

Lesson 10

The Experience and Wonder of Worship

Subtitle Here

Read: Luke 5:17-26; Isaiah 6:1-8.

Pray for help in deepening your desire for worship and to grow closer to God. Ask God to deepen your hunger for Him and for an open mind and heart as you prepare to worship.

Set Your Intentions: What do you hope to achieve from this lesson?

Journal Your Thoughts. Journaling can be a valuable tool for spiritual reflection and growth.

What is Worship?

When the word worship is mentioned, all sorts of definitions come to mind. Worship is “declaring the worth of God.” In Old English, it was called *worthship*. Practically speaking, we don’t worship God for what we get out of it. We worship to give God the honor due Him, to recognize His worth and value, and to acknowledge His place in and claim on our lives.

Before we go further, it is appropriate to discuss what worship is not:

- It is not a weekly pep talk to make us feel good about ourselves.
- It is not a rock concert or a symphony.
- It is not a motivational seminar.
- It is not an excursion into the acquisition of academic knowledge about Scripture.

Worship occurs when people encounter the God who loves them and desires a relationship with them. It is a “meeting between God and His people.” It does not lead to an encounter with God; *it is an encounter with God*. When we worship, we come with an agenda: *to meet with God*. When we worship, God has an agenda: *to meet with us*.

This should be considered each time we walk through the doors at our weekly service. When we do, it will impact us. It should affect our attitude, dress, and punctuality. It should also impact how we pay attention to what we’re doing during the service. If you don’t go to worship to meet God, you will not get anything out of the service.

The Realities of God’s Presence:

If worship is about encountering God’s presence, someone might say: *I thought God’s presence was always with us*. And indeed, He is, as explained in Psalm 139:8. God’s omnipresence is a reality. We can’t escape it. God is always there (Exodus 33:14; Matthew 18:20). Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 18 indicates that God manifests His presence uniquely when we worship.

Before going further, we should consider Luke 5:17-26. Here, we observe an example of both God’s omnipresence and His revealed presence. Jesus was there - that’s omnipresence - he was in the middle of

the crowd that heard him come to preach. But notice the 2nd sentence in 5:17: *And the power of the Lord was with Him to heal*. What does Luke mean? This may not have been a physical manifestation of power, but it was noticed. Jesus had the power to heal, and the Spirit gave it to Him. That power - that revealed presence - caused the people to glorify God after they witnessed the miracle.

Then everyone was astounded, and they were giving glory to God. And they were filled with awe and said, “We have seen incredible things today” (Luke 5:26).

When you were with Jesus, you knew you were with God. You couldn’t get enough. They were *astounded*. They *gave glory to God*. They were *filled with awe*. That’s the extra glimpse of God we should crave. We should want to experience awe and amazement because we’ll be forever changed when we do. We should ask for it.

What is Needed in Worship?

If you could ask God for anything, what would it be? Moses got the opportunity. He didn’t ask for food, riches, or prestige. He desired something more profound, higher, and spiritual beyond this world—a hunger for God.

He asks, *please show me your ways ... that I may know you*, (Exodus 33:13). Moses wanted to progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with God. He wanted to recognize more and understand clearly. He wasn’t interested in God’s ways just because he possessed information. He had the heart of a worshipper. He wanted to experience God every day in His life. He didn’t just want the facts; *He wanted God*. He’s talking about relationships.

Moses’ Encounter with God

Moses asked, “Please, let me see your glory” (Exodus 33:18). *Glory* refers to “God’s honor, renown, majesty, and His visible splendor.” It is closely related to presence and face. Moses wanted to see God face to face. *He wanted a visible encounter with God*. He was not content with *business as usual*. He wanted God to show up in life. We need not only to hunger for God, but we need an encounter with God. We need a sense of His presence. When we get it, it will transform our worship from a:

- Duty to devotion.
- Ritual to relationship.
- A simple meeting to a holy gathering.

What do we need to do?

Here are three life-changing actions we need to take to experience God’s revealed presence in worship:

- **Anticipate God’s presence.** Expect it. Long for it. Pray for it. Prepare yourself for it.
- **Look for His hand at work in worship.** Focus on the words used in our praise and prayer. How often do the words in a hymn or prayer directly apply to something you’re dealing with in life? Do you chalk it up to luck or coincidence? How often has a word spoken by a shepherd,

preacher, or teacher hit you squarely, and you know it is God speaking to you through His Word (Hebrews 4:12)?

- **Listen to God speaking to you through His word.** He has preserved Scripture for a reason. Listen to the message. We're not just for gaining new information but to store up and invigorate your soul. Understand the connection to our vision plan and the purpose behind it.

The Power of Worship

Our family last visited Yellowstone National Park in 2003 as a farewell tour before we moved back east to Indiana. We spent several days going around the park. As always, it is a unique and breathtaking experience. Where is the first place you want to visit if you've visited the park? *Old Faithful*. Why? It's not the tallest geyser or the most spectacular out of the hundreds in the park, but it is *faithful*. Every 35-120 minutes, hot water shoots straight up the ground over a hundred feet for as little as 90 seconds or as long as 5 minutes. You can count on it. The National Park Service has even timed when the next eruption will occur.

When you're there, it's clearly the center of attention.

Tourists are everywhere. As the time approaches for the geyser to go off, the number of people grows as they crowd in on the boardwalk to watch. Everybody's phone is out - all pointed at a hole in the ground. At once, water starts sputtering. Then it stops. Then it starts again - water going 100 ft into the sky. Everyone is just amazed. Spellbound. Then, in a moment or two, it's over.

But the people's reaction is the same every time I go to Yellowstone. Hundreds of people are gathered together on a boardwalk, moved in awe of having just experienced something powerful—something beyond themselves. When they leave there, they know they've experienced something spectacular.

A similar dynamic should occur when we worship God.

We should be able to see something spectacular—something beyond ourselves. We should leave filled with awe, mesmerized by God's life-giving, life-flowing power. We should be motivated to tell others about what we have experienced. What *Old Faithful* does for the tourist in Wyoming, our worship of God should do for us.

Psalm 40:3 – Two Elements of Worship

He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and they will trust in the LORD (PSALM 40:3).

Here, we discover two profound elements: *celebration* and *proclamation*.

Celebration

He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.

Think vertically. David had an experience with God. God had rescued and refreshed him. He had been in God's presence. He was changed. He couldn't keep silent about it. Notice how he is exuberant in his praise. He is excited. He can't contain his joy/happiness/relief. He *had* to shout for joy! It wasn't just any

song he was singing - it was a *new* song, indicating a freshness or newness in his experience with God. It was as though he was seeing God again for the first time.

There hasn't been a time that I have visited Yellowstone National Park without visiting Old Faithful. You want to see it again and again. Every time you walk away, you are amazed and moved. That's the way it should be with worship. David's singing was not about him - it was about God. It was worship. It was an expression of gratitude to God for who He is, what He has said, and what He is doing. David knew that the source of everything he had was God himself.

Proclamation

Think horizontally.

Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.

As David worshipped, many saw it. They saw him praising. They didn't just hear it. The security he gained and found in God - gave others the confidence to join and find it in worship. David's joy before God was a powerful testimony. It was inspirational. We don't just worship God at church. Worship should be a constant attitude and activity in our lives. At church, we worship publicly and corporately. And when we do, we proclaim the mightiness of our God. When people far from God hear those close to God moving with heartfelt praise, they are moved. It's like seeing *Old Faithful*. They're moved. They want to know how and why that happens.

Two Products of Worship

Spiritually lost people can be drawn to Jesus by our worship.

It can be like a magnet.

If, therefore, the whole church assembles together and all are speaking in tongues and people who are outsiders or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your minds? But if all are prophesying and some unbeliever or outsider comes in, he is convicted by all and is called to account by all. The secrets of his heart will be revealed, and as a result he will fall facedown and worship God, proclaiming, "God is really among you." What then, brothers and sisters? Whenever you come together, each one has a hymn, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Everything is to be done for building up (1 Corinthians 14:23-26).

Here, Paul is amidst a discussion on the purpose of spiritual gifts. Tongues and prophecy are in view. Tongue speaking was the ability to speak in a language other than one's own without the use of a translator. Prophecy was the ability to reveal things directly from God as the Scripture had not yet been completed.

Please focus on 14:24-25, where instructions are given for them to worship in a way that an unbeliever entered. Paul desired that the guest at worship would be *called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.* What we do in the public worship service should be done with a consciousness that the unchurched may be present and how we conduct ourselves will influence them.

Now, let's look at John 12:32: *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.* Jesus is predicting his death... but the principle we're looking for here is that when Jesus is lifted up in praise and worship, lost people will be attracted to Him. Again, this is a product of worship, not the aim of worship. Worship is all about God, where we declare His worth.

Now, let's go back to the Old Testament:

I will praise you, Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your faithful love is as high as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches the clouds. God, be exalted above the heavens; let your glory be over the whole earth (Psalm 57:9-11).

There is an evangelistic connection that arises from honest and heartfelt worship. When God's people experience His presence, they meet God and engage their hearts. Lives are changed and one of the results is that lost people can also be drawn into God's presence. The worldly person will take notice. Remember, the unchurched who come to our worship service are making judgments about God and us as they gather here. If they come in and see people unprepared, unengaged, uninterested, going through the motions, engaging in mere ritual, they'll leave and never come back.

But if our hearts are on fire, the lost will be drawn to Christ. We must never compromise the need to be prepared for worship. Worship leaders must be ready to lead in the Lord's Supper, giving, singing, and praying. *All of these are to be connected to the purpose of praise and adoration of God.* Not only do leaders need to move with this purpose - but all the participants.

The Scriptures teach that God draws people to Him through authentic worship by His people:

- Psalm 18:49: *Therefore I will thank you among the nations, LORD; I will praise your name.*
- Romans 15:9: *and so that Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and I will sing praise to your name.*
- Psalm 96:3: *Declare his glory among the nations, his wondrous works among all peoples.*
- Psalm 138:4-5: *All the kings on earth will give you thanks, LORD, when they hear what you have promised. They will sing of the LORD's ways, for the LORD's glory is great.*
- Psalm 145:10-12: *All you have made will thank you, LORD; the faithful will bless you. They will speak of the glory of your kingdom and will declare your might, informing all people of your mighty acts and of the glorious splendor of your kingdom.*
- 2 Samuel 22:50: *Therefore I will give thanks to you among the nations, LORD; I will sing praises about your name.*

More people are won to Christ by being moved by God's presence than by all the apologetic arguments combined. Few are converted to Jesus purely on intellectual grounds. Having a sense of God's presence melts hearts and explodes mental barriers. A seeker may not understand the meaning of a song or what happens in communion, but they know joy when they see it. They know when lives are being impacted. They can read where lives are being changed. This will cause them to want what we have. If this is true, so is the opposite: *What happens when a seeker sees someone bored to tears, having a scowl on their face, incessantly yawning? Will they be attracted to Jesus?*

The saved are sent out to share Jesus after worship:

Who hasn't been inspired to tell someone about Jesus after an inspirational worship service? *True worship affects believers.*

Isaiah 6:1-8 is a great example.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphim were standing above him; they each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another: Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Armies; his glory fills the whole earth. The foundations of the doorways shook at the sound of their voices, and the temple was filled with smoke. Then I said: Woe is me for I am ruined because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, and because my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Armies. Then one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a glowing coal that he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said: Now that this has touched your lips, your iniquity is removed and your sin is atoned for. Then I heard the voice of the Lord asking: Who will I send? Who will go for us? I said: Here I am. Send me.

You are probably very familiar with verse 8: *Here I am! Send Me!* Please note that Isaiah was commissioned to speak for the people only after he saw and heard God. He would have missed God's calling if he had not entered worship.

In Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus gave the great commission. It is the reason for our spiritual existence. In it, we are charged to tell others about Jesus. Let's look at the context in which this command is given:

The eleven disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but some doubted (Matthew 28:16-17).

Focus on how the disciples saw Jesus, and *they worshipped*. In this context, the command to share Jesus with the world is given inside the context of worship. From that (worship), they were called to go to all nations and represent Jesus. The same thing repeats itself in Acts 2:1-41 on the Day of Pentecost. The disciples were gathered for worship. It was the 50th day after the Passover. It's Sunday. *They're worshipping*. In verse 2, the Spirit descends. *What do they do?* They begin to declare *the mighty works of God* (2:11). Now, look at 2:38-41 - what happens here? People saw and heard the message, experienced God, and responded in faith to the gospel call.

Evangelism springs from worship. Unbelievers are drawn to God through it, and in turn, their worship compels them to tell others about Him. Wholehearted worshippers call the whole world to wholehearted worship.

Two Challenges for Worshippers

What can you do? You can do what people do when they gather to watch *Old Faithful*. i.e., *find a place to meet God in worship*. Come to celebrate. Worship is a time to lay aside trouble, anxieties, and cares. Worship is a time to celebrate God's gift of mercy and grace and to experience God's forgiveness. It is a weekly opportunity to let God's power lift you out of the slimy pits of life and allow His provision to set you on firm footing. Every week, you get to proclaim a *new song* by lifting hymns of praise to God. You can tell others about your experience. We don't just do this for ourselves. We invite others to join with

us. We call on others to come into God's presence and stand before the throne, to come to the mountaintop.

What's In This for Us?

Anticipate and Prepare for Encounter: Approach worship with the anticipation of meeting God. Just as we prepare for important meetings or events, we should prepare ourselves spiritually and mentally for encountering God's presence. This means coming with an open heart and mind, ready to engage in worship rather than passively attending.

Engage Actively: Worship is not a spectator sport but an active engagement with God. Pay attention to the words of songs, prayers, and teachings, seeking to connect them with your own life experiences and spiritual growth. Actively participate in worship rather than simply going through the motions.

Seek God's Presence Daily: Like Moses, cultivate a hunger for God's presence in your daily life, not just during designated corporate worship times. Seek to know God more deeply and intimately, desiring to experience Him in every aspect of your life. This involves prioritizing spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation on Scripture, and fellowship with your spiritual family.

Reflect God's Glory: As worshippers, our lives should reflect the glory of God to those around us. Just as David's joyful worship attracted others to God, our genuine worship should inspire curiosity and draw others to seek God. Let your worship be a testimony to God's transforming power in your life, inviting others to experience His presence for themselves.

Concluding Thoughts

While God does not need your worship, He delights in it. Are you telling others about Christ? Are you inviting others into God's presence? You can be drawn to Him. You are to worship. But God doesn't want you to stay there. He wants to send you out and have you testify about Him. It's like seeing *Old Faithful*, basking in its glory and splendor, but you must go home. You don't live on the boardwalk around the geyser. But once you've seen it, you must tell others about it.

For Discussion

1. How does our understanding of worship as "declaring the worth of God" shape our approach to Sunday services and daily life?
2. How do the misconceptions of worship mentioned in the lesson (e.g., weekly pep talk, rock concert) affect our personal worship experiences?
3. Reflecting on Moses' desire to see God's glory, how can we cultivate a similar hunger for encountering God in our lives?
4. How does the concept of God's omnipresence challenge or reinforce our understanding of worship as encountering His unique presence?
5. Discuss authentic worship's impact on believers and non-believers, as illustrated in the lesson through examples like David's praise and Isaiah's commission.
6. What practical steps can we take to actively engage in worship rather than passively participating?
7. How can we ensure that our worship is not just a ritual or duty but a genuine expression of devotion and relationship with God?
8. Reflect on the idea that worship should transform our lives from a simple meeting to a holy gathering. How does this transformation manifest in our attitudes, actions, and interactions with others?
9. Consider the connection between worship and evangelism. How does our worship influence those around us, both believers and non-believers?
10. How can we encourage one another to prioritize and pursue authentic worship experiences that lead to encountering God's presence in our lives?