



**CHURCH:  
A WORSHIPPING  
COMMUNITY**

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**THEME:** WORSHIP

**KEY SCRIPTURE:**

REVELATION 7:9-12, PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11,  
REVELATION 4:8-11, COLOSSIANS 3:23-24/PSALM 95/  
MATTHEW 15:8-9, ROMANS 12:1-2, JOHN 4:21-24/  
LUKE 18:9-14/MATTHEW 6:1-8,  
DEUTERONOMY 6:1-9, MATTHEW 18:20/HEBREWS 10:24-25

**SERIES PRAYER FOCUS:**

LIVING LIVES OF WORSHIP

**DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS:** LOVING GOD

**SERIES GOALS:**

TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS: WHAT IS WORSHIP? WHO AND WHY DO WE WORSHIP? HOW DO WE WORSHIP?

**PURPOSE:**

Worship is an integral part of discipleship. Whether it is worshipping in our own individual lives or worshipping corporately within the church body, we were made to worship and scripture instructs us in how we do so. The hope of this study is that we would see our opportunities to worship in every aspect of our lives.

**BIG IDEA:** Worship is the Greek word “proskuneo,” the bowing down and kissing something. God, by His very nature, is Holy and worthy to be praised.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Revelation 7:9-12, Philippians 2:5-11

**TEACHING/DEVOTIONAL:**

The word “worship” is defined as, “ascribing supreme worth or value to something.” But in other languages, the word for “worship” paints more of a visual. In Hebrew, it is the word “shachah,” pronounced sha-cha (with the guttural Hebrew “cha” sound) which means to bow down or prostrate one’s body in humility and adoration. In Greek, it is the word “proskuneo,” pronounced “pros-koo-neh-o” (pros = toward, kuneo =to kiss.). This paints a picture of one bowing down and kissing another’s hands or feet. Bowing down is a universal sign of submission and reverence, used in cultures worldwide because it shows both humility and honor. Bowing and lying prostrate is seen throughout the Bible, and usually done in the presence of a king or person of honor (Psalm 95). Even Jesus, who is God made flesh, is seen throughout the gospels getting down on His knees and worshipping/praying to the Father! Worship is not found in the traditions or rituals of man, it’s found in our heart and impacts our actions. Every single day, our decisions, thoughts, and actions determine what we worship. The object of our “proskuneo,” or worship, can be identified by looking at what receives most of our time, talent, thoughts, and treasure. Worship requires sacrifice (1 Chronicles 21:24), and God wants the best of our time, talent, thoughts, and treasure. Regardless of what we worship today, there is a day yet to come where every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father and those who have personally received Jesus as Lord will bow down before the throne of God and worship Jesus as Lord forevermore. We don’t worship to receive salvation, we worship in response to the salvation Christ offers us by faith. God is the only One truly worthy of our worship because of who He is: Holy, Forgiving, Merciful, and Eternal, and we are all invited to bow down before Him here on earth, then forevermore in heaven.

**SHARING LIFE:**

Think of a time you experienced humility. What happened to your posture? What happened to your voice? What happened to your attitude? What happened to your view of others and yourself?

**READ:** Revelation 7:9-12

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What personally strikes you about this scene?
2. Who is gathered around the throne of God?
3. What is the significance of waving palm branches and wearing white robes?
4. What are some ways they worship God in this scene (physically, symbolically, and audibly)?
5. What are they declaring to be true of God and the Lamb?

**PRAYING TOGETHER:**

Humbly come before the Lord, asking Him to reveal any idols in your heart and to show you how you can worship Him with your whole body, soul, heart, and spirit.

**CHALLENGE THIS WEEK:**

Experiment with different postures when you pray and worship: kneel (sign of submission), lift or open your hands (signs of surrender), even prostrate yourself on the floor at home and pray out loud (as opposed to speaking to God in your head). Notice how this changes your worship and approach toward God.

**BIG IDEA:** We were created to worship and worship is the natural response to encountering who God is. It has been said that we are all worshipping something. Tim Keller says in his book, *Counterfeit Gods*, that “Anything in life can serve as an idol, or a counterfeit god.” He goes on to say, “Anything can be a counterfeit god, especially the very best things in life.” Someone could look at our lives and see what is important to us based on what we prioritize by our actions. Now, this is not all bad. We are beings created to worship, but it is vital that we have the correct center of our worship. We were made to worship not just everything we enjoy, but we were made to worship the One who created us. Even more than that, we do not just worship simply because that is how we are made, but because He who made us is worthy of our worship. In Revelation, John is given a vision of the throne room of God and reminds us of our Creator’s worthiness to be praised now and forever.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Revelation 4:8-11

**READ:** Revelation 4 (special focus on verses 8-11)

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What stands out to you in the description of the throne room of God?
2. When you worship do you picture God in His throne room? How do you think your worship experience might be impacted if you did?
3. Do you see yourself as a being made to worship? Why or why not?
4. If you were to look at your life and how you spend your time, what would you say about what you worship most?
5. Read through Revelation 4 again with eyes closed and let yourself imagine what it would be like to be in the presence of God in His throne room.

**PRAY TOGETHER:** As you pray together, try to picture the throne room of God. Spend time praising him for his majesty and wonder and worthiness to be worshipped.

**CHALLENGE THIS WEEK:** As you pray, read Scripture, or listen to worship music this week, try to picture God on His throne. Notice how that changes your worship experience as you make God the center and even journal it if you feel led.

**BIG IDEA:** There are lots of ways we worship God, and worship through music is one of the ways most recognized throughout Scripture. Worship involves every part of our being: our minds, our bodies, and our souls. God is pleased when we offer this gift of praise to Him, and has given us many ways to express our praise: in our actions, with our words, and by the way we live our life. One of the most powerful ways we worship is through music - a catharsis for the soul. Musical worship is not meant to be a performance, production, or entertainment - it's not about what we can "get" out of it. Rather we are called to participate in praising God with our voices (Psalm 95) and giving to God. When we sing in worship, we are waging war with the enemy. Martin Luther once said, "The devil flees before the sound of music almost as much as before the Word of God." When we declare with our lips through melody and song what God has done and declare His goodness, our spirit and body respond in a powerful way that overflows to other parts of our lives. But worship is more than merely gathering and singing for an hour a week. Jesus says worship starts in your heart (Matthew 15:8-9 & Isaiah 29:13) and just because you honor God with your lips doesn't necessarily mean you're worshipping. True worship isn't giving God the scraps of whatever time is left in your day, showing up to church and going through the motions so you're "good with God" for another week, or saying the "right things" in the "right way." It isn't a moment or an experience, worship is a lifestyle - it consumes every area of our lives. It infiltrates everything we do - our prayers, work, thoughts, actions, conduct, the way we save, invest, and spend our money. Worship ultimately directs and aligns our hearts and minds toward God and His goodness as we outpour our thanks and praise to Him.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Colossians 3:23-24; Psalm 95; Matthew 15:8-9 (references Isaiah 29:13)

**SHARING LIFE:**

1. How have your ideas about worship been challenged or changed the last few weeks?
2. Has worship taken on a new meaning for you the last few weeks?

**READ:** Isaiah 29:13-16

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What distinguishing factor makes honoring God with your lips an act of worship?
2. What are some rules and traditions people point to as an act of worship? Did you have any growing up?
3. Why does God say He alone is worthy of worship in this passage?
4. Have you attended church, said a prayer, or sang a worship song and not had your heart directed toward God while doing it? How did it make you feel? What thoughts were going through your head? How did it affect your attitude and mindset?
5. What would it look like and how would your whole being be transformed if you turned every moment in your day into an act of worship?

**CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK:** Think of ways you can turn even the most mundane moments in your day into worshipful moments, then put them into practice. How did making this change affect your attitude, perspective, etc. about God, yourself, and others?

**BIG IDEA:** How do we worship God in the everyday? (vocations, relationships, etc)

In this series, we have been unpacking the idea that we are beings created to worship. As we continue to expand our view of worship beyond just a Sunday morning, we look to expand it into our everyday existence. Whether we realize it or not, we all have a worship practice in our day-to-day lives. But the question for us, then, is: Is our worship aimed in the right direction? In Tish Harrison Warren's book, *The Liturgy of the Ordinary*, she discusses that all of our practices, habits, or rituals are formative and constitute themselves as daily liturgies. The term "liturgy" literally means ritual or form and is most often linked to an act of public worship. She says, "Therefore, the question is not whether we have a liturgy. The question is, What kind of people is our liturgy forming us to be?" We are not just meant to worship God in specific times or places, but in every breath, and thought, and action. So, how do we live as worshippers of God in our jobs, relationships, and world?

**KEY PASSAGE:** Romans living sacrifices, Romans 12:1-2

**READ:** Romans 12:1-8 (9-21 if there is time)

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Do you engage in worshipping God outside of a Sunday morning church experience? If so, how?
2. How do your daily routines and rhythms affect your day? Do you feel that your daily liturgies affect how you worship on a Sunday?
3. In the same way, do you feel as though your worship in church impacts the way you approach the rest of your week?
4. Are there any "worshipful habits" in your life that you feel are not aimed in the right direction? (i.e. phone, social media, people, etc.)
5. What is a new worshipful habit, or spiritual discipline, that you could implement into your walk with the Lord?

**PRAY TOGETHER:** Pray that God would reveal opportunities to worship Him better in the various spaces you occupy. Pray that God would expose worshipful habits in your life that are not aimed at Him. Pray for a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit as He shows those things to you.

**CHALLENGE THIS WEEK:** Pay attention to your habits this week. Notice if there are certain routines or rituals you cannot go a day without. Take inventory of your practices and look for opportunities to create worshipful routines that bring glory to God.

**BIG IDEA:** God desires for us to come to Him regularly in prayer, where we can worship Him for who He is, free of pretension, and get our hearts right with Him so He can then transform us from the inside out. We are made to be constantly communicating with God and living a life of worship. God's essential nature is Truth and Spirit: He is not confined to the limitations of time and space - He is Infinite and Eternal, and the fact that He can be everywhere at once proves that He is omnipresent, but yet personal. He is also Truth: He created everything we see (and don't see), His Law is perfect, and His infallible Word has been preserved and stood the test of time. Therefore, we can be assured that when we approach Him in prayer and pour out our hearts, regardless of the situation we find ourselves in, He can meet us where we are and He hears us. Before the Samaritan woman met Jesus, He knew her completely and sought her out. Even when she sidetracked their conversation to one about the location of worship, Jesus assured her that pouring out your heart and worshiping in your spirit and in God's truth and Word is more important than where you find yourself physically or situationally - even where she found herself, having six husbands! In Matthew 6, Jesus tells us to get alone with God, close the door, and pour out your heart. Regardless of where you're coming from, God wants to meet you where you are. God hears the prayers of those who do not rely on their own righteousness, but confess their sin and turn to Jesus' righteousness. It is only then that He can truly forgive and transform us. The tax collector, though socially unrighteous, left the temple justified before God because He confessed his unrighteousness and pleaded to God for forgiveness. On the other hand, the Pharisee, though socially seen as righteous, did not receive God's forgiveness because he solely relied on his own good deeds and merits. Praying and worshipping God in spirit and in truth is more important than location, words, or the situations we find ourselves in.

**KEY PASSAGE:** John 4:19-24, Luke 18:9-14, Matthew 6:1-8

**SHARING LIFE:**

1. Has your idea of worship been challenged the last few weeks?
2. What are some areas you struggle in giving over to God so you can truly worship Him in spirit and in truth?
3. What are some ways you have covered your sin in pride and self-righteousness? Did this take away from your peace and joy with God?

**READ:** Luke 18:9-14

1. What things did the Pharisee do physically and audibly in his prayer?
2. If you were at the temple and saw the Pharisee praying, what would you think of him and how would it have impacted you? Would you be impressed by his position and merits? Would you feel intimidated and lacking? Would you think he's a jerk, or a holy man?
3. What things did the tax collector do physically and audibly in his prayer? How did this differ from the Pharisee?  
Now read John 4:21-24
4. How did the tax collector pray in spirit and in truth?
5. How is this seen as true and proper worship before God?

**CHALLENGE THIS WEEK:** Reflect on times where you have subtly (or overtly) relied on your own pride, abilities, talents, merits, or righteousness instead of coming to God in total depravity and deficit, asking for Him to forgive and heal you. When you find yourself boasting in yourself or operating in your own strength, stop and humbly turn to God, worship Him, and He will fill you with His love that overflows to abundant thankfulness, peace, and joy.

**BIG IDEA:** Worship isn't just about what we are feeling or prefer, but it must be aligned with God's truth--Scripture. The importance of spending time in God's Word, memorizing it, and meditating on it should not be undervalued or underrepresented in our worship experience. We need Scripture to inform us of who God is and His promises when we forget or think differently. There are many aspects of church culture that have seen the pendulum swing from one extreme or the other, and the culture of worship is no different. Many churches have multiple services catering to different worship preferences, for example, traditional music/style versus contemporary music/style. Some may find that their preferences lead them to easily connect with the Lord on a "spirit level" through music. Others may find that it easiest for them to connect with the Lord when reading His Word. Regardless of where you fall in that cultural dichotomy, Scripture is clear that true worshipers are to worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). Last week we focused on the importance of recognizing God as Spirit and how He created us with the capacity to connect with Him from our spirit as well. However, the defining anchor of worshipping in spirit and in truth is God's Word. Scripture keeps us from making it too much about what we feel, perceive, or prefer and directs us to the truth of who God is, who we are, and how we ought to live. Many of us have seen the unfortunate effects when spirit and truth have been out of balance in our lives. We miss so much of the richness of the worship experience when we forsake one for the other.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 119:11

Psalm 119 is written as a celebration of the Torah ("Instruction/Law"—the first 5 books of the Bible). It is the longest Psalm and longest chapter in the Bible. The goal of this Psalm is to enable God's people to love and admire His Word so strongly that it will cause them to allow it to shape their character and conduct.

**READ:** Psalm 119:9-16

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. In verse 9 the author poses the question, "How can a young man keep his way pure?" What are all different ways you see the question answered in the following verses?
2. Do you find it easy or difficult to "delight in [God's] statutes"? Why or why not?
3. Have you experienced a time in a worship service or gathering where there was too much focus on spirit or truth, without the balance of the other? How did that impact you?
4. In your own worship experience, are you able to easily access spirit and/or truth through Scripture?

**PRAY TOGETHER:** Pray through the words of Psalm 119: 9-16, and as you read these verses, ask God to make this the desire of your heart as well.

**CHALLENGE THIS WEEK:** As we seek to develop ourselves as disciples who worship in spirit and in truth, it is vital that we develop a love for God's Word that shapes the way we live. Spend time this week reading the rest of Psalm 119. As you read, spend time thanking God for the gift of His Word and ask Him to show you how you can better allow it to shape you. Write verses down too and practice memorizing Scripture as we learn to "hide it in our hearts." (vs. 11)



**BIG IDEA:** There is power in corporate worship and we are commanded to take part in it. We are better together. While we are meant to worship with our own separate lives, we are specifically called to worship as a collective unit as well. There is necessary value in each, and Scripture spends time instructing us in both. If there is one thing that 2020 has taught us, it is the great importance of community. It is something that cannot be substituted and it is essential to our spiritual health. One of the ways we are meant to experience community in depth is through worshipping together. We are created to be together, open God's Word together, and to respond in worship with our lives together as we spur one another on towards good works. Community may not always look like us standing physically together shoulder to shoulder, but we have seen community look a million different ways this year, and it is all valuable.

**KEY SCRIPTURE:** (Matthew 18:20) when two or more are gathered, (Hebrew 10:24-25) do not forsake the assembling...spur one another on in doing good works

In Hebrews 10:19, the author begins by referring us back to Jesus' sacrifice that ultimately paid the price for all. Before Jesus, the Jews were very familiar with the sacrificial system. They would bring an animal to the priest to be sacrificed for their sins. The blood of the animal only served as a covering of their sin, but not a payment to remove sin. This is the major difference in the sacrifice that Jesus made versus the animal sacrifices made before. Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection cleansed us of our sins and allow us to stand blameless before the Father. This "once and for all" sacrificial act of Jesus is what the author of Hebrews is referencing in the verses leading up to 19.

**READ:** Hebrews 10:19-25

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. There are 3 exhortations, or urgings, for us in this passage. What are the three "Let us..." statements?
2. We are able to "draw near" and "hold fast" because of what God has done for us? Now read verse 24 again. Do you often consider how to spur on those around you toward love and good works?
3. Do you find that being a part of community comes easily to you or do you find it more difficult? Why or why not?
4. Hebrews tells us that it is essentially our responsibility to build up one another's faith in community. How has your faith benefited as a result of being in a community of believers?

**PRAY TOGETHER:** Spend time praying with and for one another in your group.

**CHALLENGE THIS WEEK:**

As you approach your various relationships this week (friends, family, work acquaintances, church members, etc.) practice the discipline of encouragement. Spur on those around you to practice love and to do good works. Likewise, allow those in your life that you trust to spur you on in the same way. Notice the difference in your walk with the Lord as you observe this important spiritual discipline.