

WORSHIP

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Take a minute to pray for God to guide you as you study...

In the last lesson, we talked about prayer life and how important it is. Share with someone how it has been working in your life!

While prayer is a critical part to being a disciple of Christ, worship is another aspect that you will experience as well. And in order to understand worship, you need to know what it is, why we do it and how it is done.

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

If you were to look up the definition of WORSHIP, you would read something along the lines of, *“The feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a diety.”* It makes sense that Christians, disciples, would worship (express adoration and reverence) for God since God paid such a price for humanity. His price was ridiculous! In fact, the most well-known verse in the Bible puts that price in words where it says,

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only _____, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

The price that God paid for us is enormous, and it’s something that we as disciples will always be in awe of. That incredible sacrifice would be enough for us to give our adoration and reverence to God, but there’s even more reason than that! But we are getting ahead of ourselves. First, let’s take a look at what worship is.

In the 10 commandments, God outlines the “What” of worship... what it really is.

Exodus 20:2-5: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have ____ other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or _____ them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God...”

Here, God is speaking to people that he just saved from slavery, and He tells them to give Him His proper place in their lives. Worship involves giving whatever it is that we are worshipping its proper place within our hearts. God, having saved His people, is saying that He should be first over everything else! He deserves it because of what He has done. God should receive our reverence and adoration more than our marriages, more than our jobs, more than our hobbies. Worship is making God the priority in our lives.

A question that many want to ask when it comes to worship is, does God command us to make Him number one because He is egotistical and wants to merely be adored and praised non-stop? It’s a really good question and one that has been asked by many people, including C.S. Lewis. When C.S. Lewis became a Christian and was learning how to draw near to God through the Psalms, he would see commands to give praise and worship to God. This was something that puzzled him tremendously. He said that we often despise those who require us to pay homage or ascribe a certain status, yet God requires us to worship Him. Lewis struggled with this concept, and I believe it’s because he had the wrong perspective on what worship is. In all reality, worship is not an order, it’s an opportunity!

Just look at how Psalm 95:6 puts it:

Psalm 95:6: “Come, let us bow down in _____, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.”

The invitation to worship our Maker is a powerful perspective adjustment that will help you want to worship instead of feel like you NEED to worship. Worship is an opportunity, and why we worship makes it even more meaningful.

WHY WORSHIP?

Jesus really zeroes in on the “why” of worship in John 4. Take a minute and read John 4:7-24.

In this story, Jesus encounters a samaritan woman (which is unheard of, because He is a Jewish man) and reaches out to her for water. But the main issue isn’t really about water. It’s about something we all have in common...**a desire for connection.** We all have a desire for connection, to be in a relationship of trust and love, one that is majestic and filled with awe.

And watch what Jesus does as He works past the baggage in this woman’s life and goes straight for a deeper relationship with her.

John 4:16-18: Jesus says to the woman, “‘Go, call your _____ and come back.’ ‘I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

BASIC POINT

Worship is making God the priority in our lives

Jesus completely cuts through her response by zeroing in on her greatest desire, desire for connection and a desire for relationship. She had searched and searched for a way to meet her most basic need, and yet, she could not find it.

Worship is built on the idea of building a relationship with a God that cares about you! It’s all about your connection with Him and how you can grow deeper with Him! Worship is an opportunity to know God!

At creation, God made us in His image. We look like Him and are made like Him. And just like He is a relational God that wants to connect with us and have a relationship with us, we too have this natural desire of relationship.

In Genesis 2, God has wrapped up all of His creation; He has created the Earth and everything on it. Then God does something remarkable! He rests on the 7th day. He has no work that needs to be finished, no meetings to attend, no emails that need to be responded to. He can devote all off His attention to His creation, specifically His created image, mankind. God desires connection and He placed that desire within us. The 7th day comes and God can play with His created image, mankind. He spent the entire day just building a relationship with Adam and Eve, humans. And you know what? Each and every week since then, God has set aside His schedule so that we can spend time with Him too!

As Jesus is wrapping up his conversation with the woman at the well, he gives a charge to her, and to you today. He says in,

John 4:24: “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the _____ and in _____.”

It’s almost like Jesus tells us that our worship should be with all our hearts (spirit) and about everything that we know about God (truth). It’s like He’s challenging us to praise and adore Him and connect with Him on all levels, because He knows that is the only thing that will satisfy our longing to be in relationship. We worship God because, if we were honest with ourselves, there is nothing that we could create, or build, or buy that would meet our most instinctual need. We were created for an intimate relationship with God. We worship God because He is so wonderful to us and deserving of our praise and adoration!

HOW SHOULD WE WORSHIP?

The greatest part of worship is that there is no right or wrong way. There is no correct style of music or one way to pray. Worship is something that moves and flows depending on culture and context. Some worship in church, others in nature, still others on the couch while reading a spiritual book. Worship is not a once-a-week church service. It’s a lifestyle of praise and adoration to God!

But, if you were to look for some specifics about how to worship God, one place you could look is in 1 Chronicles 16:1-27. Read the passage below and then list several ways this Biblical poem tells us to worship.

*“Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.
Sing to him, sing praise to him;
tell of all his wonderful acts.
Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.
Look to the Lord and his strength;
seek his face always.
Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,
you his servants, the descendants of Israel,
his chosen ones, the children of Jacob.
He is the Lord our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.*

*He remembers[c] his covenant forever,
the promise he made, for a thousand generations,
the covenant he made with Abraham,
the oath he swore to Isaac.
He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant:
“To you I will give the land of Canaan
as the portion you will inherit.”
When they were but few in number,
few indeed, and strangers in it,
they wandered from nation to nation,
from one kingdom to another.
He allowed no one to oppress them;
for their sake he rebuked kings:
“Do not touch my anointed ones;
do my prophets no harm.”
Sing to the Lord, all the earth;
proclaim his salvation day after day.
Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among all peoples.
For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
he is to be feared above all gods.
For all the gods of the nations are idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.
Splendor and majesty are before him;
strength and joy are in his dwelling place.*

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

- 1. What are your favorite ways to worship?
- 2. How does understanding worship through the lens of relationship help you?
- 3. Spend some time as a group praising God for Who He is.

LESSON 4: WORSHIP/REVERENCE

