

Way of Discipleship Small Groups

Worship 1: Why worship?



Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



Opening question(s) (5 minutes)

Worship 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.



In what ways could you say Maureen is a worshipper?

Understanding the information (15 minutes)

Share these thoughts in your own words or read them together:

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. Some worship out of awe, some out of fear, some to keep their gods happy (or at bay), some out of duty, some out of love. In reality everybody worships something.



The English word 'worship' comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'weorthscipe' which literally means to ascribe worth to something. Your worship what you most love, give attention to, or desire. Worship is how we respond to what we value the most. Who or what we worship is the deepest expression of our humanity.

Who we worship also shapes us. This is why the Bible warns against idolatry so often.

Psalm 115 says, “...their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands....Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.” The things we base our lives on are the things which make things normal for us. If you worship money, greed becomes normal. If your god is violent, killing becomes normal. Worship expresses what we value, but also shapes it.

For Christians, God (alone) is worthy of our worship. 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, ‘When we face up to the glory of God, we find ourselves face down in worship.’

Worship is the deepest expression of who we are. Worship is the practice that makes us most human and reveals our deepest longings. 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. “The chief end of people is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

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.’ The original human problem, and the root of all the brokenness in society, is the way we have replaced God with ourselves, living our lives, and ruling the world, as if He does not exist. To worship God is to reverse this, by placing God at the centre.

When Jesus said we should worship “in spirit and in truth” He wasn’t recommending any method or place, but showing how God was looking for the worshipping people who will truly make Him the centre of their lives.

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)

Discuss: What for you is the best reason to worship God?

Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read Psalm 8.

Discuss the Discovery Bible Study questions:
What does this passage teach me about God?
What does this passage teach me about people?
How does this passage call me to obey God?
What might I do in response to this this week?

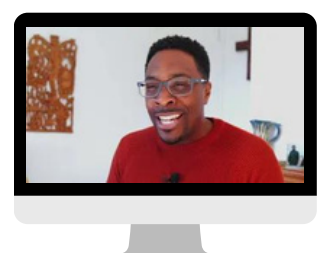


Seeing how it looks in real lives (10 minutes)

Watch the video at:

<https://youtu.be/5CQRs6614eE>

What struck you as important in the video?



Optional further material and questions

Share these thoughts or read them together:

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. He kissed his daughter to show he loves her (expressing), but as he kisses her his love grows (strengthening). So while the English word for worship describes how it is about ascribing worth to God, the Greek word in the New Testament describes worship as connecting intimately with God. The word (proskyneō) literally means to come towards and kiss the back of the hand. It's a word of intimacy and reverence. 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.

The practice of worshipping God is strongly linked to the practice of celebration and to joy. In a time and culture in which many struggle with anxiety, stress and depression it is important to experience the practice of worship as key to better mental health and well-being. The early church "ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God" (Acts 2:46/7). Nehemiah tells the people, "Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)

Worship leads to joy. Whereas pleasure is responding to something in the moment, and so is temporary, joy is a deeper commitment that comes through ways we live and attitudes we have. While it's possible for this joy to come upon us unexpectedly as a gift, there are two ways God gives us to cultivate joy in our lives. In a specific sense, God called His people to worship Him through festivals and celebrations. For example, three times a year they were to celebrate for seven days. They were to spend a tenth of their income on one celebration and make sure it was accompanied by strong drink! (Deuteronomy 14: 22-27). While as Christians we might not obey that joyful command so accurately, there are a number of celebrations and feast days spread throughout each year for the same reason – the most famous being Easter and Christmas. The more important ones have a long period of preparation. In a general way, God calls us to worship and celebrate by giving thanks in all circumstances, and at all times. "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say: rejoice," Paul wrote from prison.

It's important to say that some people have a genetically more cheerful character than others. Worship and celebration is not about pretending to be a different person. Nevertheless, numerous writers affirm that worshipping God by choosing to be thankful and to celebrate opens us up to being more joyful. Thanksgiving stops us from taking ourselves too seriously and opens up space for God. It reminds us that life is a gift. It helps correct ways in which we see God negatively and instead expresses our trust in God's goodness. Thanksgiving is the least selfish prayer.

Discuss: How might you grow an attitude of gratitude?

Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, "What might God be showing me and how might I respond?" They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, "Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?"



Group prayer (5 minutes)

Praise the Lord, my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
Praise the Lord, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—
who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.



Praise the Lord, you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his bidding,
who obey his word.
Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts,
you his servants who do his will.
Praise the Lord, all his works
everywhere in his dominion.
Praise the Lord, my soul.

Amen.

(Psalm 103)



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Additional notes:

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