

Christian Worship
Class 1: You Become What You Worship
TPC CE, Fall 2023
August 20, 2023

I. Introduction to the Class

II. What Is Worship?

Worth-ship: ascribing worth to something or someone

Devotion or Service

Exodus 4:31, And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.

Exodus 4:22-23, Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me."

Deuteronomy 26:9-10, And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O LORD, have given me.' And you shall set it down before the LORD your God and worship before the LORD your God.

Psalm 29:2, Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

Psalm 66:1-4, Shout for joy to God, all the earth;
sing the glory of his name;
give to him glorious praise!
Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you.
All the earth worships you
and sings praises to you;
they sing praises to your name."

John 4:19-24, The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is

seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Hebrews 12:28-29, Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

Revelation 5:11-14, ¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might
and honor and glory and blessing!”

¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

III. Why Does It Matter?

Worship is what we were made for

Worship is inevitable

Romans 1:18-25, ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

“Here’s something else that’s weird but true: in the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship—be it JC or Allah, be it YHWH or the Wiccan Mother Goddess, or the Four Noble Truths, or some inviolable set of ethical principles—is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough. It’s the truth. Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you... Worship power, you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out.” – David Foster Wallace, Commencement Speech at Kenyon College, 2005

“Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your god.” – Martin Luther, *Large Catechism on the First Commandment*

Isaiah 46:5-7, ⁵ “To whom will you liken me and make me equal,
and compare me, that we may be alike?

⁶ Those who lavish gold from the purse,
and weigh out silver in the scales,
hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god;
then they fall down and worship!

⁷ They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it,
they set it in its place, and it stands there;
it cannot move from its place.

If one cries to it, it does not answer
or save him from his trouble.

Isaiah 44:14-17, ¹⁴ He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. ¹⁵ Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it. ¹⁶ Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half he eats meat; he roasts it and is satisfied. Also he warms himself and says, “Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!” ¹⁷ And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, “Deliver me, for you are my god!”

Psalms 115:1-9, Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory,
for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!

² Why should the nations say,
“Where is their God?”

³ Our God is in the heavens;
he does all that he pleases.

⁴ Their idols are silver and gold,
the work of human hands.

- ⁵ They have mouths, but do not speak;
eyes, but do not see.
- ⁶ They have ears, but do not hear;
noses, but do not smell.
- ⁷ They have hands, but do not feel;
feet, but do not walk;
and they do not make a sound in their throat.
- ⁸ Those who make them become like them;
so do all who trust in them.
- ⁹ O Israel, trust in the LORD!

Books

Basic:

- *Does God Care How We Worship?* by Ligon Duncan
- *What Happens When We Worship* by Jonathan Landry Cruse
- *The Westminster Directory of Public Worship*, discussed by Mark Dever and Sinclair Ferguson
- *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* by James K. A. Smith
- *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters* by Tim Keller

More Specifically-Focused:

- *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of Christ-Centered Worship* by Michael Horton
- *With Reverence and Awe: Returning to the Basics of Reformed Worship* by D. G. Hart and John R. Muether
- *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* by Bryan Chapell
- *Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present* by Jonathan Gibson and Mark Earngey
- *The Presbyterian Liturgies: Historical Sketches* by Charles W. Baird
- *Worship: Reformed according to Scripture* by Hughes Oliphant Old
- *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* by G.K. Beale

Audio

- Reformed Theological Seminary class, “Theology of Worship” taught by Ligon Duncan, https://rts.edu/resources/?fwp_resources_series=theology-of-worship (you can also access this on the free Reformed Theological Seminary app)