

ARRIVAL - an entire Hollywood blockbuster based on **linguistics** – **the study of language**.

Linguistic relativity - language effects our worldview.

Linguistic determinism - goes a step further - language effects how we experience reality.

Proverbs 18:21 –words can bring death or life!

We often make this verse about the totality of our words and what comes out of our mouth.

But what about *each* word?

When we lose our spiritual vocabulary... it can result in a decay of belief, instead of life.

The point we get to is this: ***The definition of our words can make a world of a difference.***

We've looked at words we use again and again without ever pausing to consider what they mean, and what they mean to our faith walk.

We've looked at words that we've stopped using altogether.

Worship has been shrunk until our use of it only addresses the smallest fraction of its meaning.

Liturgy by most streams has been all but kicked to the curb.

But reconsidering and reembracing the concept of liturgy can breathe life into our worship again!

ROMANS 12:1-2

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out.

One commentary on Romans 12 said the following:

“All theology is practical, and all practice, if it is truly Christian, is theological.”

The point?

The good news of Jesus Christ is supposed to impact our lives from the ground up, starting now, moment by moment. It is meant to be owned and lived out in every detail and habit.

The Common Rule by Justin Earley – it's about lining up our habits with our beliefs.

In it he states: *“we are all living according to a specific regimen of habits, and those habits shape most of our life... he defines a habit as something we do automatically, subconsciously, over and over. And he quotes a study from Duke that shows 40% of our actions each and every day aren't products of choices, but of habits.*

So much of what shapes us we allow to happen unconsciously.

“Liturgy is a pattern of words or actions repeated regularly as a way of worship. The goal of liturgy is for the participant be formed in a certain way. [Habits and liturgy] are both something

repeated over and over, which forms you; the only difference is that a liturgy admits its an act of worship."

His focus is habits. But I wanted to use liturgy as a window to look at worship tonight. In our intro to this series we talked about how **"every word is a window."**

The lens of liturgy - helps inform our worship.

How is liturgy practically defined in our dictionaries?

the ritual or script for various forms of public worship in churches

We often think about worship as what?

"Public worship in churches."

The power of two or more being gathered.

God is glorified in a special way with public worship.

Jesus is said to manifest himself in and through his Church.

Public worship most resembles Heaven.

There's so much value in our public worship.

But when that is the extent of our definition of worship, we walk back out of those doors and it's like we step out of this awkwardly inserted sentiment and devotion and back into our unsentimental, no-nonsense lives.

Within our public worship services there is a liturgy, even if we don't call it one.

But what about our private - personal worship?

What about our Romans 12 worship?

Offering *"your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life"* to God.

Paul says it plain: **"This is worship."**

That means worship isn't just what we do on the weekend. It's how we live.

We see throughout scripture, prophets reminding God's people again and again: our public worship carries little meaning without a personal worship that invades our behavior, interactions, and habits.

Is there a liturgy for that?

Looking at liturgy's definition: *is there a ritual and a script for that?*

RITUAL

Wait- **ritual?** That's bad right?

We think of ritual and think of verses like Isaiah 29:13, which was quoted by Jesus:

These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. And their worship of me is nothing but man-made rules learned by rote. [Rote routine, ritual]

Rituals aren't problematic in and of themselves.
Rote routines and empty rituals are problematic.
But what about meaningful, rich rituals that point us back to Jesus? (ie communion)

Sure, if we were implementing habits to earn **justification** before God and earn his love, or to be justified before him... they would be legalism and unbiblical.
But when we recognize the call to **sanctification**, growing in grace to look more like Jesus, habits are key. They are a necessity, a non-negotiable.

Romans 12:1-2 –AMP- *“don't conform, but be transformed and progressively changed by the renewing of your mind.”*

“Renewing of the mind” is progressive. “Progressively changed”

The very fact that Paul is calling believers to a process is proof it doesn't just automatically happen to us when we believe.

We worship Jesus, so we work on our habits,
Because we worship through our habits.

“We all worship something” We've heard that preached and proclaimed.

But the secular author David Foster Wallace spoke these words to the 2005 graduating class at Kenyon College: *“Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship...is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough...Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you...Worship power, you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. But the insidious thing about these forms of worship is...they're unconscious. They are default settings.”*

What gives these words such ominous weight – that anything outside of God that you worship will eat you alive – is that it wasn't long after this that Wallace took his life.

What he said was true and echoes reality.

We were created to worship. We all worship. We were wired for it.

He called it our default setting. It's often unconscious.

So how do you know what you worship? Check your habits.

We have to recognize – our habits are little liturgies. Rituals and scripts that form us.

Of **8000** Christians surveyed, **73%** say they check their phone before any kind of devotionals. And then on average, as we go about our day, we check our smart phones every 4.3 minutes of

our waking lives.

But while these impulses strike me as annoying or frustrating habits, I often fail to consider that face that they are more than that. They are deeply formative.

I hate that the phone and its apps and social media invades my habits.

But I don't often think – *it has invaded my worship.*

But at some point in our mornings its onto the daily grind...

We've long bought the lie that gathering as a body for preaching and prayer and praise is the real worship, and the daily grind is inferior.

We so often forget that Jesus spent 30 years in relative obscurity, working the daily grind as a carpenter.

This seemingly obscure daily grind was a part of our redemption story.

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The lens of liturgy helps us see that these moment by moment rituals we repeat – they form us. They either help us conform or be transformed. When we zoom into each moment of our life, those moments are part of our worship.

SCRIPT

We speak the English language, which has a very linear view of time made up in individually packaged days, hours, and minutes that march along from past to future. It gives us the illusion that time is blocks in a calendar that we feel we can tame and control.

But many other languages, like the Hopi native American tribe for instance, have a more cyclical notion that days aren't separate things, but that "day" is something that comes and goes.

Which- in a way- is kind of closer to reality- that's the same sun that's back again.

In Arrival the alien language is expressed in circles. Their language is circular and cyclical, which allows them to see past, present and future as a big cycle they can zoom out from and see from the outside.

We can compartmentalize our days and our life and forget it all flows as part of a bigger story. It doesn't revolve around us. It revolves around Jesus.

You see- the problem isn't just that some of habits day to day *waste* time.

Our habits also *frame* time – meaning they shape the script and story we live in.

In many of the new Star Wars movies numerous actors and actresses lined up to play cameo, background, low-to-no-profile roles. All kinds of A list to B list to C list actors. But chief among them was **Daniel Craig**. James Bond. He's starred in well over 40 other films, yet in Star Wars- a story that began some 40 years ago- he asked to play and I quote:

“some sort of secret cameo role.”

Why would Craig do this?

The most likely explanation for Craig and so many other who volunteered for such roles – is that Star Wars is such a huge story in film history that these actors happily stepped into a role, even if it wasn't a starring one.

Their perspective?

It's about the bigger story - not me. I'm just honored to be a part of such an iconic Hollywood story.

Why do we love stories like Star Wars so much? We love them so much because we were created to live in one. We aren't just meant to watch and read stories. We are created to live in one.

We desire meaning. Purpose. That story is the Gospel. The good news of our redemption.

God creates in Genesis, and in the next book Exodus and into Leviticus he ordains liturgies – rituals and practices for worship – all of these point to Jesus.

The Prophets would correct it when it became rote routine or off the rails.

Then Jesus came as the fulfillment.

So we think... the liturgies and structures aren't needed anymore.

But to let go of the script that informs our worship is to lose the plot.

To let go of scripture is to lost the script.

“Don't conform to the patterns of the world.”

That sounds all ethereal and poetic and deeply spiritual.

But it's intensely practical and applicable to our culture.

You're taking in a liturgy and its script daily. These liturgies like all liturgies shape us.

We are conforming or transforming.

The liturgical calendar is structured around the seasons of Advent, the Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost – and it helps us not to conform to a culture of impatience that rushes from celebration to celebration, and holiday to holiday, without ever pausing to find purpose or meaning in it, leaving us empty and hung over instead of filled and fulfilled

The liturgical calendar teaches us to embrace a liturgy of patience and longing and hope.

To seek meaning in every moment and every season in Christ.

The power isn't in the calendar.

The power is in what it points to. Scripture. Jesus.

Want to change and redeem your script? Open scripture.

Even before God's people had Advent, Easter, and a like, the liturgies and rituals introduced in the beginning of scripture gave God's people the script. It gave them a deeper meaning. It told God's people that they were a part of a bigger story that pointed forward to Jesus.

Hebrews is such a powerful book of the Bible because it unpack all of the structure of the priesthood and sacrifices and the prophets and how every bit of it points to Jesus.

And what does Hebrews close saying? Let go of liturgy? No.

As Hebrews is coming to a close, we get the command in **Hebrews 13:15-16**:

Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God.

I love verse 16 in the MSG - *God takes particular pleasure in acts of worship—a different kind of “sacrifice”—that take place in kitchen and workplace and on the streets.*

All your little liturgies.

All your rituals and scripts.

All of your habits.

Offer them to God as ‘a different kind of sacrifice.’

Hebrews also contains one of my all time favorite verses that makes sure we don't lose perspective in the midst of a focus on disciplines and habits and walking in sanctification.

Hebrews 10:14:

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

We don't implement habits and do anything to earn justification.

He has perfected us. We have right standing. Our debt has been paid.

Communion is a ritual that Jesus told us to never stop doing.

Because it reminds us of our script.

It's a part of the liturgy of almost every church.

Why? We remember.

Why does he tell us to remember?

He knows we forget.

Life has a way of making us disoriented and forgetful of the story we're in.

The hectic pace.

The to do lists.

The demands of our jobs.

We orient our lives around all of the above.

We lose our liturgy.

We lose our script.

And we lose the plot.

TAKE COMMUNION

"Take my moments and my days - ceaseless praise, ceaseless praise"