



Being with God: Session 4 – Facilitator’s ppt script.

The numbers correspond with the slides. This is an edited version of the Content booklet. ① indicates an animation click is needed.

1. Introductory slide

2. I want to grow in being with God and becoming like Christ...how does this happen?

3. Put simply, on a day by day basis, ① we get to experience this ‘being with God’ *by developing the kinds of habits, practices or rhythms that focus us on Him.* ① We do not have to make these habits up from scratch – these are ways in which disciples have grown for millennia and are ways of living found in Jesus’ life. Sometimes they have been called ‘spiritual disciplines’. These days, more people are adopting the language of habits or practices to ① avoid splitting life up into a “spiritual” and a “non-spiritual” part (God calls us to be with Him in all of our lives), and to avoid making “Being with God” sound like a duty.

4. What are practices?

5. We are familiar with the idea of good and bad practices. ① There are things that *over time become a natural part of our lives and focus the way we live.* ① Discipleship habits do two things. Firstly they help draw us into a life of love and joy with the God who loves us! ① The other things these practices do is *change us.*

6. As disciples we learn in order to become like our teacher. God doesn’t want us to be people who can just do the right thing in our *behaviour*. The picture the Bible gives us is that He wants to do something far deeper – to change our *inmost being* (the heart). ① When our innermost being changes, over time we do the things Christ does because they *become things we want to do*, and the *natural* choices we make will be to do what He would do if He were in our situation, in the strength that He gives.

7. How does this change happen?

8. We can’t change by just saying, “I want to change.” Most people know that while we might be able to tweak our behaviours a little, for the deeper patterns of our personalities to change we need a power beyond ourselves. (See the AA twelve step programme). ① Genuine change is a *lifelong journey of letting God transform us.*

9. Very briefly, disciples are changed as two things happen. **Our minds are renewed** ① so we see the world and people more and more *as God sees them.* We have the ‘mind of Christ’. **Our innermost selves (hearts) are changed** ① by allowing God’s Holy Spirit to change us *from the inside out.* In Luke 6, Jesus points out that “there is no good tree which produces bad fruit.... Men do not gather figs from thorn bushes....” (vv. 43-44) It is the inner nature of the tree that determines its outward product. ① Habits and practices are about *giving space in our lives for God’s Holy Spirit to shape our minds and our innermost desires.* They give us ways of “abiding in Him”, or “walking in the Spirit.” As we do so, as well as knowing *what* to do, we gradually *want* to do it.

10. Practices change us ① *indirectly.* We do what we can, in order to enable us to do what we can’t do directly. We can see this reality in any physical training. The more you train, the easier it becomes to, for example, run a marathon. And the more natural marathon-running will be. As we are being with God through worship, prayer, study and rest, we become the kind of people who want what God wants. It is true that sometimes we get transformed in moments of “breakthrough”, like Saul on the road to Damascus. But most of the time it is through the process of living. Because we are covenant partners, *we have a part to play in this.* We make ourselves *available* and open. But it is *God who does the work, through His Spirit.* ① “Without Him we can’t, but without us He won’t.” We are making an effort, but we aren’t *earning.* We are training, but we aren’t trying. Richard Foster calls this ‘the path of disciplined grace.’ It is ‘grace’ because it is free; it is ‘disciplined’ because there is something for us to do.” All the practices *create the environment for the Holy Spirit to change us.*

11. What is worship and why do we do it?

12. Worship ① is the first practice of any disciple. Maureen Collins is a modern example of a worshipping creature. Her home is a shrine to Barry Manilow, and she is so obsessed that she doesn’t have time for full-time employment. The walls are covered with posters from different parts of Barry’s career. She doesn’t listen to music by any other artist, she has seen him all over the world and written him hundreds of letters. She has a scrapbook filled with newspaper and magazine cuttings, and calls radio stations all over the UK requesting his songs. Her family and friends have long since given up trying to dissuade her from her obsession. While Maureen may be a somewhat extreme example, she illustrates a point: People from all tribes, cultures and nations worship and have been worshipping someone or something since the beginning of humanity. ① *You worship what you most*

love, give attention to, or desire. ① Worship is how we respond to *what we value the most*. Who or what we worship is the deepest expression of our humanity.

13. Who we worship *also shapes us*. This is why the Bible warns against idolatry so often. Worship expresses *what we value*, but also *shapes it*.

14. Why do we worship God?

15. **God (alone) ① is worthy of our worship.** ① Throughout the story of the Bible when people encounter God, they worship. *Worship is the only appropriate relationship* we can have when we see God for who He is. As Matt Redman writes, ① “When we face up to the glory of God, we find ourselves face down in worship”.

16. **Worship is the deepest expression of who we are.** As we have seen – everyone worships (gives ultimate worth) in some way. Worship is the practice that *makes us most human* and reveals our deepest longings. The Christian faith says, “I worship, therefore I am.” We are made for God. The human heart is restless until it finds its rest in God. ① **Worship is the opposite of sin.** Pope Francis has said, “The most dangerous idol is our own selves when we want to occupy the place of God.” ① **Worship is joining in with the activity of earth and heaven, now and forever.** To worship God is to join in with a creation which gives glory to God, making us more at home with the rhythms of earth. “All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name.” Psalm 66:4

17. **Worship connects us with God and changes us.** When we worship, we seek to give our full attention to God, and to place Him at the centre. As this happens, not only is our love *expressed*, it is also *strengthened*, and we open up our lives to the work of God’s Spirit. Worship changes us, as it helps us grow in love for God. A writer called Baron von Hugel said worship is like kissing his daughter. ① He kissed his daughter to show he loves her (expressing), but as he kisses her *his love grows* (strengthening). Worship connects us to God, aligning what we want with what He wants, submitting who we are to Him. As we draw close in this union, God can change us from the inside out. One writer says, ① “Worship isn’t just something we do; *it is where God does something to us*. Worship is the heart of discipleship because it is the gymnasium in which God retrains our hearts.” James K.A. Smith. It is not that God is an egotist who needs our praises, but for all the reasons above God knows we are shaped, completed, and drawn into His love through worship, and He delights in that relationship.

18. The Content booklet explores how worship combats anxiety and depression and is rooted in celebration and joy. Jesus, as the most joyful person alive, told His disciples that His joy would be in them, and that it would be complete – literally “full to the brim”. (John 15). God wants disciples to be as joyful as Him – the God who announced at creation “It is good!” again and again. Numerous writers affirm that worshipping God by choosing to be thankful and to celebrate opens us up to being more joyful. ① “If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness and perfection, he must tell you to make a rule to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you.”

19. How do I worship God on my own?

20. Which of these is worship? (**Look at pictures of people engaged in different activities**). The answer is that they all can be, or not. Worship doesn’t split life up.

21. In fact, to worship God in church, but not to offer that worship *in the rest of life is a contradiction*. In Colossians we read, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him...Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.” (Colossians 3: 17;23).

22. The Content booklet describes some principles: ① focussing our attention on what is good, ① slowing down, ① being childlike and ① seeing worship as a gift helps us to make worship our priority, wherever we are.

23. Why do I worship God with others?

24. In contrast to a culture which can be about the individual, from the beginning, God calls a people to be the best sign of His presence in the world. Among the many good reasons for worshipping God with others, key reasons would be: **As those who are united with Christ, we are a sign and image of Him by being together.** ① **When we worship together it encourages an expectancy of God’s power and presence in our lives.** When Moses entered the tabernacle, he knew he was entering the presence of God. In the early church when people prayed and worshipped together, sometimes the buildings shook. Coming together can heighten our awareness of God and help us to focus on Him. ① **As we worship together, we can encourage each other to continue to worship God in our individual lives.**

25. The Content booklet unpacks how worship involves everyone – it is ‘the work of the people’ – and celebrates variety. There are many different ways to worship God together, ① which involve different parts of who we are, and are more natural to who we are. ① It is extremely unlikely that everyone in our church will naturally express

worship in exactly the same way. The best group worship would enable people to express their love for God fully without embarrassment or judgment, and to rejoice at variety.

26. **What will worshipping together always involve?**

27. Whether worshipping together by eating round a table, confessing, praying, studying the Bible, singing (there is a section on "Why we sing" in the Content Booklet), or sharing bread and wine, these elements will always be present in some way: ① Being gathered – we are coming together as Christ's body. ① Hearing God's word – we are here to encounter God. ① Being at peace with God and each other – we are here to remember who God is, and who we are as His people. Thanksgiving ① – we are here to give thanks together. ① Being sent out – we come together so that we can be sent out to be with God in the rest of our lives.

28. **Why are sacraments important in worship and being with God?**

29. A significant way of worshipping God, indeed for some Christians the central way of worshipping God, is through sacraments. We can't see God, or fully understand Him. Sacraments are a way in which, through physical and material realities which we can see and take part in, we can meet with God in worship.

30. **Where does breaking bread and sharing wine at Holy Communion come from?**

31. Jesus ① had a habit of breaking bread and sharing it – two of his disciples at Emmaus recognised Him after His resurrection as He broke bread. ① But it was at His last supper with His disciples that He associated the bread and the wine with his own death and gave to them a significance that continues to shape us.

32. **What was Jesus doing at the Last Supper?**

33. On the night he was arrested, three of the gospels say that Jesus was celebrating a Passover meal with His disciples, remembering how the blood of a lamb (they ate lamb at the meal, and used bread and wine to act out the story) was used to mark their homes, and save them from death as it 'passed over' them. ① At the last Supper, Jesus shockingly reinterpreted the Passover meal to reveal how God's purposes were being fulfilled in Him. ① Jesus identified the bread his body; the cup, his 'poured out' blood - pointing to what was going to happen to him on the cross. The words and actions Jesus used to reinterpret the bread and cup became the foundation for the Lord's Supper in the early Church.

34. **Why is remembering so important?**

35. Jesus told His disciples that now, when they broke bread and drank wine, it would no longer be to remember being rescued from slavery in Egypt, but, through Him, being rescued from death. He told them, "Do this to remember me." It is a remembering of what God had done, telling the story again (and it is often good to be reminded), but it is far more than that. ① It is an *active remembrance*. ① In the Passover meal everyone who took part was imagining themselves to have *personally being part* of the rescue from Egypt. ① So remembering Jesus in bread and wine is our way of *receiving Christ's victory in the present*. ① It's a sacrament that carries with it *the living reality of what it signifies*.

36. **What are the meanings of breaking bread and sharing wine?**

37. Over time, the way we share bread and wine has developed in various ways – from simple and informal to more complex and structured. ① There are common elements to each expression (Word / People – peace / Sacrament / Sending out) but different names have been used which highlight the many gifts of this sacrament. ① **Breaking bread**. As Luke writes in Acts (about A.D. 70) the early Christians used this description. ① **Lord's Supper**. Paul used this in his letters from 45-60AD to describe the meal which included a liturgical recital of the words of Jesus. ① **Eucharist**. This comes from a Greek word meaning 'Thanksgiving'. It is found in an early document known as the Didache (Teachings) from as early as 60 AD.

38. **Mass**. ① This name was possibly used as early as the 5th century, but definitely by the 7th century. It probably comes from a word meaning sent. It emphasises how gathering to receive bread and wine leads to us being sent out to be with God and be disciples in the world. As Pope Francis says, "Worship is not worship if it doesn't change us." ① **Holy Communion**. To be holy is to be set apart, and to commune is to have union with. This emphasises how when we share in the bread and wine that has been set apart, our union with Christ and with each other is strengthened in our lived experience. We are not *observing* something, but we are guests who are fed spiritually. ① **Love Feast or 'Agapé'** (a Greek word meaning 'love') meal. By the second century this would be a shared meal, separate from the Eucharist, often linked with providing food for the poor. It died out by the eighth century, but was revived by Methodists in the 18th century. It emphasises the hospitality of God - how in sharing bread and

wine we are a family where all are invited in. A table signifies that you are welcome and that there is a place for you. It's very human and it brings people together.

39. Through the Eucharist God gives us a sacrament in which we find ① **Healing**. As we identify our brokenness with Christ's, we can meet with Him through bread and wine in a way that can lead to wholeness again. ② **Hope**. At the last Supper Jesus looked forward to when He would "feast" with His disciples again. ③ **Everyday life is valued**. Jesus takes ordinary things like bread and wine, transforms them and gives them out. In the same way the ordinary stuff of our lives is taken up into Jesus and given back to us. ④ **A heightened sense of His presence**. God's presence is everywhere, all the time. So how are sacraments different? They remind us specifically of how He has and is acting in our lives to make us whole. And they can intensify our 'being with Him'. If God's presence in creation is like fire, sacraments can perhaps be like the tip of a bunsen burner flame – the same presence, but experienced in a focussed way. (Yet it's also good to know that the Eucharist doesn't split life up - the result of encountering God here should be that we become more aware of God's presence in our everyday lives, not less.)

40. How is this presence known?

41. Christians have different understandings of exactly how God's presence is known in bread and wine. ① For some it is about a heightened sense of memory, and the presence of Christ is known through the whole service, and His people gathered together. The word and the sacrament are linked together. (Luther called the sacrament a 'visible word'.) ② For others, the presence is particularly located in the bread and wine itself in a spiritual sense. ③ For others, the bread and wine become the physical body and blood of Christ during the thanksgiving prayer. While this had led to disputes down the centuries, within the Anglican church these perspectives are held together. It is possible to hold all or some combination of these beliefs together. ④ The key thing is that through sharing in the bread and wine we can be with God in a unique way.