux Fall less, shop with the internet more. I am OK with that. But when you start calling the earth your mother and say that she birthed you and sing Hakuna Matata, we are all part of the circle of life, that is too far. We are not part of the circle of life. We are image bearers of God made to steward God's earth, not worship the earth. So do we take good care of what God has

entrusted to us, of course. Do we participate in the divine and become part of the circle of life by going radical green, of course not.

Let me give you a serious warning about worshipping creation. In the context of Romans 1, God repeatedly says, he gives people who insist on worshipping creation up to a debased mind, to do things that ought not to be done. In Romans 1, worshipping the creation always leads to sexual sin. Worshipping creation will always lead to sex, nudity and worshiping a body, because the body is the pinnacle of God's creation. If you are a worshipper of the creation, rather than the creator, you will get caught in a web of sexual sins as you go after a body, the epitome of God's creation.

Worshipping what we have made.

This is worshipping your career. Nothing wrong with a career, but it is not to be worshipped. Remember, you know what you are worshipping by looking at your daytime and checkbook to see what gets the glory and what gets sacrificed. Many people are willing to sacrifice their health, their Sabbath rest, their time in a small group and even their marriage and their children, all for the idol of work.

Some people buy an old house to renovate it. Nothing wrong with that but be careful. It can become what we worship. All of our money, all of our time, all of our energy going into making a little piece of heaven on earth. Then we yell at the kids because they played in the front yard they messed up the perfectly straight mow lines. Sacrifice your children on the altar of your perfect house. None of these things are inherently wrong, but they can become the object of our worship, especially if we consider what we are willing to sacrifice to get them.

Some people worship their car. They have crazy payments so they can drive a fancy car. They love their car more than their wife or their children because they sacrifice everything for the car.

It is very easy to have the things God has made and the things we have made take the place of worship in our life and get the glory and sacrifice that belong to God alone.

How can I find my idols?

I am going to give you a series of questions to help you surface the idols in your life. We won't hit all of these questions and there are more of them in the digging deeper section of your small group work sheet.

Who or what are my external idols?

When we think of external idols, we think of Hindu dolls and we are thankful we don't worship them because they are obvious idols. Maybe a better way to look at it is to say, "Who or what makes the decisions that guide our life?"

I had a friend with six kids and he didn't spend much time with his wife and children. His job demanded he was on the road half of every month as a salesman. While his wife was a trooper, she was seriously unhappy. He had the cell phone with him all the time and the fax machine in the house because his job required it. He made good money. He was chasing the American dream. His job was his God.

Jesus says, "Love your wife, raise your kids." You can't do that if you are gone two or more weeks a month. The job was his glory. It was what he was willing to sacrifice for. I am thankful to say, he realized he was worshipping his

job. He was sacrificing his wife and kids on the altar of financial success. He began looking for another job and eventually found one. It didn't pay as well but guess who was at every soccer game?

I'm not saying we should throw in the towel when work gets demanding. I know work is hard. All I am saying is who calls the shots? Jesus or your job? Is Jesus or the job heaviest in your life? What gets sacrificed? For many of you high school students, between school and the sixteen things you involve yourself with, I have to ask you, who is calling the shots, friends and activities or Jesus? Maybe you need to back off a bit.

You see in John 5 it says Jesus is the judge we need to seek approval from. He is the one we will stand before and give an account of our life. What sometimes happens is we think people are the ones we need approval from. As long as my parents are happy, as long as my kids are happy, as long as I have straight A's on my report card, as long as I get a varsity letter, that is what matters.

No, the approval of Jesus is all that matters. Seeking approval from anything else over Jesus is worshipping an idol.

What do I plan and pray for?

Some of you have a plan and you are praying for God to fulfill it, but you are mad at God because he keeps saying, "No." Maybe the reason he says, "No" is because you are asking for an idol to replace him with. God is not going to give you your idol.

When I was a kid, I kept praying God would give me an exotic European sports car. God kept saying, “No.” Thank goodness he did. What would have happened if God gave me a Porsche when I turned 16?

What parts of the Bible do I doubt or disbelieve?

I meet Christians all the time who doubt or disbelieve part of their Bible. They know what the Bible says, they just think they know better than God on the part they disagree with. They don’t come right out and say it, but when a particular topic comes up, they let you know it. “Ladies, respect your husband.” Well, that is an old book. It was written for a different time, a cave man, male dominated culture. We have moved beyond that. “Husbands, love your wife.” I know what it says but it only says that because my wife wasn’t around yet. Trust me, she’s a real piece of work. If God had seen her, he would have never written that.

Some of you would never outwardly say this but I know what your devotional time is like. You read parts of your Bible with a black marker and cross out the parts you don’t like, especially the parts in the Old Testament where God gets angry. God needed his Prozac. Thankfully by the time we get to the New Testament he gets his feelings under control.

The funny part is we live in this culture where everybody thinks we are so educated. We are so smart so we can critique everything from the high and lofty perch of knowledge. Because the Bible was written by primitive people and we are smart folks. Friends, that is idolatry! We are worshiping our mind, our thoughts, our culture, our opinion, our preferences, our degrees... not Jesus!

Who or what, if taken from my life, would cause me to not walk faithfully with God?

“God, if she gets cancer, this is over with.” “God, if one of my kids die. I am done with you.” “God, I have a great job and lots of money in my 401K. If I get laid off and end up in poverty, I will never trust you again.” “God, if I get sick, if my husband cheats on me, if my kids shame me, if my boss fires me, if my finances fail me. I am walking out on you. I am done praying to you. I am worshipping you. It is over with.”

If that is the way it is, then all we are doing is using God. Using him to get something else that is worth more to us than he is. God, if you ruin my life, I’m warning you. I will find a new religion.

I know we wouldn’t say those things out loud but is it the truth? I have thought about this. I know it is hard. What if I had to preach the funeral of my wife or one of my children. Could I still say, “God, you are good?” What if I was hit by a car and my brain was scrambled like eggs and my job was gone and my wife and children were reduced to poverty, could I still say, “God, you are good?” You see, it is tricky because when God is good to us, our heart starts to worship the goodness of what God has given to us, not the goodness of the giver. When God takes away the good things from our life, it is tempting to turn on him. If we do, it is because we were worshipping an idol instead of him.

What is my functional heaven?

This one is mind bending, but it is good. I am not talking about the real eternal heaven right now but the one you have in your mind that you want to get before you die. Usually, it is pictured on the cover of a travel brochure with the

sun in the sky and clear blue waters on a beach. That vacation would be an earthly heaven. The problem is that when you get there you discover when you drink the water it makes it so you can't retain any liquids. The hotel is filthy and who knows what is left in the room from the people before you. Instead of the sun, it is cloudy and rainy every day of your vacation so you spend the entire time at the hotel pool. Unfortunately, they put too much chlorine in the pool so it burns your eyes and dries your skin. While you are trying to sleep poolside the drunk tourist with the runny nose and gaudy rainbow striped swimsuit keeps talking to you about the nausea he has from the raw oysters he ate the night at the clam bar. Isn't heaven great? Can't wait to get there.

So here is the question. When daydreaming about escaping life, what does your functional heaven look like? Where do you dream of going to get your little piece of earthly heaven? For some of you, it is a vacation spot, for others of us, it is the refrigerator. Laying in bed at night all stressed out with work so we can't sleep. We go to the refrigerator for a little taste of heaven. Just open the refrigerator door and the shekinah glory shines forth over the leftovers.

Next time you pick up the magazines in your mailbox, look at the picture on the cover, what is it? It is a functional heaven picture. They are dressed so quaint on the L.L. Bean magazine cover. Buy these clothes and go to heaven. There is, "I'm so cool in school Hollister" heaven. There is the catalog of organized home heaven. How about the outdoor magazines? There is hunting heaven where on every page you get a big buck. There is fishing magazine heaven where everybody always gets the one that got away. If you are getting

married, there is bridal magazine heaven. If you are getting divorced there is divorced magazine heaven.

Each portrait on the magazine says, “Here is your heaven. Buy the magazine. Read the articles. Worship the false gods, the functional saviors. Do what this magazine says and you will live in heaven.” It’s all an illusion. The real heaven is not so much a place as it is a person, whose name is Jesus.

Remember in the eternal heaven, Jesus is the center of everything. His radiance is the light of the planet. If everything is perfect and whole when Jesus is the center of everything in literal heaven, why wouldn’t it follow that for there to be joy and satisfaction in this life, it would begin by him being the center now?

Is it wrong to go on a vacation? No. Is it wrong to buy a new car? No. Is it wrong to keep your house clean and organized. Of course not. Just remember that what the ads tell us is a lie. The ads tell us to buy a car, and if we do, we will have a piece of heaven because it has leather seats that are so soft they feel like sitting in melted butter, and the seat warmer is so amazing you could cook your breakfast on the passenger seat while driving to work. If you just bought the car, you would have a piece of heaven.

You buy the car and discover the seat heater on the passenger side automatically goes off after ten minutes and the seats are never warm enough. Even though it is under warranty, there is an annoying clunking sound in the front left wheel that you keep bringing it back to the dealership but the mechanics can’t find the problem. The car is not heaven. If you’re not with Jesus, you’re not in

heaven. It is when Jesus is the center of things that we begin to experience a piece of heaven.

What good thing has become a God thing?

We tend worship good things. We tend to worship things that we over elevate into a God thing. Christians are notorious for doing this to their children.

Want to destroy your kids? Worship them. Everything you do is for their glory. Make your child into a little god where everything you do is for them. You will raise a spoiled, bratty, self-indulgent, kid. Make your marriage, your life, your budget and the focus of your home be nothing but your children and, I guarantee, you will raise a little demon. Our homes are to be Christ centered, not kid centered. I know this seems subtle, but it is very important. Many Christian parents get this wrong.

How can I return to God fixated worship?

Let's review again what we are talking about. It just kills me when people want to stop drinking, stop smoking, stop losing their temper, stop lusting and they write 500 times on a piece of paper that they will not do those things any more. Folks, the goal is not to stop doing those things. Those are all things we worship. We can't stop worshipping. It is built into us. Instead, start worshipping God, then you will stop doing those things. If you just try and stop doing those things and not focus on worshipping God, in time, you will either go right back to them or substitute a new sin for them because we were created to worship.

Let's get real practical. Some of us need to turn off the iPod, put down the iPhone, close the screen on our school issued laptops and get our Bible's out.

When we read the Bible and spend time in prayer, we will hear from God

1. **Personal Renewal** - Every day, time with Jesus through prayer and Bible reading so you can grow in your love relationship with God.
2. **Relational Renewal** - Out of personal renewal comes relational renewal. As God changes us, he will change the way we look at and love people. If you are married, you will start to be gentler and more loving with your spouse and your kids. It will extend to your co-workers and even all the way to your enemies.
3. **Missional renewal** - The more this works its way through our life, the more excited we will become about Jesus. We will want other people to meet Jesus. The mission of our life will become to tell people about Jesus. He changed us and we want him to change others.

This whole things begins with *personal renewal*. It begins by you seeking to worship Jesus rather than trying to worship the idols in your world..

As I close, I will give a few moments of quite before I pray to give each of us an opportunity to confess the idols in our life to Jesus, to repent of them and to start worshipping God in our hearts today.

Prayer

God, thank you for the challenge of your word. Even as I was studying this, I found myself convicted about the idols in my life. Forgive me, I repent of them. God, I pray for us as a church. Help us to see our idols and to repent of worshipping them. We want to find our joy and satisfaction from the only place it comes, from worshipping you, the one we were created to worship. Amen.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the EFCA. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics of study are ancient rhetoric and preaching.

Feel free to contact him at ktruck@gmail.com or visit his web at www.christ2Rculture.com

© Dr. Kurt Trucksess. You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that: (1) you credit the author, (2) any modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include the web site address (<http://www.christ2Rculture.com>) on the copied resource.