
VCL International
VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING CONFERENCE

GODSHIP

Lesson Transcript by David Ritzenthaler

Have you ever wondered why there is so much conflict in the world—nations fighting nations, husbands and wives wanting to murder each other, children angry with their parents? Someone sent me this article about a man by the name of Marty Course. “Marty tried unsuccessfully to ease his tow truck into the jammed Los Angeles freeway traffic. A Datsun pickup moved forward to block him from merging, so he slowed down. But the occupants of the pickup weren’t satisfied with the fact that he slowed down. In fact, they slowed down to match Marty’s speed. Then the passenger in the pickup pulled out a hand gun, aimed it at Marty’s truck, and fired.” These kinds of terrifying incidents happen constantly on the freeways across our country. What is it that makes man who is supposedly innately good, so ugly in his actions and his attitudes?

This session is entitled “Godship.” Turn to the front page and there is a box in the center where Genesis 3:5 is quoted. It says, “. . . your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God . . .” What I want to help you see in the next few minutes is that there is a major malady that has existed from the beginning of the human race, and this malady is the cause of all these conflicts. On the front page, you’ll notice some numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 that are highlighted. You might even want to underline them. These various definitions are to define a little word that’s the title of this lesson on godship. Godship is simply a little word that I thought of as I was reading Genesis 3:5 “. . . and they shall become as gods . . .” I thought, “There is a problem of godship. These people are wanting to try to be God.” I want to give you four

definitions that will help you grasp this concept so we’re thinking together whenever I use that term “godship.”

The first one says, “an individual functioning as his or her own god.” I think most of us when we think of that, think of other people’s names regarding this problem of godship.

Secondly, it says, “the self-life or walking after the flesh.” Now we have an entire session on the flesh-life and self-life and walking after the flesh, but godship is expressed in walking after the flesh.

The third one is “an individual living without considering what God has to say.” You say, “What do you mean by that?” Let me give you some examples of that. Most of us are very desirous of having financial success. Yet, how many of us have ever taken the time to take God’s Word and find out what God has to say about spending money. Spending money is a major issue that I have dealt with for years with people who are in trouble financially. Very few of them have any understanding of what they should be spending their money for, much less know what God says with regard to spending money. There are six things that God says with regard to spending money and seven if you need to get out of debt, but most people don’t know that. People get married and have children and they are wondering why they have terrible two’s or why they have troubled teenagers and they’ve never taken the time to find out the seven things God has to say with regard to parenting children. God has delineated the details of how to live successfully in a marriage, yet how many

people have taken the time to really thoroughly study and then begin to act on the things that God has to say? Well, that's what I mean when I say people are living without considering what God has to say. That's what we call godship.

Maybe you are thinking, "Well you didn't get me yet." Hopefully, this fourth one will collect the rest of you. These are the people "allowing circumstances or feelings to rule instead of God." They do what they do based on how they feel. They base what they do on their circumstances. You might even ask one of them, "How are you doing?" "Well, under the circumstances . . ." God never intended a believer to live "under the circumstances" and let circumstances control the believer's life. That is not God's design for a person who is supposed to be allowing God to rule his or her life.

EXERCISING GODSHIP

(Diagram 100-A)

When we talk about godship, it's simply this little word that I began to see back in Genesis 3:5 when Adam and Eve did what God said not to do. They began to decide for themselves how life should work and that's godship. When we see the problems that exist in society, we're seeing this issue of godship. In fact, if you'd turn to your first diagram, 100-A, you'll notice various things that you and I might do in exercising godship. On the left hand side you'll notice a bunch of little boxes. The reason those boxes are there is because I want you to think personally, do any of these apply to me? Is any one of these an issue of godship in my own life that I need to face and deal with so that I don't create all kinds of unwanted problems?

Notice the first one: I determine standards of conduct for myself, others, and God. You say, "What do you mean I determine standards of conduct?" Well, let's think about some of those things. We just talked about the freeway

and Marty and his truck. How many of you have found yourselves on the street driving your car and suddenly someone is reacting to you because you pulled in front of that person or you came up on that person too fast and the driver is all upset with you? The driver may even be giving certain motions to you, because he or she considers you are not driving in the certain space and place where you should be. That person is setting the standard for how you should drive.

Look at the next one. Not only do people set standards, but then they demand absolute obedience of those standards. In fact, you probably thought about this when growing up. I don't think there are any children that haven't been upset with their parents' standards and decided that their parents aren't fair with them. They demand their parents to function according to the values or the standards that *they think their parents should have*. The same thing is true in marriages. Over and over we have people come for help and the husband and the wife have both come into the marriage with various baggage—their value systems, their ideas, their opinions, their standards—and expect the other person to meet those same conditions and standards.

Third one. People judge God, others, and their own lives, attitudes, and actions by those standards. How much of our society today is judged on standards like the size of a lapel or the size of the tie or the way a dress or haircut looks? How many times do we look at other people and we make a judgment about them because we have certain standards and we use those standards to judge others? In fact, many times we have probably missed out on meeting and knowing a most incredible person. We never got the privilege, because we already had set a standard that the way the person looked or dressed or talked didn't meet the conditions of somebody with whom we wanted to have a relationship. In fact, maybe at some point you have broken through the barrier of your judgments against some person and found out this is an incredible person.

Look at the next one, seeking revenge. I think of one couple we ministered to here that had already been divorced when they came to the center. They came for counseling because at the time they were in court fighting over the children. In the process of getting them reconciled, the gentleman revealed the fight over the children in divorce court was so severe that he had actually gone to a store and put a deposit on a gun. In his view, in the next few days, he was going to have to eliminate her. He thought, "If I can't control her and I can't get her to do it the way I want to do it, I'll just eliminate her completely." As we talked with him, one of the things he said was, "You've got to understand, in my family we don't get mad—we get even!" And so, in his mind, he wasn't just going to get mad over this situation, he was going to get even. In fact, he was going to get more than even, he was going to eliminate her. So, seeking revenge is one of the expressions of godship. It is the way people express their commitment to being god.

Look at the next one: I selfishly endeavor to control circumstances and people. This is one I see often when people come in and they're depressed or anxious. It's over this issue of godship. This might be one you'd check if you're an anxious or depressed person. Almost always, people who are anxious or depressed are people who are upset with either the circumstances not working the way they want them to or the people around them not functioning the way they want them to function. They're frustrated. They're angry because they can't control. In fact, to think about it, being god is really a difficult project, and yet, that is what godship is all about. It's an individual trying to be god in other people's lives and in every area of the person's own life and circumstances. Usually when somebody does that, the individual is a frustrated, angry person, maybe depressed, or anxious.

Next one: I exercise "sovereign" independence,

doing whatever I please. In fact, just as an illustration of that, someone gave me an article out of the Phoenix paper some time ago. It's about a woman by the name of Carrie Munson. I want to just read to you what it says here. This is a woman who is terminally ill, a victim of cancer. The title of the article says, "She Will Attend Her Own Funeral." This caught my attention and I began to read it. She scheduled her funeral early, so that she could attend it alive. "Carrie Munson, 62 years of age, from Milwaukee sent invitations to her friends, associates, enemies, and three sons for the next Saturday service. Munson, who has pancreatic cancer, had been told by her doctor she didn't have long to live. She had a 25-year addiction to heroin, attended the university, and acted as a hostess on a radio jazz show. The heroin habit led her to prison terms for crimes committed to get drugs including theft, prostitution, forgery, and mailbox fraud. As she considered this funeral in planning it ahead of time, she decided that one of the things she wanted was to inform everybody that she had achieved all of her goals." Now those sound like quite worthy goals but, also as a part of the funeral, she decided that the only music she was going to have was "My Way" by Frank Sinatra. This is an illustration of a person who has decided to live a life of sovereign independence. The sad part about it is, though she was acting as if she were god and she was living this life of independence, she had no power over when the day was that she was going to die. Because you see, ultimately, no one as a person exercising godship truly has the power to be god. Nobody has the resources to control everything, only God does. So, we consistently see in ministry to people, people trying to be god, exercising godship in the area of sovereign independence.

Look at the next one: Seeking praise, approval, and acceptance from others and not from God. One illustration of this is people who have grown up convinced that the only way they can have value and the only way they can be impor-

tant is to perform. So, what they do is spend their whole lives trying to be perfect. They become perfectionists and, in their perfectionism, they just become filled with anxiety and trials and tribulations with many physical maladies as a part of it. As we help them understand this issue of trying to be god, trying to control everything, trying to be perfect, they release this godship, and they begin to let God be God of their lives. As they begin to entrust themselves to Him and they begin to rest in Him, many of the physical maladies just disappear because they are the effects of this issue of godship. In seeking praise and worship, the perfectionist says, "Well that's not me. I'm a Christian. I don't do that kind of thing." Well, let's think about that for a minute. Here's an illustration of godship—of seeking praise and worship. How many have spent their lives buying new cars every year or every couple of years, when the cars they had were still fine? How many have found themselves wanting to buy a bigger, fancier house when the one they have is actually fine; it's perfectly sufficient for their family? How many get caught up with the fads because they want to look good and they want people to see them? Or, how many adorn themselves with jewelry and various things to give evidence that they're really successful? What's that all about? Are they seeking God's praise and worship or are they seeking the praise of men because they want to be viewed as really important? That's godship.

The last one: Asking no help or guidance from anyone, not even God. I see this especially with men, but it's not limited to men. I don't know if you've had a little child that you've raised, maybe your own or you've been dealing with another one, and you observe that something is wrong and so you ask the child, "What's wrong?" He answers, "Nothing." Well, it's kind of a laughable thing when you see him in your office, he's 50 or 55 years of age, his wife has filed for divorce, and she has come in for counseling. As a part of the counseling pro-

cess, you've invited him to come in to get his perspective of things. You ask him a question, "Well, how are things going?" and he answers, "Everything is fine, there is nothing wrong." You say, "What about the divorce papers?"

"Oh, that's no problem. I'm sure we'll work that out."

He has no idea of the desperate state he's in and his need for help. He has no idea that he should ever ask for help because he thinks he's self-sufficient.

I remember particularly my brother Richard sharing this with me at one point in time. When he was first in the process of divorce, we tried to help him. He assured us that he didn't need any help. Well, to appreciate this you'd have to know that my brother is really a genius. In fact, he owns the patents of things that have never existed before. He has a very creative, brilliant mind. His view was he could do anything. He didn't need anyone's help. He could just think it out with his brain, and he could solve it. Well, he ended up divorced.

Years went by and at one point in time when I went to see him, he was living in a corncrib in the middle of January, in Illinois, with a little light bulb that was basically a heating system and the light for the facility. His two children were sleeping in sleeping bags. There was no heating system. He didn't have a job. He didn't have a car. In fact, he didn't even have any food. He was at the end of things. I remember as we sat there and he asked me if I would help. I said, "Well, you'd have to be willing to let me open my Bible and read to you what God has to say." You see, he also didn't see that the Word of God had anything to do with life. He had been given a brain and his brain was quite brilliant. The only problem was that night he said to me, "You know, I don't know if I'll ever even be able to think again." I realized at that moment the most precious thing

he had, which was his ability to think, which was his god, when he realized that didn't work anymore he had nothing left. He had nowhere to go, and he was willing to then listen to what God had to say. I answered his questions that night, and God began to do a supernatural thing, because God's supernaturally capable. Because Richard realized he needed help, he wasn't God, he wasn't capable, and that only God was capable.

I have to tell you that today my brother takes the Word of God and helps other people transform their lives to the wholeness and healing that only God can do supernaturally. So today it's just fun to watch, to see his children living and walking with Christ. Then 18 years later, for him to remarry his wife, for them to be a family again, and for them together to be seeking God's will to do things God's way. God's capable of doing what none of us could think or imagine could ever happen because He's God and we are not.

GOD BEING GOD (Diagram 100-B)

In fact, look at your next diagram, 100-B. You'll notice there the same things that we just described in 100-A. The only difference is that next to each of those is a verse which I'm not going to take the time to read. You can read these verses later. The first one is that God determines standards of conduct for mankind. You see because God is God, because He created mankind, because He owns everything including us, God has the right to set standards. We're in a society where everybody is talking about rights. It's an interesting thing that we're all caught up with what our rights are. Yet, we're these puny little human beings under the control and authority of the One who created everything and owns everything. He's the One that has the rights. We don't have any, ultimately; but God, because he is God has the right to determine standards of conduct for people. If we don't want to be little gods exercising godship, then we're going to have to go back

and find out what His standards are and operate according to His standards. If we don't, then we're acting as gods ourselves.

Notice the second one. He demands absolute obedience of those standards. He has the right to demand absolute obedience. The wonderful thing is when you get to know who God is, He doesn't demand absolute obedience for anything that He doesn't empower to make possible. So for every one of these standards that He demands, He has provided all the resources to make it possible for us to obey them.

Thirdly, He judges the lives and actions and attitudes of the human race. He has the right to do that because of who He is.

He takes vengeance. In fact, He says no person has the right to ever exercise vengeance. He says vengeance is His and His alone. Does He have the right to do that? Well, if He owns everything, created everything, He's God, therefore He has the right to do whatever He wants, including vengeance.

Controls all of life. Well this is an interesting one. He happens to be the only One, the only Person who actually has all the resources necessary to control life. He truly can. That's because He's God and we aren't.

Exercises sovereign independence, does whatever He pleases.

You see because of who He is, He has the right to seek the praise and the worship and the acceptance of mankind. He created us for the purposes of worshiping and praising Him; that was His whole purpose for creation.

Asking help and guidance from no one. Who is He that He would need to ask us how things should work? You see, the problem is we need to ask Him how things work. Otherwise, we're living a life without considering what God has to say, and we're exercising godship.

JUDGING GOOD AND EVIL

(Diagram 100-C)

Notice your next diagram, 100-C. When Genesis 3:5 took place and Adam and Eve ate of the fruit that God told them not to eat, they became as gods to decide what was right and wrong. You see, when God is the standard as to what is good, whatever out of God's infinite goodness ultimately blesses man is what is good. When God is the standard as to how you judge what's evil, whatever God rejects as being inconsistent with His perfect character and against His good purposes in the world is what is evil. When that is true all of us live under the same absolute standard. There are no differences. The standard is the same for every human being.

But an interesting thing happens when godship goes into motion. Every human being who is exercising godship is now deciding what personally seems to be most beneficial for "me"; or if you get the greatest number of people together, because they have the greatest power through numbers, then that's what is good. Good changes from generation to generation, from society to society, from person to person and, pretty soon, you've got millions of gods all deciding what is right and wrong. You've got incredible confusion; and that's exactly what is happening to society, because we have so many gods deciding what is right and what is wrong.

THREE KINGDOMS (Diagram 100-D)

Turn to your next diagram, 100-D. This is just simply another illustration to help you and me understand this idea of godship, to realize the gravity of it, and what happens when we exercise godship. You see, godship really is just sin. We're just describing to you a way that sin evidences itself in what we call godship. This little diagram has three kingdoms. You'll notice that kingdom number one on the left-hand side is a circle that represents a person. On the right side there is another circle and that is another person. In the center of each of those is a little throne or chair. That little chair just represents

that in each of these people there is a control center. There is a king or queen that is in charge of that center of control. Anytime you put two people together, you have not only kingdom number one and kingdom number two, but you create a third kingdom called a relationship.

Let me illustrate that. When you put a man and a woman together in marriage, you call it a marriage relationship. When you put together two guys in business, you call it a partnership relationship. When you put two friends together, you call it a friendship relationship. Now here is the interesting phenomenon. You notice on your diagram, you have a dotted line going down through the center and a little arrow line going from each of the circles to the other circle. What that represents is a relationship. A man and a woman commit to each other in marriage. They're convinced that when they met each other they had just met "Mr. or Mrs. Right." I mean, they'll be happy forever, because this person is everything they ever thought they wanted to marry. Now a little program starts when they come home after the honeymoon. Because they made a commitment that they would stay married to each other for the rest of their lives, they now feel free to really be who they actually are. So, they start opening the baggage they brought into the relationship. Person number one (the husband) starts seeing in person number two (the wife) things that he didn't realize he got as part of the deal. Person number two starts seeing in person number one things that she didn't realize she got as part of the deal. And so, all of a sudden, there begins to be a war, back and forth with these arrows—a conflict of whose standards and opinions are going to be the rule for this marriage relationship.

This war begins to be one where person number one decides, as the head of this home, he is going to take control and he's going to dominate person number two. He begins to actually

suppress person number two because she wants her standards. He knows if his standards rule the marriage they rule the kingdom that is inside of that marriage, and that's what he wants. He wants to be able to rule their marriage. That's called godship. Person number two, maybe growing up in a Christian home, thinks, "Well, I don't want to rock the boat here, I want to be a nice Christian wife." She wrongfully decides not to express any thoughts or feelings and pretty soon begins to be a "nonperson." She begins to repress herself to where she's actually sick emotionally and eventually goes in for psychiatric help. She feels a nonperson, wrongfully thinking the way to live is to not be a person, not express her feelings. If she expressed anything, he would get angry and mad and blow up and they would be divorced. Again, that is a very subtle example of godship.

The interesting thing is that not only is suppression going on by person number one and repression is going on by person number two, but what is happening is that person number two is probably becoming depressed in the middle of the whole process. So there begins to be a conclusion by both parties. We see this happen over and over. In fact, I actually have people come in and say, "Well, God wouldn't want me to be unhappy, so I think the best thing is to end this relationship kingdom, and divide the third kingdom. Let's get separated from each other so we can each rule our own kingdoms and be happy again [god again of our own lives]." It's called divorce and it's called godship.

The same thing happens when two guys get into business. They begin to think: "Hey, I don't like his standards, opinions, and ideas. I want to do it my way. Let's dissolve this partnership, so that I can be king of my kingdom again." It's called godship.

The interesting and exciting thing is that even though we have this terrible malady of the human race—mankind committed to being gods

of their own lives—God designed the system so that this problem would drive us to our knees and we would recognize that we need somebody bigger than we are—God to be God, instead of us exercising godship. We need God to be the Lord and the Ruler and the Controller of our lives in these two kingdoms down here. If person number one and person number two began to let the One Person with the one standard rule both their kingdoms, guess what, those two kingdoms could function effectively in a third kingdom. In fact, in the 30 years I have been counseling, I've never seen any two people who couldn't be successfully married if they got off the throne of their lives and they began to let the same God rule both of their kingdoms by His standards.

“GOOD” TAKEN BEYOND THE BOUNDS—IS SIN (Diagram 100-E)

Turn to your next diagram, 100-E. This is just another way of showing you the same problem, the problem of godship. These are just illustrations of it and, hopefully, make it easier to see something that you and I have to face if we're ever going to live a victorious Christian life. I will tell you that in all the years that I have been counseling, I have never yet seen a counseling case or a situation in ministry to people that hasn't included serious issues of godship as to the reason why a person is not living effectively.

“‘Good’ Taken Beyond the Bounds—Is Sin.” When we do things our way, it isn't because we're doing something that isn't good, it's just we're doing something good that's out of God's boundaries. You see, some people think that Satan is a creator and he created sin. Let me tell you, sin is not something new or unique that is created by Satan. It's something good that God created that is being used outside of God's design and outside of His boundaries.

Look on the list here. For example, on the right-hand side, right across it says marital sex. Do you know that God designed sex? He

designed all the instruments for it. He said it was good. He thinks it is wonderful. But you notice around the outside it says, “The Boundary of the Will of God.” Whenever anything that is good is taken outside the boundary, that’s when it becomes sin. That’s all Satan does. Sin is simply Satan wanting you to move outside of God’s boundaries to do something according to your own will, your own way. That is sin and that is godship. And you’ll notice here in this particular one, marital sex, when it is outside of God’s design which is only in marriage, the sin is immorality. In other words, if you are single and you have sex, it’s called fornication and is outside of God’s boundary. If you’re married and you have sex with someone other than the person to whom you’re married, it’s called adultery. It’s sin and it’s godship and it’s outside of God’s bounds.

It is all the same in every one of these things. In the circle, on the inside, are good things, but when taken outside of the boundary of God’s design, they are issues of godship and that results in sin because it is our way. It’s using the good things that God created, on our own terms, in our own way, and in our own time frame—it is godship.

GOD’S WAY (Diagram 100-E1)

Notice 100-E1, “The Fruit of the Spirit.” This is simply showing you the positive picture. When you and I face this issue of godship that causes most of the problems that exist in the human race today, when we face this problem that started back in Genesis 3:5 at the fall of the human race, and we face it for ourselves, personally, that’s the beginning of us doing what’s necessary to be able to have God be God in our lives. We looked at the little boxes in 100-A and we checked our checks in that column to evidence what are the real, obvious, continuous issues of godship in our lives. When that happened, we faced that, and we saw God’s way. Whenever you and I begin to allow the Lord to be Lord of our lives, letting Him be in charge with His ways, and letting His stan-

dards be the rule, we begin to experience the fruit of His Holy Spirit.

Notice the fruit of the Spirit are all inside the boundaries. I can tell you as I’ve been ministering to people all these years, I have never found anybody, Christian or non-Christian, who isn’t desirous of experiencing all of these things—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Everybody I have ever met wants to experience these. In fact, I can tell you having met with very, very wealthy people, wealth, money, material things don’t begin to match having your life filled with these ingredients of joy, peace, love, and patience. These are the things that I find people are really searching for. In fact, I find that people who have what would be considered everything that would make them happy in this world—have everything, can do anything, and can buy anything—and they’re still miserable inside. That is a worse misery than the people who are anticipating maybe something else that they could get or have that will finally make them happy. The worst misery is to have everything and know that there isn’t anything that makes you happy; because, at that point, life is hopeless. There’s no answer, there’s no possibility of something that might make you happy. But God’s way—allowing the Spirit of God to rule, letting God be God, letting Him determine the standards, letting Him determine how marriage should work, letting Him be the guide as to how we should raise our children, letting Him be the ruler and the authority as to how we spend our money—when we begin to let God be God, we begin to experience a life on the inside that every human being is searching for.

REVIEW

Let’s review. “God is God and I am not.” If you can see that one lesson, that the problem is a problem of you and me trying to be god or acting as god when God is the only God and we’re not, then we’re halfway there, beginning to learn what it takes to let Him be God.

The second thing it says is, “God is God and only He has the right to set standards, judge, and demand absolute obedience of people.” Only God has that right. I don’t know if you’ve experienced it, but every time you and I take any of those rights, it usually ends up in difficulty in relationships with other people.

The next thing is, “There is something within me that desires to be like God.” In creation, God created the human being in His image. He created within us the desire to actually be like Him. The only problem is that instead of truly being like Him because we’re letting His Spirit produce Him in us and through us, it is us exercising godship in our own power, on our own initiative, our own ways, with our own ideas. We’re trying to copy Him. We’re going to try to do what we want to do for ourselves with all the resources He gave us, instead of using them for God. You see, God didn’t create us for ourselves, for our own benefit. He created us for Himself and for His benefit. Until you and I begin to understand what it is to be like God because we’re doing it for Him, because He’s producing it in us, only then, will we experience the Lordship of Christ.

The next one, “Godship is sin and leads to withdrawal from God and others and doubting instead of trusting.”

Next one, “Only when God rules over our relationships with others will we experience relationships that bring glory to His kingdom.”

And then lastly, “Good taken beyond God’s boundaries leads to sin.” It’s an expression of godship anytime we do something outside the boundaries.

You have been listening and thinking about this issue of godship. Would you join me right now, and instead of you and I digging around and trying to find things that might be issues of godship in our lives, would you join me as we bow our heads. We’ll ask God who says He convicts of sin, of righteousness, of judgment. He’s the one that knows because He knows the thoughts and the intents of our hearts. Would you bow your head with me and as we let God show us that. “Heavenly Father, as we come before Your presence, I pray right now as we’ve considered this issue of godship, that You by Your Spirit, at this very moment, would begin to reveal to each of us what You want us to see as areas of godship in our lives. And then, Lord, I pray that You would create within each of us a desire to begin to enjoy the fullness of Your presence and the joy and the peace that comes as a part of You being God in our lives. We thank You that You have given us Your Word, You’ve given us Your Holy Spirit, You have given us everything necessary to be able to deal with this issue of godship in our lives. Thank You for what You are going to do. In the great name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus, we pray, amen.”