

# Worshiping God

*in Spirit and  
in Truth*

Jennifer Campbell

*Foreword by Ken Campbell*

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Sample Excerpt

**Jennifer Campbell**

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*Worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth*

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*“But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”*

—John 4:23-24



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## Chapter Five

# *Worship Not Entertainment*

*“But everything that is done must strengthen all of you” (1 Cor. 14:26).*

While many pastors and congregations claim to surrender fully to the leading of the Holy Spirit, their priorities and actions contradict their intention. From perfectly planned programs to succinctly scripted sermons, the objectives of these bodies of believers are well and good. Yet when it comes time for the service to begin, there is no room for the Holy Spirit to work in their midst. Not too long ago, I attended a church service where a few congregants seemed somewhat disgruntled because the segment of the service devoted to prayer requests and praise reports went on for nearly thirty minutes. Of course, this delay resulted in the service ending approximately twenty minutes after the noon hour. Upon seeing their reaction, I could not help but wonder at the likelihood of God’s disappointment with the way His children react to certain situations within the house of the Lord.

Obviously, countless people attend church for social interaction more than they come to seek God. Rather than spend time duly in prayer, they would rather assemble over a cup of coffee and a pastry, hearing all of the local town gossip or catching up with their friends concerning a fabulous fishing trip or spectacular sporting event. While many people

engross themselves in their own festivities and affairs, God is not looking for the next great event planner or social butterfly. He is looking for people who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. Jesus said, “A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks” (John 4:23 NIV). This verse is not speaking of ancient biblical times, but it is speaking of the here and now. When we worship in spirit and in truth, God will seek us. He is seeking sincere worshipers this very moment.

Through the years, many different people have called, texted, or emailed me. Others have stopped me in the grocery store or visited my place of work. Some have even traveled to



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our home for food and fellowship after receiving an invitation from my family. While I appreciate all of the relatives, friends, and acquaintances whom God has blessed me with, there is no one I would rather hear from than my Father in Heaven. My primary purpose in life is to please the Lord in all I do. As Psalm 19:14 says, I pray the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart will always be

pleasing to the Lord. When I ponder the fact that God will seek me when I worship Him, my heart is overwhelmed with a special kind of joy that mere words cannot fully explain. I

could not imagine refraining from worshiping my Lord and Savior, for nothing else satisfies my soul like praising His excellent name.

I can only vaguely recall the first time I ever raised my hands in worship as a young child. Yet, even though I have worshiped the Lord countless times since, each time is special, like a precious gift bestowed upon me. The privilege of worshiping the One who loves me more than I could ever imagine holds a greater value than the rarest jewels a person could find. One of my most beloved experiences in life is to stand in a sanctuary filled with thousands of other Christians, calling on the name above every name, Jesus Christ. When we join our hearts in one accord, it seems as though God blesses us with a miniscule preview of what Heaven will be like.

In recent times, I was especially pleased when a friend sent me a message. She said she and her family would love to have the opportunity to worship with my dad and me when we visited her church. Her focus was not on increasing church membership nor was it centered on the possibility of all of us having the chance to catch up over dinner after the service. Instead, she understood the purpose of going to church. Psalm 26:8 says, "I love your sanctuary, LORD, the place where your glorious presence dwells." Notice this verse does not say the place where people socialize or the place where people go to fulfill their weekly duty. David wrote about the Lord's "glorious presence." How many churchgoers today would tell you they go to church because the Lord's presence dwells there? Although there would be some, I am afraid the numbers would be few.

When I enter the doors of a church sanctuary, I want the presence of the Lord to overwhelm me to the point where everything and everyone else around me takes a backseat to



worshipping the Lord. Several months ago, I was standing near the front of a church sanctuary, waiting for the service to begin. Playing softly in the background was the song, “Psalm 23 (Surely Goodness, Surely Mercy),” written by Shane Barnard and Shane Everett. My mind was completely in tune with the lyrics of the song. I was so focused on the beautiful melody and inspiring message found within this song that I did not even notice a dear friend of ours walking up to me. Once they were directly in front of me, I finally noticed them. While it was a true pleasure to speak to them, I love the way I was not looking for people, but I was searching for God. How special it was to be so lost in His presence that I temporarily lost track of what was going on around me. Like King David, I love the place where God dwells. The joy and peace in my heart was so very great. All because I allowed the Holy Spirit to work in my heart and mind, and usher me into the sweet presence of the Almighty.

Worship is such an extraordinary part of my life, so I cannot truly grasp the reasons why some people would not want to commune with our Creator. God made us in His image (Gen. 1:27), yet some people have no desire even to talk to Him much less give Him glory, honor, and praise. It saddens my heart to know that many people miss such a tremendous blessing. Unfortunately, many churches are straying from worship the way it used to be. Even as a child, I can recall church services where the praise and worship music lasted far beyond a few hymns or choruses. Sometimes, the Holy Spirit would move in our midst, and praises to our Heavenly Father could continue to the end of the service. Now, the praise and worship segment of a service may range from nearly non-existent to something akin to a rock concert complete with elaborate lighting and fog machines. While

many of the contemporary songs beautifully bring honor to God, there surely must be room for more than one era of worship music. It disappoints me when I visit churches where they no longer sing some of the familiar songs I grew up with, such as “Glory to His Name,” “I Love You, Lord,” and “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” Nevertheless, things are not as they used to be, considering the fact that true worship is often an afterthought in many church services today, and memorable melodies and theologically sound lyrics are being replaced by repetitious lyrics, generic melodies, and millennial whoops.

Even though his circumstances were different than my own, I echo the words of the psalmist David who wrote, “My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be: I walked among the crowds of worshipers, leading a great procession to the house of God, singing for joy and giving thanks amid the sound of a great celebration!” (Ps. 42:4). The entire event known as “going to church” has drastically changed, even in the last couple of decades. Instead of church being seen as a way to renew one’s spirit and sing praises to the King of kings and Lord of lords, it is now often considered a place to “do one’s duty” by making a feeble effort to attend church. For some people, it makes them feel like a better person if they go to church. Others might be looking for a way to erase some guilt, and still others may attend church services simply to avoid sitting home alone for one hour per week. Whatever a person’s reasons for attending church, it certainly seems as if reverence to God often falls pretty far down on the list.

For many people, worshiping God is more of a spectator sport. Other individuals believe worshiping God is about putting on airs for other people to see. It is disheartening to know that many people have the outward appearance of

worshiping God, yet they do not actually worship Him in their heart. The Lord said, “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Isa. 29:13 NIV). Some people come to church with an enormous smile on their face, singing the praise songs proudly and raising their hands to the heavens. In reality, though, it is all for show. They want to *look* like a Christian. They want people to think they know how to worship, when they really have no concept of meaningful worship whatsoever. Their performance, if you will, is simply to draw attention to themselves as opposed to giving God the consideration He deserves. Worship must always be God-centered.

Jesus said, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind” (Matt. 22:37). Notice He did not say we should love the Lord our God a little bit or only with one piece of ourselves. We are to love the Lord with everything within us. God did not create us so we could split our praise between our favorite sports team, movie star, or recording artist, only reserving a small amount of praise for the Lord on Sundays. God created us so we could worship Him exclusively. If we love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind, then there will be nothing left over for other entities our earthly flesh may desire to honor. Rather than giving recognition to people, places, or things, which have no power to save us, we should give all of ourselves to God. He is the One who merits all of our praise.

Nonetheless, some people do not understand the importance of worshiping God. They feel worship is only something to check off the list once per week by going to



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church. Sadly, many people only darken the door of a church building on Christmas and Easter. These “holiday Christians” certainly fit the category of duty-led church attendance. The intricate decorations and frequently extravagant holiday pageants attract huge crowds largely because of their entertainment value. Of course, these individuals may just be living under the pretense of what a person *should* do, as opposed to anything they may actually want to do themselves. How disappointing it is to know that some people sitting in the pews on Sunday mornings literally have no clue about the meaning of it all. One pastor put the estimate at approximately sixty percent indifferent. Even sadder is the fact that some pastors are in the same predicament, leading a flock of congregants yet failing to realize why they are leading their congregation in the first place. In the midst of their confusion and frustration, many of them are leaving their churches at a rapid pace, with a large number of pastors departing the ministry every single month.

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While these individuals are struggling to cope with the daily disappointments of life, they could take a lesson from God's creation. The psalmist David wrote about the way all creation proclaims the greatness of God on a daily basis in Psalm 19:1-4:

The heavens proclaim the glory of God.  
The skies display his craftsmanship.  
Day after day they continue to speak;  
night after night they make him known.  
They speak without a sound or word;  
their voice is never heard.  
Yet their message has gone throughout the earth,  
and their words to all the world.

All day and all night long, God's marvelous creation makes His presence known. Unlike many people in the world today, they do not grow weary of bringing glory to the Creator. The birds do not get tired of flying and decide to take an extended break. The stars do not determine to turn themselves off, ceasing to light the night sky. The flowers and trees do not coordinate a protest against growing beautiful fragrant blooms and luscious fresh fruit. Not at all, for the sun, the moon, and all creation continuously displays His perfect majesty. Yet, in all of their radiance, the book of Psalms tells us, "Their voice is never heard." That is one thing that sets us apart from all of God's other unique creations. Men, women, boys, and girls are the only ones who can worship the Creator by speaking His name aloud. We have exclusive rights on worshiping God through words. We are the only ones who can declare His most holy name, sharing His amazing love with everyone we meet. It is up to

you and I to proclaim the name above all names with a voice others can hear throughout the earth. God created us to worship the Lord in all we do, sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ day after day, night after night.

Thankfully, there are devout Christians who continue to be witnesses for the Lord, always sharing the Gospel everywhere they go. Furthermore, there are churches, which serve as lighthouses within their communities. They have a common goal of reaching the lost, fulfilling the Great Commission as they share the Good News with everyone (Mark 16:15). One such church exists in the heart of downtown Brooklyn, serving as a godly refuge amid the hardened streets of New York City. God has blessed this ministry in a tremendous way, due to their sincere commitment to intercessory prayer and their focus on the One who matters most. Pastor Jim Cymbala often says the choir is singing to an audience of one, Jesus Christ. Everything they do is to give all glory to God, for He is the One who deserves all praise. They acknowledge the fact that a church service is not an entertainment venue, but a place for individuals from every tribe and tongue to magnify our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

### *An Audience of One*

*“Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10 KJV).*

Although the appearance of many church platforms would suggest otherwise, worship is not entertainment. When an

individual stands on the platform at church, his or her goal should not be showing off their fashionable new clothes, flashing a beautiful smile at the camera, or even desiring people's applause. They should have one goal, and that is to point everyone in the congregation to Jesus Christ. Likewise, as congregants, we should not be gazing at the worship team or choir members, but focusing our eyes on Jesus. We are not there to sway to the music or impress the people around us; we are there to sing to an audience of one, Jesus Christ.

I fondly recall a video my dad and I once watched online of a remarkable organist in California by the name of Derrick Jackson. He played a marvelous medley of gospel songs with expert accuracy and musical interpretation. At the end, the congregation who had been worshiping the Lord, stood and enthusiastically applauded his efforts. Rather than accept the praise given to him, he did something more



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surprising and profound than his skilled musicianship. He turned his back to the congregants, folded his hands, and humbly gave God all of the glory. He understood that his place was not to entertain the people, but to exalt the Lord.

In the fall of 2019, my dad and I had the opportunity to attend The Brooklyn Tabernacle Music Conference. Phil Wickham was the guest artist for this special event. After he

led the conference attendees in a selection of praise and worship songs, he began leading everyone in singing the beloved hymn, “How Great Thou Art.” In the middle of the song, he did something very few musical recording artists would even consider. He put his guitar down and walked off the platform. He did not stay for applause, nor did he seek recognition of any kind. He simply walked off stage quietly as all twelve hundred voices joined in harmony, lifting praises to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Instead of making worship about Phil Wickham, he made worship about Jesus



*Worshiping the Lord is not about having impressive stage presence; worshiping the Lord is about glorifying the wonderful name of Jesus Christ with everything that is within us.*



touching example of someone who wholeheartedly worshiped the Lord in spirit and in truth will bless you.

Christ. This example is one we should all strive to follow. Worshiping the Lord is not about having impressive stage presence; worshiping the Lord is about glorifying the wonderful name of Jesus Christ with everything that is within us.

In my inspirational autobiography, *When You're in the Sunset, There's Sunshine Awaiting You*, I shared the story of a gentleman my dad and I had the privilege of hearing sing in the Great Smoky Mountains. I pray my account of this



Several years ago, my dad and I visited a church in Cherokee, North Carolina. During the service, one of the members of the congregation sang a special song. This elderly gentleman poured his heart into every single note. Although it may not have been a performance deemed “good enough” to grace many prominent stages in the world, it was something I will always remember. The zeal and love for our Lord that he expressed through this single song embodied a greater message than a month of sermons could convey. His aim was not to please the congregation, but to please his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As he sang, he held nothing back. He passionately sang of his anticipation of seeing Christ. He gave everything he could to the delivery of this song, so that it might be pleasing to our Heavenly Father. Through his ministry, I know God used him to touch people’s hearts. How do I know? I know because his song touched my own heart in a special way.<sup>1</sup>

To this very day, I can clearly recall the goose bumps that covered my arms as this Native American man humbly delivered this song of praise to the Lord. Affectionately known as Brother Squirrel, he could certainly teach all of us about what it really means to worship. He was not concerned with the congregation or what they thought about how he sang. He was in tune with Jesus Christ throughout the entire song, giving all of the glory to the One who is most deserving of all praise. Brother Squirrel unreservedly knew the purpose of worship. Worship is not about pleasing people; worship is about pleasing God.

Having perfect pitch will not earn you salvation. Playing an innovative rendition of a beautiful song will not save you. Preaching a well-written sermon will not get you into Heaven. If you are living your life strictly to provide entertainment or to enjoy amusement of some kind, then you are not fulfilling God's purpose for your life. My dad wrote, "Unfortunately, many preachers and pastors focus too much attention on comedy, storytelling, and showmanship."<sup>2</sup> God did not create us for entertainment. He created us to proclaim His praise (Isa. 43:21). We are not on this earth to extol one another, nor are we here to bring attention to ourselves. Our Creator purposefully designed us to give Him glory. Our lives should be a living testimony of His grace and mercy, whether we are sitting with a few of our colleagues at our workplace, catching up with dozens of relatives at a family reunion, or standing in front of hundreds or even thousands of congregants in church. Everything we do should bring honor to God.

When we stand on the platform at church or any other location on this planet, we have an important reputation to uphold. It is far more than our personal reputations, for we are the ones representing the King of kings and Lord of lords. Second Corinthians 5:20 says, "We are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us." Our mission in life should be to shine forth the love of Christ everywhere we go. Consider this: what if your employer asked you to give a presentation at a prominent business meeting, which would influence the direction the company would take for the next five or ten years? Surely, you would make careful preparation, doing all you could to ensure you upheld the company's image. By comparison, we should diligently labor to ensure our lives demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ every day of our lives. Sharing His love

with people whom God places in our paths could be the determining factor in whether they choose to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. If we put ourselves before Christ, we could be the one thing standing between them and the Lord. As opposed to having a five or ten-year impact on a corporation, each time we speak to other people has the potential to influence their life for eternity.

Nevertheless, some people seem to gloss over this vital truth, acting as if nothing they do could possibly have an effect on another person. To complicate matters further, they live as if they are on this earth for the sole purpose of making themselves happy. Rather than give their lives to serving others, or most importantly, serving the Lord, they focus on themselves, neglecting the notion that their testimony of God's faithfulness in their life could save someone on the verge of suicide. Recently, someone emailed me and said they thought ending their life would make them feel okay. They did not contact me so they could hear the latest weather report or even to hear my life story. Nor did they reach out to me, hoping I would simply tell them to go and live their best life. They emailed me because they needed encouragement from the Word of God, reassuring them that there is hope beyond their circumstances. They needed someone to tell them that God created them for a purpose, reaffirming the fact their life is valuable. They needed someone to remind them that Jesus Christ loves them more than they could ever begin to imagine.

I will always remember our visit to Nanortalik, a small fishing village in southern Greenland. With a population of less than twelve hundred, Nanortalik Church singlehandedly serves the spiritual needs of the entire community. As we walked through the doors of this historic church built in

1916, a small group of native Greenlanders was singing hymns of praise to God. After the concert, we gave them some Gospel tracts we had written to encourage them. My dad also had the opportunity to play their organ, which featured hand-carved wooden keys. The chance to encourage these fellow believers was truly special. We spoke to many people throughout the town as well. Seeing the downcast faces of young and old was heartbreaking. Although a small number in this remote area serve the Lord, the lack of adequate sunlight during the year coupled with the struggling economy causes many people to succumb to depression and alcoholism. Greenland's suicide rate is reportedly among the highest in the world. The people living in this region do not need someone to entertain them or to offer a five-step program designed to help them achieve success. They need the eternal hope that only comes from knowing Jesus Christ.

People do not need a parade of motivational speakers or flashy entertainers. There are already plenty of those in the secular world. Even so, many churches spend millions of dollars, striving to provide a family-friendly entertainment venue as opposed to a beacon of hope to a lost and dying world. Not too long ago, someone told me of a visit to a friend's church near Atlanta, Georgia. As they summarized their experience, all they said was that there were many lights on the platform and loud music. Yet, this worldly display did not intrigue them a bit, despite the fact they are a member of the younger generation and a previous member of a rock band. Instead, they were disappointed to find such goings-on within the church. They had nothing to say regarding the pastor's sermon. There were no comments made concerning the messages conveyed through the lyrics of the songs sung. They went to church, watched a show, and returned home.

The whole purpose of assembling for a church service was lost in translation due to this church's desire to be *like* the world instead of being a *light* to the world. As my dad said, "Boats are put in water. That is their purpose. However, if water gets in the boat, it will sink. The church should be in the world; the world should not be in the church."

When individuals walk into a church sanctuary, they need to find spiritual refreshment. The worship team and



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musicians should be leading people into a spirit of worship, not doing all they can to provide the latest beat with which people can mindlessly clap their hands. Likewise, the purpose of the pastor is not to entertain their congregants. It is not the minister's job to serve as the Sunday morning comedian, or motivational speaker, but to serve as the shepherd of their flock. The apostle Paul summarized the purpose of a worship service when he wrote, "Let everything be constructive *and* edifying *and* done for the good of all the church" (1 Cor. 14:26 AMP). When we gather to worship our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we should have two goals. One should be to glorify the King of kings and Lord of lords. Our second goal should be to provide spiritual strength to our brothers and sisters in Christ. If congregants do not leave the church sanctuary feeling revived spiritually, ready to confidently battle through another week, then the church has completely failed. As the apostle Paul wrote, "everything,"

meaning the music, the sermon, the prayer time, and all that is in-between, must serve to strengthen everyone.

Church should always be spiritually edifying to everyone in the congregation. The intention of praise and worship music is not to



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provide young people with the opportunity to dance. Preachers should not deliver sermons in an effort to give people in the congregation a sense of self-proclaimed empowerment or attempt to get people excited by shouting at the top of their lungs. Children's ministry programs do not exist to provide a free babysitting service for parents and guardians one or two hours per week. Even the nursery should not be a place for aimless playtime or naptime, for the Bible says children should be brought "up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4 NIV). Although this instruction should originate at home, the church should reinforce the godly principles children learn from their parents. Activities for young adults, senior citizens, widows, and other specialized groups should all serve to edify the saints. Church should be a conduit of encouragement, not a means of entertainment.

Pastors and other church leaders need to remember that the people who enter the sanctuary doors are battling the same trials they themselves encounter each week. Mothers and fathers enter church services emotionally and physically drained from the busy

events of the week. Children and teens face all manner of negative influences throughout the week, coming from other people, the television, the Internet, and many other sources. Single adults could be wondering if they will ever find a spouse or be alone for the rest of their lives. Other adults may be seeking God's purpose for their lives following retirement, or they may be trying to adjust to an empty nest. Some people may be struggling with drug addiction, depression, or suicidal thoughts. Everyone has a story. We all encounter difficulties every single day. As such, the church should serve as a triage center, providing aid for the diverse needs of the congregation. People need to know that



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deserves the  
spotlight.*



someone cares, that someone loves them, and that they are not alone. As James 1:27 says, this is part of our worship and pure religion.

This Sunday morning, someone sitting in the pew in front of you could be going through a dreadfully dark valley, needing a shoulder to lean on or

maybe even to cry on. Perhaps they just received a cancer diagnosis, where the doctor told them they only have a few months to live. Rather than considering their own health concerns, they could be troubled over the fear of leaving behind their spouse and children. An entertaining sermon or foot-tapping song is not going to help them all that much, no more than a conversation about current events is truly going to lift their spirits. They need a dose of divine inspiration,

which can only come from God. This individual needs fellow churchgoers to go to the throne of grace, praying on their behalf, while reminding them that the Lord heals all of our diseases (Ps. 103:3). Like the person facing a battle with cancer, countless individuals are experiencing equally distressing situations, anxiously searching for true, lasting hope. We need to be the ones to tell them that Jesus Christ is the only source of eternal hope. The church should be a lighthouse to the community and to the world, careful to focus on delivering spiritual encouragement not secular entertainment, for Jesus Christ is the only One who deserves the spotlight. He alone deserves all of our praise.

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*Worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth*  
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# God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.

Bowing down, raising hands, singing praises—there are innumerable forms of worship throughout the world. Some groups worship on certain days of the week or during particular months of the year. There are people who believe they should only worship in a certain location and those who feel they have the freedom to worship anywhere in the world. While many individuals take worship very seriously, others are rather lukewarm in their approach to worship. The most important question concerning worship, however, is not how you worship, when you worship, or where you worship. The vital question surrounding worship is distinctly, “*Who* do you worship?”

God is the only One we should worship. The time to worship Him is now. Jesus said, “The time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way” (John 4:23). God is seeking individuals who will glorify Him through everything they do. Worship is not a spectator sport. Worship is a way of life. Our purpose on this earth is to bring glory to our Creator as we worship Him in spirit and in truth!

“*Worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth* is a book that will enlighten your understanding as to what God desires, but also inspire your heart to live a life filled with praise.”

Pastor Jim Cymbala, The Brooklyn Tabernacle

“In *Worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth*, we are reminded that worship is not a show put on by an entertaining band on a Sunday morning. It is about establishing a genuine connection with the only One who deserves our praise.”

Pastor Eddie Luke, Sanderson Christian Revival Center



Jennifer Joy Campbell is a public school teacher, host of the *Be Encouraged* webcast, and author of *When You're in the Sunset, There's Sunshine Awaiting You*. Having been blessed to travel to over fifty countries, her greatest passion is sharing the love of Jesus Christ around the world. She and her dad, Ken, live in Florida.

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