

# Worth-Ship

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Each one of us has a hungry heart. The fulfilment of this hunger (at least to a reasonable degree) is what we call happiness. If we wish to be happy, the most pressing question -- yet one too often not consciously asked or fully examined-- is “what does my heart need?”

However we answer this question --whatever we think our heart needs-- becomes what we live for. Pursuit of this “need” becomes the way we spend our time, the reason we make the choices that we do, and the most frequent object of our thoughts and desires. In short, it becomes what we worship.

Bishop Robert Barron has coined the term “worth-ship,” because we end up worshipping whatever has the highest worth in our eyes. Broken down to essentials, there are really only five choices -- five altars we may choose to worship at: Pleasure, Power, Honor, Money, or God.

Consciously or unconsciously, we are all worshipping at one of these altars at any given time. We may have worshipped at different altars at different times in our lives. But we all have priorities, and one of these five is taking the top spot. Which one of the five do you “worth-ship?” The answer is not necessarily to be found in what we say or *profess*. The real answer is to be found in how we are spending our time and the real choices we are making.

I can speak as a witness that only one form of “worth-ship” actually satisfies: God. And believe me, I’ve tried the others. I made my first million by the age of thirty-one. I know the thrill of riding high while being involved in some of the most innovative technology companies of the 1990s and early 2000’s. I know all the best hotels in the world. What I have found is that each time you worship at one of the first four altars: when you make more money, have another pleasure, gain in stature, acquire more power -- whatever satisfaction or enjoyment quickly fades away and you need your next “kick” to get back in the race and prove yourself again.

There’s a momentary pleasure, yes. But the joy doesn’t last, and once the “buzz” has worn off, you have to keep “worth-shipping” and “worth-shipping” while the thrill wears off faster and faster. That’s not happiness; it’s actually a kind of slavery. And don’t we all know people who are hopping restlessly around one of these first four altars, desperately seeking happiness, but never finding any joy?

That’s because God alone will satisfy the deepest hunger of our hearts.

Maybe you've come across the great theologian St. Augustine's remark, "You have made us for yourself, Almighty Love, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You." God created our hearts with a longing for the infinite, and if we try to fill that longing with finite, passing "stuff," we will always come up empty and dissatisfied.

Worth-shiping the true God does not mean suppressing our more superficial desires. The God who created our longing for the infinite also created pleasure and our ability to work and create. Our challenge is not to suppress our desires, but to direct them so that we learn to desire what truly fills us. Take for example the pleasure of eating. If most of the time I choose nutritious foods that fuel my body well, I will feel good and be able to work, exercise and play. I can enjoy occasional treat meals as a way of celebrating -- particularly with friends and family. Then food is fulfilling not only my biological needs, but also helping me build lasting relationships which fill my heart. Contrast that with the experience of sitting alone in my room eating a pan of brownies or drinking to excess. Which experience of pleasure actually fills me in the long run? Which leaves me feeling sick and empty and ashamed? See the difference? I'm not meant to suppress my appetites, but to order them toward my lasting good.

This kind of distinction applies not only to the way I live my own life, but to the decisions I make when running a business as well. It is not wrong to make a profit. Profit is one important signal to me that the good or service I am offering has real value for others. But if I run a business just to "make a buck," the thrill of that will bore me eventually -- and if greed leads me to cut corners or cheat customers or mistreat employees, I will earn a reputation that will harm my business in the long run. There is far more lasting satisfaction and genuine joy to be had in making decisions that put people —the human person— at the center, making space for love —for God— in my everyday interactions.