

# discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership  
Leader's Guide

## THE CHURCH AND WORSHIP

### LESSON 3: THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP

#### INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled The Church and Worship. This series of lessons examines what the Bible teaches concerning the purpose of the Church and how it came into being. Church leaders need to be grounded in their understanding of why Jesus Christ established the Church to function as His Body (His ambassadors in the world) after He ascended into heaven. The Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, has been instructed to spread the Gospel around the world and to serve in its local community. It also meets regularly to worship God, be instructed in His Word, and to support and encourage one another.

#### INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is emerging leaders who are preparing for specific ministry within the Church.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at [www.discipleshipessentials.org](http://www.discipleshipessentials.org).

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# THE CHURCH AND WORSHIP

## LESSON 3: THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to establish a Biblical basis for worship. We will examine the fact that worship is much broader than music and liturgy.

### LEADER'S NOTE

From a different perspective, this lesson reflects much of the material in the lesson titled "What is Worship?" which can be found in Module 3 of Course 1 (Christian Life and Worldview). In that lesson, 'worship' is defined as ascribing worth to someone or something. Having a theology of worship will help your participants avoid limiting their view of worship to a weekly service or a daily devotional time. The Bible teaches us that worship is both temporal and eternal, and is focused on ascribing worth to Almighty God who is Creator of all things, Lord of heaven and earth. Our worship of Him must permeate our whole life and our ministry for Him -- at home, in our community and around the world.

## INTRODUCTION

*Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.*

- ❖ How does your church express its worship?
- ❖ What distractions do you experience when you are worshipping in church?
- ❖ What disturbs your private worship? How can these be overcome?
- ❖ How does worship differ from one church to another, or in different cultures? What is the same? What elements are essential?

## STUDY

*Instruct the group on the following points.*

- ❖ **Why have a Theology of Worship?** A Biblical theology of worship establishes a basis for evaluating our worship. There are many trends in music style and church service liturgy that may or may not be useful in your particular group or church. It is good to know what the Bible teaches on any topic, especially worship, before incorporating change for the sake of change or popularity. Here are some basic reasons why a Theology of Worship is important:



- **Worship is more than music.** Confusion exists in some churches that worship is music and music is worship. That's only partially true. Worship is much broader than the brief time we spend singing in church. In Psalm 86:12 David said, *"I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my **whole heart**, and I will glorify your name forever."*
  - **Worship is all about God.** To consider anything else as more important than God, is to enter into idolatry, which God hates. The 1st Commandment states that God alone is to be worshipped (Deuteronomy 5:8).
  - **Worship is a spiritual activity.** It is an expression from deep within our spirit, engaging both our emotions and our mind. Its origin and purpose must be grounded in Scripture. Jesus told the woman at the well that the Father is seeking people who will *"worship in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:23-24).
  - **Worship is a deliberate act.** It involves participation – personally giving glory to God. His holiness is beautiful beyond description and deserves a beautiful expression of thanksgiving and praise from our lips and through our acts of service (Psalm 29:2).
- ❖ **When is Worship Not Acceptable?** Because we are sinful, even our worship of God can be contaminated. We must take care not to worship in a way that is not acceptable to God.
- **Wrong motives:** If we are not honoring the Lord in our daily lives, but we meet with others to worship on Sunday only to make a good impression, our songs are only noise to God (Amos 5:23).
  - **Insincerity:** Jesus quoted Isaiah in Mark 7:6, *"Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me'."*
  - **Unconfessed sin:** Going through the motions of worship while harbouring deliberate sin is unacceptable to God. *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear"* (Psalm 66:18).
  - **Idolatry:** God has warned His people clearly throughout the Bible that He is against those who take part in idolatry, which is viewing anything to be more important than God Himself (Deuteronomy 31:18).
- ❖ **Worship in the Book of Revelation:** Even though this book of the Bible is one of the most difficult to comprehend, there are many examples of worship that teach us what is happening at this very moment in heaven, as well as what will take place there in the ages to come. The selected scenes below describe an ongoing picture that begins now and extends to the end of time – a drama of worship as it were. As we compare our own worship experiences to these, we will be challenged to greater humility and sharper focus on Jesus as the object of our worship.

## TASK:

Assign each of the following passages to individual students or groups of students to read and answer the following questions. Then they can report back to the class, or even act out their scene.



<b>Examples of Worship in Revelations</b>		
<b>Questions:</b>		
1. Where are they?	2. Who is the focus of their worship?	3. What are they doing?
		4. What are they saying/singing?
<b>Who?</b>	<b>Where?</b>	<b>What?</b>
The Four Beasts	Revelation 4:8-9	-They are closest to God, surrounding the throne. - They never stop worshipping God. -Their declaration of worship is: <i>"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"</i>
The Twenty Four Elders	Revelation 4:4, 10-11	-They are seated on 24 thrones surrounding God's throne. -Taking their cue from the 4 Beasts, they fall down before God. -They cast their crowns before God. - Their declaration of worship is: <i>"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created."</i>
The Beasts and the Elders	Revelation 5:8-10	-They all fall down before the Lamb. -They each have a harp and golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. - They sing a new song: <i>"You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for you were slain and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God, and we shall reign on the earth."</i>
The Angels	Revelation 5:11-12	- They are many in number and surround all the others. -Their declaration of worship is: <i>"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour and glory and blessing!"</i>
All Creation in Heaven and Earth	Revelation 5:13	-They are in heaven and on earth. - Their declaration of worship is: <i>"Blessing and honour and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!"</i>
The Great Multitude	Revelation 7:9-10	- They are standing on front of the throne and the Lamb. -They are from all nations, tribes, peoples and tongue. -They are clothed with white robes and hold palms in their hands. Their declaration of worship is: <i>"Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"</i>
The Angels, Beasts and Elders	Revelation 7:11-12	- They all stand. - Their declaration of worship is: <i>"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanks giving and honour and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."</i>

**TEACH:**

- ❖ **Worship Guidelines from 1 and 2 Chronicles:** In these two books of the Old Testament, there are many references to worship events. In some smaller church groups, large celebrations may not be possible or practical. However, besides regular worship services, a church or a group of churches could gather from time to time for a special worship

**TASK:**

*Divide the participants into two groups. Assign half the group to look at special worship events, and the other half to look at regular worship events. Have them present their findings to the class, and make suggestions for application in our local Churches today.*

- ❖ **Special Worship events** require special preparation and skilled leadership. Some examples:
  - David brings the Ark of the Lord's Covenant to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 15:16-29).
    - Appoint a capable leader to lead the singing, encouraging everyone to join
    - Appoint musicians who will use their gifts and abilities to accompany the songs.
    - Include joyful, exuberant praise music.
  - Dedication of the Temple under Solomon (2 Chronicles 5:12-14).
    - Assign the musicians to lead the people in praise.
    - Give praise and thanks to God.
    - Expect blessing from the Lord.
  - Purification of the Temple under Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29:25-30).
    - Compose new worship songs to add to the already familiar ones.
    - Sing praises with gladness and instrumental music.
    - Bow our heads and kneel down in worship.
- ❖ **Regular Worship Events** such as Sunday meetings require someone to organize and lead the various parts of the service. Someone gifted in music should plan, rehearse and lead the music. David organized the ongoing ministry of worship before the tabernacle by assigning 4000 musicians, supervised by 288 trained leaders (1 Chronicles 23:2-6).
  - Daily ministry before the Ark of the Lord's Covenant (1 Chronicles 16:37-42).
    - Musicians are chosen to lead in worship.
    - Regular duties are assigned by leadership.
    - The Lord is the focus of our worship.
  - Regular Worship for all Israel (1 Chronicles 23:5 and 30, 1 Chronicles 25:6-8).
    - Musicians are set apart for a ministry in music, recognizing they are proclaiming the Word of God in song.
    - All music leaders must be accountable to the authority of those over them.
    - Music leaders should be good singers and able to play or give direction to those playing instruments.

**TEACH:**

- ❖ **Worship in the Psalms:** The Book of Psalms was the hymnbook of the Jewish people. Each Psalm was set to music and sung both privately and publicly. Psalms give us many good examples of how to worship God in spirit and in truth. The following short list of Psalms provides good models for both personal and corporate worship:

- [Psalm 8](#)
- [Psalm 19](#)
- [Psalm 23](#)
- [Psalm 47](#)
- [Psalm 84](#)
- [Psalm 95](#)
- [Psalm 96](#)
- [Psalm 98](#)
- [Psalm 100](#)
- [Psalm 150](#)

- ❖ **New Testament Worship Guidelines:** In the New Testament, the object of our worship remains the same, but there is a shift to worshiping in spirit and truth, rather than through ritualistic adherence to the law and sacrifices.
  - **Acceptable Worship:** Read [Hebrews 12:18-28](#). It ends with this admonition regarding our worship. *“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.”*
    - Our worship is an offering to God.
    - Our worship should be from grateful hearts.
    - Reverence and awe of God define a worshipful attitude.
    - All things should be done decently and in order ([I Corinthians 14:29](#)).
    - Everything should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus ([Colossians 3: 17](#)).
  - **Spiritual Worship:** God wants our whole person – body, soul and spirit -- to be engaged in worship.
    - Make our body available for God to use ([Romans 12:1](#)).
    - Worship in spirit and in truth ([John 4:19-24](#), [I Corinthians 14:15](#)).
  - **Expressive Worship:** Words are a very important part of our worship – our own words to and about God, as well as God’s Word expressed in reading or song ([Colossians 3:16-17](#), [Ephesians 5:18-19](#)).
    - Teaching and admonishing each other
    - Using a variety of styles and forms of music
      - Psalms – based on God’s inspired Word
      - Hymns – teaching truth about God
      - Spiritual songs – expressing God’s work in our lives
    - Singing and making melody to the Lord with thankful hearts
    - Expressive worship can also include other forms of art – drama, dance, visual art – to express gratitude, teach truth and ascribe worth to God.



### **ASK:**

*From our study today, what should Churches keep in mind when they are planning worship for believers? How should what we learn from this study show up in practical ways on a Sunday morning, or special worship event?*

### **TEACH:**

- ❖ **Conclusion:** We can worship God in the everyday moments of life as well as during planned worship events. The worship that God desires of us comes from our heart, and is not done to be seen by others. The work we set our hands to every day can be done in a worshipful fashion. Even the words we speak to one another and the attitude of our heart should be worshipful. Worship can be both planned or spontaneous, individual or collective, silent or ecstatic! It is a joyful activity performed by the entire universal and invisible Church of God in response to His command, and it draws us closer to God and one another.

## **DISCUSSION**

- ❖ What wonderful worship experiences stand out in your memory? Describe what was special.
- ❖ Describe a typical worship service in your church. Is it a spiritually uplifting experience? How could it be improved?
- ❖ What are ways you can use your body as an act of spiritual worship?
- ❖ What is your favorite Psalm? Is it God speaking to you, or you to God, or both? What expressions of worship does it contain?

## **PRAYER**

*Close with a time of prayer. Pray that these guidelines from Scriptures will help your participants to worship God in spirit and in truth. Pray that they would always turn to the Bible for guidance and direction in all aspects of life. Pray that they would present their bodies as living sacrifices for God to use in spreading the message of salvation, and in encouraging other believers in the faith. Pray that their churches will keep the primary focus on exalting God in their worship, and not on the individuals who are leading.*