

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Study Guide

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 9: WHAT IS WORSHIP?

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled Christian Life and Worldview. This series of lessons examines the choices and practices that are essential for Christian living. To live as the Word of God teaches us means we understand that the choices we make each day affect our faith. It also means learning to pray, practising the commands of God and learning to serve others. These are important lessons for understanding the practice of Christianity and how to live out our faith within our Church community.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 9: WHAT IS WORSHIP?

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

The purpose of this lesson is to look at what Christians mean by the word “worship”, and how we can be the type of worshippers that God desires.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

Everyone worships something, even if they don't see themselves as religious. The things we spend our time, money, and effort on are the things we worship. People naturally worship something, but it is critical we do not end up worshipping the wrong things. This lesson looks at the heart of what worship is for the Christian. Regardless of the particular method of corporate worship you are accustomed to (such as worship songs or liturgical practice), this lesson teaches that worship should extend to our everyday lives.

GETTING STARTED

1. What things or people are worshipped by the world? Describe this kind of worship (idols, false gods, popular media figures, political leaders, famous actors, etc.).

2. When do you feel like you are worshipping God? What does a person have to do in order to worship God properly?



STUDY

❖ **WHAT IS WORSHIP?** To worship means to ascribe worth to something or someone – to acknowledge the quality of worthiness. When we worship God, we say that God is worthy of whatever sacrifice or honour we bring Him. Christians often talk about ‘praising God’, giving glory to God, or acknowledging the things that are admirable and praiseworthy about Him. This is worship. According to the Bible, what is the reason we were created? Read 1 Peter 2:9.

God does not need our worship in the same way we need food and water, but because God is above all things and so infinitely praise worthy, He truly deserves our worship.

God alone is worthy of worship. We worship one God, as revealed to us in the Bible. We are forbidden to worship idols, angels, or indulge in proud self-worship. God requires us to worship Him.

❖ **WORSHIP IN THE BIBLE:** Throughout the history of God’s people, worship has taken several forms. Jesus revealed to us the heart and desires of God. The practices and rituals of the Old Testament people pointed to Christ Himself.

- **Worship before Moses:** In the earliest days of people relating to God, there was no need for priests or buildings for people to worship in.
- Read the following verses and write down what you learn about how people worshipped. Genesis 24:26, Genesis 12:7, Genesis 22:5

- Each person worshipped God and set up their own altars to offer sacrifices.
 - People bowed or fell down before God as an act of worship.
 - Sacrifices could be animal, plants, oil, or other things that were costly. To qualify as a sacrifice, the object had to be valuable.
 - These sacrifices were sometimes burned on stone altars. Altars were also set up as memorials.
- Worship was not restricted to a certain place or particular method. The only condition was that the one true God was to be worshipped. **Worship through the Law:** Later in the story of God’s people, Moses was given the Law which contained the 10 Commandments. The Law gave instruction for holy living, daily practice and sacrifice.



- The purpose of the Law was to show people their need for forgiveness, and to set the standard for holiness.
 - Sacrifices were made according to strict guidelines and in specific places in order to receive forgiveness for sin. Specific sacrifices were needed for particular sins. Animals were sacrificed because without blood being shed there is no forgiveness of sin ([Hebrews 9:22](#)).
 - Only priests could approach the holy place of God. Only certain people qualified to be priests.
 - Sacrifices were made continually as an act of faith that God would one day provide the perfect sacrifice, Jesus, the Lamb of God. He would cleanse them from sin ([John 1:29](#)).
- Read [Hebrews 10:1-4](#) and write down what you learn about this form of worship. What did these sacrifices accomplish?

- **Worship After Jesus:** In the New Testament, we read about a very different way of worship. Jesus revealed God's priorities in this important area.
- Instead of offering animal sacrifices, God asks for something different. Read [Romans 12:1-2](#) and [John 4:21-24](#) and write down what we should offer to God.

- Instead of physical sacrifices, God asks for our whole lives to be offered as 'living sacrifices'. ([Romans 12:1-2](#))
- Instead of temples and altars, Jesus said true worship happens in the spiritual realm, and therefore we worship 'in truth' with our mind and our inner spirit. ([John 4:21-24](#))
- God dwells in us through the Holy Spirit, so we no longer have to go to certain places or a Temple to meet Him. He is already with us! ([John 4:20-21](#))
- Jesus criticized false worshippers whose motivation was to impress others. ([Matthew 6:1-2, 5](#))
- Jesus initiated baptism and communion as part of our worship to Him.
- After Jesus' death, the Temple veil was torn in two, symbolizing that there was now no barrier between God and man. We can now come to God through our High Priest, Jesus, rather than human priests. This allows us to pray directly to God! ([Hebrew 10:19-20](#))



❖ **HOW CAN WE WORSHIP GOD TODAY?** Since God is deserving of all our praise, it is important that we regularly worship Him. What does this mean? There are four areas of worship we will examine in this lesson.

- **Submission:** obedience is the sacrifice God desires. We must submit to His will, and His desires. It is a posture of the heart. God has always desired our obedience more than sacrifices of any kind.. Submission to God as our authority and obedience to His laws are the foundation of true worship.

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| 1 Samuel 15:22 | |
| Amos 5:21-24 | |
| Hebrews 12:28-29 | |

- **Service:** When we serve in Jesus’ name, that is our sacrifice of praise. This can be giving of our time, our money, our abilities, our talents. What we give in His name to do His work is an act of worship. This may include preparing food for others, teaching, exercising skill as an artist, loving our spouse and children, working hard to earn a wage that can be used in ministry, etc.

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| James 1:27 | |
| 1 Peter 4:9-11 | |
| Acts 20:35 | |

- **Song:** Music is a gift from God that was used throughout the Bible to worship Him. There is a deep connection of our hearts, minds and bodies when we make music to God, and so it is a fitting vehicle for praise and worship. It is common when Christians meet together to have a time of worship, which may include reading of Scripture, singing of hymns or spiritual songs.

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| Colossians 3:16 | |
| Hebrews 13:15 | |
| Ephesians 5:19 | |

- **Fine arts and special skills:** We can also use writing and speech or many other forms of art, such as paintings, stained glass, or decorative fabric banners to express devotion to God.



- o Exodus 35:30-35
- o Psalm 20:5
- **Other expressions of worship:** Our worship, whether corporate or individual, may include many different expressions. Giving offerings, praying, listening to sermons, standing, kneeling, clapping, raising our hands – all are for God and not for ‘show’.
 - o 2 Corinthians 8:1-5
 - o Psalm 95:1-7

- ❖ **WHAT IS THE RESULT OF TRUE WORSHIP?** Notice in Scripture that worship is to be a continual act – not an occasional one. It is a lifestyle rather than a weekly event.. However we express our worship to God, whether in a group or individually, it is valuable and honouring to God only if we do so from our heart and with sincerity..
 - **God is Glorified:** When we sing or speak truth about Him and praise Him for what He has done, God is glorified. Through our worship, we also demonstrate who God is to those who do not know Him.
 - o Psalm 150:1-6, Psalm 96:1-9, Psalm 115:1
 - **We are filled with Joy:** Worship is a joyful experience! God wants us to delight in Him! We have a unique relationship with an amazing, loving, powerful God who invites us into His presence! Read Psalm 16:11.
 - **God Draws Near to Us:** As we praise God through our lives, art, music, speech, or acts of service, we can often experience the spiritual presence of God with us! Worship creates a closer relationship with Him. Read James 4:8 and John 14:23.
 - **We Are Changed:** When we set our sights on God and who He is, we change. Our hearts begin to love what God loves and not desire earthly things or idols as we did before. Putting God first orders our lives correctly, and allows us to produce spiritual fruit. Read Colossians 3:1-17.



IN SUMMARY

- ❖ To worship means to ascribe worth to something or someone – to acknowledge the quality of worthiness.. When we worship God, we say that God is worthy of our praise and adoration.
- ❖ Throughout the history of God’s people, worship has taken several forms. Jesus reveals to us the heart and desires of God, of which the practices and rituals of the Old Testament people were merely a picture.
- ❖ Worship before Moses consisted of sacrifices and setting up memorials to God in various places.
- ❖ Worship through the Law showed people their need for forgiveness and to establish God's standard for holiness.
- ❖ Worship after Jesus changed because He fulfilled the Law and set out new priorities for us. Now we can worship God wherever we are, and offer God our faith and obedience.
- ❖ Since God is deserving of all our praise, it is important that we regularly worship Him. We can do this through submission, service and song.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does the church you attend conduct worship? Do you see the components of worship as outlined in this lesson taking place there?

2. What can you do to prepare yourself for times of worship? How do you get your head, heart and body ready for this awesome experience?