

## The Seven Pillars of Christian Growth

### Part 5 – The Fourth Pillar – Worship

We are continuing in our series on The Seven Pillars of Christian Growth.

First pillar – God’s Word

Second pillar – Serving

Third pillar – Evangelism

In this study, we’re looking at the fourth pillar: Worship.

I want to give you some important truths about this important subject.

#### 1. You get out of it what you put into it.

One of the most powerful principles you can ever learn is that of sowing and reaping.

Gal 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

And it works like this: What you put in determines what you get out.

ILLUS – Let’s just say there’s a great investment opportunity. Two guys invest in a bank at 25% interest. One invests \$100,000, and the other invests \$10,000. At the end of the year the one who invested \$100,000 has made another \$25,000. But the one who invested \$10,000 has only made another \$2,500. What if the guy who made the \$2,500 marched into the bank and said, “Hey, how come he made \$25,000 and I only made \$2,500? That’s discrimination ...” Do you think the bank will take any notice of him?

What you sow is what you reap.

ILLUS – What would you think of a farmer who said, “I’m not going to plant any corn seeds this year. When God gives me some corn, then I’ll plant some seeds.” So every day he’s out there in the field checking it out for corn, saying, “Hey God, where’s my corn?” That guy’s never going to get any corn.

Sowing comes first, then you reap – this is **the** most basic of principles.

And it clearly demonstrates that obedience precedes results; in other words, **first** obedience, **then** results.

If you just stand there thinking, “Well I’ll just see if God touches me, then I’ll praise and worship Him”, you’re not going to get anything.

Someone once said to me, “We like the church, but there’s too much singing. It’s boring.”

Listen to this: (John 4:23) But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

News flash: God isn’t looking for singers or musicians – He’s looking for worshipers.

#### 2. You don’t have to *feel* like praising and worshiping before you can *do* it.

Let’s talk about how faith works, because this is really an issue of faith.

ILLUS – I think of faith as spiritual muscle. Think of Arnold Schwarzenegger’s muscles. How did he get muscles like that? Yeah, I know. Steroids. But there were years of hard work. There’s no use your complaining that you’ve got teeny-weeny little muscles if the heaviest thing you ever lift is a pen.

Spiritually speaking, most churches have some who look like Arnold Schwarzenegger and some who look like Steve Urkle. You know, the skinny, weedy little guy who used to say, “Did I do that?”

And you know how to tell the difference?

The Steve Urkles, when they've had a great week, they have great worship. But if they've had a lousy week, they have lousy worship.

But for the Arnies in the church, it makes no difference at all what sort of week they've had. They just do it.

Do you know why? They make a choice to rejoice.

They've learned to walk by faith, not by feelings.

They've learned that no matter how bad their week was, the Lord never changes, He is always worthy.

Ps 135:3 "Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant."

ILLUS – Story: Once upon a time there was a king who went hunting game with his friend. As the king shot the arrow his thumb came off. His friend said, "Praise God because He's in control." The king was furious and threw his friend in gaol. Some time later, the king was hunting when he ventured into a distant land where he'd never been before. Suddenly he was surrounded by cannibals. They tied him up and were ready to cook him when they saw the hand with no thumb. "No perfect, no cookie," said the chief, and they let him go. He went back to his friend and apologised. "You were right. Not having a thumb saved my life." His friend said, "Praise God that I have been in gaol for so long." "How can you praise God?" "If I hadn't been in gaol, I would have been hunting with you. And look: two thumbs."

He is good, therefore He is worthy to be praised.

ILLUS – So what happens if: you've had a terrible week; argument with the boss; washing machine chewed your favourite outfit; cat scratched you; got a flat tyre on the way to church; you're tired, you're miserable & you're angry. **You're in no fit state to worship.**

What can you do about it?

What a lot of people do is to sit there, refuse to do anything, and try to teach God a lesson.

What we really should do, is ask the Lord for forgiveness for all our bad attitudes and start praising the Lord.

Lift your hands to Him and begin to rejoice in the outer man, your physical body.

At first the outer man is like this ☹ and the inner man is like this ☹ too.

But as you press on in faith, something begins to take place in your spirit.

You open up on the inside.

It doesn't require much faith to worship when you feel like it.

But first you have to make the effort to praise and worship – that's sowing.

And eventually your feelings follow suit – ☺ – that's reaping.

I don't praise God because I feel like it, I praise Him because He said to, because it's good for me, because when I do He does great things.

### **3. It's not enough to close your eyes and lift your hands – it matters what you are thinking.**

Now you're thinking: Well, duh! Everyone already knows that.

But it's not what you know that counts, it's what you do.

For many worshipers, the problem is what goes on in their heads.

Don't think I don't know what goes on – I'm human too.

ILLUS – I'm worshipping the Lord, trying to focus on him. Then my stomach rumbles, and I'm thinking, "Boy, am I hungry. I'm really looking forward to lunch. I could eat a horse."

Is this what Jesus meant when He quoted Isaiah? (Mat 15:8) These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.

My lips are singing, “Jesus precious Jesus ...”

But my mind is saying, “Food – give me food!”

ILLUS – I’ve had a few acquaintances over the years, and when they’re talking to you, they’re looking over your shoulders. They see someone else and they’re off. And you’re left thinking, “Did I just have a conversation, or am I the Invisible Man?”

There’s no connection; maybe Jesus has that problem with us sometimes.

He’s standing in front of us while we’re “worshipping” and He sees our hands raised and hears our singing, but when He looks into our minds, He’s wondering if there’s anybody home.

This is a perpetual challenge for all of us – to not treat Jesus like the Invisible Man.

Not to let our brains go on automatic pilot.

Mark 12:30 “And you shall love the LORD your God with **all** your heart (**that’s in here**), with **all** your soul (**that’s in here somewhere too**), with **all** your mind (**that’s here**), and with **all** your strength (**that’s your body**).” (**and then Jesus said**) **This** is the **first** commandment.

Remember that there are two kinds of worshipers – English and Italian.

ILLUS – You’ve got to go to airports to understand this. Different people respond to others in different ways. Some people are really warm, but others are cold and distant. Imagine a man’s son has been overseas 15 years, been very ill and nearly died. Now he’s returning home. The father is pacing up and down at the airport, waiting and muttering, “Where is that boy? I hope he gets out here soon. I’ve got an appointment.” The son arrives. They shake hands: “Hello son, how are you? ... Good. Okay I’ve got an appointment, so we’d better hurry.”

This guy’s totally disconnected.

I’m sure he loves his son, but it’s a very intellectual relationship.

Lots of Christians are like that; they have limited heart engagement with God.

ILLUS – Then there’s an old Italian lady. Her son’s been in a neighbouring town for a week. She paces up and down, and then she sees him. She hugs and kisses him, pinches his cheeks. “Oh my beautiful baby. He’s back again. My little bambino has come back to his mama. Oh, you’re so beautiful. I missed you so much. Come to mama. You look so skinny. We gotta get you home and feed you.”

Which one is the better illustration of loving the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength?

The Italian lady – she put everything into it – and she connects.

All the problems people have with raising their hands, shouting praise to God, will eventually disappear if they focus on God, and really connect with Him.

#### **4. What we say we believe should match up with how we act.**

ILLUS – How many of you like watching tennis? Imagine the world no. 1 seed is playing at Wimbledon. It’s right at the end of the game. He hits the ball, it’s a beautiful shot, and it’s game, set and match. The audience jumps to their feet and roars in approval. Why?

Have you ever thought about this?

All those people are getting so excited because some guy whacked a little ball from one end of the court to the other.

You know what? Jesus could do that in His sleep!

But how do we act towards God who created the heavens and the earth, and paid the ultimate price for our souls?

We say that we believe that He turns up at church every week.

But so often people are thinking, “Oh, man, how long are they going keep doing this song? Where on earth did the worship leader get his fashion sense from?”

Or other unworthy thoughts.

What does that say about our sense of the reality of God’s presence?

What does it say about us if we say that He’s here, but act like He’s not.

Mat 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.

I haven’t talked about the ways you can praise God – it’s all in your Bible.

You can dance, sing, shout, clap...

But I’m going to teach you a very important principle based on what Jesus said here, that will help you in your worship.

Jesus said that He’s with us when we gather together.

And I’m going to ask you to do something crazy: Act like it’s true.

ILLUS – How many of you are connected to the internet? You know that there are basically two kinds of connection – dial-up and broadband. The major difference is this: broadband is connected all the time.

God doesn’t want us to be the kind of people who only connect with Him during Sunday morning worship.

He want us to be connected to Him all the time.

Our whole lives are meant to be acts of worship.

I want to ask you a question: Do you have dial-up Christianity, or are you a broadband Christian?

I’m a broadband Christian – I’m connected all the time.

Sure I sing and shout and clap and raise my hands when we get together in worship, and that’s good.

But our whole life is worship, whatever I do is an act of worship.

And the reason for that is that I have Jesus living within me.

I don’t need dial-up Christianity – I don’t need to go to a priest to worship, or to a particular building, or to the virgin Mary, or anyone else.

I am connected directly to God through Christ all the time.

That means I can worship anywhere, and everything I do should be worship.