

# WESTOVER REFLECTIONS

## Letter from the Pastor

Dear Westover UMC Family and Friends,

This is my last month with you, and it is bittersweet. We had less than three years together, most of which was during this pandemic. I had great hopes and dreams of the things we would do together to have more meaningful engagement with the community that would have hopefully translated into some growth for the church. The pandemic forced us to set aside the dreams and plans we created to focus on how to survive this pandemic instead. I had hoped to be the pastor that helped the church to find a new path to health and growth, but now I know that God called me to be your pastor who would get you through the pandemic. With Bruce and Jenny's help, we have created new ways of doing worship. With the help of your church leaders, we have had to find ways to keep everyone safe in the use of the church facilities and deal with the issues regarding the facilities. Many thanks go to the trustees (especially Phil and Jesse) with all that they have had to deal with over these past couple of years and especially with the recent drain issue. When I reflect on my time at Westover, there is much for which I give thanks to God.

I leave with a heavy heart because I have grown to love you and will miss you very much. Yet I know that God will take care of you and me. We never know where God will take us on our life journey at times, and we can make all the plans we want. Ultimately, God has a plan. God's plan for me was to help the congregation get through the worst of the pandemic.

Now God's plan is for me to rest, recuperate, and move on to something different. I have ideas of what that may be, but ultimately God has the final say. So it is with the church. You may think that you know what the church's future will be, and it may turn out as you expect. Remember the words from Jeremiah 29:11 which say: *For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.* I hope that you will step into the Lord's plans for you, and you will find the path to life. In my remaining time with you, I hope that we will continue to love and care for each other. Please do all that you can to help your interim pastor and the new pastor that will be appointed to you in July. I thank God for the privilege of serving this congregation and for your love and support while I have been your pastor. Where I have failed you, I beg for forgiveness. Where I have brought you good, I hope you remember me with fondness. I am always your friend and hope that you will regard me and my family in that way. So please don't be a stranger after I leave. I am happy to still connect with you as your friend.

Peace,

Pastor Sung



# FIRST FRUITS OF WORSHIP

## The Love Connection In Worship

By Bruce Smith  
Director of Music Ministries

***“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”  
Matthew 22:37***

It's February, the month of love! Do you remember the TV show "Love Connection"? A male or female guest would sit on the couch with host, Chuck Woolery, and they and the studio audience would view three contestant profile videos and then the audience would vote on who was best suited for the guest. The guest on the couch would then share who they selected for a date and the details of a recent date with that person. (That contestant was off stage via live video to give their perspective of the date as well) Very quickly it became clear whether there was a "love connection" between the guest and the contestant. If it was a success, the contestant came on stage to join the guest and a new date was set for them there.

At the center of this game show is the "connection" that was or was not made between the couple. How attuned to each other, compatible, interested, and sensitive to one another were they? Were they "present" for each other and given to the experience of being together? Were they on the same page?

That is precisely the connection the Lord is looking for in us each Sunday we gather to worship, as well as in our own private devotional time.

(They call it "devotion time" because we are to devote ourselves to Christ during this time!) The Greatest Commandment states to "love the Lord with ALL your heart, ALL your soul, and with ALL your mind." What does that mean for us in the context of worship? Let's take it phrase by phrase...

1. ALL YOUR HEART - Worship is a "heart thing". It has to engage our emotions, our memories of God's goodness and faithfulness, and it requires us to drop our guard and be real about what is in our hearts with God. King David was a "man after God's own heart" - so he should know about these things. He wrote constantly about his heart's expressions for God...

***"I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonders."***

**Psalm 9:1**

***"But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation."***

**Psalm 13:5**

***"Examine me, O Lord, and try me; Test my mind and my heart."***

**Psalm 26:2**

***"Lord, all my desire is before You; and my sighing is not hidden from You. My heart throbs, my strength fails me"***

**Psalm 38:9-10**

We have to connect with the Lord on a heart level - not just causally, but with ALL our heart - expressing our love for Him with complete abandon. So, does your heart throb for God in worship?

**CONTINUED ON PG 5**



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Do everything  
in love.

1 Corinthians

16:14



# Thank You Westover!

Thank you for your donation [of \$5,000] to the Crosswave Youth Discipleship ministry. God has called Crosswave to go into all the world to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Thank you for your partnership to help make it happen.

You have not only partnered with Crosswave, but with God as He instructed us to "*prech good news to the poor, bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort those that mourn and provide for those who grieve*" ... (in Peru). Also, "*to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair*". All of this so, "*They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of His splendor* (Isaiah 61:1-3).

If you would like further information about Crosswave or about a future Mission trip to Peru, please let us know. It would be a joy to share it with you!

May God richly bless you and your family for your generosity.

Gratefully,

Mary McLaurin  
Executive Director



# SONG STORY: THE HEART OF WORSHIP

By Bruce Smith  
Director of Music Ministries

***"When the music fades, all is stripped away, and I simply come."***

Being creatures of habit, it is easy for us as worshippers to fall into a rut and become "consumers" of worship rather than participants. We listen to a choir or worship band and the singers, we watch the video screen, and we sit back and observe, rather than engage in worshipping God. This was the setting for the birth of Matt Redman's classic worship song "The Heart Of Worship".

In the late 1990's, Matt's church was going through a bit of a worship slump. The Lead Pastor felt as though the church was just going through the motions and not connecting from the heart the way they should. "There was a dynamic missing," says Redman, "so the pastor did a pretty brave thing. He decided to get rid of the sound system and band for a season, and we gathered together with just our voices. His point was that we'd lost our way in worship, and the way to get back to the heart would be to strip everything away."

The intent of the Pastor was to remove all the distractions in worship, and thus transform the congregation from a "concert-goer" mentality to an immersed worshipper - focusing only on Christ. With the band and the sound system out of the picture, the experience was revelational to the church as they sang only a capella. "Before long," says Redman, "we reintroduced the musicians and sound system, as we'd gained a new perspective that worship is all about Jesus, and He commands a response in the depths of our souls no matter what the circumstance and setting. 'The Heart of Worship' simply describes what occurred."

In John 4:24, Jesus shares the heart of worship with the Samaritan woman at the well

***"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."***

So, as Redman's song reveals, God isn't interested in the pretty song, melody, and choral arrangement. He wants to connect to the depths of our hearts in worship - to meet us at our innermost, intimate parts of our spirit- and commune with us there.

***I'll bring You more than a song, for a song in itself is not what You have required.***

***You search much deeper within, through the way things appear, You're looking into my heart.***

This song is also a song of repentance for making the wrong things the main things. Singing "The Heart of Worship" requires a contrite heart and great humility before God as we seek to please Him and not ourselves.

***I'm coming back to the heart of worship- and it's all about You, it's all about You, Jesus.***

***I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it - when it's all about You, it's all about You, Jesus.***

This sounds like a harsh question, but it's a necessary one. Do we take God for granted in our worship? Are we thinking about Him and His goodness when we're singing and praying? I have to answer for myself, "not always", and I have to repent to God for that. Because we all need a soul check from time to time, and God's redirection back onto His path - not just in worship, but in every aspect of our life.

***King of endless worth, no one could express how much you deserve.***

***Though I'm weak and poor, all I have is Yours, every single breath!***

Jesus is completely honored when we bring ourselves back to the heart of worship again, and after all, isn't pleasing and honoring God our reason for living?



## CONTINUED FROM PG 2

2. ALL YOUR SOUL - So what does it mean to love God with your soul? It is to bring your inner person, your issues, concerns and fears before God to let him speak to them. It is to allow God to speak into the deepest part of your life where your dreams, hopes and frustrations lay buried under all sorts of other activities and ideas. The Apostle Paul share the depths of his soul to the church in Corinth and in doing so asked God to remove the thorn in his flesh, but Paul shares that God said to him...

***"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me" 2 Corinthians 12:9***

We need to connect with God from the deepest parts of our soul, so He can minister to us there, bring healing, confirm dreams and plans, restore relationships and fulfill our greatest desires. So, are you giving God your complete soul in worship?

3. ALL YOUR MIND - This is an easier one for us. We understand Christ, we can analyze scripture and place things in a historical perspective pretty easily. John Piper, the great Christian theologian, identifies three components to loving God with all our minds - 1) Dedicating our minds to knowing him. 2) Thinking clearly and truly about him so that we don't have false ideas in our minds, and 3) Not being satisfied with merely an intellectual awareness of his attributes, character, and acts but intentionally devoting that mental effort to serve the affections (emotions) for God.

How distracted are you in worship? Do you find your mind wandering during devotions, are you checking your cellphone during worship?

Think of our time in worship with God like a date. If your spouse or significant other was disengaged emotionally, not sharing the deepest desires of their life with you, and were distracted when together with you, you'd likely feel there was no love there at that moment. The same is true with our time with God. When we're with Him in worship, we need to engage our heart, soul and mind so that the time together is special, meaningful, and productive to our relationship. In short, we need to foster that "love connection" with the Father!

## BIRTHDAYS

- 1 BEV CAPPADONIA
- 2 ARYA DANICA PHILLIPS
- 3 DIS KSOR  
NOAH BATTS
- 7 TED WEYBREW
- 10 BILL PITZER
- 11 BRANDON SARGENT  
VICTOR MOY
- 13 PEGGY BROWN
- 15 THERESA WEYBREW
- 16 EDMOND PROFFITT  
NANCY CASHION
- 21 JUDY TUDOR
- 27 FRANK CALDWELL
- 28 JENNIFER PROFFITT  
DORIS PRICE  
SHERRIE WATKINS

