

Exploring our Core Values

Week 1: Worship

Worship is at the heart of everything we do

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing and sharing together.

What does worship mean to you?

WORSHIP

Sing or listen to: Jesus be the Centre

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EG-l1kK-BpU>

WORD

Read Romans chapter 12 (our focus today will be on verse 1)

Worship is a central theme in the Bible. It's found explicitly on many pages and implicitly on all. It's to be found in every stage of God's big story: from Eden, where Adam and Eve live before God and one another without distance or shame; to Egypt, where the groans of slaves catch the ear of Heaven. From the wilderness, where God's Law is fearfully received; to Israel, where a nation under God is established. From Jesus, who only does what he sees his Father doing; to the ends of the earth, where disciples of Jesus are made. And ultimately, to the glorious garden-city, where sin and death are no more, and people from every tribe and tongue dwell in the light and presence of the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb.

Read each of the following passages:

Psalm 95:1-7; 1 Kings 18:30-38; Amos 5:21-24

1. What does each passage tell us about worship?

Growth Group Notes

Autumn 2022



Generally speaking, we recognise we are worshipping when we sing a song in church, but not when we sign off the accounts; when we are praying for an overseas missionary, but not when we are paying for the shopping. But as the passages we looked at show, worship is wide-ranging, and can cover all aspects of who we are and what we do.¹

Read Romans 12:1.

The verse starts with the word “therefore”. Paul is saying that because of what he has explained in the previous eleven chapters... *“I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”*

What does Paul say in the first eleven chapters? That’s a big ask! Paul’s letter to the Romans is his longest and arguably the most important letter. It is rich with theological content. I offer this, as the shortest summary I could manage in less than 100 words:

Paul describes what Jesus has done for us. Paul explains that God’s family is now for everyone: Jew and Gentile. Paul explains how God feels about sin. He explains how grace works. He explains that our salvation is based on faith and not on what we do. He explains that the law is now written on the heart and not on parchment. At the core of the first eleven chapters of Romans is the sacrifice that Jesus has made for us.

2. Why should we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice?
3. Who is the sacrifice for?
4. What does “*offering your body as a living sacrifice*” mean in general?

¹ Includes extracts from LICC: Whole Life Worship

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5. What does it mean, more specifically, in our life: with our family; with our friends; in our workplace, in the church, in our community?

Jesus said to the rich young man, “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor” (see Mark 10.17-31). Jesus said this because the man loved his wealth more than God.

6. Is there anything that you can't sacrifice?

Paul says that *offering your body as a living sacrifice is holy and pleasing to God*. Holy means set apart for God, so our bodies - our entire being, are placed at God's disposal, to do with as he wills. This is pleasing to God. This can be rather counterintuitive for many, when we have been taught that nothing we can do can commend ourselves to God. It is true that we are saved by God's grace and not our own efforts.

Paul says that our very purpose is to please the Lord. See 2 Corinthians 5:9 and Ephesians 5:8-10.

Read Romans 8:5-11

7. How can we please the Lord?

Summary

1. Worship is our purpose

Jesus said the greatest command is to, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength (Mark 12:30). Worship is the total alignment of our heart, soul, mind and strength with the will of God. It is our wholehearted response to God's extravagant love and mercy.



2. Worship is our priority

Similarly, genuine worship involves giving everything we are to God. The Lord needs to become our number one priority, above every other purpose, love or activity.

That doesn't necessarily mean that we stop doing the things that we currently do or we stop engaging with the people we currently engage with, rather that we engage with these people and these activities like we are doing them in the name of Jesus and for his glory.

3. Worship is about God's presence

Worship is not about rules or religion; it's about relationship. Everything we do must flow from our relationship with God. Jesus had a remarkable conversation with a Samaritan woman at a well. Jesus said, 'a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.' Rather, 'true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.' (John 4:21,23-24).

WHAT NEXT?

God calls us to worship him in the ordinary everyday areas of life.

On a piece of paper, write down a couple of things that you will be doing this week that you generally find easy to see as acts of worship. On the other side, write down one or two things that you will be doing this week where you generally find it hard to feel like you are worshipping.

When everybody is done, put these notes together in the middle. Take some time to thank God for his incredible mercy. Ask that, in the light of his mercy, he will help you to respond by offering yourselves as living sacrifices. Finish with reading Colossians 3:15-17 together or you could turn it into a prayer for each other.