The Dangers of Casual Worship

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Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0:00] There are always glitches. But here's the thing, and I'm thankful for this. There's no glitch in God's Word.

So we'll just camp out there and see how it works out, right? Is that your worst nightmare? Just keep singing. Just keep singing.
It's Dora, you know, just keep swimming. Just keep swimming. All right, so folks, here's my plan. I think what I'm going to do, I have a conference, the ACBC conference coming up in the first week in October that will be gone just a few days.
And Greg, you'll be preaching, brother, won't you? Greg will be stepping in to preach twice. Get him twice, praise the Lord. And then I'll be back, and I think I'm going to wait until getting back at some point there, either the week I'm back or the next week, to start the new book of the Bible, preaching through that new book.
So right now I've dusted off some others and made some tweaks and all and want to bring them to you. I went back and forth thinking that I would preach some sermons I've done way back in the past.
[1:15] I think it was about five years ago that dealt with some heart issues to try and tag team on what we're doing on Wednesday night. But the Lord in His own way led me to this.

So I'm going to do a two-parter with you in Ecclesiastes this week and next week. You guys seem to really enjoy Ecclesiastes. I do. It's easy for me to preach from this, not because it's easy to understand, but because it's just so applicable in so many ways to how we live.
And today it's particularly applicable to thinking about worship. So the title of my message is The Dangers of Casual Worship. The Dangers of Casual Worship.
Now, I need to say some pointed things to you today, and I'm going to caveat them right now, and I might end up repeating them in my message. The first thing I want you to know is the same thing that is always the case when Pastor Greg and I come to preach.
We're not targeting you. We're targeting your hearts, but we're not singling out anybody. So please don't feel that way. Please don't allow yourself to go there and say, Oh, Jeff is doing this to single us out.
[2:31] No, I'm not. This is a if the shoe fits where. It's always like that. You should feel the conviction of the Word of God. At some point in the sermon, it should hit and show you something about your heart.

Every time we're in the Word, it should do that. So let it fit the way it's supposed to fit today. And take away what you can. And just know that we're bringing this to you as pastors, Pastor Greg and I, because we have the heart to make sure that you know the Word of God and that you live by the Word of God and live by the Word of God, practicing it in your life.
Now listen, far be it from me or Pastor Greg to not bring you the truth and not point out to you areas in your life where you need to bring your life more in line with the truth of God so that we would stand before the Lord as teachers and preachers one day and God deal with us.
You didn't tell Him. Why didn't you tell Him? What excuse will suffice? None. Absolutely none. Well, Lord, I didn't want to tell Him because I was afraid people might get offended and leave the church. Now that's all about me. That's not about the Lord. I didn't tell Him, Lord, because I was afraid that they might not like me anymore or somebody might write me a nasty email or whatever.
[4:05] And that's nonsense. The Word is the Word. And we all need to be grown up enough to receive the Word implanted and love the Lord in it and say, thank you, God, for not letting me live in some sense of being deceived or hard-heartedness.

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So you're probably wondering now, what in the world is this man? Well, I just... Look, as I thought about this message this week and thought about what this passage is telling, I thought a lot about, man, Lord, help them.
Now, I always pray that, but Lord, help them. Help them think carefully about this. Now, here's the reason. It's not so much that this is some kind of big, big issue for us. There are issues here that we need to address as a congregation.
But folks, I just see so much of what I'm going to talk to you about today happening in so many places and people call it worship. And it isn't worship. Not by scriptural standards, it's not.
And it breaks my heart that pastors let their people get away with this and foster it. And I'll talk about that in just a moment. So, if you're not already there, if I haven't told you, Ecclesiastes 5 is where we'll be.
[5:19] I'm not going to read the passage right this second. Let me get into this a little more. Talking to you about the dangers of casual worship. Now, I want to share this quote with you right at the outset to kind of set the tone for what I want to bring to you.

False hope is based on human ideas of what is pleasurable and desirable. Many people think that their problems will disappear if they can just get what they want.
Then, the author goes on to add this. True hope against false hope is a biblically based expectation of good.
So, we're talking about expectations here, hopes, based on what is good and what is good is defined by the Bible. And so, he goes on to say, in other words, it is biblical hope.
That is, it is an expectation based on the promises of God. Well now, can you think of anything that is better grounded in terms of hope than the Word of God?
[6:31] If you're going to put your hope in someone or something, why not put it in God and in His Word? Then, this is the encouragement that I'm offering you throughout this sermon.

That you would put your hope and your expectations in God and in His Word. Now, what I hope this sermon is going to do is help you take a hard look at what are my expectations in life and toward other people and how much of that expectation in any given moment toward any given person or situation in life is truly grounded in a biblical expectation, a biblical hope.
It's defined and dressed in the garb of the love of Jesus Christ and the priorities of heaven. Now, folks, listen. Every person on the planet has hopes and expectations about how his or her life should be.
We can't get away from them. We live that way every single day. It can be something as simple as, I have a hope and an expectation that we'll be able to go to the Outer Banks in another two weeks or we're looking forward to our trip away or we're planning on this.
And so you have a certain expectation about that. But now think about it as it's applied to something more important. Think about your expectations toward your spouse.
[7:58] What kind of expectations do you live with toward your spouse every single day? And how many of those expectations that you have toward your spouse, how many of those are grounded in biblical truth so that you are having that expectation defined and guarded and guided by a love for Jesus Christ and His truth?

And how many of those expectations toward your spouse are just you? Almost as if you're setting them up for failure so that if they don't meet that expectation, you punish them in some way.
It goes on in marriage. Don't think it doesn't. How about your expectations toward your kids? You know, kids will be kids. I was raised with a very stern father that thought at six and eight years old we were supposed to be little adults.
Now my dad repented of that much later but I'm a person who grew up with expectations on me as a child that were grounded more in my dad's desire for comfort and whatever else than in the reality of living for the Lord.
And of course, early in his life like that, my dad wasn't a Christian. And I have certainly been guilty of that with my kids too. What about your family in general?
[9:22] Do you have biblical expectations about your family? And then there's this one. We can't ignore this one. What about biblical expectations for your church? How many of your expectations and hopes about church life and what we do here and who we are here are grounded in the word of the Lord?

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Are based and defined in the word of God? So that you have a biblical view of the church and your expectations are grounded in that biblical view. What about toward your pastors?
And then finally, all of life. What about your life in general? What are your expectations grounded in as you think about why I'm here? Why I'm a Christian? What my life has to do with serving the Lord as a believer?
I'm just simply saying this, folks, and I'm belaboring it a bit, but it's very important that I couch this for you. Each of us carries expectations about how our daily lives should operate.
We have an expectation that the sun will come up tomorrow. What if it doesn't? We have an expectation that when I, you know, I'll wake up tomorrow and I'll be able to get in my car and go do what I have planned to do.
[10:37] And James tells us you need to say not no, no, no, if the Lord wills. Because you don't know. I don't know. Our expectations now, get this, are tied to our worldview.

That is, our understanding of ourselves, our understanding of others, our understanding of our world, our expectations are tied to why we think we are here.
The purpose that we think we serve as a human being. And if these expectations are not grounded in the truth of the Lord, we will experience, listen, not only disappointment, we will also miss the point of being human and following Jesus.
did you hear that? It's quite serious. And the reason it's quite serious is because what we expect we bring into our worship.
You come here every Sunday with a certain expectation. That expectation might be pretty low, but it's still there. Or it may be pretty high. Whatever it is, I'm asking you, is it biblical?
[11:50] I'm asking you, is it grounded in the word of the Lord? Is it defined by God? And I'll grant you this, if that expectation about what we do here is grounded in the Lord, it won't be like that.

It'll be like this. And that's fine because the bar ought to be up here. We ought to be constantly striving in our own heart to worship God out of the heart of joyful thanksgiving.
No matter what we're experiencing or going through in the moment, no matter how tough it is, God is still on His throne, folks. And that expectation, that hope needs to be grounded in Him, not in circumstances.
But I understand that we need to preach sermons like this because real life is hard. It's easy to say what I just said. It's a lot harder to live it, isn't it?
Yeah. But now every person in the room is in that boat together. Your pastors included. We're not exempt from the hardships of life, the temptations of life.
[13:00] We don't want to miss the point of being human, especially as it concerns following the Lord Jesus Christ as His disciple. I want to put this up on the screen for you because I want it to resonate with the theme of the message this morning.

all of life is worship. There aren't parts of it. You're going to leave here today and worship. You're going to worship until we come back to this place for your worship to be focused as a gathered people.
The difference is as you go out from here today and you worship, you're worshiping as individuals and maybe as an individual family. When we come in here together, we are gathered for worship as a corporate entity.
It's a we offering. We are offering. It's not just one person. Honoring. It's a we. We are collectively honoring the Lord.
But you're going to worship, right? All of life is a spiritual endeavor. All of it. Now you understand the world does not define the existence that they have like that.
[14:12] The world does not think in terms of spirituality, but you see them living it and expressing it every day. They are all hunting for something that expresses in some way the void that they feel in their worship.

Do you not see that? Are you with me? Tracking with me? I hope I'm making this clear. Why? Because God has made you a worshiper. Whether you're worshiping the Lord or not, He has made you a worshiper.
So you must worship. Now you've heard this from this pulpit before. All of life is spiritual. All of life is worship. Behind everything we say, think, and do, there is a spiritual element driving all that we think, say, and do.

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Because we live life under the Lord. This is His world. And we cannot escape that reality. We will give an account to God for everything that we live, everything we think, say, and do.
All of life is worship. Now, because that is true in Scripture, look at what I say next here on the screen. Worship defines and changes you depending on what and who you worship.
[15:24] Amen. Worship does define you. Period. The issue is who or what is defining you in that worship.

That's the deal. As Christians, we're taught by the Lord Jesus Himself to live our lives for Him, for Christ, while keeping our perspectives, keeping our interpretations of life, our perspectives on life, our expectations and hopes in life grounded in the truthful reality of our eternal home.
We don't want anything to cloud, redefine, muddy, distract us from our expectations and hopes being grounded in our eternal destination.
We need to think in terms of where I'm headed. My life as a Christian is on a trajectory and that trajectory is toward the Lord, heaven.
I'm sojourning in a place where I'm an alien and a stranger. And so, I should be thinking in terms of my ultimate destination. And my ultimate destination is to be with Jesus forever.
[16:41] Ever. Forever. Now, don't you think that should shape in some way and to some degree how we think about who we are and what we do here?

Here's the problem. We're not in heaven yet and there's nothing around us here that looks like heaven. We're constantly reminded that we're not there yet and it can be discouraging, it can be tough.
We have sickness, you know, I've been coming down with something now the last few days. It's going around and we feel that. One day we won't but we feel that here.
Just keep in mind that we're strangers here. It's not our home yet. We are meant to enjoy our life here as a gift of God.
So, please don't hear me putting down this life or saying that, well folks, you're just going to have to grin and bear it and tough it out. God has called us to live in the Lord Jesus and to sing joyfully.
[17:46] We just read it. To shout to the Lord. To serve the Lord. But the point is the Lord, the Lord, the Lord. And that's what we have to ask ourselves about our expectations and our hopes.

Now, here's the deal. Between this Sunday and Lord willing, next Sunday, I want to offer you five surveys, I'm going to call them.
Kind of a survey. Five elements for heavenly perspectives connecting us to companionship with God. So, these perspectives here, these heavenly perspectives are going to help nurture us in a closeness to God so that we are more and more thinking in terms of all of our life being an aspect of worship to God.
The way I do my job, the way I deal with my spouse, the way I handle my kids, the way I drive my car, the way I spend God's money, all of it. The way I talk to the cashier at the grocery store, all of that is tied to how I worship the Lord.
How I think about God and why I understand I'm here. So, these are truthful perspectives you see here on the screen. Truthful perspectives to ground us in God's view of our life.
[19:06] You guys and I do, we need to have a godly view, a God-like view of my own life. I need God to tell me what I'm about. Dave, if God doesn't tell me what I'm about, who knows where I'll spin off to?

Why? Because I'm constantly trying to make it about me, Alonzo, constantly. She didn't know that about me, I had to tell her. Everybody's that way, she says.
So, these perspectives help us nurture a biblically-based, now here, listen to how, or read how I say this, it helps us nurture a biblically-based expectation of good in our life with God.
No matter what the circumstance, this transcends circumstances and situations in life. If you're not currently in a difficult trial or a hardship or something challenging your life, just wait, it's coming.
Or maybe you're coming out of something like that. Maybe you've had them hit you, pop, pop, pop. Life can be like that, seasons. These perspectives that I'm sharing with you help us nurture a biblically-based expectation of good in our life with the Lord.
[20:14] Now, the first, very appropriately, and that's all we're going to deal with today, is the first one. We'll do some of the others next week and just see how it goes. The first one appropriately addresses your view of God that I've been talking about as you relate to Him in worship each day, making each day of your life about worship so that you get out of the bed in the morning and you're

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already praying.

As soon as you become alert enough and aware, you're getting out of the bed. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord, for Breath for Life today. Lord, as my feet hit the floor, please help me to live for you today.
Help me to be very conscious of you today. Help me to be thinking. And all the way to the bathroom, you're thinking like that, you know? You just start like that. I know we smile because we're thinking, I don't know if I do that.
We'll do it! That's a great way to start the day. Go to bed like that and it's almost certain you'll wake up like that. Go to bed, lay in there and thinking, Lord, thank you for the day and thank you and Lord, I have somebody on my heart right now.
I talked to them earlier today and this was going on and I know I've already talked to you, but I just want to lay here and that's how I want to be thinking as I drift off. Please, Lord, will you... You're going to be amazed at how you dream or read Scripture to yourself.
[21:37] Whatever. And then wake up like that. It's worship. Alright? The first thing that I want to talk to you about today that I want to elaborate on throughout the text is a truthful or heavenly perspective on God.

Again, this is where it all starts. For us to have these perspectives, these heavenly perspectives in our life so that they draw us into a deeper sense of worship and companionship with God throughout the day that we live, we want to begin with a perspective on God that is biblical.
It's true. It's based in the Word. Why wouldn't we? So now let's read the passage together. This is Ecclesiastes chapter 5 and he begins with this admonition, this warning.
Guard your steps as you go where? To the house of God. Uh-oh. And draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools for they do not know they are doing evil.
Now that's alarming. Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth, therefore let your words be few.
[22:53] For the dream comes through much effort and the voice of a fool through many words. So that's twice we've been introduced here to the concept of a fool or acting foolishly.

Now when you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it. For God takes no delight in fools. There's the third time. Pay what you vow.
It is better that you should not vow than you should vow and not pay. Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake.
Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands? For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness. And then at the end of the day, at the end of all the verses that he just gave and all the admonitions, what does he say at the end of verse 7? Rather, fear God or worship or reverence God. So see, all of this he says, the antidote to all of that that I'm warning you against that we're going to couch as casual worship, the antidote to all of that is fear the Lord or have a high and holy reverence for God.
[24:18] Worship the Lord throughout the day. In every situation, context, with every relationship, make it an issue of your worship to God. Now folks, I wouldn't say this and the Bible wouldn't tell you this if it wasn't possible.

It is. We get into trouble with it because of sin and self. And we're constantly tempted away from an attitude, a perspective on life like that because we're constantly beat down.
But the Bible calls, this is the bar. And so we're going to preach the bar and call us to it. And that's what we're doing. Alright, now, what can we say about this?
Well, right out of the gate in verse 1, we have something that is given to us as an admonishment. And admonishment in Scripture is 9 times out of 10.
It is a due warning. When you think of admonish, think of something that is given as a warning to you. Please be warned. Please be on your guard.
[25:21] Please be alert to this reality. Now, folks, sin, sin is a grotesque departure from reality.

Did you hear me? It is a grotesque departure from reality as God has defined it for us. So at its root, sin always disregards God.
So this is the element of sin that makes it sin and makes it the worst thing that it is. Sin at its heart, at its root, disregards God.
And so it is sin. It is lawlessness. Think of it this way. The worst thing about sin isn't that your sin hurts other people or hurts you. That is bad enough.

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The worst thing about sin is it is against God. It is rebellion. That is the nature of sin. It is gross and grotesque.
[26:23] So when Solomon speaks to you about, notice in verse 1, guard your steps as you come to worship God for you to draw near to listen.

He is putting your spiritual attention on high alert. He is putting your attention just where it needs to be.
He is saying there is a problem. There is a problem among God's people and that problem is they are not doing this. They are not guarding their steps.
They are not coming into God's house as it were, into the presence of God as His people for corporate worship. they are not coming into His presence to listen.
And they are not guarding themselves in that listening and that spiritual attentiveness. There are other things going on. He is going to address some of those things.
[27:28] No, guard yourself from this. He is cautioning you. This is up on the screen. He is cautioning you against casual worship as He mentions the house of God.

Now, I am going to qualify this just a second. Here, in this context, He is talking about the Jewish temple, the center of Jewish worship, the knowledge of God for religious life in Israel.
Solomon was the one that God used to end up building all of this. This place where the Jews would gather for this worship. And it was where God said, here is where I will meet you and I will dwell with you here.
And my presence will be known among you here in the Holy of Holies. And that kind of thing. Now, where does God reside today? In our hearts, she said.
That is correct. By a miracle of God's grace, the God of the universe and the power of the Spirit, comes to live in your soul. Now, do I understand that and can I explain that any further than what I just said?
[28:41] Absolutely not. I don't understand it any more than you do. It's a miracle. They call it regeneration, rebirth, being born again. But now, here's what I know.

Here's what I know, based on what I just told you from Scripture. God does not live in this building. Okay? It's not like we all fellowship after church today, and we all leave and the last person out turns all the lights on and God's over here in the corner in the dark going, they didn't even leave a light on for me.
All right? I know we understand we call this God's house. It isn't. Not really. But this is a building, a physical facility where we come to meet with the Lord.
But the Lord walked in with you, in you, if you're a believer and He's going to walk out with you as a believer. He's not going to stay here. Now, if God wanted to come down in a physical presence and abide here, He could do that.
I'm not saying He can't do that. He did that in front of people. He did it with Moses in the burning bush. You'll see in a minute. I'm just trying to tell you, I know what we mean when we say I'm going to church, but you're the church.
[29:55] You're the people of God. This is not the church. This is a building, a facility that we meet in as the church. Now, as long as we understand that, you'll hear me say it.

Hey, when you guys were meeting on Wednesday night, did you guys lock the church up? See, I'll say stuff like that. But we know what we mean, right? Look, I just want to get that out of the way right now so that we're not confused about what we're talking about.
I'm not talking about a building when I speak about the church. I'm talking about you as the people of God. Here, the house of God is the temple of God, and that's how the Jews thought about it.
We're gathering together to meet God in the place that He has ordained for us to come, where He has said, my presence will be with you in this place as a people. Okay, we understand that.
This church building is not the temple like it was for the Jews. Those are not apples to apples there.
Jews were to have, listen now, this is the point, Jews were to have a cautious care about the disposition of their hearts as they related to God in worship.
[31:10] a careful cautiousness about how they came to the Lord. Now, look, the Lord didn't want them to come in going like this, am I going to get zapped?

Have I done everything I'm supposed to do? He just wanted them to be cautiously careful that they didn't bring a flippant, paganistic, worldly attitude and demeanor into corporate worship.

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You know why? Because that's contagious. And I'm going to say something to you. Are you ready? It matters how you walk into this place.
How you walk in here says a lot about what you think about what we're doing right now. When you walk in here says a lot about what you think about what we're doing here. Folks, we need to think about it.
your pastor is offering this to you in all love. Please do not be self-deceived and take a worldly casualty. We are not here in some entertainment venue.
[32:24] This is not a concert. This is not a meeting. This is a place where we are gathering for corporate worship of Almighty God Himself. We ought to walk in like that.

We ought to be here like that. We ought to leave like that. There should be a high and holy reverence in your heart about what we do here. And you need to be prepared for what we do here. And every once in a while, pastors need to step up in front of the people and say, folks, we've kind of slipped a little bit. Let's tighten it up. And there's nothing wrong with tighten it up as long as what we're talking about isn't legalistic.
We're not being legalistic here. We're calling you to the standard of worship that God calls you to. And we're saying, worship shouldn't be casual. I remember when this first started years and years ago, there was this big debate when I was in seminary the first time in Texas.
There was this big thing going on. Seminary students like to do this kind of mess. It's just, you want to tell them, grow up. And I get it. I was one of them. But there was a church that we went to, and the big issue was, we are a church that is so welcoming of people, you can wear shorts to our service and nobody's going to be upset.
[33:42] And wearing shorts was this big debate. And here's how they couched it. Casual. Come casual. Be comfortable.

Now I'm going to tell you those are the last two things I want you to be here at Grace Church. You can wear shorts all you want, but don't be casual, and I'm not at all concerned about you being comfortable.
In fact, I want to stand up here and shake you out of your comfort zones. I saw a little mean thing, whatever that is, from John MacArthur recently, and he said, my job is basically to offend everyone. As a pastor, you preach the word long enough and true enough, you're going to offend everybody. Somebody's going to go, well, I don't think I like that. And hopefully we're saying it in a way that's gracious and kind, but we're saying it from the word.
And so you tell them, well, you got to go take that up with the Lord, because that's what God says. She's coming back. All right.
[34:43] Let me take you to Exodus and give you a little breather. Let me take you to Exodus. Now, you can see why I am saying as a pastor, I don't want to stand before the Lord and the Lord say, Jeff, why didn't you address this?

Well, Lord, I just never got to it in the word. Well, why not? You're supposed to preach the whole counsel of God. That's on you. Exodus chapter three. Now, what I want to share with you here is this.
This is something of the mindset that Jews would have brought to this attitude of worship where I'm speaking to you about them being having a cautious care in the disposition of their heart toward worship, a cautious care.
So it's healthy. It's biblical. This is Moses coming before the Lord and the Lord appearing as a burning bush. Now, Moses was pasturing Exodus 3.1.
Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.
[35:49] See? And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush. And Moses looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet, here's the miracle, the bush wasn't consumed.

And Moses said in verse 3, I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up. When the Lord saw that Moses turned aside to look, God himself called to Moses from the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses.
And he said, here I am. And he said, do not come near here, remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. He said also, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.

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Then Moses, what did he do? Did he get giddy? Did he start screaming and laughing and jumping up? Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.
That cautious care is the fear that you see here. I am in the presence of a holy God. I should bring a sense of fear and trembling before him.
[37:01] Folks, do you come like that? Do you foster that in your worship? Do you realize what we're doing here? Do you understand the gravity of what you have come to do?

See, most of us don't. And shame on pastors. Most of the pastors don't require their people to understand this and raise the bar to this level of honoring the Lord.
We have another passage. You're very familiar with it. I didn't want to get past not sharing this with you. It's in Isaiah chapter 6. So if you blow past Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon, you'll come to Isaiah right after that.
Isaiah chapter 3. And we'll start in verse 1. Or sorry, Isaiah chapter 6.
Excuse me. Isaiah 6. And we'll do verse 1 here. In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting.
[38:10] Now remember, seeing the Lord here, he is in like a dream state. With this. This is how this is coming to him. I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with a train of his robe.

Isn't it interesting to think of God having this magnificent robe on him, trailing behind him in majesty, in royal authority? Seraphim stood above him, each having six wings.
With two, the seraphim covered their faces. With two covered the feet. With two they flew. And one called out to another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.
The whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out while the temple was filling with smoke.
And then I said, woe is me for I am ruined because I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.
[39:20] How about that? Now I want your attention back here if you could. How about that? That's quite a scene, isn't it? And as Isaiah was confronted with the presence of God, it lowered him.

The man himself did not get exalted. God got exalted and it lowered him in worship. And what did he say? I am a man of unclean lips.
The holiness of God in contrast to his sin left him confessing that to the Lord. He couldn't help but be changed in the presence of God.
And this is what I pray for you every Sunday as we gather together that you will be refreshed in the presence of God and renewed in the presence of God to think of the privilege that you have to worship and honor and serve this magnificent God that has saved your soul from sin and death and hell.
It should do that to you every single Sunday. And the preparation that you make through the week should carry you into that moment. Whatever the circumstances and situations that you faced and the difficulties that you faced, that we come here to honor this great king.
[40:38] Now what I just read to you in these passages become, I'll put it up here on the screen, the symptoms of casual worship. These people then hear, but they do not spiritually perceive or understand.

Alright, I'm going to reverse that. Now look with me and say, Jeff, where is that? Look in Isaiah again with me and notice what he says to him. First of all, the seraphim flew down in verse 6 with a burning coal, that he had taken from the altar with the tongs.
Now here's the miracle. He says that he touched my mouth with it. And you would think, boy, that's going to hurt. Well now look, that's not what had happened. Behold, this has touched your lips and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.
Now, this didn't make him a Christian as we would think of it, a believer. He's talking about here making him worthy to worship the Lord. what you brought in in the way of not being cleansed from the confession of your sin and making you ready for worship, that's what I'm doing in your life.
This isn't a new salvation experience for Isaiah. He was already a believer. The point here is I'm making you ready for worship. Now look what goes on. Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send and whom will go for us?
[41:57] And I said, here I am, send me. See, having been cleansed in this way, he gets sent out. Now, I'm ready, Lord. You've made my heart ready. I'm ready to go out and witness for you now. I'm ready to go out and live a life for you now.

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See, that's how we should exit this place. I'm ready to go out of here refreshed, rejuvenated. The word has penetrated my heart, Lord. I've been reminded of why I'm here and now I'm ready. I'm ready again, Lord.
Now, and here we go. And this is where he is. Notice what he says next in verse 9. Go and tell this people. Oh, here it comes.
Keep on listening. But do not perceive. Keep on looking. But do not understand. Render the hearts of this people insensitive, dull.
Their ears dull. Their eyes dim. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed.
[42:52] Folks, I'm going to put it back up here again. Now, here it comes on the screen. These are the symptoms of casual worship. Here it is. They do. They hear, but they do not spiritually perceive or understand.

They don't take it into their hearts. They go through the motions and offer God things he despises while convinced in themselves that God is delighted with what they bring to him.
Now, isn't that tragic? Scary. That God is pleased with, they think, with what they're offering. So, you read this and you think, Jeff, what is that?
It's judgment. This passage is a passage of judgment. Isaiah is about judgment. God is using Isaiah as a prophet to bring judgment on Israel because they've turned their hearts away from worshiping.
What did Jesus say? Look, go with me. This is for free. Go to Mark 7. Go to Mark 7, please, real quickly. I've got to do this fast. Isaiah is about judgment.
[43:55] That passage is about judgment. They should, from their heart, open their heart to hear me, to see me, to follow me, to love me, to serve me, but they don't.

So, keep preaching to them and see the hardness of their heart. Manifest to them the reality of their heart toward me. In Mark 7, Jesus comes to the Pharisees and scribes in Mark 7, 5, and they ask Jesus this question that is meant to trip him up.
And here's how Jesus responded in verse 6. And he said to them, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites. This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me.
In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men, neglecting the commandment of God you hold to the tradition of men. He was also saying to them, you are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.
Moses said, honor your father and your mother and he who speaks evil of father and mother is to be put to death. But here's what you say. If a man says to his father or mother, whatever I have that you would be helped by is Corban.
[45:06] Corban means given to God, so I can't give it to you. You no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother. Thus you invalidate the word of God by your tradition which you've handed down and you do many things such as that.

Now that's a stinging indictment isn't it folks? Your heart is far from me. Oh you come and pay a lot of lip service. You show up and go through all the motions but you know what?
You leave here and basically nothing changes in your life. Folks be aware that is exactly what God is warning against right here. You cannot have it both ways.
You cannot come into the presence of God and leave unchanged. Woe is me should be our response. And then that should swell our hearts to know that God has given us Christ through the Spirit to live in our lives so that we can come into his presence and be seen by God as he sees his son.
In the perfection of his son. Spotless, blameless, cleaned. Not because I'm all that but because Jesus in me is all that. These are the ways that they have convinced themselves that God is delighted with what they bring to him but he despises it.
[46:27] Now you say how can this be and how can they be so unaware? Well here is the root problem in casual worship. You ready? Here it is. Their hearts are spiritually insensitive, dull, and dim.

That's what he said in Isaiah isn't it? Yeah. They are careless, clueless, and casual in their heart knowledge of God.
And you say to me well Pastor Jeff can a believer suffer from this problem? Hear me carefully. Yes you can. Yes you can.

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Now folks what what this is not. What I'm talking about here in casual worship this is not a lack of information problem. This is not a matter of getting the wrong information.
Either the lack of it or wrong information. Even though sometimes pastors can be guilty of this. This is an issue of your heart toward the Lord.
[47:37] Your heart toward the Lord. If you leave a church worship service more enamored with the preacher than the message we got a problem. There's a disconnect somewhere.

If you leave you should appreciate the giftedness of pastor teachers who come before you. The Lord tells you to do that. You should consider them high in honor because God gave them to you to do that.
That giftedness comes through. That's all fine and good. If you leave a worship service laughing and remembering more of the jokes and the stories than you do the message from God's word we got a problem.
There's a disconnect. If you leave saying boy tell you what I don't come here for the preaching I come here for the singing. We got a problem. It's not an either or it's a both and.
I'm just saying to you folks and I'm preaching this the way I am because I've watched for 30 years this issue climb and grow and climb and grow and spread and it's sad.
[48:39] It's sad for what passes for worship. Can you be happy in worship? Can you raise your hands in worship? Absolutely. Can you honor the Lord in joyful singing with tears in your eyes or running down?

Yes, absolutely. That can be present here. The issue is your heart toward the Lord. Is all of that based on God bringing that out of you because you are in his presence and his word is having that effect in your soul?
Because we're not up here trying to jerk your feelings around. We're up here aiming at your heart with a message of truth, wanting that truth to penetrate your soul and change you into the image of Jesus.
If feelings come along with that and this is the result of it, fine. If it doesn't and this is the result of it, fine. Fine. I draw the line at the happy laughter mess.
I don't want anybody falling out on the floor and wiggling around like a shocked worm or whatever because it's mindless. Worship is not mindless.
[49:45] It's just the opposite. Worship begins in the heart, the mind. Our hearts have to be arrested by the truth.

Where do you process truth? In the mind. In the heart. And then all of that is affected. Your mind, your will, your emotions, your desires, that is all affected by the truth of the Lord flooding into your soul.
Right? And then what does it elicit? We're not hung up on what it looks like within reason. You might say, well, if it's not a lack of information problem, it's not a wrong information problem, and it's an issue of the heart toward the Lord, what is that issue bearing on them and on us as God worshipers?
What is that issue that we need to identify? Well, Derek Kidner, a commentator, expresses well the person God has in mind in these verses. And so here it is.
I want to share his quote with you. This writer's target is the well-meaning person who likes a good sing and turns up cheerfully enough to church, but who listens with half an ear and never quite gets round to what he has volunteered to do for God.
[51:08] I'll say more about that in a few moments, but he's basically talking about somebody who comes in and gets all worked up and then wants to make what the Ecclesiastes says are these vows before the Lord or resolve things in them and then they go out and they never act on them.

See the busyness of life or the dullness of life or the routine of life, they fall right back in and they never follow through on what they say to the Lord. They feel the conviction and they walk out and immediately as soon as they can, they let the stuff of their life push that right out.
And he said, be careful. Be on your guard that that's not you. Now, we can level some responsibility for trivial and casual worship on a number of factors.
And I've only got a couple minutes to do this with you before I need to jump back in into the text. I'm going to go back to Ecclesiastes here. And so I want to share a couple of those with you.
Where can we lay some of the responsibility for this issue of casual worship in so many worship services, quote unquote, around the world, not just in America? Well, the first one I want to share

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with you is this one.
[52:23] Pastors and church leaders who foster triviality by focusing on the trivial. This is not rocket science. People will never rise beyond what you call them to and use as the measure.

And if the measure are my jokes and my ability to entertain you and clown you and make you feel clever, you'll never get beyond that. But if I call you the high and holy standard of Almighty God in His Word, now we've got a bar we can't even reach.
We're constantly reaching. And that's what Paul says, strive. Strive. And that doesn't stop as long as we're on the earth. We're always striving.
We don't arrive here. Remember what I did over here a minute ago, the destination? We're headed toward eternity, folks. So as we think about eternity as our destination, we recognize I can't get to eternity until I leave this place.
Right? So this is all temporary. That puts it in perspective, doesn't it? This is all temporary. It's going to all burn. Somebody's going to get your stuff. So don't put too much emphasis on your stuff because somebody else is going to get it.
[53:38] He deals with that later in Ecclesiastes as well. Here's the quote. By singing man centered songs, which put the focus on me by exalting my feelings and making my happy mood a critical component of gathered worship.

The only thing that I care about your mood is it surrendered to Jesus' lordship in this service. I can say that about any aspect of your personality. What I want to do is call you as a person in all of your being to surrender yourself to the lordship of Jesus Christ.
That includes your mood. And I'm not worried if it's happy. My concern is that you are holy. Holy before a holy God. So we've got pastors focusing on the trivial that contribute at casual worship. We've got man centered singers singing. You know, I had a person actually tell me, I think I've shared this with you before. I've had actually several people do this with me over the course of my ministry where they've talked about, I don't go to that church for the preaching, I go for the singing. They've got a great band. And I just think, man, wow. I had a woman tell me one time, along with her husband, in a coffee shop, they had gone to a church in my town that I was living in.
[55:01] It's a big, big church. And she said, the worship was so powerful and so good this Sunday. It just happened a few hours before.

We're still feeling it. We never even got to the sermon. It was wonderful. It was wonderful, she said. And she was glowing. And I remember sitting there looking at her and thinking, now this was, I'm still in a place where I'm not sure how all this works, right?
I'm still trying to figure out all this. And I looked at her and I thought, boy, that doesn't sound right, but I don't know why that's wrong. I didn't know why it was wrong. You do because you're taught. And you're counseled. See, so many people measure churches by whether or not they can go and feel good about the worship. worship. And so we can have this dichotomy that's raised up between the singing is known as worship.
We're worshiping when we're standing up and we're singing and the band's playing and we're all doing this. We're worshiping now. Then the pastor comes up and preaches. You know, we kind of endure that.
[56:11] We can't wait to get to the other songs. And so we put up this false dichotomy between worship, which is singing and something else, and preaching, which isn't worship anymore.

That is wrong. You can't worship apart from the word. You cannot do it. It's impossible. God, I mean. Worship God. You can't worship him. He said, worship me in spirit and truth.
Where's the truth come from? The word. You cannot do it. If you want to worship God as a God worshiper, you need his word to do it. I want you to worship God when you sing.
That's why we sing songs that exalt sound doctrine. I want you singing the truth back to God or he won't receive it. If all of our songs are me, me, me times seven, that's no good.
That's no good. We call them the seven elevens. The same seven verses sung eleven times or whatever. And we don't do that.
[57:13] And it's not because we're better than other churches and all that. Please don't hear pride oozing out of me. This is the carefulness of guarding worship for what it is. So that we worship according to the Lord.

I wish more pastors would get on their knees before the word of God and ask themselves, are we worshiping according to what God's word tells us to do? How God defines it.

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Singing is worship and it's necessary. So is the sermon. It's both and. Casual. Listen, look, I put this one up here because it's a little harder to understand.
Casual worship is fostered and encouraged when the visual and the visceral are more important and more dominant over biblical content and over the character and knowledge of God.
So what does that mean? All right. Let me get this next one up here and you'll see what I'm talking about if you can read it. A visceral emphasis in worship is characterized by or proceeds from instinct rather than intellect.
[58:18] See? So it's almost like I'm telling you in some cases disengage your mind and go by feeling. And that is not right. I'm not at all interested in your feelings.

I'm interested in how it's affecting the rational aspects of your mind. How are you reasoning about what you're hearing in the way of the truth? What you're singing in the way of the truth?
What are you doing with it in your heart? If it leads you to warm fuzzies, that's great. If it doesn't, that's okay too. See?
But so many churches seem to, they'll keep playing. I was in a church like this. I was on staff. They'll keep playing and keep playing. I remember the senior pastor telling us, just keep doing it until somebody reacts.
And so we got to the point at the end of the service, we'd already been there two hours, where we all knew, if somebody doesn't get up and come up front, we're going to do this for the next hour. And I wondered sometimes, does somebody just get up and go, this has got to end.
[59:17] Here, I'll go up. You know? Pastors fostering this kind of thing in people and training people to think this way in church services.

And I don't want that, folks. I go on to say there in this, it is biblically, this is just me explaining this, it is biblically uninformed, it is feelings-driven, man-centered, misdirected activity taking the place of word-enriched, heart-humbling, Jesus-exalting, spiritual song- singing praise from thankful hearts submitted and committed fullity to God's greater glory.
I don't judge these people, folks. I'm not naming names yet. I'm just saying this goes on. Listen, here's another way to think about it.
When the show trumps the Savior, instead of stooping to the Savior, the church sacrifices true biblical worship for what God abhors.
No matter how ardent and seemingly sincere the individual participants are, and in spite of how slick and seamless and stellar and scintillating the show appears to be, it's still a show.
[60:33] And we need to be careful that the show doesn't eclipse the Savior, but serves the Savior. You say, Jeff, can churches have a band and a choir and excellent music and not overshadow the Savior?

Yes! Have you been to them? Linda, you guys are in a big church. Chandler grew into a big church. Linda goes to the church that Suzanne grew up in, the church I was saved in, the pastors that led me to Christ.
She's in that church right now. Yes, you can have all of that and still honor the Lord, but you understand that you need people who lead that, that help everybody involved realize all of this is to serve the worship of Almighty God.
We are simply instruments, literally, serving the greater glory of the Lord as we bring this 70-something person choir to bear on honoring Him.
We just, we keep them on the same page. We're not up here to entertain them, we're up here to keep them on the same page and help them worship together in symphony, as it were. You with me on that? I think one of the reasons that some of you guys come to this church is because you know we're endeavoring toward that, we're laboring toward that.
[61:52] We want that to be the point of what we do. And it's important to you, just like it is to your pastors. When we make worship about us, we start wrong-footed.

We flounder in between, we deceive ourselves in the end. Now, all of that can be us. All of that can apply in some measure to much of what passes for Christian worship today.
And I'm just, I'm a pastor who is calling my own congregation. I am not responsible for all the others. I see it out there. But I'm calling my congregation to say, folks, let's do what verse 1 says. Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen. To have the Word of God slam right into your rational faculties rather than make an offering that would be considered by God a sacrifice of fools.

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Lord, help us. For they don't even know they're doing evil. Oh, the tragedy of that. That what they're thinking and offering is worship, God considers the sacrifice of a fool and they don't even know that they're doing it.
[63:08] Don't be hasty in word or impulsive in your thoughts to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you're on the earth. Therefore, let your words be few. He's just trying to sober you.

He's saying you need to be careful what you say in this gathered community when everything is supposed to be aimed at worshiping the Lord. You need to be careful about that. Be guarded in your heart and realize who you're before and what we're doing here.
It's just it's more exhortation to be sober minded. Now, in these verses that we're dealing with in Ecclesiastes, I'll put it up here on the on the screen.
The target of responsibility for countering casual worship is this. The subject here is you. You guard your steps as you go to the house of God and as you draw near to listen.
So the onus, the responsibility rests with you. Yes, Pastor Greg and I have a responsibility as worship leaders. You say, Jeff, who's the worship leader in our church services?
[64:11] Your pastors are worship leaders. We're the worship leaders. We have a responsibility not to focus on the trivial or on ourselves.

You have a responsibility as well. And it's being given to you here. You are responsible for the worship you offer to God, even in a corporate gathered setting. Now, let me put this up.
How worship is done matters to God. How you are prompted to worship God matters to God. How are we prompting you? What are we prompting you with?
What are we prompting you to? That all matters. What is used to prompt you to worship to God? Worship of God matters to the Lord.
That all matters to God in his word. But now there's this. The bottom of the screen. But what is most important to God in your worship is your heart.
[65:11] And what most impacts and influences your heart in gathered worship is what you know of God from your week of worship prior to Sunday morning. What is your worship of God been like all week, folks?

If your worship of God all week has been slender and you walk in here, what do you think your expectations are grounded in?
What's going on? This is why Pastor Greg and I remind you as your pastors and worship leaders, we cannot work up worship in you for you.
And we're not going to. We're going to preach the word. We're going to sing the word. We're going to pray the word. But I can't create that in you. That's the spirit. And a lot of that is on you.
Worship springs up here. Worship springs from what? From what we know of the character of God filling our hearts.
[66:16] And then it works out from us through thankful hearts as we convey worth to God in spirit and truth. To convey worth to God is worth ship. Old English worth ship.

That's what it is. We are conveying worth to God through prayer and singing, through our praises, through the preaching, the teaching. That can only come through God's word.
It can only be based in the truth of his word. We don't have to make it up. We just have to be faithful. And I think you guys understand this and appreciate it. Now what follows, and I'll do this real quickly, what follows are cautions against you falling into a hard attitude of casual worship evidenced by the behaviors that you're to be on guard against in these verses.
There's a particular verse I want to show you as I do this. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. Now you see, the wicked can make sacrifices to God. people who fall into this casualness, particularly unbelievers, that's an abomination to the Lord.
Anything that is offered to God in worship that isn't worthy of the Lord based on the truth of the Lord is an abomination in the Lord. It's a travesty. But the power of the upright is his, the prayer of the upright is his delight.
[67:41] The prayer of an upright person is based in who God is. That's how our prayers are heard. We're praying according to his will, who he is, his character, what he wants, his ways.

Prayer is aligning yourself with the will of God. That's what prayer is ultimately. I don't want to pray anything, God, beyond what you want for me. So I always say in my prayers, may your will be done, Lord.

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And then I mean it. I submit. If what I'm asking for isn't in your will, let me receive the answer that I didn't pray for. Because ultimately the answer I want is the answer you want for me.
I hope you follow that. We don't want to offer a sacrifice of fools as the text says. So look again with me at verse 2. Don't be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God because you have this feeling or this sense.
Do deal with God. Do business with God in these services, folks. But just be careful about what you're saying to God because He's going to hold you to it. God is in heaven.
[68:49] That's just a way of saying God is God. You're on the earth. You're not God. Therefore, you need to recognize that relationship and let your words be few. For the dream comes through much effort and the voice of a fool through many words.

We're going to deal with that real quickly. Look, a high and holy reverence for God and His Word makes us eager to listen. If you come in here with a high and holy regard for the Lord, you are eager to listen.
You want to hear. A Holy Spirit-guarded heart helps keep ourselves in heavenly-minded perspective before the Lord. So he says in verse 7, I'll just jump right down to that, rather fear God. That gives us our focus for actively guarding our hearts against becoming casual or flippant or superficial with the Lord.
And I'm not saying anybody in here would do that on purpose. Here's the insidious reality of it. You could be doing it and not even realize it. And I don't want that for you, folks. Because going before the Lord for Him to deal with you and you say, well, I didn't realize that, God's not going to say, oh, okay, well, you get a pass then.
[69:58] It's not going to happen that way. So here are your priorities as you express this reverent trust in the Lord in your worship.

The first one, guard your heart against spiritual pride. That'll lead you to spiritual flippancy and superficiality. It's pride-based. Number two, draw near to God to listen.
That is to hear and then heed. I'm listening to take it in so that it changes me. I don't want to walk out of here the same person I was when I came in. I want some aspect of the message to have changed me.
Maybe it taught me something I need to repent of. Maybe it taught me something that I need to start taking into my life. Maybe it challenged me in an attitude that I'm having that needs to change.
So maybe I need to stop something. Maybe I need to start something. And then, be humbly self-aware. Alright? Now look. Humbly self-aware.
[71:04] Not self-focused. Humbly self-aware. Know that you are God's child by God's grace and goodness. Don't think more highly of yourself than you should while at the same time thinking, I'm here because I'm God's child.

What a privilege that I can join with other of God's children and worship the Lord. Isn't that good? What a privilege. Now folks, here's what I say about this.
At the bottom of the screen, these spiritual safeguards can guide you when you pray so that you don't pray in haste or impatiently. They will help you in the content and character of you speaking to God in prayer and they will guide you in a humble approach to the Lord when you consider your own walk with Him.
When you come to personally offer your worship. And here's the danger. Here's the danger inherent in the text if you don't take this wisdom seriously and practice these spiritual measures in your worship.
You ready? Right out of the text. For they do not know they are doing evil. You could be coming in here and offering a casual worship from your heart to God and you don't even realize you're doing it.
[72:13] Hence this sermon. Because that's a terrible place to be. You don't want to be that person. You can become so casual with it you don't even know you're doing it.

Now let me set you an example before I move toward a close here. Listen to this. Don't be too hasty to leave. Let me get this out. If I don't get this out I'm going to blow up. Alright listen. I got to finish it right.
Please listen now. I'll set you an example. If you knew. Now look. Another caveat. This is silly. But I'm going to ask you to use your imagination and join with me in your imagination in this just for a moment and just grab the point.

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Okay? If you knew for certain that the Lord Jesus Christ in all of His glory was going to be physically present in this worship service next Sunday so that I would come up and do the call to worship and we would sing and then I would come up and say and now I want to introduce to you the Lord and Savior whom we love Jesus Christ Himself is going to bring the message.
And He was going to be physically present in this service next Sunday and I told you that was the case and you knew ahead of time that was the case. Would it change anything about the way that you come into this place and when you come?
[73:44] And if the answer is yes you need to think very, very prayerfully and carefully. You with me? Would it change anything about how you would approach being here?

Quoting Dr. Barak another commentator from Ecclesiastes he says they are so dull of spiritual understanding that they actually think they are doing something good and acceptable.
Folks, I don't want that to be you. I love you. I don't want you to be fooled or deceived. I don't want you to be casual. In verses 4-6 you make a vow don't be late in paying it.
Again, all of it you see here 4-5 you see people who are coming into these moments and their feelings are getting moved all over the place and so they are saying rash things to God out of these feelings and they never follow through.
They don't make the commitment. They are not disciplined. They are not changed in their heart. They are just moved in their feelings. It is very surface. And so in verse 6 don't let your speech cause you to sin.
[75:03] Don't say things you are not going to do. Do not say those things in the presence of the messenger of God the Holy Spirit and then later on say oh well that was a mistake.

He is saying God doesn't play those games. Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands? You see that? I didn't really mean it.
Don't put off being faithful to the Lord. Keep your promises. Make them. It is okay to make them. Just keep them. Act on the conviction God gives you. In verse 7 it is the second time he mentions dreams and the vanity of many words.
Those are themes from verse 3 as well you might have noticed. Now the point is summarized by Derek Kidner's understanding of how dreaming and empty words combine to affect your worship. Alright? Here I am going to put it up on the screen here for you.
Daydreaming reduces worship to verbal doodling. What he is saying here is if you left your mind drift off I know I preach for a while it is okay. Don't let your mind drift off.
[76:11] He said that is something that people do just to mark time. Why do you doodle? Because you are distracted. You are mentally not involved. So you doodle.

You do something to refocus yourself. You know on see? He said don't daydream in the service like that. Don't daydream before the Lord like that. That is like doodling in your head.
Folks do you see how practical this is? God right down to the nth degree is dialed in to you with worship. He knows exactly what is in your mind and heart.
He knows exactly what you are thinking. How you walked in here. Look. True biblical God exalting Christ honoring spirit empowered worship engages and guides the mind in truth.
The mind isn't carried off in some fitful loss of control or some attention grabbing display of words or actions. I don't have time to build on that. At the same time true biblical worship it isn't stuffy, stagnant, selfish, stained by pride.
[77:14] No. True biblical worship, worship in spirit and truth is all about knowing God and expressing the love that we have for the Lord. And we're just simply prompting you to express your love to the Lord.

But we want to do that corporately. Not just individually, we want to do it as a group. We are offering group worship to the Lord. Sinclair Ferguson said this, Knowing God is your single greatest privilege as a Christian.
It's the one that sensitizes you to every other issue of importance. But, he asks, is this the issue that lies at the center of your thinking? Doesn't it come down to that?
Yeah. Now I'm going to offer you one final exhortation from a pastor's heart who is deeply concerned for you and wants to make sure that Pastor Greg and I are doing our spiritual diligence before you to tell you the truth and call you to that truth as a corporate body.
Because I know that as we do that, God will bless us. God will bless us and grow us. He'll grow us spiritually. He'll grow us physically in numbers. But he's not going to do that if we don't pay attention

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to these things.
[78:28] And stay trivial. We don't want to be like that. So we're fighting that. So here's the last thing I'm going to say to you about this. Come early. Come eager.

And come to edify. Edify. Will you pray with me?
Father, these words are deeply convicting.
I know they were to me. And I'm the teaching pastor here at this church. And so I ask you to help me and Pastor Greg to model this and to lead out in this so that our own hearts are ready and steady because we have worshipped you through the week and we're ready to come and worship you among your people to lead them in worship.
I pray for my brothers and sisters to be sobered in this message. church. This was just part one. We got four more to deal with. So I pray that you'll help us to come and consider to be cautiously careful to take your word for what it is, your word, and guard our steps to consider carefully the heart that we bring into this place and why we come.
[79:59] And as we were challenged with the question, if Jesus himself were to show up next Sunday and we knew he would be here, if it would change anything about when we come and how we come, then help us to consider why that would be.

Help us to be sobered by your word, informed by your word, and most of all, God, help us to be a congregation of brothers and sisters who love each other and love you in a way that says we want God to be glorified.
The most important thing about us as a church family is glorifying Jesus Christ as his character is seen in our lives throughout the week and most especially as we gather together as his people to sing and honor and praise him.
And so may you be honored in all that we offer you now and we praise you for your goodness to us and your grace at work in our lives by your mercies, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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