

March 21, 2021
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1 Corinthians 10:31-33 What to Do When We Don't Know What to Do: Worship
Greenland Hills United Methodist Church

1 Corinthians 10:31-33

New Revised Standard Version

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved.

The last year has been hard. The first worship service that we all watched online instead of being in the sanctuary was March 15, 2020. Huge thanks to Rev. Carol Montgomery, Kristi Hassell, and Robert Edwards for figuring that all out. That week Kristi Hassell set up our YouTube channel because Greenland Hills didn't have one! We have learned so much in this past year.

So, last year for Spring Break our daughter was in Hawaii with the high school drill team and as they came back home that Wednesday of Spring Break, the airport in Hawaii was a ghost town with no restaurants open. Lee and I had decided to take our son Everett to Disneyworld and five minutes before we boarded the airplane, they closed Disneyworld. We had planned to visit my Aunt and Uncle for a few days anyway, so we went ahead and got on the plane but came back earlier than we had planned. I remember feeling such a sense of uncertainty. We really didn't know if we would be able to fly home or if we would have to drive.

My Uncle David is a fisherman, so he took us out on his fishing boat. I have a vivid memory of looking at the beautiful blue sky while my Uncle David showed us all around the lake. He would stop and point out birds and his favorite fishing spots. We didn't know what the future held for us, but we knew in that moment that we were safe, and that God was with us. I remember taking deep breaths in and out and realizing that every moment can be holy, even while you are sitting in a smelly fishing boat!

We are in the forty days of Lent and my hope is that it is an opportunity for us to take a deep breath and ground ourselves in God. This Lent at Greenland Hills we are focusing on spiritual practices to help center ourselves in God as we experience and practice prayer, scripture reading, fasting, confession, worship and silence in our daily lives. When we don't know what to do, we go back to the basics of spiritual disciplines. When we don't know what to do, spiritual practices help connect us with God and can help us to experience God in new ways. Since practice is an important part of spiritual practice, Lent is the perfect opportunity to take the time to learn and explore and try out different spiritual practices.

Today we focus on worship. When I hear the word worship, I think of going to church on Sunday morning. There is nothing like a pandemic to make you worship in different ways! In this past year of online worship, I have missed all of you so much. Church for me is where I find God in love. Church is where I find community. We go to church to remember that justice wins and to get the energy to keep believing that. I love what writer Brene Brown says about church. She says she goes to church to sing with strangers, to break bread with people she needs to understand better, and to pass the peace with people she would normally want to punch in the face.

Because we haven't been able to worship in our sanctuary in so long, I have been thinking about other things that we lift up with reverence. Things that we adore and give our devotion like we do God. In my life I worship food. I crave it, I watch shows about it, I find comfort in it, and I pay lots of money for it. I lift up with reverence the idea of certainty. I love tradition. When we had to cancel the Smith family Easter party last year, I was gutted. I realized how much I worshipped that tradition.

If people followed us in a normal day or if they looked at our credit card bill, what would they say that we worship? If someone were to crawl into your head, where would they see that your thoughts go? If someone were to see how you live, what would they say that you worship? Is it gadgets? If it blinks and has a power cord will you sing its praise?¹ Will you bring it offerings of money and time? Do you worship other people? Do you put your feelings of self-worth, of security, of am I good enough, of am I smart enough, cute enough, effective enough in the hands of other people? Do you spend most of your time trying to find new ways for other people to like you? Where do you spend your time, your thoughts, your emotions, your energy, your talents?

There are many things in our lives that we worship. Things like our career, parenting, technology, food, politics, romance. We worship sports teams, celebrities, politicians, and wellness. One of my friends told me about being in the drug store and there was someone else in the same aisle who said, "Thank God. They have my hairspray." We worship beauty, pets, power, control. We worship comfort and traditions, after all, we have always done it this way.

I want to invite us to expand what we think of when we think of worship. Paul says in 1 Corinthians, whatever you do, do it for the glory of God. Can we turn our daily activities into worship? Paul takes this metaphor of eating and transforms worship to be about our entire lives and all its activities. Whether it's reading a book or going on a walk. Whether it's making dinner or doing laundry. Anything can be worship; it depends on your mindset and intention going into it. We can weave worship through our everyday lives in different ways.

Worship is our heartbeat. Psalm 95:2 says, "Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to God with songs of praise." *That* is worship. Worship is about having gratitude in our hearts (Colossians 3:16-17). I remember one of the trips that we made to build a home for a family in Juarez with Proyecto Abrigo. The house was all built and we were going to have Communion with the family and pray together. We went to the grocery store to get bread for Communion and I think it was Judy Kline who picked out the bread. The team from Greenland Hills is gathered around the house with the family. We have laid our hands on the house and prayed for the family. I am holding the bread and I share the story of the first Communion on that night when Jesus shared in the Last Supper with his friends the disciples. I break the bread and there is a pineapple spread inside. It was the stickiest Communion I have ever served!

In the passage from 1 Corinthians, Paul says that we worship is something we do not for our own advantage, but for others. How can we get in a daily routine of worshipping God? How can we incorporate a faithful habit of worship that will help us grow in our spiritual lives? I love to visit the ocean, to put my toes in the sand, feel the water cover my feet, and breathe in the breeze. When I'm in Dallas, Texas and I'm not standing at the edge of the ocean, how can I harness that feeling where God feels so near? If I feel God's presence when I'm climbing a mountain, how can I recreate that feeling while I'm sitting in traffic on 75? If I worship God when I'm gathered around a meal with friends and family, how can I feel that same feeling when I'm at home eating by myself because we're still in a pandemic?

Scripture tells us that everything we do is worship - from our breathing to our eating, as long as it is done with the intention of praising God. There isn't a standard for how to worship God. There aren't prayers that need to be said or verses of the hymns that need to be sung. Worship starts with the intention that everything that is done in a day is done to give glory to

¹ <https://nailscars.com/worship-poetry/what-i-worship/?feedsort=rand&fbclid=IwAR0DZwaALBdsmB8ThbUXpdWHQF7bn66XTMTftfbF0niacIxxwyrwGpy7Up4>

God. Our worship is done with the intention to bring glory to God. It is not about perfection; it is about living our lives as followers of Jesus the Christ. Whatever we do, whether we are living or breathing, eating or drinking, we do it for God, to give glory and show gratitude.

Worship can be done every single moment of the day. It is a way of life. How do you worship? Where do you feel most connected to God? I remember being in a staff meeting at Lovers Lane UMC years ago and the organist, Clarice Candamio said that the most important part of worship was when we give our financial gifts to God. I had been a preacher for a while, and I had never thought of that. She said when we sang the doxology, (Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts! Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!), it was the highlight of worship because it is the point in our worship service when we are giving our gifts to God. So much of worship is us receiving, but in the offering we are giving back to God. So, now when I sing the doxology and when I give my financial gifts to God, I think about my intention. I think about Clarice's words and I realize it is worship. When we give to the church in the offering, we are worshipping God. It is a small token of our praise and thanksgiving for all that God has given.

Worship is central to our everyday lives. May we seek to give glory to God in everything that we do as we weave worship into our everyday lives. As Paul says, "do everything for the glory of God." Thanks be to God, Amen.