

Church family,

You will find below a (more or less) transcript from this Sunday's teaching on worship. Worship is a touchy subject as it pertains to SO MUCH of how we live our lives. But it is a subject that is crucially important for us to be yielded to the Lord in, as it is how we approach and relate to our God.

Please also find below the teaching notes a copy of our Calvary Chapel Aiken Core Values (pg. 28), our Worship Song Selection considerations (pg. 30), and other discipleship materials based on the teaching (devotion, discussion prompts, pgs. 31-44).

May the Holy Spirit unify us together as a body as we all seek to worship God together in spirit and truth.

With love in Jesus,

Sean

## WHAT IS WORSHIP?

### INTRODUCTION: WORSHIP IS A PRIVILEGE

Today I get the immense privilege a teaching on worship. So, I know this is a Calvary Chapel, but we are going to get into a topical teaching this morning. I know it's not what you're used to – it's not what I'm used to! But I pray it will be a blessing for us all as we consider many passages of scripture together. [PRAYER] We are going to dive into what the Bible says worship is, what our purposes in worship are to be, and how we are to practice worship. Also, we'll look at how our different biases and preferences affect us and why all this matters to us as followers of Christ.

- But before we get into all of that, I want us to come at it from a place of remembering that worship is a great privilege.
  - So, let me remind us of the greatest privilege of all time. Let's refresh in our minds the beauty of the Gospel.
  - We know from the truth of scripture and from the testimony of our lives, every single one of us here was once dead in our sins.
  - By the inheritance we received in our flesh, the attitudes of our hearts, and the action of our lives, we earned eternal damnation – the righteous punishment for our sins.
  - But God loves us, so He gave Himself for us! Jesus, the second person of the Triune God, shed His blood for the forgiveness of our sins. God the Son bled and died that our guilt would be eradicated! Then in His resurrection, Jesus raised back to life and extended the invitation of eternal life to all of us. That we would join Him in His life.
  - So now all who put their trust in Christ are no longer dead but alive! It is purely by the grace of God that we can be saved through faith in Christ – and even that faith is a gift of grace, not of a result of our works (Eph 2:8-9). To have our sins forgiven is a

privilege – it is an extravagant gift – a blessing beyond our comprehension! To even know the Lord and be known by Him in love should fill us with the greatest sense of humility and awe.

- But then we are told to live out worship...
  - Salvation is only the beginning for the child of God. Not only has God brought us from utter darkness into His marvelous light, but He has brought us from a life of futility (a life of grasping for the wind) into His high and mighty calling that He has for each of us – to worship Him and bring Him glory.
  - This is what we have just discussed last week in 2 Thessalonians 1. The calling the God has on our lives that Jesus would be glorified in us.
  - THIS is the good work that God predestined for you before the formation of the universe (Eph 1:4, 2:10). Before He spoke the world into existence, He chose you to bring Him glory. WOAHH
  - My friends, I hope we see as we look at worship this morning, that it is not a burden but a blessing. Oh, the holiness of God *does* demand worship. But more than that, He desires and enjoys the worship of His people (Psalm 149:4, John 4:23). Do you know that? The Most High God delights in the worship that you bring Him (Phil 4:18). Do you know that through Jesus in worship you can please God (He 13:15-16)? Imagine bringing a smile to the face of the I AM.
  - If I heard this and did not know what worship was, my chest would be burning to discover it. What is this amazing thing that God has given us to do that we might please Him? *What is worship????*

### DEFINING WORSHIP

I think one of the most common definitions of worship that I have heard from various sources – I’m sure many of you are familiar with this definition – is to “attribute worth”.

- I think this definition is a bit lacking and does not quite fit the full meaning of Biblical worship. We certainly do attribute worth to whatever or whomever we worship, but we can also attribute worth to something without worshipping it.
- When you get your house appraised, the appraiser will attribute a worth to your house. But they aren't worshipping your house.
- So, what does the Bible say? There are actually many Hebrew words in the Old Testament and Greek words in the New Testament that get translated to "worship" in our English Bibles. The most common Hebrew word and the most common Greek word that are translated to worship actually both mean in their original languages, "to bow down before" – literally, physically bow down before.
- Looking at all the Greek and Hebrew words being translated to worship and their literary meanings, we get a better picture of what Biblical worship is, "To bow down, to prostrate yourself, to serve, to be devoted, to work for or be enslaved to, to offer homage to, to honor, to revere, to fear."
- Isn't that a different picture? So, we *do* attribute worth to whatever we worship, but worship is so much more than valuing an object. It is taking our lives and laying them down in service and devotion to that object.
- There at least are angles of looking at worship, two sides of the same coin in our lives.
  - The first is Big Picture Worship, or you could say Slow-Burn Worship. Over the course of time, what do our lifestyles, the sum of our decisions, our attitudes, actions, and intentions demonstrate that we are devoted to? This is what we worship.
    - We see this concept in Romans 12:1 – present yourselves as living sacrifices which is your reasonable worship. So the whole of who we are can be presented as worship. This is that idea of Big Picture Worship.

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- But that Big Picture, Slow-Burn Worship is made up of individual moments of Active Worship. This is the other side of that coin. These are intentional expressions of worshipful action. You can think of this as the *verb* worship. When you read in the word that someone “bowed down and worshipped”, this is that active worship. It’s an expression of praise, a moment of adoration, a profession of faith, an act of service, anything done in reverence and devotion to the object of one’s worship.

## WORSHIP IS OUR PURPOSE

So, now that we have a better understanding of what is worship, let’s next consider, “why”. Why do we worship? The simple answer being, because we are designed to worship.

- We know from scripture that God is the One who created everything, all that exists. And each thing, God designed with a specific purpose –

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**His glory!**

- We read in **Colossians 1:16** 'For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.'
  - All things were made by God for God. This fits our definition of worship; all things are devoted to God – this is their purpose.
- More granular than all things, what about all people? We read in **Ecclesiastes 12:13** – this is Solomon at the end of his life after he has tried everything in the world, he says, “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.”
  - This also fits our definition of worship, to fear, to revere, to be devoted to service. So, it is the intention for every person to worship.

- Let's look even more specifically, what about us as Christians? Certainly we've already been grabbed by the large nets of "all things" and "all people", but for us specifically, **1 Peter 2:9** (this is beautiful you all) "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, SO THAT you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."
  - We are saved so that we may be devoted, given in service to Him who called us, that we pay homage, we revere, we proclaim His praises! We are saved that God be worshipped! We are saved that God be glorified!
  - This is God's design for all things, this was God's design for all people, His intention for you from birth, and in your new birth (as you've been born again) this is even more so His design for you and for me, we are to worship.

So, we have our directive – we are to worship, it is our design. But God leaves it to the individual to choose, "What will you worship?"

### GOD ALONE IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP

Now, there is only one adequate answer to that question. We are to worship God and Him alone – and we'll get into that in just a moment. But there are many things that we choose to worship – as humans, and yes as Christians.

What was our big definition of worship again? "To bow down, to serve, to be devoted to, to be enslaved to, to honor, to revere, to fear."

What has your devotion? What are you bowed down to? What are you owned by?

It ought to be the perfect will of God, but many people, even professing Christians, are owned by their flesh. The course of their life, the decisions they make, their actions and intentions are bowed down to their own

desires. Whatever seems best to them, whatever makes them the most comfortable. Is that you? Is that me? I pray not.

Many people, yes Christians, are devoted in worship to their jobs, their careers, and thereby they craft idols from the works of their hands. They are bowed down to whatever in their minds progresses the most important thing and advances their career. Now please don't misunderstand me! I know that we have to work, I know that we have to provide for our families. It's good to work, to enjoy it, to invest effort into it, to work heartily as unto the Lord, it's what we are told to do! But it cannot be what we are bowed down to, what we are enslaved to, what our lives center on, and what we base all our decisions on. If it is, can we really say that we are living for and trusting God?

Here's another touchy one, I pray you hear this via God's grace, many people, yes Christians, are devoted in worship to their families. Their lives as a whole are bowed down to whatever *they* deem is needed for their family. The key thought here being what we deem is needed, because our family is a good and beautiful thing – a gift given by God for us to steward well! We should be serving our families, but we must do that as unto the Lord. We must do that in submission to His leadership. Because sometimes instead of being driven by God, instead of seeking His will in fervent prayer for our families, we are driven by whatever our own man-wisdom tells us is best, we are driven by maybe the unbiblical demands of a family member, we are driven by what culture says you need to be doing for your family or with your family. But Church, if we want to serve our families well, if we want the best thing for them, we will lead them in bowing down in worship to God, in devoting our lives to His purposes and His calling! What is “king” in your family? What is the most important thing? Do we really need every extracurricular opportunity? Or should we leave space for time where we (AS A FAMILY) have devotion with God? Do we really need every family vacation? Or sometimes should we sacrifice the good thing for the best thing – serving God and living for His purposes? What a beautiful thing to

teach your family! Look – I haven't raised kids yet; I don't have the bruises, the experiential wisdom. So, if what I am saying is foolishness, then just be mad at me. But if there is any wisdom here, any good counsel, if this convicting you, then know it's from God – from the truth of His Word! And I know this is hard for us because as I said already, the family unit is a good and beautiful thing designed by God. And it's even harder because families are under attack right now. The nuclear family is being torn apart by our culture today. But in defending our family, in serving them well, we cannot, we must not elevate the family to the place of God. We must not be bowed down in worship to family. We must worship God alone. And it's only when we do this that we actually give our families the thing they need the most! Our families need to be led to kneel before the Lord in worship and fulfill the high calling He has placed on each one of our lives – to glorify Him! Cause in the end, nothing else matters. In eternity, all that will matter, for you and your family, is “are we in God or not?” And if we are in God, we will worship Him alone. We will bow down to no other, be devoted to no other, fear no other!

If we are given to Christ, if we are to be followers of the word, we will worship God alone! This is the command of God:

- **Exodus 20:3-5a** “You shall have no other gods before (besides) Me. “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them”
- This the start of the 10 Commandments. God takes the first two of them to emphasize that He alone is to be worshipped! We are not to worship any other deity, and other religious practice or idea, anything besides God, anything addition to God, anything and everything else is false – He alone is true. We are not to worship or live our lives for anything else that exists in heaven or on earth – we are not to be bowed down before anything or anyone but God!

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- So, if for no other reason, we worship God alone in obedience to His command. But more than that, it is only reasonable to worship God. It only makes sense to worship God alone! In fact – it’s only when we obey His command to worship Him alone that our worship is no longer in vain.
- For in truth – there is no thing and no one worthy of worship but God.

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**He alone is worthy of worship.**

- **Isaiah 44:6** “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me.’
  - He alone is God! He alone THE Supreme Being!
- **Revelation 4:11** “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”
  - Nothing can be greater than the one who created it – and nothing exists that wasn’t created by God! So, any glory, and honor, any power that exists belongs to Him!
- **1 Chronicles 29:11-12** 'Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O Lord, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone.'
  - All dominion, all riches, all power, all strength comes from God. If anyone has these qualities, it was given them by God. If there is anything praiseworthy in this world, then the credit and glory for that belongs to the Lord! It is unfitting to worship anything other than God. He alone is worthy.
- We looked at the example from Exodus at the men’s lunch that we had when the fishing day got rained out a couple weekends

ago. God had just delivered His people from slavery by His power. Then while God was in the process of giving His people His Law for them, they grew impatient and built an idol to replace Him. Then they looked at this calf that they had made out of gold and said, “This is Yahweh who brought you out of Egypt,” and they worshipped the idol. That makes my skin crawl! How ludicrous to look at something created and attribute glory that belongs to God to that *thing*!

- It’s foolishness, but we do the same thing many times. We look at the beauty of the universe – God’s glory on display throughout His creation – and we attribute it to natural processes. We worship the created instead of the Creator!
- Maybe we look at a pastor or a preacher who has been used by God to impact many lives, and we elevate that person made in God’s image to a place of glory. We worship the vessel instead of the Spirit that worked through that vessel!
- Maybe we look at the good things in our lives – how our kids have turned out, how our careers have advanced, how nice our house is – we sit back and say, “That was a lot of hard work, but I did it.” And so we worship ourselves when we can’t even promise ourselves tomorrow.
- No, all good things are a gift from God! To Him alone belongs glory and honor. He alone is to be worshipped. Honor where honor is due – we can respect the good things and those that have done well. But worship only where worship is due – and it due to God alone.

## SPIRIT AND TRUTH

So, we have talked about what worship is. We have answered who we worship and why we must worship Him alone. Logically, the next question that should be asked is, “how do we do it? How do we worship God?”

We know that scripture holds the answers – God has given us all we need – and in this case, the answer was given by Jesus in John chapter 4. Let's turn there. **John chapter 4 verses 23 and 24.**

- 'But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.'

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If you want to please God in your worship to Him, then you must worship Him in spirit and truth. He desires to be worshipped in this way – in spirit and truth!

What does this mean for our worship of God? Well, we must worship Him from within ourselves, our spirit, the very core of who we are – it cannot be merely an outward practice – and it must be done in truth – we cannot fake genuine worship! Oh, we can go through the motions and perform various acts of worship, but that isn't what God desires – rote ritualism will not please God. True worship is not a list of religious boxes to check; it's not a set of disciplines or processes that we can accomplish purely by our actions. Now there are outward acts of worship that in obedience to God's Word, we should be disciplined in practicing! (That's where we are going next). But these are only accepted by God if they are done in spirit and truth. True worship that God accepts is first and foremost a spiritual posture.

The Greek word for worship in this passage is *proskyneo* which means to bow down before or to lay prostrate, but it literally translates to "kiss towards." So, if we want to please God, we must bow down, kiss the ground in our spirit. We must truthfully and genuinely humble ourselves before God. This is why in vs 23 it says that this is the *type of person* that God is seeking to be His worshippers – and doesn't say the type of service God is looking for. True worship will entail service and action, but at its core, true worship is not about *doing* – it's about being. It's about being genuinely and completely submitted to God in your spirit.

This teaches us that true worship is only possible for those in Christ. If we are not relying on Jesus, depending on Him, abiding in Him – we cannot bring God worship that will be pleasing to Him! He desires worship that is in spirit and truth, and that can only be done by the Spirit and by the Truth! Jesus taught in John 8:31-32 that if we follow Him and continue in His word, then we shall “**know the truth, and the truth will make [us] free.**” Then later in John 14:6, Jesus elaborated further and said, “**I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but through Me.**” So apart from Christ, we are not in the truth. What’s more, apart from Christ, we cannot worship in spirit either – because outside of Him we are spiritually dead. That’s everyone’s starting point, dead in our sins. But then as we come into the true knowledge of Jesus Christ – we realize our need for Him, confess Him as our Savior, and give our lives to Him – we are made “alive together” with Him! Our spirit was dead, but in Christ we are made alive together! Then we read in Ephesians 2:18 that we who are in Christ have “access in one Spirit to the Father.” Praise the Lord that through Jesus we are not spiritually dead but spiritually alive! In Jesus we are in the Truth – His truth! Through Jesus we are not separated from God, but have access by the Spirit to the Father.

So, God desires those who will worship in spirit and truth – we genuinely bow down to Him and serve Him in the very depths of who we are – and that can only be done BY His Spirit and BY Him who is Truth! So, worship follows the pattern of all creation, it’s from God and it’s for God.

Now, I mentioned that we are going to go next into practical disciplines in worship, and we’ll get to that – but I want to reemphasize what we’ve just been over. Don’t think of worshipping in spirit and truth as some kind of classroom philosophy that we can consider, and define, nod our heads, and then move on to the actual hands-on stuff. Folks – spirit and truth is the bottom line. We can tend towards the practical action side of our faith, because it’s easier to see and quantify – but acceptable worship to God is purely dependent on if we are abiding in Christ or not! Are our spirits

surrendered in worship to God? Are we bowed down before Him in our hearts? Is our devotion to Him what drives us to worship, or are we worshipping just because we think we ought to or because we think it will tip some “good vs evil” scale and make us a better person in God’s eyes? We must worship from our hearts; we must worship in spirit and truth – rote ritualism is rejected by God! There will be people who practiced the disciplines of worship outlined in scripture who do not enter the Kingdom of God! This is the warning of Christ to those who would seek life in Him:

- **Matthew 7:21-23** “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

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Only those who do the will of the Father will enter Heaven, only those who do His will can please Him – and His will is that we surrender to Him in our spirit. If we are not surrendered to Him, if we are not in Him, then anything we think we are doing for Him He calls ‘lawlessness’. So, if you are not spiritually surrendered to Christ, if you have never kissed the ground before Him in your heart – then make your first act of genuine worship to confess Him as your Savior, to repent from your sins and call upon the Name of Jesus. And if you are in Jesus, praise God! Continue in Him! What we started in the Spirit, may we continue in the Spirit (Galatians 3:3).

## ACTIVE WORSHIP

So, with that being said, let’s look at what the Bible says hands-on worship looks like – remembering that this starts from within us, in spirit and truth, and only then is expressed through our actions. To do this, we are going to look at the framework presented for worship that pleases God found in **Hebrews 13:15-16** if you’d like to turn there.

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“Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

So, I'll say it again – the first two words of this passage here are “through Him”. Our worship will only be acceptable to God through Jesus as we worship in spirit and truth. So, with that as our starting point, if we want to please God, what does it say here? We offer Him the sacrifice of praise, the sacrifice of doing good, and the sacrifice of sharing. Let's look at those in reverse order. So, first we'll look at sharing...

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## SACRIFICE OF SHARING

All one has to do to understand our natural bent in sharing is to spend some time around a group of three-year-olds. MINE! We often hear the parent's response, “Sharing is caring” ... I wonder if any of you parents have ever tried telling your toddler, “Sharing is a Biblical command!”

Jesus said in Luke 3:11 “The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise.”

I think it's pretty safe to say that we don't like that much. It goes against our American culture – it goes against our human nature! If it was natural for us to be generous in this way then Jesus wouldn't have had to give us the command, but He did! In our flesh we want to say, don't give away your spare tunic, what if you get a hole in your first one?” We tend to view sharing as a luxury for those who have already stored up all they need, and then some, and then some.

But the Bible is clear on how vital sharing is:

1 John 3:17 - 'But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?'

The apostle John questioned the salvation of those who refused to share!

We are to please God by worshipping in spirit and truth, abiding in Christ, and we just heard here in 1 John that if we refuse to share it is showing us that we are not abiding in Christ, and our worship is unpleasing! Or perhaps more accurately stated – our worship isn't being directed towards God but our treasures instead. If we refuse to share when it is right to do so, we demonstrate what we are bowed down to in our hearts. We demonstrate what we are enslaved to – not to the will of God, but to the love of money.

So maybe some of us have come to the place where we say, “okay I won't close my heart off to anyone, if someone asks or I'm confronted with a need, then I'll share.” First of all, praise God if you're at that point, because that is not the natural bent of the human heart. That is the Holy Spirit at work in your life. Second, don't stop growing – we are called to more than simply “not refusing” to share:

Romans 12:13 – “contribute to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality” and I like the way that the New Living Translation of scripture and a few others emphasize, “always be eager to practice hospitality”

Not only should we share with those who ask, we should eagerly seek out opportunities for hospitality and generosity!

Now this isn't to say that everyone should run to the bank at the first opportunity and empty your account and give it away. But it's a fair question – if God asked you to, would you? We are told to be good stewards of what God has given us – and we should be wise as God directs in our sharing. Wise, but eager to share as an act of worship. Paul instructed the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 that each person was to every week lay aside an amount that they deem right based on how prosperous they were. So, that is to say, be wise and plan your life with sharing in mind. It's also to say, don't live in the misconception that giving to the church, to the work of the Kingdom, is a modern, American idea. It's Biblical!

Paul tells the same church later in 2 Corinthians 9:7-8 – 'Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for

God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;'

- I am not trying to compel you to be generous. By spending all this time talking about sharing – I'm not trying to guilt you into anything. This is about worshipping God in the way that pleases Him! God loves a cheerful giver – wow!
- When I say most every week during the announcements portion of service, "if you'd like to worship through your giving you can do so with the wooden box by the doors of the sanctuary or at ccaiken.org or on the Calvary Chapel Aiken app" I'm not up here trying to wrangle up funds for church projects – as much as I want to update the lights in this sanctuary – I'm saying that because we want to invite you into an opportunity to worship in spirit and truth! To humble yourself before God by trusting Him with your treasures! To do what we read in our Hebrews 13 passage, make a sacrifice that will please God!

Can I tell you a shocking truth? God doesn't need your money. Not for His church, not even to provide for His children – He's fully capable of doing that without you. But He invites you to make that sacrifice in your worship to Him. And when you do, He is pleased with you! When you give, He's not saying, "about time – give more next week" no, God loves a cheerful giver! When you give as worship – doing it from the heart because you are devoted to God – you are pleasing God, how cool is that?

It's so simple, just give because you want to please God – and God will be pleased with you! And yet many if not most don't give! Is it that we don't know it pleases God? Do we know it pleases God, but we don't care? Or is it that it's meeting us at the limits of our faith – Do we truly believe God's promise that He will provide for all we need? Cause He promises He will. God knows our hearts – He knows how powerful an idol money can be for

us. But if we let Him, He will care for us. We can trust Him – and praise God, when we give cheerfully from the heart, we can please Him.

So that is the sacrifice of sharing, what about the sacrifice of doing good?

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## SACRIFICE OF GOOD WORKS

If sharing is worshipping by giving God your treasures, then doing good is worshipping by giving God your time and your energy.

Doing good is different than just doing a good job at whatever you're already working at – though that is also pleasing to God, working heartily as unto the Lord. But the command to “do good” is separate from this.

Doing good isn't simply going about your business in a good way, it's stepping outside of your own concern and serving others. Good works are intentional, specific acts of kindness, mercy, and grace for others done in worship to God! It's serving! And it glorifies God and pleases Him when we sacrifice our time and energy for the good of others. Again – I'll say He's pleased and glorified when we do this in spirit and truth. When we do good to others because in our hearts we are bowed down to Him and seek to bring Him glory.

Our good works have purpose:

Titus 3:14 says, “Our people [that's us, the church] must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.’

It is good to meet the needs of others in worship to God – it is fruitful and brings Him glory! And I'll say, it is a beautiful thing to see you all, the Calvary Chapel Aiken Family, walking in these good works and meeting the need of others!

- All the times someone has moved and a team of you came together to help them
- All the meals that have been brought to those who were sick

- All the hours spent by many in the body sitting next to someone's hospital bed just to be there for them.
- Or here's a wild example – here's a picture of Spencer 60ft above mine and Torie's home cutting down a big limb.
- And many, many more examples of the body taking care of one another – and others! Acts of kindness to brothers and sisters – and strangers! I'm sure there are enough testimonies in this room of times that we have been helped in our need by a brother or sister here that we could spend all day and more on it. This pleases God! Well done – keep purposing to do good! keep purposing to meet the needs of others. And more of us also – may we all engage in these good works that we will not be unfruitful.

But before all, may we meet the greatest need – may we do good by purposing to further the Gospel, to work for the kingdom!

We do this by inviting to our neighbors to church, by praying with our waiters and waitresses when we're out to eat, by talking with the person behind in line at Walmart.

We do this by going on neighborhood outreaches, by setting up a prayer booth at Aiken's Makin, by singing for residents at nursing homes, by praying for people that come to the Liberty Fireworks stand, by being a part of our services here at Calvary! Working in the children's ministry, greeting people at the door, cleaning the bathrooms, running the sound board or the tvs, and many, many other ways.

If you've ever looked at our church calendar and wondered why it's so full, if you've ever questioned why we so constantly announce service opportunities and ministries to be a part of – this is our worship to God! God desires our good works! He is pleased when we worship Him by sacrificing our time and energy for His Name sake!

Now please hear what I'm about to say in grace. Same as the passage we read on giving, I'm not looking for anyone to serve under compulsion – we

ought to be *cheerful* workers for His glory – But we ought to be workers! We are called to worship God by serving Him, by serving others, by being about the good work of the Kingdom! Why are so few of us active in this? Now I do know we have many dozens represented here that are faithful in glorifying God in service here at Calvary and elsewhere... but why not more? Why not all of us? Why is there so much need for workers in children's ministry? Why in the Liberty Fireworks stand – a ministry where it is so simplified and yet we are bringing the gospel to the lost – why are most days empty of workers?

I know life is busy. There are countless demands on our lives each and every day. Good things, great things, necessary things! Our families, our careers, things that are out of our control. Just this past week I told Torie I was discouraged because it felt like I had so many things I needed to do and was failing at getting any of them done – and I had to repent for that because in that moment I wasn't trusting God – not with my time and not with the results of my efforts. The fact is, God has called us into His service, and He is worthy of us serving Him. Period. That's it. He is worthy no matter what else we have in life. He is worthy of our faithful sacrifice of good works.

Now not all of our service will look the same. Some are able to faithfully give many hours every week, some are only able to give a couple hours once or twice a month. But the question is where is our heart? Are we bowed down before God in spirit and truth, and so we serve Him by doing good works when we are able? Or are we bowed before our schedules and the demands of life, are we bowed before the free time we are not willing to sacrifice, are we bowed before the activities we have filled our own lives with so that there is rarely any time left for God? Who or what has your first fruits? Who or what has the leftovers?

Here's a happy thought – when we are bowed before the Lord in doing good works, we are not working in vain:

Galatians 6:9 – 'Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.'

And what's more, when we are faithful in good works, there is a multiplication of glory brought to God.

Matthew 5:16 – 'Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.'

Our good works of themselves are worship – a sacrifice that is pleasing to God, but then they also will inspire others to glorify in our heavenly Father for whom we work – what a blessing!

And same as with our treasures – God doesn't need our service. We have the privilege of being invited to please God with our efforts and make an eternal impact for the Kingdom of Heaven – again, what a rich blessing! So if you are faithful in service, in good works, praise God, keep running the race. And if you aren't currently serving in any capacity, okay – start this week. There are many places in whatever circles you're in to do good – but there are many places right here at Calvary to get plugged in to service. Make this your act of worship to God and sign up to serve before you leave today.

Slide 10

## SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

Alright! The third sacrifice in worship we're going to look at is the sacrifice of praise. To praise God means to boast in God, to out-loud declare His glory, to thank Him for His character, His nature, and His deeds<sup>1</sup>.

Praising God is so central to Christianity – it was our purpose and calling we read earlier our study in 1 Peter – that we are a chosen people set aside for God “SO THAT [we] may proclaim the excellencies of [God]”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://answersingenesis.org/answers/biblical-authority-devotional/what-is-praise/?srsltid=AfmBOopR4r-nEpzIAmzd2ZMg7H7t1RkxBzsrXZ23ZqWqCoGAw3qciOyR>

Praise is central to the presence of God, who is surrounded by the heavenly hosts who day and night do not cease to proclaim, “holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!” (Revelation 4:8)

Sometimes praise is a shout of joy, sometimes a cry of desperation, some times a softly whispered prayer – in any case, praise is the verbal worship of Almighty God.

Praise can be spoken as a declaration or a confession, or often we praise in song. Now, I’m sure most of you would not have guessed that it would have taken almost 40 minutes for the guy who’s normally up here with a guitar to mention music in a sermon on worship. But this was done with intention.

I hope it’s clear from all that we have talked about already this morning that worship is so much more than music. It’s wholly inadequate and pretty laughable to degrade our definition of worship down to “a music genre”. But that can be a common misconception in cultural Christianity, and that’s somewhat understandable given some of the language we use. My title here at Calvary is “worship leader” and most times you see me, I’m singing a song. Even the songs we sing at the beginning of service we call “the time of worship.” And in truth – that’s what it is! We do worship God in praising Him with song, but worship is so much more. What was our definition of worship again? “To bow down, to prostrate yourself, to serve, to be devoted, to work for or be enslaved to, to offer homage to, to honor, to revere, to fear.” And all of that in spirit and truth – from the very center of our being to God. There’s nothing inherently musical about what we’ve just said...

*That being said*, many have come to this Biblical realization that worship is not inherently musical and have jumped too far in the opposite direction to say that “musical worship is optional”. We think, *well, singing praise is just one way to worship, so I can check my worship quota by doing other things; I’ll leave the singing to other people*. But would we say this about sharing? Would we say this about serving? Should we not be walking in *all* that God has called us to? Every Biblical command for worship?

- **Psalm 100:1-2** 'Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. '
- **Psalm 147:1** 'Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God'
- **Isaiah 12:5** 'Praise the Lord in song, for He has done excellent things; Let this be known throughout the earth.'
- **James 5:13** 'Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.'
- **Colossians 3:16** 'Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.'
- **Ephesians 5:19-20** 'speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; '

In Jesus we sing a sacrifice of praise to the Father, and when this is done in spirit and truth – He is pleased. This is a Biblical command to all the earth – we are to sing to the Lord!

It's so simple, such an easy thing to do! Just open your mouth and proclaim the truth of who God is in song. Yet, this is a Biblical command that many Christians willfully ignore. Maybe we are uncomfortable singing in front of other people. Maybe we just don't enjoy singing or don't like how our voice sounds. Maybe we don't like the style of music we are being led in or the song we happen to be singing. And that's all understandable, relatable... again, please hear this with grace, I love you, but it's not about you. Praising through song isn't about how we feel. It isn't something we're told to do only if we enjoy singing. It isn't about our musical preferences. It isn't about us! Really it isn't even about the music! It's about making melodies with our hearts in thanksgiving to God! It's worshipping in spirit and truth! And it's for God – it's all about Him! Worship in any of its flavors in never about what makes us comfortable – it's always about what pleases God! And many

times, we are uncomfortable, and that's kind of the point! It's called a sacrifice of worship. Singing to God is our sacrifice of praise. Sacrifices are meant to be costly. Does our praise to God *cost* us anything? Or do we only participate when we feel like it, or if we enjoy the music? Are we offering God a cheap sacrifice, or are we bowed down in our hearts to Him, and out of devotion to Him raising our voices in lyrical praise because He has called us to do so?

- God doesn't do anything on accident. He didn't make us musical, and command us to be musical in praise on a whim... do you know that **God is musical**? Each person of the triune God is musical in some capacity! In Zephaniah 3:17 it says that the Father rejoices over His people with joyful singing. In Matthew 26, Jesus and His disciples worshipped together by singing a hymn. And consider how the Holy Spirit is the One who inspired the authors of scripture – the book of Psalms is a song book along with many other places in scripture – He is a songwriter. So when we live in obedience to this call to praise God in song, we are actually more closely reflecting our God. How special, we grow closer to the likeness of God in our praise!

Slide 12

And still there are yet more sub-purposes, side-affects (if you will) in our praise. You may have heard it said that the worship at the beginning of service softens our hearts for the teaching of the word. Well it's true, because as we praise God and declare his excellencies, we are doing what we read in Philippians 4:8-9 and dwelling on the things of God – and the God of peace is with us! In praise, as we sing in spirit and truth, we are abiding with God – and even more so as we gather together as a body for the congregational worship that we read about in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19. As we gather together in His Name, He is here in our midst (Matthew 18:20). Then as we sing to Him, Psalm 22 says that the holy God enthrones himself on the praises of His people! Then in that praise we remind each other of the truth of God, we teach and admonish one another as we sing scripture, we are encouraged as we see one another praising

God throughout all the various trials of life, and so we are strengthened together as the church! Now, none of these amazing things that we are privileged to experience in praise are actually the point of praise. The point of praise is to glorify God and please Him in our worship. But God is so good to us! It's all about Him, He is worthy of our obedience in worship no matter what, and yet He freely gives us all these additional graces as we praise Him!

Now... since music is so central to our practice of worship, especially in evangelical Christianity, it has become a common point of disagreement among Christians. And this should not be. It's a fine thing – a good thing actually – that there are many different expressions of musical worship throughout the global church. Preference of style and differences in how we do what the Bible commands is actually a beautiful aspect of the broader church – God takes the diversity of many cultures and peoples and makes us unified (not in how we express our praise) but that we praise together in one Spirit and in the one Name of Jesus Christ.

What is not beautiful, what is in fact an insidious attack against the unity of the Church, is when we take our preferences and raise them to the level of commands. When we decide that there is one correct style of doing things, we are right, and everyone else is wrong. Some churches say you **MUST** sing only hymns, some churches say you **MUST NEVER** sing hymns, some say you **MUST** raise your hands and clap and dance, some say you **MUST** stand still and never be a distraction, some say you **MUST** have bright lights and sing only a capella (no instruments), some say you **MUST** create an atmosphere of worship using musical swells, smoke machines, and fancy lighting in a dark room. And not just churches. Sometimes we as individuals make these demands – if not with our words, then with our actions. *If the worship isn't how we want, we simply won't participate.* When we do this, we are worshipping our preferences in praise instead of worshipping the God we are meant to be praising! We are meant to be bowed down in our hearts to God, but instead we are bowed down to our bias and taste.

So how do we ensure that we are bowed down before God in our praise? We look to the word and hold to it. There are commands for praise given in the Bible – follow them! But there are also many liberties, things that the Bible does not give us a specific way to do things – appreciate those liberties! Where a command does not exist, DO NOT INSERT YOUR OWN!

We are commanded to sing joyfully. We are commanded to sing with thanksgiving in our hearts to God. We are commanded to sing in spirit and truth – genuinely from our hearts, in Jesus, and adhering to scriptural truth! We are commanded in our singing, to declare the excellencies of God! If we are not doing these, we are missing the mark. There are many songs that are used in many churches that are not fitting for the worship of almighty God – but I don't say that because of my preference or your preference – I say that because our songs must align with the commands for praise in scripture, and they must be glorifying to God! Many times, songs don't do this. They are vague about scripture and the gospel, many times they elevate our human experience rather than focusing on God. All this is to say – it is important what we sing! We take much prayerful care to make sure that the songs we sing here align with what we read in scripture for how we are to worship God. If you are interested in how we do this, we have a document on this process that will be posted below the recording of this teaching. So yes, it is important what we sing, But PLEASE, do not make condemning judgements on worship based on your preference. Many times, people will disengage from worship because their stylistic bias is not being met, or because they have been led to question the validity of the worship based on unbiblical, man-made requirements. This should break our heart! We have been invited to bring glory to God and please Him in singing praise, and to enjoy all His blessing that come along with that, but we allow these distractions to keep us from enjoying this gift.

Keep the Biblical command to praise – engage in singing praise. Keep the Biblical commands for how we are to praise, and do not make more

commands where they don't exist in scripture. And though this is especially pertinent in our praise, this concept is true for all of our worship.

## REVERENCE AND AWE

So, as we start to land this plane, there is one more command for us to look at as we consider how we worship:

- **Hebrews 12:28-29** 'Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.'

Slide 13

Our God is a consuming fire. Yes, we have intimacy with God and are called His children, but that does not excuse us from the righteous fear of God. We must remember that He is still the terrifying Almighty Most High God! If it were not for His grace and forgiveness, we would be consumed by His wrath! And that forgiveness we have is only our because the Son of God spilled His perfect blood for us! We are only righteous because the thrice holy God is the One at work within us – so we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12-13).

We must make our sacrifice of sharing with reverence and awe. Not just giving when we feel like it or if it's comfortable, but because we are bowed down to God in spirit and truth.

We must make our sacrifice of good works with reverence and awe. Not just participating in the services that we enjoy. Not just serving when we are pressured into to but seeking to do good.

We must make our sacrifice of praise with reverence and awe. Not just singing what we feel like, but praising God for ALL of His excellencies! It's good to be joy filled and excited about the love we share together and the peace we have with God, but we must not be irreverent in our worship. We should not be showing up late every time we come to serve, and we should not be showing up late every week for praise and worship. Things happen

from time to time that make us late. But if we are constantly approaching God in worship with a casual tardiness, are we truly showing Him the reverence He is due? We should not be disengaged in service or the time of praise while we are here because we are busy striking up conversations with one another or doing some other activity. Fellowship is good, and there *is* a time and place for it. We are such a loving church, and we cannot afford to lose that love we have for one another. But we must not allow our fellowship to override the righteous fear of God. This is our sacrifice of worship to Almighty God! Is He not worthy of our full devotion? Are we bowed down to God in spirit and truth? Is our worship pleasing to Him?

I know there has been a lot of exhortation this morning. And that's why I started us with the reminder that this is a privilege. It is a privilege to worship God, to be able to learn His heart for us from His word and walk in it. To live in a way that pleases God! What a blessing!

I've said so much so strongly because this is all important to God – it should be important to us – not just in theory, but in truth and in practice.

This isn't just what we think is good and sounds right, worshipping in spirit and truth is how we are to function as a church. One of the three parts of our mission at Calvary is to encounter God in spirit led worship. In our core values we highlight service and sharing by emphasizing that we work together as a team, we love each other like family, we walk together with grace. We emphasize our sacrifice of praise as a main value of the church. And we emphasize that we ought to be bowed down in spirit and truth to God, by abiding in Him. Worship is central to the church, this church and the Church broadly. Worship is central to the life of the Christian. Let us walk well in worship that pleases God.

# CALVARY CHAPEL AIKEN CORE VALUES

*Read through each of our core values and consider them as they relate to our worship of God. How do we do these in a way that demonstrates that we are bowed down before the Lord in our hearts, worshipping Him in spirit and truth?*

## - **We Take Bold Steps of Faith**

- God honors those who take Him at His Word and step out in brave obedience. So we try new things, unafraid of small beginnings and messy middles, as we work towards excellent endings.

## - **We Teach the Entirety of the Bible**

- The Bible is the inerrant, inspired word of God, given for our benefit and instruction. So we take the time to study the entirety of God's word in order to understand it and apply it to our everyday lives.

## - **We Pray**

- Jesus gave us access to the throne room of God in His name through prayer to receive whatever we ask for. So we pray together often, expectant that God will be true to His Word, and that we will encounter His presence.

## - **We Sing Praises to God Together**

- While all of life should be an act of worship, Scripture gives special honor to the people of God making music together. So we give glory to God through dynamic, Biblical corporate praise and worship music.

## - **We Walk Together with Grace**

- God has shown us overwhelming patience and compassion through Jesus Christ. So we treat one another with forgiveness and love in all things.

## - **We Love Each Other Like Family**

- God has given us unity of purpose in Christ, and we therefore have unity in views, affections and fellowship. So we love and support one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, through peace or conflict, no matter what.

## - **We Work as a Team**

- Every Christian is valuable and necessary for the Church to function properly. So we build teams to do the work of ministry, and we urge every believer to get in the game.

## - **We Strive for Holiness**

- The Holy Spirit dwells in us, sanctifying us to be more like Jesus. So we take personal integrity seriously and will continue to mature towards mirroring Christ.

## - **We Take the Gospel to the World**

- Jesus commissioned us to preach the good news to every creature. So we reach out to evangelize Aiken in many ways, and work to multiply our efforts by planting churches and supporting missionaries around the world.

## - **We seek After the Spiritual Gifts**

- Christ gave to each believer the manifestation of the Spirit for the benefit of all. So we encourage each other to discover these gifts, and to follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit in exercising them in a manner bringing honor and glory to God.

## - **We Seek to Know God**

- God gives us a yearning and need for Him. So we seek to abide in Him.

## - **We Make Disciples**

- God gives us the great privilege of helping others see, grasp, and walk out the vision God has for them. So we incorporate discipleship principles throughout our ministry while also inviting others into discipleship relationships.

# Worship Song Selection

1. The selection process must be Spirit led (not emotionally led, not popularity led, not fear-of-man led)
2. Theologically and Doctrinally Sound (are we worshipping in Spirit and Truth? Emphasis on Bible).
3. God Centric (while our worship will include all three persons of the Trinity, there will be an emphasis on Jesus).
4. Teaching, edifying, admonishing toward holiness in being His children and his Church.
5. Emphasis is on God's will, character, and attributes (and man's right response/desperate need AND NOT on man's sovereignty, power, and wisdom).
6. Includes a relational focus where we are not just singing songs about God, but to God, in praising Him together.
7. Aligns with our core values and Calvary Chapel Distinctives.
8. Songs are viewed in the context of the set in which they are played as one moving part of a larger narrative.
9. Congregational Sing-ability and Accessibility (while maintaining fealty to all the other guidelines, this guideline remains important that our worship will be accessible to all generations). Note: This will generally include a healthy balance and variety of songs that may encourage the development of a multigenerational church family.
10. When considering songs, artists, or labels that may invite division into the body of Christ, if the same spiritual value can be found in another song, don't invite in the controversy. Instead pick or even write another song.

# 5-Day Devotional

## What is Worship?

### Day 1: The Privilege of Worship

Reading: Eph 2:1-10

Devotional: Before Christ, we were dead in our sins, deserving only judgment. But God, in His extravagant love, gave Himself for us through Jesus. This salvation isn't just forgiveness—it's an invitation into purpose. We were created for good works, predestined before the world began to bring God glory. Worship isn't a burden we bear but a privilege we've been given. The Most High God actually delights in our worship and is pleased when we offer our lives to Him.

Today, pause and reflect: Do you view worship as duty or delight? Let gratitude for your salvation fuel your devotion. You were saved to worship—what an incredible honor!

### Day 2: Worship in Spirit and Truth

Reading: Jn 4:19-26

Devotional: Jesus reveals that true worship isn't about location, ritual, or religious performance—it's about posture. God seeks worshipers who will worship "in spirit and truth." This means genuine surrender from the depths of who we are, not merely outward actions. We can attend services, sing songs, and serve in ministries, yet miss true worship if our hearts aren't bowed before Him. Acceptable worship flows from abiding in Christ, the Truth, empowered by His Spirit. Without Him, our religious activities become empty rituals.

Today, examine your heart: Are you going through motions, or are you genuinely surrendered? True worship begins within, where only God can see.

### Day 3: The Sacrifice of Sharing

Reading: 1 Jn 3:16-18; 2 Cor 9:6-11

Devotional: Worship extends beyond Sunday mornings into how we steward our resources. God commands us to share generously, not from our abundance after all needs are met, but eagerly, as an act of devotion. When we cling tightly to our possessions, we reveal what truly owns us. But when we give cheerfully, trusting God's provision, we demonstrate that our hearts are bowed to Him alone. God doesn't need your money—He invites you to participate in Kingdom work and experience the joy of pleasing Him.

Examine your giving: Is it sacrificial or merely convenient? God loves a cheerful giver. Let generosity become your worship, trusting that He will provide all you need.

### Day 4: The Sacrifice of Good Works

Reading: Tit 3:8-14; Mt 5:14-16

Devotional: God calls us to "do good"—intentional acts of service that meet needs and advance His Kingdom. This isn't about working harder at your job; it's about sacrificing your time and energy for others as worship to God. When we serve faithfully, we bear fruit that glorifies our Father and inspires others toward Him. Yet many remain on the sidelines, too busy with good things to engage in the best thing.

Where is your heart? Are you bowed before your schedule, your comfort, your free time—or before God? He is worthy of your faithful service, regardless of life's demands. This week, identify one specific way to serve. Don't wait for convenience; worship through action.

**Day 5: The Sacrifice of Praise**

**Reading: Ps 100; Col 3:16-17**

Devotional: Singing praise isn't optional for the believer—it's a biblical command for all God's people. Yet many withhold their voices due to discomfort, preference, or pride. Worship isn't about musical style, personal enjoyment, or vocal ability—it's about declaring God's excellencies because He is worthy. When we praise, we reflect our musical God, soften our hearts, encourage one another, and invite His presence. But the primary purpose is simply to glorify Him. Your praise costs something—that's why it's called a sacrifice. Will you offer God cheap, convenient worship, or will you sing with reverence and awe? Open your mouth today. Declare His goodness. Let thanksgiving rise from your heart.

# Small Group Study Guide

## What is Worship?

**Opening Prayer:** Pray for God to enlarge your heart and stir your spirit to enter into the fulness of worship of Him.

**Icebreaker Question:** What's one thing you thought worship was when you were younger, and how has your understanding changed over time?

### **Key Takeaways:**

1. Worship is a privilege - We were dead in sin, but God saved us so we could worship Him and bring Him glory (1 Peter 2:9)
2. Biblical definition of worship - "To bow down, to prostrate yourself, to serve, to be devoted, to work for or be enslaved to, to offer homage to, to honor, to revere, to fear"
3. God alone is worthy - Only God deserves worship; anything else is idolatry (Exodus 20:3-5)
4. Spirit and Truth - True worship must come from our hearts, genuinely surrendered to God through Jesus (John 4:23-24)
5. Three sacrifices of worship - Sharing (generosity), Doing Good (service), and Praise (declaring God's glory)
6. Reverence and Awe - We must approach worship with holy fear, not casual irreverence (Hebrews 12:28-29)

**Discussion Questions:** Did the Holy Spirit prompt any questions with you? Start with those.

#### I. Understanding Worship

1. How does the biblical definition of worship (to bow down, serve, be devoted) challenge or expand your previous understanding of worship?
2. The sermon mentioned "Big Picture Worship" (lifestyle) and "Active Worship" (intentional moments). Can you share examples of each from your own life?
3. Read John 4:23-24. What does it mean to worship "in spirit and truth"? Why is this the only acceptable worship to God?

#### II. Examining Our Hearts

1. The sermon asked: "What has your devotion? What are you bowed down to?" Take a moment of honest reflection. What competes for God's place in your life?
  - Career/work
  - Family
  - Money/possessions

- Comfort/leisure
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Why do you think it's so easy to elevate good things (like family or work) to the place of worship in our lives? How can we serve these areas well without making them idols?
3. Read Matthew 7:21-23. This is a sobering passage. What's the difference between religious activity and genuine worship that flows from a surrendered heart?

## I. The Three Sacrifices

### 1. Sacrifice of Sharing (Generosity)

- a. Read 1 John 3:17 and 2 Corinthians 9:7-8. Why do you think generosity is described as worship? What makes it a "sacrifice"?
- b. Be honest: What makes sharing/giving difficult for you? What fears or beliefs about money might be hindering your worship through generosity?

### 2. Sacrifice of Doing Good (Service)

- a. Read Titus 3:14 and Galatians 6:9. The sermon asked why so few Christians are actively serving. What are legitimate barriers to service, and what are just excuses?
- b. Where is God calling you to serve—either at church or in your community? What's holding you back from taking that step?

### 3. Sacrifice of Praise (Singing/Declaring God's Glory)

- a. The sermon emphasized that singing praise is a biblical command, not optional (Psalm 100, Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19). Why do you think many Christians disengage from corporate singing?
- b. How have personal preferences or biases affected your participation in worship? How can we distinguish between biblical commands and personal preferences?
- c. Read Philippians 4:8-9 and Psalm 22:3. What are some of the benefits we experience when we genuinely praise God (beyond just "feeling good")?

## II. Reverence and Awe

1. Read Hebrews 12:28-29. Do you think modern Christianity has lost the "fear of God"? How can we balance intimacy with God (as His children) with reverence for His holiness?
2. The sermon challenged casual tardiness and disengagement in worship. Without being legalistic, how can we demonstrate that we truly value our time with God?

### **Personal Reflection Questions:**

1. In which area of worship (sharing, serving, or praising) am I strongest? Weakest?
2. What is one specific way I can worship God more faithfully this week?
3. Am I worshipping God in "spirit and truth," or am I just going through religious motions?
4. What needs to change in my heart for my worship to truly please God?

**Practical Applications:** This Week's Challenge: Choose ONE from each category

1. Sharing/Generosity:
  - Set up or review your regular giving to your church
  - Identify one person/family in need and meet a specific need this week
  - Practice hospitality—invite someone into your home for a meal
  - Give sacrificially to a ministry or mission work
2. Doing Good/Service:
  - Sign up to serve in one ministry at church (children's, greeting, setup, etc.)
  - Commit to one specific act of service for a neighbor or coworker
  - Volunteer for an upcoming church outreach event
  - Identify your spiritual gifts and ask church leadership where you could serve
3. Praise:
  - Commit to arriving early/on-time for corporate worship for the next month
  - Engage fully in singing during worship—even if uncomfortable
  - Start a daily practice of singing or speaking praise to God
  - Write out a psalm or song of praise declaring God's excellencies
  - Let go of one musical preference that has hindered your worship participation
4. General Worship:
  - Memorize John 4:23-24 or Hebrews 12:28-29
  - Do a "heart audit"—journal about what truly has your devotion
  - Confess any areas where you've been worshipping something other than God
  - Share the Gospel with one person this week as an act of worship

**Closing Prayer Points**

- That God would reveal any idols in our hearts that compete with Him
- For genuine hearts of worship "in spirit and truth"
- For cheerful, generous hearts in giving
- For willing, servant hearts in doing good works
- For voices that boldly proclaim God's excellencies in praise
- For reverence and awe in how we approach God
- That our worship would truly please God and bring Him glory

## Discussion Questions

### What is Worship?

1. In what ways might we be unknowingly bowing down to our careers, families, or possessions instead of God, and how can we realign our devotion?
2. The sermon defines worship as going beyond attributing worth to actually laying down our lives in service. How does this fuller definition challenge or change your understanding of daily worship?
3. Jesus said true worshipers must worship in spirit and truth. What does it look like practically to worship from the depths of your spirit rather than going through religious motions?
4. The speaker warns that people who practice religious disciplines without surrendering their hearts will hear Jesus say he never knew them. How can we examine whether our worship is genuine or merely ritualistic?
5. When it comes to the sacrifice of sharing, what prevents you from being eagerly generous rather than just not refusing to give when asked?
6. The sermon challenges us that God is worthy of our service regardless of how busy life gets. What would need to change in your schedule or priorities to faithfully serve in good works?
7. Why do you think many Christians willfully ignore the biblical command to sing praise to God, and what would it take to view musical worship as obedient sacrifice rather than optional preference?
8. How have personal preferences or stylistic biases about worship music kept you from fully engaging in praise, and how might you surrender those preferences to God?
9. The speaker emphasizes approaching God with reverence and awe because He is a consuming fire. Have we become too casual in our worship, treating God more like a buddy than the Almighty?
10. If someone examined the sum of your decisions, attitudes, and actions over the past month, what would they conclude you truly worship and are devoted to?

## Dinner Conversation Starters

### What is Worship?

1. **Worship as a Privilege:** How does thinking of worship as a *privilege* instead of a *duty* change the way you feel about things like prayer, singing at church, serving, or giving?
2. **What Do We Really “Bow Down” To?:** If worship means “to bow down / be devoted to / be enslaved to,” what do you think *our family schedule* and *spending* say we are most devoted to right now (God, work, school, sports, comfort, entertainment, etc.)?
3. **Worshipping God with Our Time and Money:** The sermon talked about the “sacrifice of sharing” (our treasures) and the “sacrifice of doing good” (our time and energy). As a family, what is one *practical way* we could:
  - Share more generously this month?
  - Serve someone together this month?
4. **Singing as Worship (Even If We Don’t Feel Like It):** The message said that singing praise isn’t about our musical taste or how our voice sounds, but about pleasing God. How do each of us honestly feel about singing in church? What might it look like for our family to worship God in song “in spirit and truth” even when it’s uncomfortable?
5. **Keeping God First in the Family:** The sermon warned about even good things (like family) becoming idols. What are some ways our family can keep God in first place—above sports, trips, school, work, and even our own plans—without neglecting our real responsibilities?

# Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

## What is Worship?

### AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Worship Is Loving Jesus First:** Help your child see that worship is loving and choosing Jesus first, even before toys, games, or friends' opinions.

*Scenario:* A friend at school laughs at your child for praying before lunch or for saying they go to church.

*Discussion questions:*

- a. "If someone laughs at you for talking about Jesus, how do you think Jesus feels about you?"
  - b. "What could you say or do that would show you love Jesus \*first\*, even if your friend doesn't like it?"
  - c. "How can we pray for that friend together?"
4. **Using Mouth and Hands to Worship:** Teach that worship isn't just singing at church; we worship with what we say (kind words, thankfulness) and what we do (helping, sharing).

*Scenario:* Your child is in a group of kids who start teasing another child or leaving them out of a game.

*Discussion questions:*

- a. "If we want to worship Jesus with our words, how should we talk when other kids are being mean?"
  - b. "What's one kind thing you could say to the kid being left out?"
  - c. "If you feel scared to speak up, what quick prayer could you tell Jesus in your heart?"
5. **Screens and Toys: Who's the Boss?:** Introduce the idea that if we "bow down" to screens or toys (can't give them up, get angry when limited), those things are acting like little "gods" in our hearts.

*Scenario:* Your child throws a fit when asked to turn off a show/game to pray, go to church, or help with something simple.

*Discussion questions:*

- a. "When it's time to stop watching or playing and we get super upset, what does that show is most important to us right then?"
- b. "Who do we want to be the 'boss' of our hearts—Jesus or the game/TV?"
- c. "What's one small way we can show Jesus He's more important than our screen today?"

### AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Worshipping God vs. Worshipping Popularity:** Help them see that "bowing down" can mean doing things just to be liked or accepted, instead of pleasing God.

Scenario: In a group chat or at school, friends are sharing mean memes, inside jokes, or gossip about someone else. Your child feels pressure to join in so they don't seem "boring."

Discussion Questions:

- a. "When everyone is making fun of someone, what do you think it means to 'worship' God in that moment?"
- b. "What might it look like to bow down to \*friends' approval\* instead of to Jesus?"
- c. "What's one sentence you could say (or not say) that would show Jesus you're choosing Him first?"

2. **Screens, Games, and Worship**: Connect the sermon's idea of "what we're devoted to" with how they use devices, games, and social media (if they have it).

Scenario: They constantly want to be on YouTube, games, or texting friends, and become resentful when asked to stop for family Bible time, prayer, or helping around the house.

Discussion Questions:

- a. "If somebody watched your whole week as a movie, what would they think you care about most?"
- b. "How can you tell when a game or app is becoming something you're \*bowing down\* to?"
- c. "What is one small way you can 'sacrifice' time from your screen this week to worship God—maybe by serving, reading the Bible, or praying for someone?"

3. **Digital Kindness as "Doing Good"**: Show that "doing good" and "sharing" include how we act online (comments, likes, sharing content) and how we treat kids who are left out in digital spaces.

Scenario: A classmate posts something embarrassing; others leave hurtful comments and share it around. Your child can join in, ignore it, or choose to do good.

Discussion Questions:

- a. "What would it look like to 'do good' and 'share' God's love online in that situation?"
- b. "How could a simple private message, kind comment, or not sharing the post be an act of worship to God?"
- c. "If we're worshiping God with our online life, how might what we like, share, or comment change?"

**AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS**

\*(Note: This overlaps with 8–12 but goes deeper for early teens.)\*

1. **Who or What Are You Actually Worshiping?**: Help them honestly examine whether they are "bowed down" to friends, image, social media, or romantic attention rather than God.

Scenarios:

- a. Feeling they must dress a certain way or post certain types of pictures to get likes/attention.
- b. Being tempted to hide their faith or go along with crude jokes or gossip in order to fit in.

Discussion questions:

- a. “When you think about your friend group and your online world, what do you feel most controlled by—God’s truth or other people’s opinions?”
  - b. “How can you tell when \*approval\* has become something you’re practically worshipping?”
  - c. “Can you think of a time you chose to obey God instead of fitting in? How did that feel, and how might that actually be ‘worship in spirit and truth’?”
2. **Worshipping God with Your Digital Life**: Connect “spirit and truth” worship with their online identity: what they post, watch, DM, like, and follow.

*Scenarios:*

- a. Temptation to follow accounts that are spiritually unhealthy (sexual content, bullying, constant complaining, mocking faith).
- b. Pressure to join in on trends that don’t honor God.

*Discussion Questions:*

- a. “If Jesus sat next to you while you scrolled, what would He see that looks like worship—and what might look like compromise?”
  - b. “How could you apply ‘spirit and truth’ to the accounts you follow, the comments you make, and what you post?”
  - c. “Is there one account you might need to unfollow or one type of content you might need to stop posting as an act of worship?”
3. **Friendship, Dating, and Worship**: Apply the sermon’s idea that even good things (friends, family, a boyfriend/girlfriend) can become idols if they take God’s place.

*Scenarios:*

- a. Feeling torn between spending all free time with a friend/romantic interest and staying committed to youth group, church, or serving.
- b. Being pressured by a boyfriend/girlfriend or close friend to cross physical/emotional/spiritual boundaries that you know aren’t honoring to God.

*Discussion Questions:*

- a. “How can you tell when a friendship or relationship has become something you’re \*bowing down\* to instead of God?”
- b. “What would it look like to worship God \*within\* a friendship or dating relationship—what would change?”
- c. “If you had to choose between obeying God or keeping a certain relationship exactly as it is, what do you \*hope\* you would choose? What helps you actually choose God in real life?”

**Tips for Parents**

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it’s okay to ask questions, even if things don’t make sense right away.

- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

# Family Conversation Guide for Gen Z

## What is Worship?

### 1. Who Are You Really “Bowing Down” To? (Approval & Group Pressure)

*Bible Reference:* Romans 12:1–2

*Application:* Worship is not just singing; it’s what you \*live for\*. If you bend your choices to fit your friend group or culture instead of God’s truth, you’re “bowing down” to approval instead of to God.

*Scenario:* You’re in a group (in person or in a group chat) where friends are trash-talking someone, sending shady memes, or flirting in a way that clearly crosses your conviction lines. You feel the pressure: laugh, join in, or be silent and risk being labeled “boring,” “judgy,” or “too Christian.”

*Discussion Question:* In that moment, what would it look like to “present yourself as a living sacrifice” and refuse to be conformed to the group, even if it costs you some social points?

### 2. Worship in Spirit and Truth in Your Online Life

*Bible Reference:* John 4:23–24

*Application:* Worship “in spirit and truth” means your \*inner life\* and your \*outer actions\* line up with what’s true about God. That includes what you watch, post, like, and DM. Your digital presence should match your worship.

*Scenario:* Your feed is full of content that’s (a) sexually charged, (b) mocking people, (c) promoting bitterness, chaos, or hopelessness.

You don’t post that stuff yourself, but you keep watching it, liking it, and letting it shape your mood and mindset.

*Discussion Question:* If Jesus defined “truth,” what changes would you need to make to your follows, likes, and posts so that your online life actually looks like worship “in spirit and truth,” not just a Christian label in your bio?

### 3. Money, Status, and the “Sacrifice of Sharing”

*Bible Reference:* Hebrews 13:16

*Application:* Worship includes how you handle money and stuff. Sharing and generosity—even when it costs you status, comfort, or “drip”—is a sacrifice that actually \*pleases\* God.

*Scenario:* You’ve saved for something you really want (shoes, tech, trip). You find out someone in your youth group or school can’t afford a retreat, basic gear, or even lunch. You could help, but it would mean delaying or downsizing what you planned to buy.

Discussion Question: If you believed that God is genuinely \*pleased\* when you sacrifice to share, how might that change what you do with your money in this situation?

#### 4. Doing Good as Worship in Group Spaces

*Bible Reference:* Matthew 5:16

Application: “Doing good” isn’t just about being a nice person; it’s a form of worship that points people to God’s greatness, not your own.

Scenario: At school, work, or youth group, everyone notices the same “invisible” person: the kid who eats alone, the one everyone thinks is “weird,” or the new person who doesn’t know anyone. You’re busy, you have your own friend group, and sitting with them or inviting them in might feel socially awkward.

Discussion Question: What would it look like in your current group setting to do one uncomfortable, visible good work this week in a way that clearly honors Jesus and not your image?

#### 5. Praise as a Sacrifice, Not Just a Vibe

*Bible Reference:* Hebrews 13:15

Application: Singing and speaking praise to God is a \*sacrifice\*, not a performance. It’s worship when you choose to praise even when you’re tired, distracted, or not feeling the “worship vibe.”

Scenario: At church or youth group, the worship set starts. You’re tired, the style isn’t your favorite, you’re thinking about homework, that text you got, or the person you like three rows over. You’re tempted to just stand there, scroll, or quietly zone out until the music is over.

Discussion Question: If you saw praise as a real sacrifice that brings a smile to God’s face, what would you choose to do with your body (posture), your phone, and your focus during worship times?

#### 6. Relationships That Become Idols

*Bible Reference:* Exodus 20:3

Application: Good things—friends, crushes, boyfriend/girlfriend, even family—can become “gods” when they matter more to you than obeying Jesus. Who you won’t say “no” to often reveals who you truly worship.

Scenario: Someone you really care about (friend or romantic) pressures you to (a) skip church or youth regularly, (b) cross physical or emotional boundaries, and (c) hide your faith or compromise your values. You know it’s off, but you’re terrified of losing them.

*Discussion Question:* What specific boundary or choice would show that Jesus is actually first—even if it risks the relationship—and what help from God would you need to follow through?

## 7. Reverence and Awe in a Casual Culture

*Bible Reference:* Hebrews 12:28–29

*Application:* God is close and loving, but He’s also holy. Worship means treating Him as weighty, not casual—this affects how seriously you take sin, church, serving, and spiritual habits.

*Scenario:* You and your friends often come late to church, talk through worship, scroll during the message, and treat gatherings as mainly hangout time. You’d never do that in a job interview, exam, or important event you respect.

*Discussion Question:* If you really believed God is a “consuming fire,” how would your attitude toward church, worship, and serving change next week—time you arrive, phone use, posture, focus?

## 8. Content Creation and Self-Glory vs. God’s Glory

*Bible Reference:* 1 Corinthians 10:31

*Application:* Whatever you create—TikToks, Reels, posts, music, art—can either subtly glorify you (your body, your talent, your personality) or point back to God’s goodness and truth.

*Scenario:* You’re about to post a TikTok/IG story that you know will get attention: maybe it’s borderline suggestive, flexing your lifestyle, or centered on roasting someone for laughs. You know it’ll perform well, but it doesn’t really honor God.

*Discussion Question:* Before you hit “post,” how could you run your content through this question: “Who does this really glorify—me or God?” and what would you change if pleasing God was your top priority?

**These points aim to empower Gen Z to live out their faith genuinely and courageously in various aspects of their daily lives, reflecting Biblical integrity, compassion, and steadfastness.**