

The background of the entire cover is a blurred, vertical photograph of green grass blades. The blades are out of focus, creating a soft, bokeh-like effect with varying shades of green and yellow. The text is overlaid on this background.

# Experiencing Christ's Love

**Establishing a life of worship, prayer,  
study, service and reflection**

**John Twisleton**

**Foreword by Father Colin, CSWG**

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## Foreword

‘Community life would be all right,’ I said once to a guest staying at the Monastery, ‘if you didn’t have to live with all these other people.’ She smiled, then looked puzzled and then realised it was a little joke, which, of course, it was—in a way.

Jesus commands us to love one another, which sounds odd, but those of us who live in a religious community understand it. We wouldn’t survive unless love had an element of obedience in it. Jesus tells us to ‘love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for ones friends’ (John 15:12–13). This love for one another isn’t an option that depends on how we feel or on natural affection. It is the fulfillment of a commandment of the Lord and, done willingly, extends the love that the Father and the Son share with one another into human life and thus into the life of the world.

In order to be obedient, we must listen. We must listen to God in prayer, in silence and in reading Scripture. We must listen as we broaden our understanding of our faith. We must listen as God speaks to us through the words of others, as we strive to love and serve them. When we live like this, the heart is purified and we see more clearly. We learn, not only about God, but also about ourselves and how we can become more effective servants of his will.

If we are to co-operate with God, we need some structure and discipline. In this book John Twisleton encourages us to shape our lives so that we become attentive to God’s grace and ready to respond, not motivated by our own desires but motivated by faith, hope and love.

Father Colin, CSWG (Community of the Servants of the Will of God)

# Introduction

The clue to effective living is to find the main things and keep the main things as the main things. For over 60 years I've been working at both finding and holding myself to those things. I still have work to do here, so accepting an invitation from The Bible Reading Fellowship to write a short book on Christian priorities seemed a task both fit for the times and suited to the renewal of my own spiritual discipline.

You'd have thought that, as a priest for most of my life, I'd have this sorted by now, but although theological expertise helps me speak and write about experiencing Christ's love, its outworking in real life is all the more challenging. I don't just mean the obvious challenge of watchfulness, so as to practise what I preach, but the danger of overfamiliarity with holy things. There are, in fact, no professional Christians, though some get paid for their work. We are all amateurs, hopefully in the sense of devotees rather than incompetents—'not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God' (2 Corinthians 3:5). This God-given competence is at the heart of prioritising the main things in life, so that our application to our work keeps getting pushed downwards in a list of attention descending from God, marriage, family and friends, church, study and exercise, right down to recreation.

As I prayed for God-given competence to frame this book, the Lord drew me to an image of his hand reaching down to me, and my own hand grasping his, with its five digits expressing five loves commended in his own summary of the law in Matthew 22:37–39: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Worship and prayer are

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to be seen as the heart and soul of our love for God, Jesus implies; but without study, engaging the mind with divine teaching, that love will be ill formed; and without service, love of neighbour, reflection and loving care of self, our loving God is a delusion.

Those five commitments—worship, prayer, study, service, reflection—make for me a hand that can grasp the hand of God reaching down to us in Jesus Christ, raising us into his praise and service with all the saints, an image of the grace (or favour) of God towards us. They provide the chapter headings of this short book, written during my time as Rector of St Giles, Horsted Keynes in West Sussex. I served eight years in this beautiful country village, helping people experience Christ's love and seeing my own devotion rekindled through engagement with the villagers. In his classic novel *Diary of a Country Priest*, almost a century ago, Georges Bernanos wrote of a French curé's struggles to be faithful—a work made into a powerful film of the same name. The priest is short-lived and the film ends on his deathbed as he famously utters, 'All is grace.'

'All is grace', since God's love is overall and in all. This is the 'main thing'—though we need to grasp it, and need reminders like this book of how Christians through the ages have best done so. May God bless you in reading what's ahead and, through it, may he give you a hand up into more of his possibilities for yourself, those in your circle and a world that sorely needs awakening to his love.

# 1

## First love: worship

**‘You shall love the Lord your God  
with all your heart.’**

MATTHEW 22:37

I am intrigued by worship. It’s been around since before the world was made and will continue after its predicted meltdown. There’s something awesome about connecting the heart of the universe with the human heart and lifting hearts together towards what is ultimate. Worship is extravagant, lacks restraint and goes beyond reason, in the way that love is bound to do. As a boy I dreamed of myself as a conductor of worship, raising my hands to invite folk into singing the praises of God. I see my ordination as a priest as fulfilling that dream. If worship is priestly, bringing people to God and God to people, it’s priestly for all participants, not just the conductor, like music sounding upwards and outwards from an orchestra.

I am intrigued by worship because in it we touch the face of God, and something of him rubs off on us. ‘Look to him, and be radiant,’ says Psalm 34:5. When I was a teenager I found a remarkable place where Sunday services were like heaven to me. It was something totally different. The priest seemed like a saint, and the unselfconscious ceremonial, music and preaching made heaven above real and brought radiance to faces around me. I sought and found a word in the dictionary that summed it up—‘numinous’, filled with a sense of the supernatural, something that, up to then, I had not seen exercised.<sup>1</sup>



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Being so intrigued by worship, I'm writing this book partly as a call to recapture the sense of the supernatural that worship in the Western church seems to have lost. As someone drawn to God by the supernatural in worship, I can understand why church attendance is in decline when so much of what we call 'celebration' feels so earthbound. To me, God has a sameness to us, yes, but is also utterly different in his holiness. When I worship on Sunday, I say, 'Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might' and expect to leave church different, because of the expectations of God, worship and the church that were raised in me all those years ago.

Suspicion of otherworldliness has grown on account of religious fanatics, unhinged through excessive irrationality, who see God as terrifyingly different, with the sameness to us, who bear his image, lost. Religion, like money, power or sex, is God-given but gets man-handled! The etymology of the word 'religion' is linked to the Latin *ligare*, meaning 'to bind'. I am unapologetically religious—regularly attending Sunday worship—because I want to keep rebinding myself to God and his people. So much of my life loosens me from what's ultimate, from the love of God. I need to continually bind myself back to God through the five loves that Jesus describes in his summary of religion: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your *heart*, and with all your *soul*, and with all your *mind*." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your *neighbour as yourself*" (Matthew 22:37–39, emphasis mine).

Worship and prayer are the heart and soul of my love for God. However, Jesus implies that unless I engage my mind with his teaching, in study, that love will be ill-formed; and without service (love of neighbour) and reflection (loving care of self) my love for God is a delusion.

Those five commitments—worship, prayer, study, service, reflection—make for me a hand that can grasp the hand of God, which reaches down to me in Jesus Christ to raise me into his praise and service with all the saints.

## Experiencing Christ's love

How do you see God? Maybe he's close to you as a new Christian, but the warmth of the first encounter is cooling. Or perhaps, like the mature Christians of Laodicea mentioned in Revelation 3:16, 'you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot'. Either way, you are seeking to find strategies to know the love of God for real, inasmuch as it depends on you. The good news that we will return to, again and again, is rooted in a vision of God who is 'always more ready to hear than we to pray and to give more than either we desire or deserve'.<sup>2</sup> That lovely phrase from the Collect is read as part of worship day by day for a week every summer. Like so many worship texts, it serves to remind us of truth.

Like the Collect, this book is a reminder of love, of being loved and loving, for which words matter less than attitudes and deeds. It is, at heart, a reminder to stick at loving God in the five aspects that Jesus Christ invites us to, knowing that 'we love because he first loved us' (1 John 4:19).

No one writes more eloquently about the love of God in Jesus Christ than the apostle Paul, whose writings are a substantial part of the New Testament. Even his words, with all their force, crack as they address the love of God shown to us in Jesus Christ. When, for example, Paul speaks to the Ephesians of 'knowing the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge' (3:19), what does he mean? There's real ambiguity about the phrase 'to know the love of Christ' and it's helpful for us to examine it.

Does Paul mean Christ's love for us, or the blessings that come to us when we love God in Christ? Or is he talking about the love that God has, in Christ, for all that is—the love that he draws us into?

These are three ways of interpreting the phrase 'to know the love of Christ' and they are all precious insights. To know that the Son of God loved us and gave himself for us is, as Paul suggests in Galatians 2:20, our greatest motivator. To love God in the face of Jesus Christ is

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a blessing, since our devotion to him is God's gift, surpassing earthly knowledge; and, as Jesus himself says in Matthew 5:6, we will be fully satisfied if we want most of all what God wants. To know the love of Christ, thirdly, is to sympathise with and enter into God's compassion towards all people and all things, shown in the perpetual gift of his Son Jesus Christ.

I don't know which of the three interpretations of 'knowing the love of Christ' is right—it's probably all three! We'll follow them chapter by chapter as variations on a theme: downward love for us from God, upward love from us to him, and outward love from God and believers to the world. Whatever Paul meant by 'knowing the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge', I want that love, from him, for him and with him; and I wish that were so for all of us and for the whole of creation.

Christianity starts with God's love for us in Christ, and our response follows—a disciplined response which bears fruit in bringing others to experience Christ's love. That response is corporate, a receiving and giving out, with all followers of Jesus in this world and the next. It is corporate because the many-sided love of God can only be grasped 'with all the saints' (Ephesians 3:18). This truth is captured eloquently by Baron Friedrich von Hügel when he writes of the Christian calling to become 'a great living cloth of gold with not only the woof going from God to man [sic] and from man to God, but also the warp going from man to man... and thus the primary and full Bride of Christ never is, nor can be, the individual man at prayer, but only this complete organism of all the faithful people throughout time and space'.<sup>3</sup>

Experiencing Christ's love is nothing that we can do alone, which is why Jesus Christ left us both a plural form of prayer ('Our Father') and a festive meal (the Eucharist) by which to recall him. 'The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread' (1 Corinthians 10:16–17). Some movements within Christianity narrow membership down to those with an individual experience of

Christ, who sense that they ‘know the Lord’, are ‘born again’ or ‘manifest the gifts of the Spirit’, but again and again these movements get drawn back to a mainstream understanding of full membership defined as being a baptised partaker of Holy Communion. This definition doesn’t contradict any such experience or understanding, laudable as it may be, but rests on Paul’s inspired insight that ‘because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread’ (v. 17). In a profound sense it is the Eucharist that makes the church, as much as it is the church that makes the Eucharist. ‘Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them’ (John 6:53–56).

When I go to church, I go to worship and engage with God in Christ, present in bread and wine, in preaching, prayer and fellowship. Sometimes the sermon’s dull, the sacrament feels empty or the prayers sound flat. One way or another—and it’s good that there are a number of ways—Christ makes his presence real to me. Sometimes it’s in a conversation or kind action that I experience afterwards, involving a fellow Christian. This reminds me that my commitment to worship isn’t just as an individual but as part of something much bigger, that ‘great living cloth of gold’ which is the church, the ‘complete organism of all the faithful people throughout space and time’.

## Self-deception

I like writing. It’s part of my calling and keeps me at the computer. There’s where deception begins, and it may be true for you. I mean that you deceive yourself into thinking that your life progresses best when you’re working on your own. Of course, when I am writing on a computer I can be writing or responding to friends—as I hope I am beginning to do right now as I engage you with the experience of Christ’s love. That love is something shared, as we have already heard,

and so is life itself. There are times, though, when I begrudge being taken away from writing to respond to other demands upon me. I can't live fully without balancing my own passions with those of others, those who share their lives with me, and that includes my fellowship within the body of Christ.

One of the tasks I have in winter is preparing the fire. It's great that Anne and I can sit, on occasion, by a coal fire which has something of its own life to share with us. I remember my father, Greg, taking a shovel of burning coals from the living-room fire to light the lounge fire when visitors came. We saw the red burning coals spreading their flame into a small heap of new coals placed on top of them. Sometimes there weren't enough coals brought to achieve this transfer, or too many damp coals were placed on the living coals, so as to quench them.

I think that the way fires burn challenges a major spiritual deception, which is that we can live a healthy Christian life as long as we go to church on occasion. Just as burning coals cool when separated from one another, so Christians need one another, especially in communal worship, to keep being fired by the Holy Spirit.

We deceive ourselves into thinking that we can experience Christ's love anywhere, so we don't need to worry about gathering with others to celebrate it. When I meet believers who've not been to church for a long time, I find that their love for God has cooled: he has become at best desirable, but in practice inessential to their day-by-day living. They have become practical atheists. In this falling away, a part is played by their sharing of their lives with those who implicitly reject God in Christ. Inasmuch as we have choice about who we spend time with, unless we choose to spend some time at least in worship, prayer, study, service and reflection, fervour for God will burn down, like coals isolated from a fire.

In his blog, Canadian pastor Carey Nieuwhof lists ten reasons why people are attending church less regularly:

- Greater affluence. (This brings opportunities to follow many more weekend options.)
- A higher focus on children's activities. (A growing number of children play sports and a growing number of parents choose sports over church.)
- More travel. (When people are out of town, they tend not to be in church.)
- Blended and single-parent families. (In a shared custody family, perfect attendance for a child or teenager might be 26 Sundays a year.)
- Online options. (Online church is here to stay, so anyone who attends your church has free access to any online ministry of any church.)
- The cultural disappearance of guilt. (If you're relying on guilt as a motivator to get people to church, you need a new strategy.)
- Self-directed spirituality. (In an age when we have access to everything, more and more people are self-directing their spirituality, for better or for worse. This is a characteristic of the postmodern mind, with its declining trust of and reliance on institutions.)
- Failure to see a direct benefit. (People don't see the value in being at church week after week. That could be because there isn't much value in it or because there is value that they simply don't see.)
- Valuing attendance over engagement. (When someone merely *attends* church, the likelihood that they will attend regularly or engage with their faith decreases over time.)
- A massive culture shift. (Church leaders who fail to recognise this will not be able to change rapidly enough to respond to the shifts that are happening. Change is unkind to the unprepared, so prepare.)

This list is a challenge to everyone who wants to experience Christ's love—a challenge to search their souls and see beyond the cultural shifts we're all part of, to those shifts in allegiance that have an impact on our love for God. As Carey Nieuwhof notes in his blog post, 'At our church, I find our most engaged people—people who serve, give, invite and who are in a community group—are our most frequent attenders. More and more as a leader, I value engagement over attendance. Ironically, if you value attendance over engagement, you will see declining attendance.'<sup>4</sup>

We deceive ourselves if we think we can come close to God without an engagement with the institutional church founded by Jesus. It's hard to imagine that we can come close to God in Christ without engaging with the meaning and power of scripture and sacrament. We can't receive Communion away from his church. Although we can pray and read the Bible on our own, for that prayer to be fuelled and his word to come alive, we need the school of worship and preaching that his church provides, even if that provision needs developing to enable us to engage with it fully in this generation.

I agree with most of Nieuwhof's points, but I have reservations on the last one, which speaks of 'a massive culture shift'. People aren't shifting from the spiritual (more on that later) but many are finding solace in less self-critical religions than Christianity. The loss of Sunday as a special day in so many countries has been a great shift, often allied to work demands that invade the family weekend. I know couples who have so little time with their children that taking them to church (unless the whole family is very keen to go) is a major achievement, to be attained once or twice a year.

People, by default, are having to find a spiritual path away from corporate worship. In 'self-directed spirituality', returning to Nieuwhof, there's a danger of being deceived into a vision of God that's so similar to ourselves that our own faces look back from it more than 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Corinthians 4:6). God becomes the genie in our lamp, though

scripture describes him as ‘a consuming fire’ (Hebrews 12:29). That fire energises the church, melting and moulding its members into an effective agency working for the salvation of the world, which entails the loss of selfish agendas in the service of the whole counsel of God. To use another image of heat, we could see the Holy Spirit received through God’s church as a heavenly microwave that reaches inside its members, so as to defrost our cold-heartedness and our associated failure to love God. ‘A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh’ (Ezekiel 36:26).

Another deception derives from the consumerism behind Nieuwhof’s listing of ‘Failure to see a direct benefit’. The plain sense of worship is ‘acknowledgement of worth’, so failing to find benefit in worship is, in a plain sense, contradictory, since we attend worship to honour God. The congregation that fuelled worship in me seemed caught up in something above and beyond them, in unselfconscious fashion. Although the service was an elaborate High Mass sung from the English (Anglican) Missal, there was, through preaching and pastoral care, a drawing out of the self towards sacrificial service of God. This made liturgical sentences like ‘Here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice unto thee’ ring true.<sup>5</sup>

## Rule of worship

Ever since that awakening to the Godward movement of the heart in worship, I have taken myself to church with an intention of self-offering, even if the service has at times been something that apologises for, rather than asserts, the upward call of God. If I hadn’t made a rule to keep Sunday special over the years by worshipping with fellow believers wherever I was, I would not have chosen some of the gatherings where I’ve ended up! Especially as a priest, it’s hard not to be ‘consumerist’ about our choice of church. I admit this, despite the reminder I’m giving here of worship being counter to any selfish attitude as an offering of



'ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice', refreshing our service of God's kingdom as citizens not consumers.

No rule of Christian worship can exclude either Sunday or the Eucharist, even if achieving both every week defies the pattern of life and work today and can be prevented by the unavailability of priests. If worship is a response to what God has done for us, on the first day of the week it recalls creation, resurrection and the coming of the Spirit.

*This day, at thy creating Word  
first o'er the earth the light was poured;  
O Lord, this day upon us shine,  
and fill our souls with light divine.*

*This day the Lord, for sinners slain,  
in might victorious rose again;  
O Jesu, may we raised be  
from death of sin to life in thee.*

*This day the Holy Spirit came  
with fiery tongues of cloven flame;  
O Spirit, fill our hearts this day  
with grace to hear and grace to pray.*

*O Day of light, and life, and grace,  
from earthly toil a resting place!  
The hallowed hours, best gift of love,  
give we again to God above!*

**'This day at thy creating Word', William Walsham How**

Bishop Walsham How's hymn captures the trinitarian motivation of Sunday worship. The 'hallowed hours' given back to God at the start of the week call into our souls the light that shone in creation (Genesis 1:1-5). On the anniversary day of Easter, we pray, 'O Jesu, may we raised be from death of sin to life in thee' (see Romans 6:11) and, on

the memorial of Pentecost Sunday, that the 'Spirit, fill our hearts this day with grace to hear and grace to pray'. The obligation to worship on Sunday is a defining feature of Christianity, ever since the first Jewish believers changed their holy day from Saturday to Sunday—one evidence of the extraordinary event of Christ's resurrection. By attending Sunday worship, we underline, to ourselves and to the world around us, the historical events that are the basis of our faith. 'I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4).

It is very significant that Paul's underlining of Christ's resurrection on Sunday is matched by another emphasis, just as strong, on the necessity of the Eucharist:

I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

**1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26**

As I have said in a previous book, *Meet Jesus*:

The Lord's people gather on the Lord's day in the Lord's house around the Lord's table... The Sunday Eucharist is 'the hour of Jesus' in which we soak in his presence in word and sacrament, to be refreshed as his disciples.

Meeting Jesus in the Eucharist goes much further than the spiritual refuelling of believers, however. 'Proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes' has global and cosmic impact. The

memorial sacrifice that is the Eucharist lifts participants into the worship that began with the angels before ever creation was, and will continue with the angels and 'the righteous made perfect' (Hebrews 12:23) into eternity. In what we could call 'the hour of Jesus', the Church's Eucharist, we see 'the lamb slain from the foundation of the world' (Revelation 13:8, KJV) and are lifted up into the consecration of all life to God's worship and service.<sup>6</sup>

I have found it helpful to keep such a cosmic picture before me as I gather, especially midweek, with two or three others around the altar (something well worth incorporating in a Christian rule of life, especially when shift work or family obligations override the Sunday obligation to worship). In such intimate fellowship there is a reminder that we receive the grace of Holy Communion in Christ's body and blood, both through bread and wine and through one another. Rowan Williams writes:

One of the most transformingly surprising things about Holy Communion is that it obliges you to see the person next to you as *wanted by God*. God wants that person's company as well as mine. How much simpler if God only wanted *my* company and that of those *I* had decided to invite. But God does not play that particular game.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond a rule of attendance at your local church for the Eucharist on Sundays and holy days, I can commend engaging in bigger gatherings, such as cathedral-type choral evensong, Eastern Orthodox liturgies and non-liturgical charismatic-style worship. It's good to experience, on occasion, worship in a different Christian tradition. I find that such experience, once I get accustomed, can become a conduit through which God speaks to me powerfully, in the same manner that picking up and reading a new translation of scripture can refresh my engagement with the living word of God. Although my first numinous or supernatural experience was in an Anglo-Catholic church, I would count as highly significant in my life occasions when I have been present in charismatic churches, where the congregation has sung in tongues. This is a beautiful gathering of voices gently yet powerfully

singing together, almost angelically, rising and falling in volume over several minutes, with great beauty and no human conductor. The silence that follows is to me as invested with God's presence as the silence after Communion at the Eucharist.

Following a rule of life doesn't guarantee an experience of Christ's love always in a tangible fashion, though all the evidence I see is that failure to worship moves us in the opposite direction, so that God becomes more notional than real. One of the monks of the Community of the Resurrection, where I trained as a priest, speaks of the eucharistic presence of Christ by using an analogy of love in the family: 'We may not always "feel" this presence. Just as in family life, it doesn't keep sweeping you off your feet with special experiences: it bears fruit over a long time. We gradually become steeped in the living story of Jesus, just as onions slowly become pickled.'<sup>8</sup> I like the pickled onion image of Christian formation!

## Hand in hand

King George VI popularised 'God knows', a poem by academic Minnie Louise Haskins, in a Christmas message at the start of World War II. He quoted:

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.' And he replied, 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.' So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.<sup>9</sup>

In this book I am presenting God's readiness to give us a hand up into his possibilities as we use five aspects of Christian devotion to hold to him, like the five interrelated digits of our hands. This image puts a key perspective on Christian devotion, namely that it can't save us; it just provides purchase for our Saviour as he grasps our lives to lead

us forward. 'In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins' (1 John 4:10). While we are incapable of glory unassisted, our salvation involves cooperation with God, whose word implies the same when we read, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure' (Philippians 2:12b–13).

In worship we experience Christ's loving uplift to the Father and get drawn into the ongoing momentum of his completed work, which impacts and is impacted by our prayer, study, service and reflection. For example, I recall occasions when a load of care deterred me from attending worship, but I followed my rule of life, attended, and was rewarded by losing that burden somewhere in the service, be it through sermon, prayers, Communion or a conversation afterwards. Something got shifted, and that shifting came from a reminder not to carry burdens that Christ has promised to carry, and a fresh realisation of what he has done for me and for all.

I can recall attending services which have so awed me that my prayer has flowed easily for days on end afterwards. In my experience the converse is also true—that prayerful preparation for worship builds an expectancy to encounter God in services. Worship is also helped by our study of scripture and of the world around us. Service is motivated by worship and inspires us in worship as we come before God with people's needs upon our hearts. In worship we also have time to reflect as the Holy Spirit is present in power to show us our needs.

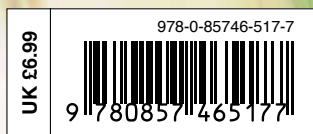
Hand in hand with Christ we enter and leave worship, and we do so in concert with following the other four disciplines of prayer, study, service and reflection, which are all interconnected. These disciplines work together to make of our lives 'a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship' (Romans 12:1b).

Again, I quote from my previous book, *Meet Jesus*:

Our prayer should be that our worship pleases God before it pleases us. What we feel like during 'Jesus' hour' is, to a degree, immaterial compared with how our life-attitude of sacrificial service extends from that hour into the remaining hours of the week. It is arguable that the high point of worship is the moment when we leave the assembly—and the nature of our worship is shown in whether or not we leave more in step with Jesus, more ready to head wherever he wants us to go next.<sup>10</sup>

In *Experiencing Christ's Love*, well-known writer John Twisleton reminds us of Jesus' gracious challenge to love God with heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbour and ourselves. Against the backdrop of the message of God's unconditional love in Jesus Christ, the author delivers a wake-up call to the basic Christian patterns of worship, prayer, study, service and reflection. These, he claims, serve to take God's hand in ours, leading us into his divine possibilities.

**John Twisleton** is a Sussex priest, an ideas and people person, theologian and pastor, who has served as parish priest, theological college principal and diocesan missionary. He broadcasts on Premier Radio and has written *Using the Jesus Prayer* and *Meet Jesus* for BRF.



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