

**Bible Study**  
Magnification



Trinity Church Adelaide  
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## Magnification: Worship in Every Direction

What is 'worship'?

The word 'worship' can have a very narrow definition.

It can be used to refer just to what we do on a Sunday, e.g. a 'worship service.'

Sometimes, it is used even more narrowly to describe something we do *in* a church service: sing. E.g. 'I loved the time of worship' = 'I loved the singing.'

A Pentecostal friend of mine once joked that, in her heritage, the word 'worship' was used even more narrowly: in 'praise and worship,' 'praise' meant the fast songs and 'worship' meant the slow ones!

Now, all of these things are 'worship,' and they're great. But the way the Bible talks about worship is much broader. In fact, it says 'worship' is something that we do with our whole lives, not just on Sunday (and certainly not just when we sing, slowly or otherwise!). Rather, we're called to be a people who worship in every direction.

That's what these studies will be about. They won't cover everything there is to say about worship - how could they?! - but they will get us *started* thinking about it, so we can *keep* thinking about it. They're going to look at the three key directions in which we manifest our worship of God: upwards, inwards, and outwards.

To stimulate further reflection, you might like to meditate on Deuteronomy 6:4-5 throughout this series. To help you with that, check out the series of 6 videos from The Bible Project.

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/shema-listen/>

## Study 1 – Worship: Upwards

We all know we're meant to worship God.

But what does 'worship' mean?

Read the following Old Testament passages. What do they tell us about 'worship'?

- 2 Kings 17:35-36
- 1 Chronicles 16:28-30
- 2 Chronicles 29:27-28
- Nehemiah 9:5-6
- Psalm 29:1-2
- Psalm 86:8-13
- Psalm 100

The word 'worship' gets used many other times in the Old Testament (171, to be precise), but this small sample is still enough to give us the big idea. In the Old Testament, worship:

- involves serving, praising, bowing down to, giving glory to, and offering sacrifices to God;
- is sometimes associated with singing;
- often happens in particular places, such as the temple;
- is a response to God's supreme power and love.

In other words, worship is an act that responds to, and declares, how magnificent God is.

Interestingly, one of the things that is most striking about Old Testament worship is how *physical* it is: it involves *literally* bowing down before an altar, offering *literal* sacrifices in a *special* place, *literally* praising God's name out loud, etc. It contains an internal element, but Old Testament worship is still also highly external.

Which is why it's surprising, when you get to Jesus, how he describes 'worship.'

Read John 4:19-26

- Jesus is talking to a Samaritan. What does she think is important about worship?
- How does Jesus respond? What does he think is important about worship?
- How does Jesus fit into all this? (See also John 2:18-22, when Jesus has just cleared the temple of money-changers).

In Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman, he completely reorients the way she is to think about worship. She thinks it's

primarily an external thing - something you do on a particular mountain and, by extension, all the other things that go with it, e.g. sacrifices, etc. But Jesus says it's primarily an internal thing - something that happens in 'the Spirit' (i.e. in the power of the Spirit) and 'in truth,' regardless of where it happens. And he is at the centre of it: he is the one who will 'explain everything to us' (John 4:26) and is the 'place' (temple) where people meet God (John 2:19).

This means worship can now take place anywhere, and in lots of ways! We can still gather together in a particular place (like a church building) and worship God in external ways, (singing, praying, etc.) but it also means we can do it with the rest of our lives, too, so long as we're following Jesus and being empowered by his Spirit.

Read the following New Testament passages. What activities do they call 'worship' (or associated terms, e.g. 'sacrifice', 'offering', 'priestly,' etc).

- Romans 15:14-16
- Philippians 4:18
- 2 Timothy 4:6
- Hebrews 13:15
- Hebrews 13:16

Worship is still an act of responding to and declaring how great God is. But now, this side of Jesus, it's no longer tied to special times or places, or particular physical activities (e.g. bowing down, singing). It's all of life. You can worship God through sharing the gospel, or giving, or thanksgiving, or good works. You can even do it eating a sandwich! *'So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God'* (1 Corinthians 10:31).

What is worship? Anything that responds to and declares the glory of God. And when can you do it? Anytime.

#### Questions for discussion

- Doing the dishes or helping a neighbour or eating a meat pie doesn't feel much like worship. In practice, how do you think it can be? That is, how can you worship God through these things?
  
- Of course, worshipping God in more 'traditional' ways - singing, coming to church, etc. - is still worship! How can we make sure we're doing these both externally and also 'in Spirit and in truth'?
  
- Pray



Having just described everything God has done for us in the gospel (Romans 1:1-11:32), Paul launches into a hymn of praise: God is all wise, all powerful, and all good. Therefore, he is to receive all glory (i.e. to be worshipped; 11:33-36). But how are we to worship him? By offering up our bodies as 'living sacrifices' (12:1). What does that mean? It means offering your whole life as an act of worship to God. And how can we do this? Only when our minds are renewed by God, and hence transformed. In other words, worship is God-empowered, all-of-life service of him. In many ways, that's what we saw last week.

But what does that look like in practice? Paul goes on to explain.

**Read Romans 12:3-5**

- How are we to think about ourselves?
  
- How are we to think about each other?
  
- How do you think this works itself out in practice in church? Think of examples.

One of the ways God renews our mind (12:2) is by giving us a right view of ourselves and each other. We're not as important as we think we are. Rather, we're all part of one 'body', the church, and we rely on other people and the roles they play to help us ('each member belongs to all the others.') Recognising this and being changed by it ('transformed') is one of the ways we worship God (12:1), i.e. it gives God glory.

### **Read Romans 12:6-8**

- What does God say about gifts here?
  
- What are we to do with them?
  
- What do you think your gifts are? How do/could you use them?

We're not just to be transformed in our thinking, but our actions. Part of belonging to each other as members of Christ's body is also serving each other with the gifts God has given us. This will look different for all of us, but all of us have gifts, and all of us are to use them, for the good of others. Ministry in the Christian life is not optional. That's another part of what 'worship' looks like.

### **Read Romans 12:9-21**

- How are we to love fellow believers? (12:9-16)
  
- How are we to love those who oppose us? (12:17-21)
  
- Can you think of an example where you have had to do one of the above?

God doesn't just transform us in our thinking, or in our actions, but in our character: how we love other people - both those 'on our side' and those against us. And all of this is part of 'offering our bodies as a living sacrifice . . . our true and proper worship' (12:1).

### **Questions for discussion**

- Why do you think the Bible describes loving other Christians as 'worship'. That is, how does it glorify God?
  
- Loving other Christians can be hard work. I know this is a leading question, but does knowing it's an act of worship help?
  
- Pray.

## Study 3 – Worship: Outwards

Over the last two weeks, we've seen what it is to worship *upwards* - living our whole lives to glorify God - and *inwards* as an expression of that: loving the members of Christ's body, the church, as people we rely on, serve, and love.

Today, we see that one more direction we worship God in is *outwards*. That is, that one of the ways we glorify God is through evangelism. Let's get into it.

### Read Psalm 96

- In verses 1-3, Israel is told to sing, praise, proclaim, and declare God's glory. Who are they to do this to:
  - in verses 1-2?
  - in verse 3?
- Why is it important that the nations hear this? (verses 4-6)
- Who is the psalmist talking to in verses 7-10? What is he telling them to do?
- Who is the psalmist talking to in verses 11-13? What is he telling them to do?



We evangelise because we want all people to worship God, as he deserves. But evangelism is also an act of worship in itself. Imagine you were talking with someone and they started slandering someone you love deeply. You'd ask them to stop so the person you love would get the respect they deserve. But you'd also do it because, if you didn't speak up, you'd be disrespecting them yourself. If you let someone slander someone you love without saying anything, that says something about your own relationship with them! It's the same with us and God. By sharing the gospel with people, we show how much we love God, because we hate to see him ignored and slandered. In that sense, evangelism is an act of worship.

### **Questions for discussion**

- How does thinking of mission as calling on people to glorify God as well as offering them salvation colour the way we do evangelism?
  
- Can thinking of evangelism as an act of worship help us do it? How?
  
- Pray.

