

SESSION 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF WORSHIP

REFERENCES

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to be an individual worshiper? What's the difference between individual and corporate worship?
2. How do you worship outside of church?
3. How can you better participate in the communal worship that takes place in the church?
4. How is worship a behavior?
5. David's knowledge of God played a huge role in the authoring of the Psalms. Do you know who God is? Discuss different attributes and names of God. What steps are you taking each day to learn more about Him?
6. We can learn a lot about how to worship God by reading the Psalms. Pick one of the following Psalms to work through together as a group: Psalm 8, 19, 34, 36, 57, 96, 103, 111, 145.
 - Read the Psalm aloud together. What does the Psalm teach us about God? What does it tell us about ourselves? What is one thing that you have learned from reading this Psalm?
7. Why do we need worship? How does worship impact your life? How do your experiences impact your worship?

SESSION 2: WORSHIP AND WITNESS

Watch the video or read the script together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

REFERENCES

Exodus 34:10, 1 Samuel 12:24, Psalm
66:5, Psalm 117, Acts 2:46-47, Acts 16:25,
Colossians 3:16 / Quote from Tim Keller

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss worship in the Old and New Testaments. How was it similar? How was it different?
2. Why is it important that moments and words of worship were recorded in Scripture?
3. Have you ever thought about how your worship is a witness to others about your faith in God? How can you be a witness of God in your worship?
4. What is the name of a hymn that you have sung to help you through suffering? What do the words of that song mean to you?
5. Think of some of the songs that you sing to yourself about God (songs that your congregation sings, songs you hear on the radio, etc.). How could the lyrics encourage those around you in their faith? What do they tell the unbeliever about God? What truths of God do these songs communicate to you?
6. Many of the psalms and hymns found in the Bible were authored out of gratitude for what God had done and promised. What do you have to express gratitude to God for?
7. Why is it important to take time to worship?

SESSION 3: PRAISE

Watch the video or read the script together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

Isaiah 43:21, 1 Peter 2:9, 1 Chronicles
29:10-13, Psalm 34, Luke 2:14, 20, Psalm
63:3, Psalm 146, Hebrews 2:12, Romans
12:1-2 (Message)

QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever thought of praise as a calling? Does this seem like an easy calling to fulfill, or a difficult one? Why?
2. What sacrifices do you make to praise God?
3. Read Psalm 103 aloud together. Then answer the following questions:
 - What does this Psalm tell you about God?
 - What names come to mind that you could give to God when you listened to the Psalm? List them.
 - Pick two names of God and explain why they are impactful to you. Share one with the group.
 - How many of these characteristics of God were familiar to you? Were there some that were new?
 - What do you notice about the language of the psalmist?
 - What do you visualize as you read this psalm?
4. Repeat this process from Question 3 with Psalm 111.
5. Write two sentences praising God that begin with the word "You" and don't use the words "praise" or "thanks." Share these sentences with the group.

6. Think of a hymn that you can praise God with. Share with the group and explain what the lyrics tell you about God.
7. What is one way that you could praise God more intentionally on a daily basis?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

SESSION 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF WORSHIP

This series will focus on worship. More than just understanding what worship is, we want to discover how we worship and what is happening while we worship.

We have learned that worship means “to show reverence and adoration for.” As Christians, the focus of our worship is God. This need to express to God how we feel about Him is something we cannot ignore. Our Catechism even says that one of the main purposes of the church of Christ is to bring “praise and worship to God” (CNAC 2.4.3). In John 4:23, Jesus says to the Samaritan woman at the well, *But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.* God is looking for us to do more than just show up for service. He’s even asking us to do more than show up a few minutes early to participate in worship. He wants us to be so passionate for Him that our worship extends beyond the walls of our congregations, that the truth of God can be seen in all parts of our lives. We cannot let the only time we worship be on a Sunday morning. We have to be individual worshippers. Worship has to become a part of us.

David’s psalms are a powerful resource for us to see how we can continuously worship God. His songs of praise often start with declaring who God is. Let’s look at some of the words from the beginning of Psalm 139.

David writes, *O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off* (Psalm 139:1-2). Here, David speaks of God’s omniscience; He knows all about us.

The verse continues: *For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether... Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it* (Psalm 139:4, 6). David recognizes that God is much wiser than he could ever be.

Verses 7-8 say, *Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell,*

behold, You are there. God is ever-present. Even in places where we think He may not go, He is always with us.

David also identifies God as His Creator: *For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made...* (Psalm 139:13).

David articulates God in a clear way, and this enriches his worship. We also want to be able to create an image of God with our worship that shows us, and the world, who He is. We can only declare who God is when we have an increased awareness of Him – when we seek His presence, and when we discover more about Him in Scripture. Our worship is more than just using poetic language to describe some nice feelings we have when thinking about God. Our words have to have meaning. They need to hold truths that bring God into focus for us.

Understanding who God is also helps David to understand himself, and where he needs to change and grow. After expounding on the many attributes of God that he experiences, David ends Psalm 139 with the plea: *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting* (Psalm 139:23-24). God does not need our worship – we need it. Worshipping God, understanding His greatness, brings us to a place of surrender. Only in this place can we realize our need for Him to shape and change us into who He desires us to be. Each moment that we spend in worship invites us to recognize where we can be more aligned to His will.

Worship is a behavior, and to worship God in all that we do, we must come into His presence and into the knowledge of Him. While God is ever-present, as David proclaims in the psalm, we do not always recognize His nearness or think of Him as with us in every moment. To come into His presence means to be conscious of Him. Truly, we are aware of Him in the divine service and as we celebrate communion with Him, but we can also be aware of His presence in other moments, whether we are reading Scripture, working, parenting, resting, cleaning, or marveling at His creation. The more we come to perceive His

presence and the more we take time to learn about His character, the more we can be delighted by Him and all that He is. This gives truth and purpose to our worship.

We may not consider ourselves to be singers, but that is no excuse to be poor in our worship of God. Worship isn't just music and it isn't just for musicians. Worship is for athletes, for tax accountants, for families, for doctors, for teachers, for students... All of us, no matter who we are, have been created and commanded to worship. Our church exists so that we may worship God as a unified body. Of all the things in life that may redirect our worship – our career, our material wealth, our influence on others – none of it will last. After the earthly world fades, God will still be the only One worthy of our worship, and He is the only One worthy of worship in our lives today. We want to answer David's call in Psalm 150: *Let everything that has breath praise the Lord* (Psalm 150:6).

SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

SESSION 2: WORSHIP AND WITNESS

Welcome to our second session on understanding the importance of worship. In our first session, our focus was growing in our understanding of worship by looking at what David wrote in the Psalms. In this session, we will expand upon that teaching and see how worship is tied to our being a witness of God. Since the Old Testament days, it has been the honor of God's people to be a witness for Him. From the time when God made His covenant with Abraham, and then throughout the history of the people of Israel, their worship was meant to be a witness to all the nations that their God was the true and only God, and He had done wonderful things on their behalf (Exodus 34:10; 1 Samuel 12:24; Psalm 66:5). That honor carried over into the New Testament, as evidenced by the songs of Mary and the apostles. It continues to be the privilege of all who believe today – we cannot stop ourselves from worshiping and being a witness of our awesome God.

We'll begin our study today with Psalm 117, the shortest of all the psalms. Psalm 117 is a brief, profound, descriptive psalm that extends an invitation to all the nations to praise God, and it provides a list of reasons as to why He is worthy of worship. The psalmist writes:

*Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles!
Laud Him, all you peoples!
For His merciful kindness is great toward us,
And the truth of the Lord endures forever.
Praise the Lord!*

To "laud" means to excitedly boast about. His merciful kindness refers to God's faithfulness and promises to His people. In essence, Psalm 117 is an example for how we are to worship; because of all of the things God has done, is doing, and will do on our behalf, we lift up a song of praise to Him for all to hear, and we welcome everyone to join in with us. For believers who are living in a conscious relationship with their Heavenly Father, the list of items to praise Him for is unending. Have you expressed gratitude for how the truth of the Lord affects your life?

We find examples of people who took the time to make note of the goodness of God during the Old Testament times, and how they turned their experiences into songs for all to hear. These songs

are recorded in Scriptures and have been a witness of God for centuries. We can read hymns from Moses and his sister Miriam, from Joshua, Deborah and Barak, Hannah, David, Solomon, and the prophets. God's people have always witnessed to the truth through their singing. The faith of the Israelites could be heard clearly in their songs. And many of the lyrics of their hymnal, the Psalms, showed their awareness of other nations listening into their singing, and called them to praise God, too. Why did each of them speak their words of praise so that others could hear and read them? They had a desire to recognize the Author of their blessings and they wanted all nations to know the greatness of their God so that others would have the opportunity to know Him as well.

The recording of hymns of praise to God was continued by those who wrote the New Testament. We can read the songs of Mary and Zechariah in the Gospel of Luke as they make known their praise in response to the news they received from God. In Acts 2:46-47, we can read the following about the believers in the early church – *So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.* Then further in Acts, we read about the actions of Paul and Silas when they were imprisoned in Philippi. In Acts 16:25, the Bible reads, *...about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them...* Here we find these two workers singing for joy in the midst of their suffering for all to hear, and then after an earthquake breaks open the door, they remain in their cell and have the opportunity to lead the jailer into faith in Jesus Christ. Because of their boldness and willingness to witness and worship in the midst of their troubles, the heart of this unbeliever was touched. He was made aware of the God of these prisoners, and he became aware of his need to be saved from his sin.

Today we are called to worship in an audible fashion so that the joyful sound we make as believers reaches the ears of those who struggle to believe in Jesus Christ – the unsaved spouse, the skeptical teenager, and our intrigued friends. Each day, believers walk

with the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God working in our lives allows us to fulfill our calling as worshipers. He draws attention to the great works of God in our lives so we can reflect on them and then respond in worship.

In Colossians 3:16, Paul wrote: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.* When the lyrics of our songs are based on the Scripture and sung with joy, then they will serve to inspire and edify those who hear it. The joy we experience through our relationship with Jesus Christ should radiate out through all we do in our life. The worship of our lives is to be a credible witness of what we believe so that those around us will come to know our God. As an American pastor said, “Glorious worship is exuberant, never half-hearted. It is attractive, not off-putting. It is awesome, never sentimental. It is brilliant, not careless. It points to God, not to the speakers... There is nothing more evangelistic, nothing that will win the world more than glorious worship.”

SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

SESSION 3: PRAISE

Welcome. Today we're going to explore the concept of "praise" – what is praise? Why should we praise? And how can we praise God?

Christ's law is based on loving God and loving our neighbor, and when we praise God, we are showing that we love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind. As we will discuss in this session, praise is one of the purposes of our lives, and is a natural result of loving God with our whole being.

So, what is praise? The dictionary offers two definitions:

1. to express admiration of; extol.
2. to offer grateful reverence to, as in words or song; to worship.

To praise God is to call attention to who He is. And God has called us to this purpose. In Isaiah 43 we read, "This people I have formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise." This calling of praise wasn't just meant for the Israelites, but God also designated the Church to proclaim His praises, as we read in 1 Peter 2:9: *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*

The Catechism emphasizes two important purposes of the church: making salvation accessible to all people, and bringing worship and praise to God. In giving praise to God, a Christian aligns themselves with the purposes of God. In addition to fulfilling the purposes of God, praise can be prompted by the unique nature of God, His self-revelation to us through deliverance and favor, the incarnation of His Son, and can be born out of the love we feel for God that develops through our relationship with Him.

We can find many examples of praise in the Bible. The Hebrew term for the Psalms translates as "praises" – so let's start there. You will go through some of the Psalms in your guide later, but let's look at what makes up a "psalm of praise" – Psalm 146.

*Praise the Lord, O my soul!
While I live I will praise the Lord;
Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help,*

*Who made heaven and earth,
The sea, and all that is in them;
Who keeps truth forever,
Who executes justice for the oppressed,
Who gives food to the hungry.
The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners.
The Lord opens the eyes of the blind;
The Lord raises those who are bowed down;
The Lord loves the righteous.
But the way of the wicked He turns upside down.
The Lord shall reign forever—
Your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the Lord!*

What can we learn about God through this psalm of praise? God is a Creator, a Righteous Judge, a Provider. He lifts up the oppressed and the burdened. He performs miracles. He is a King. When we praise God we start to see His magnificence, His greatness, how big He is, and how small we are. And what effect could that have on our lives? Perhaps knowing God as a Provider will increase our trust in Him when we are struggling or in need. Knowing He is a King makes us think about how He should be ruling in our lives. When we hear that He lifts up those that are bowed down, we feel His comfort and His love.

If we make praise a priority in our lives, it could have a profound effect on our relationship with God. How then are we to praise God? Like other areas of Christian life, rich times of prayer and praise come through learning principles and putting them into practice. Here are a few thoughts:

Use precise language: Spend a few minutes a day praising God for who He is. In this exercise, do not use the word "praise." This will force you to say what you really mean without using a word that could be somewhat vague. In this exercise, do not use the word "thanks." We thank God for what He has done; we praise Him for who He is. Avoiding the word "thanks" will help you focus on praise. Begin your sentences with the word "You" – this will help us focus on God, not ourselves, as the subject of praise.

Use the names of God: As we went through Psalm 146, we came up with specific names of God; Creator, Judge, and Provider. Spend a few minutes identifying the different names of God, and to further this idea,

follow each with a statement defining the name. This might also reveal to us how well we know God.

Use Scriptures: Learn to use portions of Scripture that are expressions of praise. These can be read or prayed over. You can find a short list in your guide to get you started.

Praise Him with music: Hebrews 2 says, *I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.* Great hymns of faith can be an important element of musical praise. The next time you join in a hymn, really think about the words and what they tell you about who God is.

Find praise in the ordinary: Let's read the Message paraphrase of Romans 12: 1-2 to get a better understanding of this: *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... 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.*

When we intentionally look for God in the ordinary and mundane, we will begin to find Him everywhere. Yes, in church on Sunday at 10:30am, but also in the grocery store on Tuesday. In a business meeting, or the colors of a sunset. Every moment is an opportunity for praise and we can choose to participate in it. That is what we were made for.