

## The Discipleship Project-Winter 2018–2019

### Series 2: The Heart of Worship

*A series by Carl McLaughlin, Ron Trimmer, and Jonathan McClintock*

**Series Big Idea:** Because God is always worthy of praise, our hearts must be set to worship Him in all things and at all times.

### Lesson 2.3: The Time for Worship

**Lesson Big Idea:** Because God is always worthy of worship, we must worship the Lord at all times.

#### FOUNDATION

**Scripture Focus:** Psalm 34:1 (PPT)

When God spoke to Abraham about making him a father of many nations, Abraham questioned the likelihood of such a prophetic word coming to pass. At his age, not to mention the age of his wife, Sarah, Abraham was convinced they were going to die without having children of their own. However, God promised Abraham and Sarah a son in their old age. And though the fulfillment of the promise seemed impossible, God did what He said He would do.

Abraham and Sarah proudly raised their son, fully convinced God would fulfill His covenant and make of them a great nation. As they watched Isaac grow, they become even more certain of God's plans in their life, until:

*Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"*

*"Here I am," he replied.*

*Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." (Genesis 22:1–2, NIV)*

A command like that would certainly test any father, causing him to question everything, be paralyzed with fear, and perhaps even backpedal on his commitment to God. Which makes it even harder to understand Abraham's reaction. Sure, child sacrifice was not uncommon in those days, as people believed certain false gods demanded such outrageous expressions. But this was not consistent with what Abraham had learned so far about Jehovah.

*Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. (Genesis 22:3, NIV)*

He arose early. He didn't delay. He didn't seem to question. He simply obeyed. Talk

about solid and unwavering faith. Though this didn't make sense and was seemingly inconsistent with the God he had come to know, he assumed God would keep His word, His promise, and His covenant.

*As they approached Moriah, Abraham told his servants to stay behind as he and Isaac started their climb. His final words to his servants before this defining journey upward were simply, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship." (Genesis 22:5, NKJV)*

- **To you, does the idea of worship seem out of place in this story? Why or why not?**
- **Has there ever been a difficult test you have faced and your worship carried you through? Explain.**

## FRAME

**Time is the most valuable commodity we have been given. (PDG, PPT)** With it we can accomplish amazing things. Time allows us the space to create, to love, to serve, and to express the God-given abilities we have received.

What makes time so valuable is the fact that **time cannot be saved or stored for later use. (PDG, PPT)** Time is constantly being spent. Once a moment passes, that moment will never come around again. Those who recognize this sobering reality guard their time and spend it wisely. But some fail to understand the fleeting nature of time and throw it away on insignificant and often selfish pursuits.

Often things that seem important are not really that important. And when something appears important, it calls out to us, demanding our time. Because of this we must be discerning, recognize the **time stealers (PPT)** that come disguised as something important.

- **What are some things you have learned are time stealers?**
- **What have you done to eliminate some time stealers from your life?**

Yes, some things we will never be able to avoid.

The writer of Ecclesiastes led into a discourse on seasons and time with these words:

*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. (Ecclesiastes 3:1, KJV) (PPT)*

**There is a proper time for everything. (PPT)** A further reading into chapter 3 reveals there is a time for planting and a time for harvesting, a time for breaking things down and a time for building things up. There will be times of laughter and times of weeping, times of mourning and times for rejoicing. There will be those times when you lose, and then there will also be those times when you win. There will be precious times when you are able to embrace those you love, and then there will be the heartbreaking times when you

will have to let go. There have always been times of war and times of peace. And we have all found there is a time to speak and then there is also a time to be silent.

Though there is a season and time for all things, we decide what gets the time we are in control of.

David made his claim clear. When it came to how he would spend his time, he said:

*I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*  
(Psalm 34:1, KJV) (PPT)

The superscription of this psalm tells us the setting in which David wrote this bold declaration. As a side note, “superscriptions are included in the Hebrew text as the first verse. It has been suggested that we should accept the superscriptions as authoritative” (*The Messiah in the Psalms*, Daniel Seagraves, page 14).

The superscription to Psalm 34 (KJV) reads:

*A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.* (PPT)

From this superscription we learn what David meant when he said, “at all times.” **To David, “at all times” meant even in times of adversity and struggle.** (PDG, PPT)

Saul was trying to kill David, so David had fled, seeking refuge somewhere far from the king. Though it is not clear why **David chose to go to Gath (PPT)** (the former home of the defeated giant Goliath), that is precisely where David went. Sometimes harrowing circumstances will influence us to choose paths we would not have normally chosen.

Upon arriving in Gath, the servants of Achish (referred to as Abimelech in the Psalm 34 superscription) began to warn the king:

*Isn't this David, the king of the land? Isn't he the one they sing about in their dances: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands"?* (I Samuel 21:11, NIV) (PPT)

When David heard their warning to the king, David became afraid. In his fit of fear, David's survival instincts took over and he began acting like a madman.

*He pretended to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard.* (I Samuel 21:13, NIV) (PPT)

Talk about things not working out like you had planned. This trip to Gath did not unfold the way David had imagined. Not only was Saul on his tail, but David's past, even though victorious, was a noose around his neck in Gath. He feared for his life and was again searching for a way out.

When Achish (Abimelech) saw how David was acting, he was disgusted and could not believe this was the David he had heard so much about. He let his servants know that he wanted nothing to do with the crazy man who had stumbled into his kingdom.

At that word from the king, David decided to plan his escape because he feared for

his life. **He escaped to the cave of Adullam. (PPT)** There a band of men gathered to him (around four hundred of them).

*All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their commander. (I Samuel 22:2, NIV) (PPT)*

Though David did not have clear direction on what to do next, he was not alone anymore. In that realization David penned these words:

*I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. (Psalm 34:1, KJV) (PDG, PPT)*

David's example to us is this: **because God is always worthy of worship, we must worship the Lord at all times. (PPT)**

Whether good times or bad, whether test or trial—no matter the situation or circumstance—we must worship the Lord at all times.

- **How can you apply this verse to your present situation?**
- **How have you applied it in the past?**

**We must worship the Lord in good times. (PDG, PPT)**

This seems like a given. People automatically want to worship the Lord when things are going well, right? Unfortunately, experience tells us that sometimes the good times cause us to forget God.

The Lord actually warned the Israelites through Moses about this very thing happening. The simple fact that God chose to warn His people about being forgetful with their worship shows the nature we as humans carry and the way good times can affect us:

*For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills. When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. (Deuteronomy 8:7–14, NIV) (PPT)*

It appears that good times can cause us to become proud and forgetful. We become proud because we begin to think the good came because we earned it or deserve it. We become forgetful because our pride leads us to selfish thinking and we become engrossed in our own accomplishments. Even in good times our worship unto the Lord can suffer.

Even in good times our praise to the King of kings can be silenced.

- **How do good times affect your worship and prayer life?**
- **Have you ever seen good times negatively affect your focus on God? Explain.**

**We must choose to worship the Lord in bad times. (PDG, PPT)**

Seldom do bad times inspire us to worship. In fact, bad times seem to have a way of handcuffing our worship. Whether due to worry, fear, anxiety, or simply an emotional downturn, bad times can often be a catalyst for silence. Many who find themselves in bad times avoid the altar, find excuses to miss church, and if they happen to come to church, they feel a heaviness that inhibits their praise.

But not Job. After experiencing what can only be described as utter disaster in his life, Job's response was stunning. Job had received bad report after bad report: the theft of his oxen, the slaying of his servants, the loss of his sheep, and the disappearance of his camels. And finally, the ultimate blow: the death of his sons and daughters.

Staggering under the weight of such horrific news, Job stumbled out of his house. Tears streamed down his face as his world seemed to rapidly crumble beneath him. In that moment of cruel reality, he found solid footing. A switch was flipped, and his faith took over. He rent his clothes, shaved his head, and found a place all by himself.

*Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." (Job 1:20–21, NIV) (PPT)*

- **How do bad times affect your worship and prayer life?**
- **Have you ever seen bad times negatively affect your focus on God? Explain.**

Whether good times or bad, the times call for worship. We must worship when we are strong like the Israelites, having settled in a land that is plenteous and filled with blessing. And we must choose worship when we are weak like Job and life has turned against us. It is difficult to sense the Lord and His presence at all times, but when we cannot see Him, we must trust Him. And when we cannot sense Him, we must still worship Him.

## **FINISH**

Leaving the servants behind, Abraham and Isaac began the slow, arduous trip up the mountain.

*Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. (Genesis 22:6, NIV)*

As the two men made their way up and over rocks, past briars and bushes, the site for their sacrifice became closer and clearer. Isaac had wrestled with a certain question since they had started their climb. And as they came near to the offering site, his curiosity got

the best of him. “Father, I have the wood and you have the fire, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?”

Abraham, knowing very well Isaac was the one the Lord had told him to sacrifice, delayed his response for a brief moment. During the momentary delay, the doubt he had been fighting relinquished itself and faith filled his mouth. “Son, the Lord will provide the sacrifice for us.”

How could he say such a thing? He had no promise of God interrupting the approaching ceremony. But Abraham did have a covenant he was counting on. And the son by his side was supposed to be the link to future generations of God-fearing believers. His faith caught a prophetic glimpse of a new revelation of Jehovah. He was about to come in contact with Jehovah-Jireh: the Lord who provides.

Every step Abraham took was a step of faith. Every stride he made was filled with worship. Even during test and trial, Abraham had made up his mind, “I will bless the Lord at all times.”

They arrived, and Isaac saw no sacrificial lamb. They built the altar together, and there was still no animal in sight. Abraham turned to Isaac and told him to lay on the altar. Questions swirled through both of their heads, but the obedient Isaac didn’t say a word and crawled into place on the structure. As Abraham took the knife in his hand, the angel of the Lord called out from Heaven:

*Abraham! Abraham!*

*“Here I am,” he replied.*

*“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.” (Genesis 22:11–12, NIV)*

Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by his horns in a thick bush. He and Isaac grabbed the animal, which miraculously became the substitute sacrifice God had provided. On the mountain God showed both father and son the Lord’s response to those who worship at all times.

Are times good? Our response should be worship.

Are times bad? Our response should be worship.

Are we experiencing testing and trial? Our response should be worship.

Why? Because He is always worthy of worship and He never changes. So like David, let us declare:

*I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*  
(Psalm 34:1, KJV)