



May 31, 2026 | Dr. Jimmy Stewart

Jesus Changes Everything

False Worship → True Worship

Scripture: Exodus 20:3-8, 34:5-8; John 4:23–24; Romans 1:18–25; Luke 18:9-14

Spotlight: True worship begins when God is trusted and valued above all else.

Summary: Jesus changes false worship into true worship by exposing the *idols* we create, the *substitutes* we chase, and the *misplaced loves* that quietly take God's rightful place in our hearts. In **Exodus 32**, Israel did not stop being religious; they simply reshaped worship around something they could control. In **Romans 1**, Paul shows that the human heart is prone to exchange the glory of the Creator for created things. False worship is not always bowing before a golden calf; False Worship is when we give our deepest trust, affection, time, money, identity, and obedience to anything other than the one true God. Jesus calls us back to true worship—not worship based on convenience, emotion, tradition, or self-rule, but worship "in spirit and in truth" (**John 4:23–24**). True worship begins when God is treasured above all else, trusted above every fear, obeyed above every desire, and loved above every substitute.

1. Why Worship?

We were created to worship [HIM]!. Showing faith, value, and trust.

Giving our deepest trust, affection, time, money, identity, and obedience to anything is worship.

Worth Ship

Exodus 20; 34:5-8

Idols: Possessions - People - Places - Things - Money - Self - God

Who or what you worship is a choice you make. Ultimately who or what you worship, you serve.

Worshipping the God of the Bible, The God of Creation, The God of Heaven, the God of Love and mercy and grace and compassion, the God who sent His only son to save us from sin and death, the God who provides, the God who sends the rain, causes everything to grow, heals, seals, speaks, makes all things right, worshipping the one true God is the only one who it makes sense to worship.

Everyone worships. The atheist worships. The religious person worships. The successful person worships. The broken person worships. The question is not whether we worship, but whether our worship true or false.

2. False Worship

False Worship is when we give our deepest trust, affection, time, money, identity, and obedience to anything other than the one true God.

a. False Worship Begins When God is Not Trusted.

Exodus 32:1–8

When Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people said to Aaron, "Make us some gods who can lead us." Their problem was not merely a lack of patience; it was a failure of trust. They wanted something visible because they had stopped trusting the invisible God who had already repeatedly delivered them.

Israel did not deny that something spiritual was needed. They simply wanted worship on their own terms. They wanted a god they could see, touch, manage, and control. The golden calf was not just an idol of gold; it was a mirror of their hearts.

b. False Worship Replaces God With a Substitute That Can Be Controlled.

Exodus 32:4–6 Something we can see. Think we understand.

A career can become an idol. Family. Tradition. Pleasure. Money. Even ministry can become a idol if it becomes the source of our worth instead of an offering of worship to God.

False worship gives God's glory to something God created. Whatever or whomever has captured your trust, affection, identity, obedience, or hope more than God is an idol?

c. False Worship is Exchanging the Truth for a Lie.

In Romans 1:18–25 Paul says that although people knew God, they would not worship Him as God or give Him thanks. They traded the glory of the immortal God for images and worshiped created things rather than the Creator.

False worship is not merely bad behavior; it is a darkened heart. Romans 1 teaches that worship is not optional. When we refuse to glorify God and give thanks to Him, something else will take His place.

Western Civilization may not bow before golden statues, but it bows before self, success, pleasure, comfort, autonomy, technology, sexuality, money, and power. These things may promise freedom, but they cannot save. They cannot satisfy the soul.

3. True Worship

True worship begins when God is treasured above all else, trusted above every fear, obeyed above every desire, and loved above every substitute.

a. True Worship Begins With the Father Seeking Worshipers

In John 4:23 Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "The Father is looking for those who will worship him in spirit and in truth." True worship does not begin with our search for God; it begins with God seeking us. The Father is seeking worshipers, and Jesus came to make true worship possible.

True worship is not reserved for people who have everything together. Jesus offered true worship to a woman with a complicated past and a confused theology. That means there is hope for every sinner, every struggler, every prodigal, and every person who has tried to satisfy their soul with false worship.

b. True Worship Is in Spirit and in Truth

John 4:23–24 Jesus said, "True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Worship is not merely external activity. It is not only singing, attending, giving, or serving. True worship involves the whole person responding to the true God as He has revealed Himself.

True worship must be spiritually alive and biblically anchored. To worship "in spirit" means worship is not empty ritual. It comes from a heart made alive by God. To worship "in truth" means worship is not based on imagination, preference, or cultural opinion. It is grounded in who God is, what He has said, and what Jesus has done.

Spirit without truth becomes emotionalism.
Truth without spirit becomes dead legalism.
Spirit and truth together become true worship.

c. True Worship is when we offer our deepest trust, affection, time, money, identity, and obedience to the one true God.

The question is not simply, "Did I attend worship?" The more relevant question is, **"Did I offer anything to God?"**

True worship shows up in obedience, repentance, generosity, forgiveness, purity, humility, surrender and praise.

True worship can be indoors or outside. True worship can be loud or it can be silent. True worship can be with clapping, dancing, with hands raised or heads bowed, with or without instruments. True worship can be quietly bowing in humility before the creator of all things. True worship must be in Spirit and in truth!

4. Jesus Changes Empty Substitutes of False Worship into the Living Surrender of True Worship.

Jesus brings us back to the Father. False worship is rooted in exchange: we trade God for something *lesser*. **True worship is rooted in surrender:** we treasure God above everything else.

False worship ends in *emptiness*.

True worship leads to life.

The Father is seeking true worshipers. The question is: will He find one in you?

Next Steps: Turn from empty worship and worship the one true God with all your attention, affection, trust, money, time, talent and obedience!

Life Application:

1. When you examine your life honestly, what or who receives the kind of attention, affection, trust, money, time, or obedience that belongs to God alone? Can something become an idol even if it is not sinful in itself? If yes, then how?
2. Israel's false worship began while they were waiting on God. Where are you most tempted to create your own "golden calf" when God seems delayed, silent, or slower than you expected?
3. False worship often gives us an idol we can control. In what ways do people today try to reshape God into someone or something more agreeable, less holy, less demanding, or more convenient?
4. Romans 1 says the great exchange happens when people trade the truth of God for a lie. What lies are most powerful in our culture right now—about identity, success,

sexuality, money, comfort, freedom, or happiness—and how do those lies compete for worship?

5. Jesus said true worshipers worship the Father in spirit and in truth. What happens when worship has spirit without truth? What happens when worship has truth without spirit? Which danger are you more vulnerable to?
6. How can church attendance, singing, serving, giving, or religious activity become a substitute for actually surrendering to God in worship? How do we guard against being religious but not truly worshipful?
7. What does your private worship reveal that your public worship might conceal? In other words, who are you before God when no one is watching, no music is playing, and no one is expecting anything from you except God?
8. If true worship begins when God is valued above all else, what substitutes need to be dethroned in your life today? What act of obedience would show Jesus that he is not merely part of your life, but Lord over your life and everything in it?

Digging Deeper

Biblical Examples of False Worship

1. *Cain's Offering Without a Right Heart* - Genesis 4:1–7

Cain brought an offering to God, but God rejected Cain and his offering. The issue was not merely the gift, but the heart behind it. Abel came by faith; Cain came on his own terms.

Point of Emphasis: False worship offers God something while withholding the heart.

2. *The Tower of Babel* - Genesis 11:1–9

The people built a tower to "make a name" for themselves. This was not worship of God; it was worship of human pride, achievement, and self-glory.

Point of Emphasis: False worship seeks human greatness instead of God's glory.

3. *The Golden Calf* - Exodus 32:1–8

Israel grew impatient while Moses was on the mountain and demanded a visible god they could control. They credited the calf with the deliverance God alone had accomplished.

Point of Emphasis: False worship replaces the invisible God with something visible, manageable, and convenient.

4. *Nadab and Abihu's Unauthorized Fire* - Leviticus 10:1–3

Aaron's sons offered "strange fire" before the Lord—worship God had not commanded. They treated holy worship casually.

Point of Emphasis: False worship approaches God carelessly rather than reverently.

5. *Israel Worshiping Baal* - 1 Kings 18:20–40

At Mount Carmel, Elijah confronted Israel's divided loyalty: "How much longer will you waver, hobbling between two opinions?" The people wanted God and Baal.

Point of Emphasis: False worship tries to divide the heart between God and idols.

6. *Saul's Partial Obedience* - 1 Samuel 15:1–23

Saul spared what God commanded him to destroy, then claimed he kept the animals to sacrifice to the Lord. Samuel responded, "Obedience is better than sacrifice."

Point of Emphasis: False worship uses religious language to cover disobedience.

7. *The Pharisees' Lip Service* - Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:7–9

Jesus rebuked those who honored God with their lips while their hearts were far from Him. Their worship was outwardly religious but inwardly empty.

Point of Emphasis: False worship can say the right words while the heart remains distant from God.

8. *The Rich Young Ruler* - Mark 10:17–22

He was moral, respectful, and religious, but Jesus exposed his worship of wealth, and he went away sad.

Point of Emphasis: False worship is revealed when we refuse to surrender what we love more than God.

9. *The Money Changers in the Temple* - Matthew 21:12–13

Jesus cleansed the temple because people had turned a house of prayer into a marketplace. Worship had become corrupted by profit and self-interest.

Point of Emphasis: False worship uses the things of God for personal gain.

10. *The Pharisee in the Temple* - Luke 18:9–14

Jesus told the story of two men going to the Temple to pray. The Pharisee stood by himself and offered prideful prayer. He exalted himself.

Point of Emphasis: If you exalt yourself in worship you will be humbled and you are participating in false worship.

Biblical Examples of True Worship

1. *Abel's Offering by Faith* - Genesis 4:4; Hebrews 11:4

Abel brought his offering to God by faith. His worship flowed from trust and reverence.

Point of Emphasis: True worship begins with faith.

2. *Abraham's Surrender of Isaac* - Genesis 22:1–14

Abraham called his journey up Mount Moriah "worship." He was willing to surrender what was most precious because he trusted God completely.

Point of Emphasis: True worship surrenders the dearest things to God.

3. *Moses Before the Burning Bush* - Exodus 3:1–6

When Moses encountered God's holiness, he hid his face. He understood that the presence of God demands reverence.

Point of Emphasis: True worship begins with holy awe before God.

4. Hannah's Prayer and Dedication of Samuel - 1 Samuel 1:9–28; 2:1–10

Hannah poured out her grief before the Lord, received God's mercy, and then gave Samuel back to God.

Point of Emphasis: True worship brings both our burdens and our blessings back to God.

5. David's Repentant Worship - Psalm 51

After his sin with Bathsheba, David did not bring empty ritual. He prayed, "The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit."

Point of Emphasis: True worship includes repentance, humility, and a surrendered heart.

6. Solomon's Dedication of the Temple - 1 Kings 8:22–61

Solomon prayed with humility, remembering God's covenant faithfulness and asking God to hear His people when they prayed.

Point of Emphasis: True worship remembers God's faithfulness and seeks God's presence.

7. Isaiah's Vision of the Lord - Isaiah 6:1–8

Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, confessed his sin, received cleansing, and responded, "Here I am. Send me."

Point of Emphasis: True worship moves from adoration to confession to surrender to mission.

8. Mary of Bethany at Jesus' Feet - Luke 10:38–42; John 12:1–8

Mary sat at Jesus' feet to listen, and later poured expensive perfume on Him. She valued Jesus above distraction, criticism, and cost.

Point of Emphasis: True worship treasures Jesus above everything else.

9. The Samaritan Woman - John 4:7–26

Jesus moved her from confusion and brokenness into truth. He taught her that true worship is not about location, but worshiping the Father in spirit and truth.

Point of Emphasis: True worship is made possible by Jesus and grounded in spirit and truth.

10. The Despised Tax Collector in the Temple - Luke 18:9–14

Jesus told the story of two men going to the Temple to pray. The Tax Collector distanced himself from others and offered himself in humiliation to God in prayer. He humbled himself.

Point of Emphasis: If you humble yourself in worship you will be exalted and you are participating in true worship.

11. The Early Church - Acts 2:42–47

The believers devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, prayer, generosity, and witness.

Point of Emphasis: True worship is not limited to a service; it becomes a way of life.

12. Paul and Silas in Prison - Acts 16:25–34

Beaten and imprisoned, Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns to God. Their worship became a witness to the jailer.

Point of Emphasis: True worship is not controlled by circumstances.

13. The Worship of Heaven - Revelation 4-5

The elders, living creatures, angels, and redeemed people worship God and the Lamb, declaring Him worthy.

Point of Emphasis: True worship centers on the worthiness of God and the victory of the Lamb.

True worship begins with faith.

True worship surrenders all things to God but especially the most valued.

True worship begins with holy awe of God.

True worship brings our burdens and our blessings back as offerings to God.

True worship includes repentance, humility, and a surrendered heart.

True worship remembers God's faithfulness and seeks God's presence.

True worship moves from adoration to confession to surrender to mission.

True worship treasures Jesus above everything else.

True worship is made possible by Jesus and grounded in spirit and truth.

True worship becomes a way of life.

True worship is not controlled by circumstances.

True worship centers on the worthiness of God and the victory of the Lamb.

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