



Session II

What Is the Role of Worship?



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God asks us in our work to mirror back to him his love to us and his care for us and for the whole world. As a prelude to a reading from the Scriptures, I'd like to read from a small book in which I've written these words:

I have been in love with the Creator since my childhood and have been inspired and awed by God's creation for over 50 years. I gained an early appreciation for God's creatures from caring for and keeping the animals in the backyard zoo of my childhood and youth.

I am now a teacher. I have taught thousands of college and university students (and nearly every other person I've met), helping them to develop a profound sense of awe and wonder for God's world. Like the great Teacher—my model—I also like to teach on field trips! And, I am also a continuous student, learning from the “university of creation” and from God's holy Word.

One Sunday evening when I was in my teens, I overheard my uncle ask my Dad a question about me: “Shouldn't you help Cal do something more important than this—something that will help him get a job?” My Dad guided him down the basement stairs to see my birds and fish while my mom and aunt prepared the after-church

goodies. Then my Dad responded to my uncle's question, softly replying that he thought I was doing just fine. You see, my Dad had told me earlier to keep going in what I loved to do; that would mean that I would do it very well, and doing it very well meant that eventually someone would even pay me for it. In this—his rendition of Matthew 6:33—he was ever so right! I now get paid for what I love to do. My profession is caring for God's creation and helping others to do so, too.

Early on, some of the people I talked to about my work saw it as leading nowhere. Later, as I studied at Calvin College and the University of Michigan, many people viewed my work with curiosity. Then much later—during the early 1970s—most people saw my work as being vitally important. As my work developed, it was labeled radical (because it suggested that we might have to change the way we lived). But, as environmental fervor grew across the land, people began to see this very same work as too conservative (because I failed to take a stand, among other things, on the ecological unsoundness of pink toilet paper). In the late 1980s that same work was again seen as curious, but largely irrelevant. And today? Well, most people think it is important again. What's next? The next stage—I feel it coming—is that what I am doing and saying about the care and keeping of God's creation will again be seen as too radical (for the same reasons as before)!¹

Matthew 6:33 (NIV) is, as you know, the key passage probably for all of us, as we

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seek God's will for our lives, because it tells us what we should be seeking. It says:

But seek first his [God's] kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

We move from here to another reference to the kingdom in the very last times, Revelation 11:15–18 (NIV):

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

We should believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (as we read in John 3:16) because in believing on him, we shall have everlasting life. If we thwart his ways we deserve the judgment described in Revelation 11:18.

Who is Jesus? And why by following him can we gain everlasting life? We find this Colossians 1:15–20 (NIV):

He [Jesus Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things ("ta panta" in the Greek) were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things ("ta panta") hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things ("ta panta") ...

Whoever believes on him will have everlasting life. However, we read in Revelation



that those, who seek not the kingdom but who destroy the earth, are destroyed. Sometime you might want to reflect on not only the consequences in following Jesus, which we read in John 3:16, but also on the consequences for destroying the Lord's earth.

As scientists, I think it is important for us to realize that God loves us not only through the gift of Jesus Christ, through whom he reconciles "ta panta," but also that God shows his love to the world in providing everything that the world needs. In our studies, in our research, in our reading of God's great second book in the context of the first book, we see this love and here it begins.

In the hymn, "Oh, Worship the King," a rendition of Psalm 104, God's love is expressed in many, many ways. In the first verse, we are already reverencing the King and the kingdom we seek. The first two lines of the hymn tell us how difficult, how impossible, it is to describe this care:

*Thy bountiful care, What tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air. It shines in the light.*

It is too bad that we sing these words so fast, because we might want to ask: "How does God's love breathe in the air?" Many

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What Are the Biblical Foundations for Doing Science?

God loves the world, and we, as scientists, have the opportunity to bask not only in God's love for us, but also to bask in the love that God shows in the very things we study.

of us have studied the atmosphere. We breathe ourselves. We study respiration and photosynthesis. But what's remarkable, of course, is that God's bountiful care "breathes in the air." Carbon dioxide, which is being released from us right now, is soon going to be absorbed by plants outside and those plants in return will be using that carbon dioxide to make the substances which fuel the rest of life, using the process of photosynthesis. They will be producing oxygen, which in turn will be fueling our lives as well as the respiration processes in plants.

The atmospheric circulations, which are driven by the differential heating of the surface of our spherical planet at its 23½° angle in relation to the sun, create these differentials of pressures and temperatures. This not only reflects the movement of the sphere, but also the connections with the carbon dioxide we breathe out and the carbon dioxide which is taken in by the vegetation that covers such a large part of our earth.

In the next two lines we see:

*It [Thy bountiful care] streams from the hills. It descends to the plain,
And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.*

Every once in a while as a scientist, there are some things that just bowl me over. Stuff I know, but I really didn't know. We all learned that water is the universal solvent. This question struck me a couple years ago: "Why doesn't water taste like a big, massive pea soup, if this universal solvent has been working over all of these years to dissolve everything?" Of course, there may be many components to the answer. But one thing is that through the remarkable process of transpiration of plants, which is occurring all across the globe, water is being pumped from the soil below and into the atmosphere. It is not being pumped up with all of its dissolved materials, but is being pumped pretty much as pure water. Evaporation is taking place across all the surfaces of the earth and all the surfaces of the city and the rivers and the lakes and it, too, is coming up leaving the solutes behind.

God loves the world, and we, as scientists, have the opportunity to bask not only

in God's love for us, but also to bask in the love that God shows in the very things we study. We know from the Scriptures that we are made in the image of God. Being made in the image of God is something that brings us to reflect God's love in a dynamic way. Perhaps it is best for us to say that we are made to mirror God's love for the world. We are mirrors of God; we are images of God, dynamic reflections of God who cares for the world. In our research, the question that should always be with us is this: "Is the work I am doing in or to God's creation reflective of God's care for creation, God's care for the world, God's care for people and for all creatures?"

Perhaps if I can be so bold as to give a commission to you, I ask you to look through the hymn book, which often is the synthesis of a great deal of theology, and reflect on the hymn texts. Sometimes if the Sunday sermon is not going too well, you can pull out the hymnal and reflect. Think on this one, for example:

*Joy to the world, the Lord has come,
... Let heaven and nature sing ...
He makes His blessings flow as far as the
curse is found.*

There are hymns and carols that pull everything together. This is one of them.

Let's conclude by reviewing. God loves the world. Our failure to love the world by destroying it has consequences. But seeking the kingdom and mirroring God's love for the world also has its consequences, which are far more glorious. Our love should mirror God's love so that his bountiful care is expressed. Our principle publication in science should not be in our papers, but it should be in our lives and in the land's care.

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Reference

¹Calvin DeWitt, *Earth-Wise: A Biblical Response to Environmental Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, 1994), 7-8.