

Well, good morning everybody. My name's Tim Armstrong. (laughter) No, I...I couldn't fill Tim's shoes at all. My name's Dan Fleming and I'm the...one of the worship leaders here at Crossroads. And while Tim is gone, he has asked me to fill in for him and I said I'd be glad to do that. We are in a middle of a prayer series and he asked me to talk about prayer in our worship so that's a topic we're going to look at today. Here at Crossroads, we have a mission statement. You've probably have memorized that by now. If you haven't, that's...that's fine. But I'm going to repeat that...that statement... If you know it, repeat it along with me. It's to...to turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ. And that's our mission statement here at Crossroads. That defines what we're about...why we exist...what...what we're all about...what...what we're trying to do. Well, in our own lives, we have a mission statement...a life mission...mission statement that God has written for us in his word. And that mission statement is this: I was created to worship the living God. I was created to worship the living God. Let's...let's say that together: I was created to worship the living God. We just sang the song, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment." Then the apostle Paul later says: So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, you do it all for the glory of God. So you might be saying to yourself, ah, Dan you...you just went to one of those worship conferences and you're coming back with a...just kind of new thought and you're sharing that with us. I'm going to say: Wrong! This is really been since the beginning of time.

Ah, in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, Martin Luther who is kind of the founding father of the Protestant faith said: A dairy maid can milk cows to the glory of God. A dairy maid can milk cows to the glory of God. Now when I first heard that quote I wasn't quite sure what a dairy maid. I don't use that word on a normal basis so I looked it up. Pretty much what I thought, it's a lady that milks cows. That's about it. So Martin Luther: A dairy maid can milk cows to the glory of God. Two hundred years later, one of the greatest musical composers, Johann Sebastian Bach, lived in the sixteenth and seventeenth century wrote at the bottom of his musical scores, the letters, solo, dei, gloria, the letters, sdg, and they're Latin, sola means the word solo or alone, dei, Latin, it means God, and gloria, means glory. In other words, he said, this music is written to God alone...to God alone be the glory.

Well, I was thinking the other day, the first time that I heard of this concept, it was probably about thirty years ago and I was at a men's Bible study, a group of about ten of us. And my dentist actually led the group, his name was Ted. We called him Doctor Ted. And we were getting together on a Saturday afternoon. We...we were eating lunch at McDonalds and we were laughing and having a good time and then things kind of settled down and Dr. Ted asked us this question. He said, "What...what are you here for?" And we all looked at him kind of funny and he says...not here, but the 'big here'. What are you here for? What is...what is your purpose here on earth? Why has God created you? And right away I thought I had the right answer. I said...I said, "Ted, it's ah...it's to save people and disciple them." And he said...he said, "Dan, you know, that's ...that's a good goal to have but, he said, I want you to think...think much bigger

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than that.” And, of course, I said, OK, save a lot of people. You know, and disciple them. He said, no, no, you’re not...you’re not getting it. In fact, nobody in the group got it. And...and Ted had to tell us. And he said, you know, you’re here to glorify God and to worship him. And that was the first time, somebody had ever shared that with me. And when I first heard that, my reaction was, you know, that sounds kind of boring. You know, I’m just here to worship God. But over the past thirty years of my life, God’s been working on my heart and now I can, you know, I can stand here and say this morning, you know, I think it’s the only way to live.

I’d like to talk to you a little bit about what worship is. I’d like to define it. You saw on the video before I got up here there’s a lot of confusion about really what worship is. If somebody had asked me in high school what is worship, I probably would there...isn’t that a nice looking guy...somebody would have asked me in high school, I probably would have said something like this: It’s all the music that’s done before the preaching...all that music stuff...you know, the prelude, and the hymns, and the special music and the choir anthem and the offertory and post...all that stuff...that’s...that’s...that’s worship. Well, then if someone would have asked me a few years later when I was in college, I would have said something like this: See, I...I did have hair at one time. If somebody would have asked me in college, I’d said something like, well, it’s the whole thing...it’s...it’s the sing time and then...and then the preaching time...the whole thing...ah...that is worship. But...ahem...the answers I gave weren’t necessarily wrong but they came immeasurably short of what God intended.

So I’m going to share with you a definition. This is not original with me. I wish I had made it up, but it’s not. It’s...it’s from Rick Warren, from Saddleback church in California, and I like the definition because I have a horrible memory...I can remember about six words and that’s all this definition is. It’s very easy to remember but I believe in...in what it says, you know. It says that worship is anything that brings pleasure to God. Worship is anything that brings pleasure to God. The verse of scripture there says: Let us be grateful and worship God in a way that will please him with reverence and awe.

Let me give you some examples of worship other than just singing. You know, when you get up in the morning and you have that hunger to...to meet with God and you open your Bible and you read a passage of scripture and you feel like God is speaking to you and you’re listening to him, is that something that’s pleasing to God? Absolutely. I believe that’s...that’s an example of...of an act of worship. And when I’m at the worship service and as I’m walking out the door and God lays it on my heart to give a portion of my income back to him and, with a cheerful heart, I take that tithe and...and I drop in the box and I say, “Lord, this is just a portion of what you’ve allowed me earn. I want to give that back to you as an act of worship.” I believe that’s worship...that’s pleasing to God. And when I’m...I’m driving to work and somebody cuts in that lane in front of me, you know, and causes me to slam on my brakes and the natural part of me wants to shake my fist at him and swear at him, hit the horn, you know, that’s my natural tendency but I say, no...no, I want to act in a Christ-like manner. You know, this guy’s probably had a rough day and I wave at him and say: Buddy, it’s OK, it happens to me all the time. And

I act in a way that Jesus would act. I believe that that's pleasing to God. And I believe that is a form of worship.

And when I come into the auditorium and the little bald guy says let's stand to our feet and worship God and we stand together as a congregation and we lift God up in praise and even though we don't feel like it, you know, the world is just not going the way that we'd want it and we don't feel like but we say: You know, God, in obedience to you, I'm going to praise and worship your name. I think God's pleased with that and that's a form of worship.

And if I'm driving in my car down 77 south through West Virginia and I look around and I see the gorgeous mountains around, look to my.... my right and left, and I'm just amazed at the beauty of nature and I realize, God, you are the Creator of all of this and I just worship and admire and adore you. I think that pleases God. I believe that is a form of worship. You know, worship is...is...worship of God is just not a Sunday thing and it's not just a musical thing but it's a 24/7 thing. True worship is a lifestyle. True worship is a life style. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers by the mercies of God present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God...which is your spiritual worship. And the reality is that if I fail to worship God, then I'll find a substitute. If I fail to worship God, then I'm going to worship something else. You know, it's...it's wired in our...our DNA...it's a part of who we are...God created us to worship. Some of the things you see people worshipping today are possessions, job, themselves, money, sports, rock stars, and celebrities. The list could go on and on and on....or the living God. And my challenge is who are you worshipping...today? You know, Exodus 23 says: Do not worship any other gods except me. Well, we've been focusing on...on worship, and now I'd like to talk a little bit about prayer. Prayer is an act of worship. God wants us to come to him and offer him our prayer. It brings pleasure to God. Prayer is an act of worship. But many times in my prayer life, I noticed I've become very 'me' focused. As I think about it later, I think, man, I spent the whole time talking to God and it was me, me, me. I want...I want... I want... I want... I want, you know. Is that what...is that a really a balanced prayer life? I don't think so. I'd like to...to share with you how to have a balanced prayer life.

And many years ago someone shared this acrostic with me and it stuck with me. It's very simple to remember. It just really helps me to have balance in my prayer life. It spells the word, ACTS. I call it the 'ACTS principle'. And the A stands for adoration. The scripture says: Praise the Lord; I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart in the company of upright and the congregation. Great are the works of the Lord. Study by all who delight in him. We need to spend time in our prayer adoring God...just praising him for who he is. And if you're a young believer, you might...you might start with something as simple as: You are good. God, you are good. And then as you...as you grow in your faith, you might move to something more like: God, I admire you because you are the author of life. You are the Creator of all. I admire you, Lord, for the grace that you show me and the mercy. I admire you Lord that you are all knowing. You know every detail of...of my life. You might say, Lord I admire you cause you are my

Redeemer, my Rewarder. We're going to spend some time adoring God right now in song. I'd like you to get to your feet. Just totally focus on him. Put everything else you're thinking about aside and admire and adore him.

Well, the A stands for adoration. We come to the C...C stands for confession. David said in the Psalms: If I cherish sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened, Psalm 66:18. But we have that promise in I John 1:9, it says: If we...if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We're going to have just a time of confession here...between you and God.

Well, the A represented adoration, the C represented confession. Now let's move on to T, thanksgiving. The scripture says: Pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. And as a kid, I was...I was brought up to say thank you when somebody did something for me or somebody gave something to me. You know, my parents said, you know, you need to say thank you. But every moment of our life, God is blessing us in some way. Not every moment, but every second, every millisecond, God is blessing us in some way and is deserving of our thanksgiving. Well, there's a space below...ah...the word thanksgiving in your program. I'm going to ask the band to come back and play. And in that space, I want you to write three things before the Lord...you...you are truly thankful for. And as an act of worship, just letting him know how thankful you are for those things. So just take a moment and do that.

The A stands for adoration, the C stands for confession, the T stands for thanksgiving and S stands for big, nice word here...big word...supplication. Well, I looked up in the Greek and it's the word deesis, means a need or a want...a need or a want. The verse of scripture there says: Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known onto God and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Supplication is where we pray for the needs of others and the needs of ourselves. And I'd like to lead you in a guided prayer...just kind of guide you through it and you're going to pray and...ah...if you'd bow your head now, I'll just suggest some things and we'll enter into a time of prayer. Why don't you begin by just praying...praying for all the believers across the world that they would have boldness in their faith. I want you to pray for the missionaries that are preaching the gospel in all ends of the earth. And to pray for our president and all those in authority over you that they'd have Godly wisdom. And just pray for our church. Pray for Pastor Tim and those that are with him for their protection. And this...that this experience will be life changing. That you'll reveal your...God will reveal himself to them even more. And just to pray for those of our church family that are ill. Just to pray for your own family...somebody that God brings to your mind. Then to pray for yourself...why don't you begin by praying about your walk with God, especially about your worship. Is it...is it a lifestyle? Just pray about your health. Go ahead and pray about your job...if you've lost one...praying that God would send a new job your way or that you'll be able to keep your job. And when we pray, we need to pray in Jesus' name, so just ask all these things in Jesus' name. And let's not say amen yet. Let's go ahead and get to our feet and let's say the Lord's prayer

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together. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.