

*providing a future with hope*

The Challenger  
is a publication  
of Life Challenge of  
Southeastern Michigan

# Challenger

*enlightening empowering equipping*

April 2006

## How The Greatest Command is the Greatest Gift: And it's not what you think (exactly)

By Jeff Bonzelaar, Executive Director

Every command of God is good, but there's one that tops the list: "Worship the Lord" (Ps. 100:1). It is like telling a child in a candy store to eat to his heart's delight . . . but infinitely better! It is like giving an all expenses-paid golfing vacation to an avid golfer and telling him to enjoy his time . . . but infinitely better! It is like giving a Sudoku puzzle book (those crazy Japanese number puzzles that are now the rave) to a Sudoku enthusiast (like my father-in-law) and telling him to "solve away" . . . but infinitely better!

Worship is "for" us. Just as Jesus taught that the command to keep the Sabbath was for the welfare of man ("the Sabbath was for man, not man for the Sabbath"), so the command to worship is "for" us. We are the benefactors. Worship is God's gift to us for our fulfillment and fruitfulness. Worshipping God is the means whereby we satisfy our deepest hungers and longings. He does not need it. We do. Through worship, we are liberated from ourselves (life's worst bondage) and brought into intimate relationship with God (life's sweetest joy).

The command to worship the Lord and its many variations (e.g., "Behold your God," "Fear the Lord," "Be still before the Lord," "Seek first the kingdom of

God," "Rejoice in the Lord," etc.) is the greatest command in all Scripture.

What could be more gracious of God than for Him to summon us to see and savor His matchless beauty!? What could be more loving than for God to call us to delight ourselves in Him—He who is boundless in brilliance and splendor and excellence!?

*"All addictions, at their core, are worship disorders."*

But there's another reason why the greatest of all commands is the greatest of all gifts. Without the shed blood of Christ, we would have no access into the throne room of God (see Heb. 10:19 ff.). Without Christ's costly sacrifice on Calvary, our sins would separate us eternally from a holy God. We would

never be able to see the Lord and live. But thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! He has opened a new and living way for us through His Son. The dividing wall of hostility has been broken (Eph. 2:13 ff). The veil has been rent and we are welcomed into His presence.

We reject this gift to our own our ruin. We violate our design when we do not worship God. We become base and ignoble when we pay homage to anything else besides God (see Rom. 1:21 ff.). Just as the human body cannot function without food, so the human soul cannot live without God (Mt. 4:4).

All addictions, at their core, are worship disorders. Drunkenness, gluttony, greed, sexual immorality, and gossip each have their roots in some version of idolatry. In fact, all sin is summarized as idolatry (Eph. 5:5). No wonder the most repeated prohibition mentioned in Scripture is against idolatry.

The greatest hindrance to receiving the greatest gift (i.e., the worship of God) is our willingness to settle for inferior pleasures. The prophet Jeremiah made this indictment against the people of his day: "My people have exchanged their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, says the Lord; for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:11-13). C.S. Lewis put it like this, "Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted crea-

*"The greatest hindrance to receiving the greatest gift . . . is our willingness to settle for inferior pleasures."*

tures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

## CONCLUSION

Of course, we all know that when Jesus was asked, "Which is the greatest commandment?" He replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Mt. 22:36-37). God forbid that I contradict my Lord Jesus on this matter. But I think that the command to love God is another way of saying "Worship the Lord" (or "Humble yourself before the Lord" or "Trust in the Lord" or "Deny yourself, take up the cross, and follow Me (Jesus)" or "Fix your eyes on Jesus"). Are not *humbling* and *trusting* and *denying* and *fixing* simply expressions of what it means to worship the Lord and therefore, love Him?

Worship is NOT making God more honorable or more worthy. It IS recognizing His value, feeling the weight of it, and expressing the glory of His name in all the ways appropriate to His character. We do this by kneeling, bowing, shouting, dancing, praying, giving tithes and offerings, confessing our sins, listening to His Word, working hard, submitting to our authorities, loving our neighbor, paying our bills, and a thousand other ways.

\*\*\*\*\*

*"Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."*  
(Heb. 12:28-29)



**Testimony**  
***Shawn Stinnett***

"I was raised in Warren, Michigan. I am the youngest of four children. Church was a big part of our family and we regularly attended four times a week.

When I was five years old my parents divorced due to my father's drinking problem. My mother enrolled in nursing school. Because of her increased responsibilities, she was gone a lot, and I was left alone with too much idle time.

When I was twelve years of age I started hanging out with a tough group of kids who encouraged me to begin drinking and smoking. I soon fell in love with the way that being under the influence made me feel, or should I say 'not feel.'

At age seventeen, I was put in a youth home for forty-five days after I assaulted someone. I was also charged with theft in connection with car parts I had been stealing for drugs.

Over the next twenty-five years I worked, played, drove, and lived drunk or high every day. I got fired from every job I had due to my inability to stay clean. I made my way into seven inpatient programs. I also tried AA, NA, and other outpatient programs. Nothing helped.

In 1991 I married someone who loved to party as much as I did. We decided to move to Tennessee and start a new life. Before long the drinking resumed, and I lost another job. I eventually lost my wife, my kids and my home.

I moved back to Michigan. I started dating a long-time friend, and we were, soon married. Tammie did not allow me to drink in the house, but that didn't stop me. I would drink all day at work and come home so drunk I would not remember the next day what I had done. After repeated warnings at work, I was fired once again when my boss caught me drinking on the job.

Ashamed of myself, I left my wife in November 2004 and moved into a shed in back of a co-worker's house. I spent nearly two months in that shed drinking myself to death.

One day I began vomiting blood and the reality of what I was doing to myself hit me. Terrified, I cried out to Jesus for help. I walked to a pay phone and somehow was able to call my mother whom I hadn't spoken to in a year. She came and took me to the hospital.

When I got to the emergency room I couldn't even tell them what day it was. I was fifty pounds under weight. I spent a week in the hospital. During that time my mother assisted me in getting into Life Challenge.

My first three months in the program are still a blur. But one day I was sitting in chapel and the light went on. I got hungry for the Word of God. I began to believe that the blood of Christ could wash away all my sins.

By the grace of God, my life-long bondage to alcohol has been lifted from me. My marriage and my family are being restored. God has given me back my physical as well as my mental health. It's hard to believe that after all those sin-filled years, Jesus was still waiting for me. He never gave up on me. To God be the glory."

*P.S. Shawn graduated in November 2005. He attends Brightmoor Christian Church with his wife Tammie. His relationship with his sons is being restored and he is pursuing a scholarship to help him realize his heart's desire to minister on the foreign mission field.*

Please pray with us as we labor to lead men and women into the white-hot worship of an all-satisfying God.

Together for souls,

*Jeff*