

## 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 2.4: The Direction of Worship

**Lesson Big Idea:** Because God is always worthy of worship, we must make Him the object of our worship.

#### FOUNDATION

**Scripture Focus:** Psalm 100 (PPT)

Having just finished freshly organizing his administration, King Jehoshaphat looked to settle back and take it easy for a while. But before his La-Z-Boy had fully reclined, some messengers interrupted his rest, saying:

*A vast army from Edom is marching against you from beyond the Dead Sea. They are already at Hazazon-tamar. (II Chronicles 20:2, NLT)*

Jehoshaphat was terrified at this news. He marveled at how fast the tides could turn, going from peace to war in a matter of moments. However, though afraid, the king did what he had been taught to do. He called the entire kingdom together for a time of fasting and prayer.

As people came from all over Judah, Jehoshaphat gathered them together in the courtyard outside the Temple. The nation sensed the gravity of the moment and listened as their king offered his desperate prayer:

*Lord, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, “If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us” . . . we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you. (II Chronicles 20:6–9, 12, NIV)*

The king made clear that their hearts were turned in God’s direction. The prayer and worship they were offering at that moment was aimed at the Lord. Jehoshaphat admitted they did not know what to do, but their eyes were on God.

As his prayer came to an end, the attention of the people was still heavenward, and their ears were attuned to listening for God's voice. Then the Spirit of the Lord moved upon a Levite named Jahaziel and he began to prophesy:

*This is what the Lord says to you: "Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's." (II Chronicles 20:15, NIV)*

As the prophecy went forth, the people fell on their faces and worshiped the Lord for His promised power, provision, and deliverance.

To further demonstrate Jehoshaphat's priority of worship, early the next morning he sent singers and musicians to lead the army into battle. They marched with their eyes upon the Lord. They moved forward in the direction of their enemy, though their hearts were turned in the direction of their Creator.

And the result? The Lord defeated their enemy.

- **How have you seen God help you through your worship?**
- **How can you keep your eyes on the Lord in each situation you face?**

## FRAME

**We are all worshippers.** (PDG, PPT) All of us—saved or unsaved, Christian or non-Christian—are worshipers. Religion matters not in worship. The truth is, we will worship someone or something. The difference between worshipers is not always style or expression. The difference lies in the object of worship.

- **What are some different things people worship?**

**True followers of Jesus Christ will worship Him alone; anything else is idolatry.** (PDG, PPT) However, this world is full of worshipers who offer worship to other gods and other things. It does not take long to find people worshipping pleasure. It does not take a detective to find those who worship at the altar of self. Of course, this type of worship is not new. Paul wrote about it in the first portion of his letter to the Romans:

*Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. (Romans 1:25, KJV) (PPT)*

These individuals of whom Paul wrote chose to worship and serve creation more than their Creator, and the consequences were devastating. This elevation of flesh led these people into abominable and sinful practices, driving them further and further away from God. Until God "abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done" (Romans 1:28, NLT). When we worship the creature, we are worshipping in the wrong direction. And before we know it, we will be far away from God.

And if **the end result of worshipping self and sinful pleasure is abandonment by God, (PPT)** may we never allow ourselves to even entertain the thought of that type of

worship.

- **What is one of the worst consequences you can think of when it comes to being abandoned by God?**

Because God is always worthy of worship, we must make Him the object of our worship. Let us turn our worship in the right direction. Refuse to worship self. Refuse to elevate human accomplishment higher than God's mighty acts and His excellent greatness (Psalm 150:2).

**The Lord is to be the object of our worship. (PDG, PPT)** The psalmist told us to make a joyful noise. But not just a joyful noise in any direction. We are to “make a joyful noise unto the Lord” (Psalm 100:1, KJV). When we turn our joyful noise toward the Lord, we are identifying the source of our joy and the originator of our blessings.

- **What are some examples of making a joyful noise?**

In lesson two of this series, we took a look at David's response to the Ark of the Lord returning to Jerusalem. When Michal, David's wife, saw him doing what she thought was making a fool of himself, she chided him and acted embarrassed by her husband's antics. But David's response was simple: “This dancing and worship was not for you or for the people. I did this before the Lord who chose me.” (See II Samuel 6:21.) (PPT)

David made it clear that his worship was offered in the direction of the one who had blessed him, chosen him, and forgiven him. Therefore, the joyful noise we make should follow the same pattern. Has He blessed you? Has He chosen you? And has He forgiven you? Then **let us make a joyful noise unto the Lord!** (PPT)

- **What are some reasons to make a joyful noise to the Lord?**

In Psalm 100, the psalmist continued his song in the direction of the Lord:

*Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.* (Psalm 100:2–5, KJV) (PPT)

Not only should our joyful noise be unto the Lord, but **when we serve, we are to serve in the Lord's direction.** (PPT)

*Serve the Lord with gladness.* (Psalm 100:2, KJV) (PPT)

When you serve others, are you doing it for recognition? Are you serving for your own personal fulfillment? Or is your service to others being offered as a sacrifice of praise unto the Lord?

When we serve others with the desire to please God in the process, the Lord accepts

our worship of service as worship unto Him.

As we continue to read Psalm 100, the passage reveals absolute focus on God in every action taken. We are to come before His presence with singing. We are to enter His gates and His courts with praise. We are to be thankful unto Him and bless His name.

Again, **worship is all about being where He is and being pointed in His direction.** (PDG, PPT) It is realizing He is responsible for every blessing and every good thing. We are to make His name known and make sure our lives reflect well on His name.

- **How can we make sure our lives are reflecting well on His name?**

The psalmist wrapped up the song with **a few compelling reasons to make our worship all about Him:** (PPT)

The first reason for us to make our worship all about Him: **the Lord is good.** (PPT)

There may be moments in life when your humanity questions this reality. There may be situations you are aware of around the world that seem to challenge the validity of this claim. However, when all has been considered, the truth of this statement remains: the Lord is good.

Paul wrote:

*Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.* (I Corinthians 13:12, NLT) (PPT)

We are not able to understand everything with our finite minds. God's ways are far above our ways, and His purpose far exceeds our understanding. Yes, trusting amid tragedy calls for faith. But in Him our hope will never fail.

*I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.* (John 16:33, NLT) (PPT)

We will have suffering in this world, but God is still good. We will have questions, but God is still good. There will be dark days, long nights, and difficult seasons. But through it all, God is still good.

*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* (Romans 8:28, KJV) (PPT)

- **In what ways has the Lord been good to you?**

The second reason for us to make our worship all about Him: **His mercy is everlasting.** (PDG, PPT)

His mercy will never run out. The King James Version uses mercy while most other translations use either *lovingkindness*, *love*, or *unfailing love*. The apostle John wrote, "God is love" (I John 4:8, KJV), while the apostle Paul told us that true "love never fails"

(I Corinthians 13:8, NIV).

If there is one thing you can count on to never change in this life, it is the fact that God loves you. Nothing you do can change God's love for you. It is a constant. You cannot be good enough to earn more of His love, and you cannot be bad enough to cause Him to stop loving you. The simple truth is His love will never fail. His mercy is everlasting.

- **How have you witnessed the unfailing love of God in your life?**

The third reason for us to make our worship all about Him: **His truth endures to all generations. (PDG, PPT)**

When reading this portion of verse 5, some will jump to the conclusion that the truth of God and the forever settled doctrines of Scripture will endure to all generations. And though that is true, the truth of that statement is not necessarily what the psalmist had in mind. Yes, the Word of God is forever settled in Heaven. We can count on the truth of His Word and know it will never change.

But the psalmist wanted us to understand what the Hebrew word emunah means: "firm, steadfast, and faithful."

*For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. (NIV)*

The Lord is forever faithful. He is faithful to His Word and His promises. And the fact that His faithfulness extends from generation to generation tells me that the provision of God that was on display for those in previous generations can be received in this generation. And it will not stop with this generation. If the Lord carries, it will be extended to the generations to come.

- **How have you witnessed the faithfulness of God in your life?**

Because God is always worthy of worship, let us make Him the object of our worship. For truly we were made to worship only Him. No other god deserves our praise. No other god delivered us. No other god saved us.

As Paul wrote:

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. (Romans 12:1, NIV) (PPT)*

## **FINISH**

Murmuring and complaining marked the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites. The people became fed up with their uncomfortable living conditions and their lack of food and water. These moments caused them to think back on life in Egypt and long for the safety and security of their former lives. The murmuring Israelites often failed to remember it was the Lord who brought them out of Egypt and had promised them a land

of plenty and blessings beyond imagination. Unfortunately their dissatisfaction and doubt were what led to their forty years of wandering.

But now Moses had died, the generation that had refused to believe God to give them the land had also passed, and Joshua had been enjoying many years of conquest, triumph, and God's bountiful blessings. The tribes had inherited the Promised Land, and each had claimed their right to the sections of land designated for their future generations.

As Joshua neared the end of his life, he thought back over the miraculous exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan. His mind wondered over the wilderness wanderings and the numerous challenges they had faced. He had watched God provide. He had beheld God's deliverance. And each step along the way, he had been a firsthand witness of the Lord's unfailing love for His people.

And as his mind wandered, Joshua became concerned for the future and what God's people may do once Joshua was off the scene. He thought, If the people turned from God before, they could do it again. *They must make up their minds and set their hearts upon God alone.*

Joshua called the people together at Shechem and preached his farewell sermon. In it he recounted God's blessings. He reminded the Israelites of God's promise to Abraham and of their ancestors Isaac and Jacob. He told them again of God's call to Moses and Aaron and how they led the people out of Egypt after God's judgment fell on the firstborn.

He reminded the people of how the Lord helped them defeat Jericho, along with the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, and others. And not only did he remind them of their victories in war, but also of the bountiful blessings that had awaited them. (See Joshua 24:13.)

After highlighting the blessings, Joshua paused and took a deep breath. Emotions overwhelmed him, and his voice began to quiver as he poured his heart out to the people:

*Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.* (Joshua 24:14–15, NIV)

Worship is a choice, because sometimes the feeling isn't there. Sometimes we have to tell our flesh to do what it doesn't naturally want to do because it is the best decision. So Joshua's final plea was for them to make a choice. Choose the direction you will take. If you turn in the direction of false gods, you will be led far away from the one true God and find your blessings stripped away and the promises forfeited. So instead, choose to serve the Lord. Make Him the object of your worship.