

Worship - A Way of Life

A 3 Week Study

Leader's Edition

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The leader tips are just that - tips. They are not meant to be the only correct answers. Some questions will have many answers, others will have no correct answer. If they are helpful to you, great. That is my hope. If not, simply disregard them. Also, the ending prayers are meant only as a guide. Please do not feel that you have to pray them verbatim.

Week 1 - Worship - A Divine Destiny

Main Idea - God Created us in His image so that we might live in relationship with Him, while fulfilling His purpose on earth, and ultimately bring Him glory.

Focal Passage - John 4:23-24 - Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Warm-Up question - Have you ever had an interesting conversation about your faith in a public place, like a store or restaurant? Would you describe it to the group?

Leader Tip - This may be a difficult question for a group with many new believers. If you think your group may struggle, you might have a story ready.

GROWING TOGETHER:

1. Read John 4:7-15. Do you think that Jesus and the woman were communicating on the same level? Was she "getting" what Jesus was talking about?

Leader Tip - The answer here is probably NO. She didn't understand, but don't let it stop there. Try to draw out reasons. You might follow up with, "Why did she not understand Jesus?" or "Would you have understood Jesus in this situation?"

2. Read John 4:16-20. It seems like the Samaritan woman was trying to change the subject in this instance. Why do you think she wanted to do that? Why did she change the subject to worship?

Leader Tip - The argument about the proper place and method of worshiping God was probably a long-standing one that everyone would have known and debated. It was

probably fodder for dinner table conversation. You might call attention to the fact that arguments about worship are nothing new.

3. Do you know anyone or have you ever met anyone who used conflict over worship as an excuse to avoid dealing with spiritual issues in their own life? Have you ever done it?

Leader Tip - If this question leads nowhere, you might spur the conversation along by asking, "What excuses *have* you used or heard other people using to avoid a hard spiritual question?"

4. Read John 4:21-24. In this passage Jesus seems to say, "OK, if you want to talk about worship, then let me tell you what it really should be." Then he tells her that true worshipers will worship in spirit and truth. What does it mean to worship in spirit? What does it mean to worship in truth?

Leader Tip - Take your time here. This is the meat. Both parts of this question have a two-fold answer. Worshiping in spirit means that we worship in our spirit. We are spiritual beings and we can't just go through the motions. It must be a real connecting of our spirit with God. It also means that worship is initiated and sustained by the Holy Spirit, and we must be in step with Him to truly worship. To worship in truth means that we worship the One, True God, in the fullness of all of His character, beauty and holiness. It also means that we worship knowing the truth about ourselves and our spiritual position.

5. Which is more difficult for you personally; worshiping in spirit, or worshiping in truth?

Leader Tip - There is so much in #4. This is just a follow up to it, meant to help you "flesh it out" a little more.

"Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't."

"All of history is moving toward one great goal, the white-hot worship of God and His Son among all the peoples of the earth. Missions is not that goal. It is the means. And for that reason it is the second greatest human activity in the world."

— John Piper

6. Read the above quotes from John Piper, then look back at the last phrase of verse 23

- “for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.” Is God in the business of “seeking” worshipers? How does this stack up against what you believe about missions/evangelism and worship?

Leader Tip - Many people who come from an evangelical background have been taught that evangelism/missions is the primary purpose of the church. The concept that evangelism is a means to the end of creating worshipers (people who glorify God), might be a difficult one for some. If you have some who are struggling with this you might help them by talking about the eternal nature of worship (Rev. 4:10, 5:14, 14:7, Psalm 86:12).

7. Read Matthew 28:18-20 (the Great Commission). What is the difference in a disciple and a worshiper? Should we make a distinction or is to be a disciple also to be a worshiper?

Leader Tip - Not sure if there is a right answer here, this is more of a catalyst for thinking about the similarities, not the differences. Perhaps, to be a disciple is to learn to be a worshiper?

8. Read John 4:25-26. This is probably the clearest declaration that we get from Jesus regarding his identity as Messiah (the Christ). Why do you think Jesus chose to end the conversation this way?

Leader Tip - We can't say for sure what Jesus' motives might have been. But in the context of worship, we realize that true worship (in spirit and truth) is always rooted in the person and redeeming work of Jesus the Christ.

You might end your time together by praying something like this: *Lord, thank you for sending Jesus to make a way for us, so that we can come before You in worship and praise. Teach us to be true worshipers. Since, we know that is what you seek, that is what we desire to be. Holy Spirit, show us what it means to worship in spirit and in truth. Conform our desires to your will, so that You will be glorified in us. We live, we worship, we pray all in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

GROWING AT HOME:

Daily Bible Reading -

Monday - Psalm 86:12

Tuesday - Hebrews 12:28

Wednesday - Revelation 4:10-11

Thursday - Psalm 5:7

Friday - Romans 12:1

Saturday - 1 Chronicles 16:29

Weekly Challenge - Strike up a conversation with someone about spiritual matters. See how far you get. If they change the subject, try to model Jesus, and let it go where it will, creating a teaching moment if you can. Report the results back to the group next week.

Week 2 - Worship - A Divine Dialogue

Main Idea - Worship is a dialogue or conversation that is initiated and maintained by God Himself. Our responsibility is to recognize and respond to God's revelation.

Focal Passage - Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory."

4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Warm-Up Question - What is your favorite worship song?

Leader Tip - This could really be anything. It doesn't necessarily need to be something you sing. It could be an old song that they grew up with.

GROWING TOGETHER:

Start by having someone read aloud Isaiah 6:1-8

1. In verses 1-4 God gives Isaiah a glimpse of the heavenly throne room in a vision. We

don't experience many visions like this today, but God certainly does reveal Himself to His people in many ways. What are some of the ways that God often reveals Himself today? Have you experienced any of these ways lately?

Leader Tip - The Bible, The Holy Spirit, Other Believers, circumstances...plenty more, but watch out for some crazy stuff here as well. God does NOT reveal Himself by saying things that are contrary to His Word. After this question is answered read (or have someone read) aloud the following quote.

Four wonderful and reassuring truths form the basis of God's self-revelation to his people. First, God is knowable. Count it all joy! God can be known-by us. Second, God *wants* us to know him; this is his heart's desire. Third, God *delights* to be known. Fourth, God is constantly in the process of making himself known to people - especially those who hunger and thirst after him. - Bruce H. Leafblad

2. What does it mean in your life that not only is God "knowable," but he delights in our knowing and wanting to know him?

Leader Tip - There is no "right" answer here, but we are looking for the implications of knowing God in people's lives...ie. hope, joy, salvation, peace...

3. What was the response of the seraphs (heavenly beings) to being in God's presence?

Leader Tip - Worship, praise, adoration, prostration. An interesting aside - The sound of their voices shook the doorposts and thresholds. It was probably LOUD!

4. In this passage Isaiah is exposed to God being worshiped in His holiness and glory. What was Isaiah's response to this?

Leader Tip - Isaiah's response could be described many ways - humility, despair, confession. When we are confronted with God's holiness our own sin, unrighteousness, and inadequacies are brought to light. Isaiah was overcome with guilt and shame.

5. In verses 6 and 7 God responds to Isaiah's humility and confession by forgiving and cleansing him. Has a realization of God's presence and holiness ever led you to humility or confession in your life? Should a planned time of confession be part of a corporate worship experience?

Leader Tip - Hopefully, someone will answer the first question with a yes, but you may need to encourage them to describe it. As for the second question, we actually do have that. We call it an invitation or altar call. It might be interesting if we moved the altar call to a different spot in the worship order though.

6. Look back at verse 8. It is interesting that Isaiah only heard God's call after he had confessed his sin and was forgiven. Have you ever tried to hear from God, but couldn't because you had unconfessed sin in your life?

Leader Tip - This question has the potential to be life changing, or it could get off point quickly. Stay sharp here, you may need to refocus the group, or suggest a private conversation if it gets overly personal. Pray for the Holy Spirit to convict.

So here is an outline of Isaiah's experience and a Biblical model for us to follow in worship:

Act of God - He reveals Himself in His holiness and beauty. verses 1-2

Act of the People - We worship, adore, and praise. verses 3-4

Act of the People - We humble ourselves and confess our sin. verse 5

Act of God - He forgives and cleanses. Our sin is atoned for. verses 6-7

Act of God - He calls us to follow and serve Him. verse 8

Act of the People - We obey, and dedicate ourselves to His service. verse 8b-9

Act of God - He commissions us to go out with His message. verse 9-11

7. After you've examined the outline above, think about what happens in your spirit, mind, and heart on a Sunday morning. How does it compare to Isaiah's experience? What can you do to come closer to this biblical model when you worship?

Leader Tip - This question could really go anywhere. Try to keep people focused on their responsibility for their own worship experience, not on what the church leadership could do differently. Hopefully, one suggestion will be, "I can prepare my heart for worship and experiencing God's presence before I ever get to church on Sunday mornings."

You might end your time together by praying something like this. Lord, help me to realize that you are always with me. When we come together to worship, God, I want to know you in all of your beauty and holiness. Help us to confess our sin, so that we might hear from You and know your will for our lives. Father, we praise you now, for who you are and for sending Jesus Christ as an atonement for our sins. We leave this place now ready to do your will and commissioned with the message of your good

news. Amen.

GROWING AT HOME:

Daily Bible Reading -

Monday - Psalm 29:2

Tuesday - Jonah 2:8

Wednesday - Matthew 15:8-9

Thursday - Revelation 15:4

Friday - Colossians 3:16

Saturday - Isaiah 1:11-17

Weekly Challenge - Next time you enter into a corporate worship setting (come to church), ask God to reveal Himself to you in a new and different way than He ever has before.

Week 3 - Worship - A Divine Discipline

Main Idea - Living a life of worship involves developing disciplines and habits that lead to holiness, and a continuing awareness of God's presence.

Focal Passage - John 15:5,8 -

5"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

8This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

Warm-Up Question: What one habit would you most like to break or begin in your life?

GROWING TOGETHER:

In this passage, Jesus seems to be saying that one of the ways we give Glory to God (worship) is to "bear much fruit" showing ourselves to be disciples. In order to bear fruit

we must “remain” in Him. The KJV and NASB use the word “abide.” The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines “abide” this way: *to endure without yielding, to bear patiently, to accept without objection, to remain stable or fixed, sojourn.*

This, then, is the flow:

We abide in Christ > We bear fruit, displaying our discipleship > God gets glory

It seems simple enough to understand. It’s in the application that we find difficulty. In order to “abide” or “remain” in Christ. We must develop habits that lead to holiness and a constant awareness of God’s presence in our lives. Let’s examine some of the disciplines that lead us to give God glory in our lives.

The Discipline of Praise

But the most obvious fact about praise-whether of God or any thing-strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honor. I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise unless (sometimes even if) shyness or the fear of boring others is deliberately brought in to check it. The world rings with praise-lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game-praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars. I had not noticed how the humblest, and at the same time most balanced and capacious, minds, praised most, while the cranks, misfits and malcontents praised least....

I had not noticed either that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: "Isn't she lovely? Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think that magnificent?" The Psalmists in telling everyone to praise God are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about. My whole, more general, difficulty about the praise of God depended on my absurdly denying to us, as regards the supremely Valuable, what we delight to do, what indeed we can't help doing, about everything else we value.

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. (C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1958, pp. 93-95)

1. Read the quote from C.S. Lewis then read Psalm 150. Have you ever had a time in your life when it was difficult to praise God? Why do you think it is hard for some people to praise?

Leader Tip - Most people go through seasons when it is hard to praise God, mostly because of life circumstances. But others have never really learned to praise.

The Discipline of Singing/Music

2. It is apparent from scripture that the early church was a singing church. Read Ephesians 5:19-20 and Colossians 3:16. Why do you think singing and making music is the primary vehicle for praise and thanksgiving in worshipping churches today?

Leader Tip - A lot of reasons. Here are a few to get started: It is easy to do as a group, we can do it together. It helps us express praise corporately, at the same time. It is universal, every culture has some form of musical expression. It is memorable (easier to remember something when you sing it). I won't go so far as to say that it is mandated by scripture, but it is certainly strongly encouraged. There are too many others to list.

3. Why do you think Paul mentioned three different kinds of songs (Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs)? Why didn't he just say, "Sing to the Lord?"

Leader Tip - I believe Paul is making a push for variety here. He knew that different kinds of songs would serve different purposes, and that the church would need them all in season.

The Discipline of Public and Private Prayer

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and Luke 18:9-14.

4. The bad pray-er in the New Testament is the Pharisee who prays a self-glorifying prayer of thanksgiving, not the sinner who prays a humble prayer of confession/supplication. Think about this, then give several examples of how thanksgiving prayers can be used wrongly for self-glorification or other purposes out of line with God's values.

Leader Tip - Notice that both the Pharisee and the tax collector prayed aloud in public. There is nothing more or less spiritual about public verses private prayer. One idea is that prayer is not a performance, but humble communication with God. We should avoid performance prayers.

5. What one thing might you do to improve prayer in your personal life?

The Discipline of Scripture and Preaching

6. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18, 21. In the New Testament, preaching was simply proclaiming the gospel or telling the good news. It was usually done outside of the church gathering, or early on in the temple. Inside the church gathering the scripture was read and taught. What is the difference in teaching scripture and preaching the

gospel? What role should each play in corporate worship?

Leader Tip - Some people may make no distinction and that is OK. Scripturally, preaching is centered around the redeeming work of Christ on the Cross. Whereas, teaching might cover the full breadth of the Old and New Testaments. Some would argue that all of scripture points to the cross, but that is looking at it through a very large lens.

7. Read 1 Timothy 4:13 and 2 Timothy 3:16. Share some ways that scripture has been “profitable”(NASB) or “useful”(NIV) in your life. What is your attitude when someone reads scripture in public worship? Are you receptive?

Leader Tip - Maybe someone will admit that they get bored, or sometimes tune it out. We all do it, but as we mature in the Lord scripture should be more exciting and more treasured.

The Discipline of Giving/Serving

Worship is about giving - giving to God from a heart of love and adoration, giving of self, giving of talent, giving praise, giving up ambitions, giving strength, giving wealth, and giving up ego. - Vernon M. Whaley (The Dynamics of Corporate Worship, Baker Books 2001)

8. Read the first 20 verses of 1 Chronicles 29. This is the story of King David giving to finance the temple that Solomon was to build. David basically gave his entire fortune over to building the temple of God. Look closely at verses 6 and 9. How does it describe their giving? What was the response of the people to the giving?

Leader Tip - They gave willingly, freely, wholeheartedly (depending on the translation). The people and even the King rejoiced to see it.

9. Notice how the giving is followed by worship and praise. Reread verses 16-18. What does giving have to do with integrity and loyalty? Is this a prayer that you could honestly pray? Is your giving truly a joyful act of worship?

Leader Tip - If you have non-Christians in your group, this may be a little sensitive. Our giving says a lot about where our loyalties really lie.

You might end your time together by praying something like this. Father, we desire to give you glory in all that we do. Lord Jesus, help us to abide in your so that we might bear much fruit. As your disciples we commit ourselves to your word and your ways. Holy Spirit, help us to remain faithful in prayer, praise, preaching your word, and in giving all of ourselves to you. Help us to take up our cross daily as we worship you with

our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

GROWING AT HOME:

Daily Bible Reading -

Monday - Psalm 96:8

Tuesday - Psalm 57:9

Wednesday - Exodus 15:1-2

Thursday - 1 Corinthians 14:15

Friday - Psalm 149:1

Saturday - Luke 2:14

Weekly Challenge - Pick one discipline from this study - praise, singing, prayer, scripture, preaching, giving, serving - and deliberately do it everyday for a week. After the week is over ask yourself if it got easier to do or harder.