

COMPLETE IN GOD

Over the next 5 weeks we'll be doing a refresher of the familiar 5 Purposes of life that Rick Warren challenges us with in his *Purpose Driven Life*. Even though this material is familiar, I find it still very inspiring and challenging. May I encourage you to reread the *Purpose Driven Life*: 1 short chapter a day for 40 days; perhaps your small group could redo the 6 wk video series that follows the book. We have some spare copies of the book and DVDs. To introduce today's theme have a look at this clip from the movie Jerry Maguire. Jerry returns home to his estranged wife who is having a meeting with her friends. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WK3XqGAhqaM&feature=related>

Very corny and terribly romantic! I cried with all the other ladies in the cinema but Anne kept pinching my hanky. However, *you complete me* might sound romantic but it's not real. In a healthy marriage, the husband and wife don't complete each other: it's not as if I was 50% before marrying Anne - OK I was only 50% the weight I am now but I was 100% whole and complete in myself, as was Anne. In fact if two people get hitched to become whole their marriage is going to be under awful strain. The equation of marriage is not $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} = 1$ but $1+1=1$.

Anne and I were already complete before marriage and we still are complete because we are complete in God. Only God can make us complete: no other person can; indeed no one can make us less than complete if we are complete in God. We're created to be complete and whole in our self as we surrender to God in worship in the whole of our life. We're only complete in worship.

Our English word 'Worship' is from the old Saxon 'worth-ship' ie to ascribe to God his worth. ^{Rev 4:11} "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." In worship, we much watch our attitude & approach, our affection & our action.

1. **Attitude.** In Jesus' day the people in the South worshipped God in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and those in the North worshipped God on their holy Mountain in Samaria. Jesus said to a Samaritan woman, ^{Jn 4:21} Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem... true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Note that worship is no longer a matter of a particular location or a specific time but an attitude of heart. Like the word church, we use worship in various contexts, mostly in what we do on Sunday morning in church and even more narrowly in our singing of hymns and songs of praise. Yet true worship really embraces the whole of our life. Worship is not a part of our life; it is our life!

in spirit means our attitude: a spirit that is genuine and transparent to God who welcomes an honest person seeking mercy and grace, but he cannot abide hypocrisy, dishonesty, self-righteousness, self-pity, false piety or religious masks.

The saints in the Bible are so bluntly candid with God telling him exactly what they think and how they feel: arguing, crying, even doubting and despairing but always in an honest spirit. The Psalms are full of every human emotion. ^{Ps 142:1} I cry aloud to the LORD? I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy. ² I pour out my complaint before him; before him I tell my trouble. This is true open worship in spirit and truth. The very worst thing is to allow our doubts & disappointments to turn to secret bitterness towards God: what Rick Warren calls "your hidden rift with God."

If in spirit refers to us, then in truth also refers to God's true nature and character. God has revealed himself in the Bible as the only God, the Creator of the universe: One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is holy and righteous: the God of grace and mercy. To worship God in truth is to worship God as he truly is. We're not to reinvent a god who is more comfortable with modern morality & attitudes.

Nor are we to doubt who God when bad things happen, or when our expectations are not met. God is love, so it is not truth to suspect God of evil or being uncaring. Idolatry is not confined to child-sacrificing Canaanites. Idolatry is any distortion of the real God's true nature to suit popular spirituality or to distort his true character to fit our experience. You shall have no other Gods before me.

2. **Approach** ^{Rom 12:1} Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Therefore ... in view of God's mercy means worship is in response to God's mercy. Worship is our reaction to what God has already done for us.

Last week Ken introduced this purpose by saying that the primary reason we exist is to be loved by God! Of course we are to love God too, but we love God only because he first loved us. Our love for God is a response to his love for us. Worship is the same. We offer God his worth in worship because God first gave us worth by creating us in his image; by saving us through Jesus & making us his own.

God's mercy is that great Gospel truth that he sent his Son to die for our sins on the cross and raised him from death to grant us the gift of eternal life. Surely the ultimate mercy is to be given a hope in a future that goes beyond death. God's mercy is in the presence of his Holy Spirit who brings peace, love and joy to heavy hearts wearied by life's burdens and grief. God's mercies are new every morning!

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. Whenever we give back to God, whenever we offer anything to God, that's called *worship*. Paul says, this is your spiritual act of worship. When we approach God in worship all we're doing is giving back to God what he has already given us: worth and love. He gives to us; we give back to Him. God has the whole universe and lacks absolutely nothing, so what else can I offer God but myself? to offer your bodies as living sacrifices means our complete whole.

Jesus said ^{Mk 12:30}. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' God wants all of us: lock, stock and barrel; body, soul and spirit; time, treasure, talent. There is no half-heartedness with God. Jesus would not accept people who were only partially committed. ^{Mk 8:34} If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. God wants all or nothing!

3. **Affection:** Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Some of us may not have been brought up in families that were particularly expressive in their affections; you didn't say 'I love you' a lot. And even if you were blessed with a loving family, it's not easy expressing affection to God without feeling a bit weird but it's essential in worship.

We know God loves us in our hearts ^{Rom 5:5} God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. And he has proven his love for us all. ⁸ God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. So God wants us to love him as our Father. ^{Rom 8:15} ... you received the Spirit of adoption. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Abba is Aramaic for an affectionate term for Father, like *Daddy*. I love being called dad or daddy or dadda by my children, so why should I be surprised that my Heavenly Dad likes being called affectionately by his children!

As well as the intimacy of the loving parent and child, the Bible also uses the intimate terminology of lovers to express the deep affection between God and his people. Jesus is called the husband and the church his bride. As our husband, Jesus says to us, "I love you with all my heart and you know that because I've poured out my love into *your* heart through my Holy Spirit." How are we to respond to such deep affection? 'I love you with all my *theology*; with my *money*; with my *duty*?

We do have a duty to love God truthfully and in generosity and obedience, but what kind of a loving relationship can it be with our Abba Father if we can't bring our selves to feel affection & to express emotion in worship? It's not just for the Pentecostals! Anglicans too must be affectionate in our worship of our Father.

4. **Action.** The apostle said ^{Col 3:23} Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. This is a revolutionary way of looking at serving, ie worshipping God. Remember: worship is not a part of our life; it is our life! Whatever we're doing, wherever we are doing it we can worship God. Luther said that a dairymaid can milk cows to the glory of God.

Brother Lawrence, a humble cook in a French Monastery was able to turn the most commonplace and menial tasks, like preparing means and washing dishes, into acts of praise and worship. In *Practicing the Presence of God*, he said the key was not changing what you do but changing your attitude to what you're doing. It's not *what* we do that matters; it is *Who* we do it for! True Worship happens in the ordinary, routine, mundane things of real life, whatever we do as long as we say from the heart, "God, what I'm doing I'm doing for You."

To conclude I'll return to my introduction. I began by saying *you complete me* only sounds romantic but it's not real. Well, in fact it is romantic and it is real as it applies to our worship of God. As corny as it may sound, worship is romantic: it is to love the One, the only One, who makes us whole. In our attitude, approach, affection and action when we worship God with all your heart mind soul & strength we are saying to God, You complete me. Amen.