

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership
Study 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.

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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THE CHURCH AND WORSHIP

LESSON 3: THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

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.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

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 us avoid limiting our 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.

GETTING STARTED

1. What distractions do you experience when you are worshipping in church?

2. How does worship differ from one church to another, or in different cultures? What is the same? What elements are essential?



STUDY

❖ **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.

- **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. Look at the following verses and write down what you learn about worshipping God with our whole being:

Psalm 86:12	
Romans 12:1	
Colossians 3:14-17	

- **Worship is all about God:** To consider anything else as more important than God, is to enter into idolatry, which God hates.

What does the 1st Commandment given to Moses say? (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.



What do the following verses tell us about worship that is not acceptable to God?

Verses	What is Not Acceptable to God?
Amos 5:23	
Mark 7:6	
Psalm 66:18	
Deuteronomy 31:18	

- What must we be careful of every time we worship God? How can we guard against worshipping with wrong motives, insincerity, unconfessed sin and idolatry?

- What forms can 'idolatry' take? What are some things we can unintentionally place as more important than God in our lives (people, aspirations, material goods)? When do these things become our idols?

❖ **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.

- We are going to look together at some examples of worship in the book of Revelation. This book describes how God is continuously worshiped in heaven.



In the following Chart, look up each example of worship and answer these four questions:

1. Where are they?
2. Who is the focus of their worship?
3. What are they doing?
4. What are they saying/singing?

Verses	Answers to the Questions
The Four Beasts Revelation 4:8-9	
The Twenty Four Elders Revelation 4:4, 10-11	
The Beasts and the Elders Revelation 5:8-10	
The Angels Revelation 5:11-12	
All Creation in Heaven and Earth Revelation 5:13	
The Great Multitude Revelation 7:9-10	
The Angels, Beasts and Elders Revelation 7:11-12	

What do these pictures describe about how we should worship God?



❖ **WORSHIP IN 1 AND 2 CHRONICLES:** Listed below are significant worship events described in these two books of the Old Testament in the Bible. For you who are worship leaders today, include these in your personal theology of worship and allow the Holy Spirit to use them in shaping your ministry in the Church. Read these Scripture passages below:

- David bringing the Ark of the Lord’s Covenant to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 15:16-29)
- Ministry of music before the Ark of the Lord’s Covenant (1 Chronicles 16:37-42)
- King David's organization of musicians in Israel (1 Chronicles 23:5 and 30, 1 Chronicles 25:6-8)
- The dedication of the Temple under Solomon (2 Chronicles 5:12-14)
- The purification of the Temple under Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29:25-30)

From these verses, what do you observe about special worship events? What planning is involved? Who does what? Why do they do what they do?

❖ **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.

- Read the following Psalms. What do the writers of the Psalms say about God? What do they do? What do you notice about how God is worshipped in these passages?

Psalm 8	
Psalm 96	
Psalm 47	
Psalm 100	

❖ **NEW TESTAMENT WORSHIP GUIDELINES:** In the New Testament, the object of our worship remains the same, but there is a shift to worshipping in spirit and truth, rather than through ritualistic adherence to the law and sacrifices.



- **Acceptable Worship:** Our worship of God is not just about showing up, singing, and doing what everyone else is doing. It must come from the heart and be sincere. What do the following verses tell us about worship that is acceptable to God?

Hebrews 12:18-28	
1 Corinthians 14:29	
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. This may include a variety of styles and forms of music. It includes singing and making music with thankful hearts.
 - Psalms – based on God’s inspired Word
 - Hymns – teaching truth about God
 - Spiritual Songs – expressing God’s work in our lives

Expressive worship can also include other forms of art – drama, dance, visual art – to express gratitude, teach truth and ascribe worth to God.

- From what we have seen in the Scriptures about the worship of God, what should church leaders keep in mind when they are planning a time of worship for believers? How should what we have learned improve our corporate worship?



IN SUMMARY

- ❖ The Bible instructs us about how we should worship God. Worship is more than music; it involves all that we are and do. It is entirely about God, it is a spiritual act, and it is a deliberate act.
- ❖ Worship is not acceptable if we worship with wrong motives, insincerely, with unconfessed sin, or when we practise idolatry.
- ❖ Examples of worship in the Bible portray God as the only object of worship, and all of creation as being made for the purpose of worshiping the Creator.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What wonderful worship experiences stand out in your memory? Describe what was special.

2. What can you take from this lesson to help you prepare to worship God more meaningfully, either alone or with other believers?