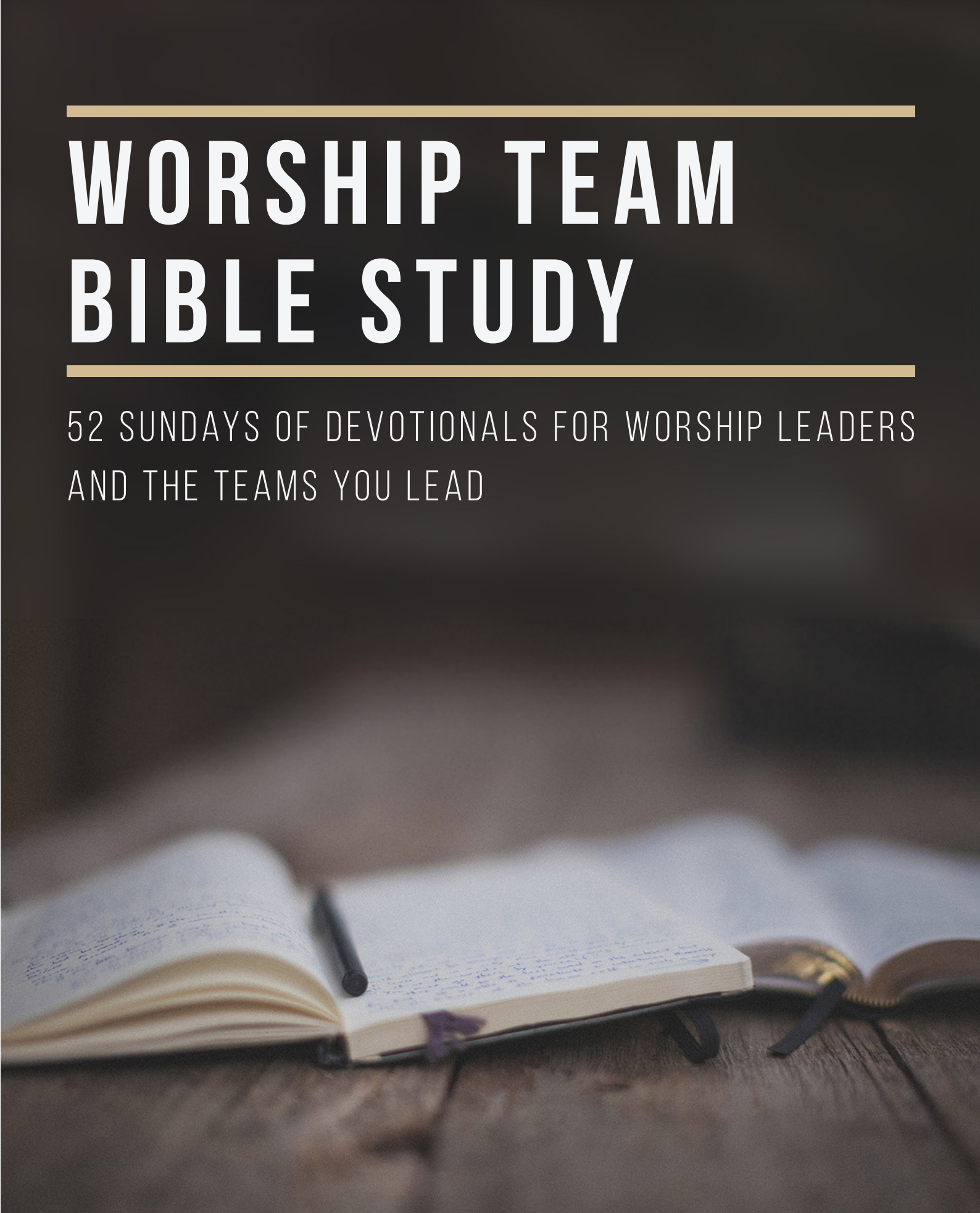
WORSHIP TEAM BIBLE STUDY

52 SUNDAYS OF DEVOTIONALS FOR WORSHIP LEADERS AND THE TEAMS YOU LEAD



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GENESIS 1:1-2

> *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*

REFLECTION

Whatever your week has been like, wherever you've gone, whether your day has gone as you've planned it or not, remember this: the center of your purpose and identity is the undeniable truth that God is your Creator. From the very beginning of your existence God has created and sustained every moment of your life.

You are not an accident. You are not without purpose. You are not a coincidence. The Creator of the universe is the Creator of you and He's designed you to be part of His great family which extends through generations and around the world. You are His and you get to be part of His family!

All of our creativity flows from this truth. God is our Creator and has invited us into this great creative redemption of all of creation. He created out of nothing, we create from what He has given us. He created everything seen and unseen, we create so people can see Jesus.

RESPONSE

? Remembering that God has created all things from nothing and now invites you to create as part of His creation, how does that impact you as you live out your creativity?

? How does your creativity help people see Jesus?

PRAYER

God of all creation, You are the one who was in the beginning. Before any created thing had ever come into being, You were there. Creator God, we admire Your creative power and we say that You are the Creator of all things, seen and unseen. Allow our creative work this week be from a place of love and adoration for You, our Creator. Please use what we have to offer this week out of our creativity so that more people would see Jesus! Amen.

EXODUS 15:1-3

> *"Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my defense; he has become by salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a warrior, the LORD is his name."*

REFLECTION

One of the reasons we sing together when we gather together as the church is to remember together what God has done for His people. A community expressing its praise together for what God has done for the community is a powerful thing! Of course our worship is personal and God's work in the life of an individual is worth celebrating but never diminish the power of a gathered community lifting their voices together singing praise to God for His work throughout history.

Catch that "Moses and the Israelites" are singing together. We see other examples in scripture of individual's singing songs of praise to God but here we catch the power of people together praising God for who He is ("he is highly exalted") and what He's done ("horse and driver he has hurled into the sea").

Praise is powerful when it's personal and the power becomes exponential when a group of individual worshippers come together and celebrate with one voice the God who is highly exalted, our strength, our defense, our salvation. Coming together to praise and exalt our God is something we should never take for granted.

RESPONSE

? Is there a favourite story in the Bible that always leads you to worship God? What is it about what God did in that story that causes your response?

? What do you love about gathering together with our church to worship God?

PRAYER

God who is worthy of all worship, we join with Moses and Your people through all of history and say that You are highly exalted and worthy of all of our worship. Thank You that we have this opportunity this weekend to gather with our church family to worship You. We don't take this for granted and we don't want this to be insignificant. As we praise You and exalt You would You remind Your people of the great things You have done through all of history and how You deserve to be praised above all gods. Amen.

EXODUS 34:14

> *Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*

REFLECTION

Jealousy is a tough attribute to lay on God since it's often seen as a character flaw and something we should avoid in our personal lives. To be satisfied with what we have, to recognize God as the giver of every good and perfect gift, to know that God blesses as He chooses in ways that we don't always understand are all different reasons why jealousy should be something we avoid as a label. And yet here *jealous* is not only a characteristic of God but is said to be *His name.*

The jealousy of God is a burning, fiery, unending passion for His people and the desire He has that Israel (and anyone else who has given their life as a covenant offering to God) would follow Him at the expense of any other god in their lives. Here God promises to drive out nations who are living in the promised land because God's great desire is for His people to know Him, to love Him, to follow Him and to obey Him. The jealousy is for what God's people are giving away to other gods, not for what anyone else has.

This jealous love continues today. It continues from God for you and for the whole world. God's unending, fiery passion of love for you has never changed and will be constant. His jealousy for your love and your affection has been present since the very moment He created you.

RESPONSE

? Are you aware of the things all around you which have or could become gods in your life?

? Are any of them receiving worship which should be given only to God Himself?

PRAYER

God of every nation, the one who is jealous for His people and loves the whole world, we want to give all of our worship, glory, honour and praise to You and to You alone. We confess the reality of other gods in our lives and we are aware of how they beg for our attention and our affections. Forgive us for offering worship to anyone but You. God, give us hearts that burn with a passion and a fire matched only by the jealous love you feel for Your people. Amen.

LEVITICUS 10:3

> *"Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord spoke of when he said:*
> *" 'Among those who approach me I will be proved holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honoured.' "*

REFLECTION

Some really beautiful truth in this one verse. Think about everything expressed here within just a few words: God speaks to His people, God is faithful to the things He promises, God desires His people to approach Him, as we approach God He becomes even more incredible, and God's desire is for the whole world to know this.

Stop for a second and consider this. God is not distant and unknown but invites His people to approach Him so that he may "be proved holy." As we come nearer to God and learn more about Him we are not disappointed by false promises unkept or disillusioned by threats and fear but instead we see more of His holiness, more of His love, more of His grace and mercy. Coming closer to God actually magnifies our view of Him instead of diminishing it.

As a result, God is honoured. Those who approach God and see Him as holy can't help but encourage others to do the same. Part of what we do as worship leaders is exactly this. We've been changed in our experience of God, as we've approached Him we've come to a greater awareness of His holiness and everything about Him and now we want "all the people" to have the same experience, to come near to a God who is overflowing with love, mercy, grace and faithfulness.

RESPONSE

? Have you ever been part of a spiritual experience where you approached God (or God approached you!) in a way that was a little uncommon and certainly not ordinary? Did you leave that experience with a changed view of God? How so?

? How does your role in our worship ministry help more people approach God so they can get a deeper understanding of who He is?

PRAYER

Holy God, we remember that there is no one like You. In every aspect of who You are, You are holy. There is no one as faithful as You, no one as merciful, no one as loving. God, You are holy. Our desire is to approach You and to see Your holiness. Thank You for the invitation and the opportunity to draw near to You because of what Jesus has done for us. We don't take this for granted! God, we ask that You would draw near to Your people as we worship You this week. We need Your presence. Amen.

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5

> *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

REFLECTION

This simple prayer has been spoken by the people of God for thousands of years and is still not only present but so powerful for us today. Father, Son, Spirit, our God is one. Perfect community expressed as one divinity, in relationship with His people Israel since the very beginning with a desire that more and more people would know this truth. "Hear, O Israel" and now hear, people of the whole earth that the Lord is God and He is one.

How do we live in light of that truth? We love God with everything we have in a way that displays who God is. Our love for God is not a religious activity of obedience but instead a joyful, all-encompassing, filling-mywhole- life, overflowing love simply as a response to God's greatness, in the same way that His love for you is overflowing in a way that we may not completely understand. With all of our heart, soul and strength we love our God who is all things for us. With our affections, our will and our energy we pour out love for a God who has never withheld an ounce of who He is from us.

RESPONSE

? What does it look like for you to love with God with all of your heart? Your soul? Your strength?

? Are any of them receiving worship which should be given only to God Himself?

PRAYER

God of the whole earth, we say together that You are the one. You are the one we love, the one we want to know, the one we want to follow and the one who deserves all of our worship. We want to love You with everything we have out of this beautiful truth of who we are. Father, Son, Spirit, be the one we love and worship this week so that many would hear and know You are God. Amen.

1 CHRONICLES 16:11

> *Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.*

REFLECTION

Strength can be either physical or emotional, allowing us to endure difficult situations or enabling us to push through physical challenges. Our own strength can come and go based on circumstances, age, experience, training and focus. Strength from ourselves is never constant and not necessarily reliable.

God's strength, however, is different. We look to God and find strength that is present and enduring - both emotional and physical. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God is not subject to the changes of emotion or the physical wear of age. God's strength never declines, never fails, never disappoints.

This week we're inviting people through these songs and our time of worship to "look to the Lord" and to "seek his face" because we know people are coming needing strength. Some are at the end of their rope, some have nowhere else to turn, some are physically fading away and God's strength is real for every circumstance.

RESPONSE

? Are you aware of the presence and power of God's strength in your life today?

? Is there someone in your life who needs strength that comes only from God?

PRAYER

God of all strength, we look to You today and find that You are strong and able in every situation. Because we want people to seek You and to see Your face this week during our worship, we need Your strength. Spirit of God, give us the power we need that comes only from You. We pray now for those who are desperate for Your strength, for the ones who have come to the end of their rope and are calling out for hope and purpose. God, be their strength. Amen.

1 CHRONICLES 16:23

> *"Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day.*

REFLECTION

One of my favourite things as a worship leader it to think about the song of worship traveling around the whole world every Sunday as the church gathers early in the morning in every timezone across the globe. The worship of God rising up first in east Asia and Australia, moving toward the middle east, Africa and Europe as the day progresses, then across the ocean from coast to coast in the Americas. The people of God all over the earth lifting their voices as a global choir to celebrate and worship Jesus and everything He has done for us.

Wherever we find ourselves we have our part to play in this global choir. In some ways the global baton of worship gets passed from country to country, from language to language, from sunrise to sunset not only on the day we gather for worship but this is part of the proclamation of who God is day after day.

Every day followers of Jesus around the world sing of His love, mercy, faithfulness and grace so that His salvation is proclaimed day after day. So this week in our church we'll join with all the earth and sing to Lord, we'll proclaim His salvation as best we know how when it's our turn. And we'll listen for the song to cover the whole earth and invite so many more people to join into this song day after day.

RESPONSE

? Have you ever had the opportunity to be part of a worship service in a very different part of the world?

? Are there any moments from that experience which stand out?

PRAYER

God of the world, thank You for the opportunity we have this week to gather with Your people in this part of the world for worship. Thank You that the song of worship and praise will happen around the whole world and we ask that we would do our part well in this incredible event. God, allow our focus to be on You and what You have done. As we proclaim Your salvation on this day would there be more and more people in the whole earth who turn to You. Amen.

1 CHRONICLES 16:34

> *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.*

REFLECTION

At the centre of God's character and God's activity is His goodness. Who He is and what He does are great. Always, without exception, He can't be anything but good. His faithfulness, His power, His mercy and yes, His judgment, all come from His goodness and are incredible displays of His goodness. Whether we are able to see it or recognize it in the moment, everything that God does is good and comes from His nature as a good God.

Because of His good-naturedness and His good-working in our lives and in the world we get to respond by giving thanks, expressing incredible gratitude for the good things that God does! Our worship this week is part of this beautiful response of thanksgiving for God's goodness in our lives and in His church.

Part of this goodness is the love of God which has always been and will always be. The love of God is sure and steadfast, abundant and overflowing, tender and true, never failing and never ending. The love of God is more than constant, the love of God endures. The love of God fights for the ones He loves, perseveres and overcomes and endures everything which comes against it.

RESPONSE

? Are you aware of God's goodness in Your life today? Take moment and say thank You.

? How are you able to be a tangible expression of God's enduring love to someone in our community this week?

PRAYER

God who is good, we remember the good things You have done all through history and in our own lives. We remember and acknowledge Your blessings and that every good and perfect gift comes from You. We look to You as our good God and we give you thanks. Thank You for the goodness of who You are and what You do. Thank You for Your love which has endured from the very beginning to today and will continue on forever and forever. Let our worship be a beautiful expression of thankfulness and gratitude for Your goodness and Your love. Amen.

2 CHRONICLES 20:21

> *"After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the Lord, or his love endures forever."*

REFLECTION

Like last week, we were reminded here of the response to God's forever enduring love with our forever overflowing gratitude. Never overlook the primacy and priority of worship in this scene where we have men singing praise to the Lord "at the head of the army," going before the rest of the people and allowing their worship to be a declaration of reality and truth of God who fights on their behalf.

Every battle we face has an element of worship connected to it. Physical battles develop from relationships broken by greed, jealousy, anger or other sin. Spiritual battles are rooted in our willingness (or lack of) to submit our complete will to God alone. Worship goes ahead of the battle to declare that God is good, that His love endures forever and that He can overcome any enemy.

This week there is the opportunity and the invitation to allow our praise to go ahead of the people as we gather together for worship. Whatever battles are being fought by those who are coming, God's love for them is enduring and He's inviting us together to give thanks to Him in every circumstance. The call for those who lead worship is to go ahead of the army, to lead the way into battle, focused on Jesus and His love so that people would find opportunity to give thanks and find victory through the power of God in their lives.

RESPONSE

? Have you ever had someone walk ahead of you in the midst of a hard situation in a way that encouraged you to worship God despite difficult circumstances?

? How would it change the way you worship and lead worship if you saw the role of what you're doing as leading the way "at the head of the army" so that others could find victory?

PRAYER

God who fights every battle on our behalf, open our eyes and show how you are fighting for us. God, in the middle of dark and difficult circumstances remind us that You are with , You will never leave us and You are strong enough to defeat every enemy. This week give us the opportunity to go ahead of any army, singing praise and worship to You, encouraging those who are fighting difficult battles to continue on because Your love endures forever. Amen.

PSALM 7:17

> *"I will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness; I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord Most High.*

REFLECTION

Of course not every situation is enjoyable or pleasant but every experience in our lives gives us the opportunity to be thankful, often despite the circumstances and not because of them. Over and over in the Bible we're reminded of this choice we have to be thankful and to choose gratitude instead of grumbling. If nothing else our gratitude is an expression of our trust in God even when life is difficult.

As people who lead worship one of the roles we play is to call people back to this invitation of gratitude. Through songs, scriptures, visuals and our interaction with the congregation we can remind people of God's righteousness and that He is the Lord Most High and invite them to sing and be thankful as a response of praise to God for who He is. The faithful Christian life is never about pretending problems don't exist or sticking our heads in the sand when circumstances aren't pleasant but instead to seize the opportunity to be thankful that even in difficult situations God has not left us, has not forsaken us, has not turned away from who He is and what He's promised. Even if that's all we're left with there's an opportunity to be thankful for that.

RESPONSE

? Have you ever been in a situation where choosing thankfulness and gratitude opened up a new perspective for you?

? Is there a worship song that describes this idea of singing praise of the Lord Most High in a meaningful way for you?

PRAYER

God of righteousness, we remember together that you are the Lord Most High. There is no one above You, no one greater than You and no one who can do what You do. We're grateful for who You are and that You are always at work in every circumstances. Thank You that we have the opportunity this week to gather with our church family to sing praises to You. We ask that our praise would be an incredible expression of gratitude because You are righteous and worthy of all of our worship. Amen.

PSALM 29:2

> *"Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.*

REFLECTION

"Ascribe" isn't a word that shows up much in everyday language and there's a chance it may have been reduced simply to the idea of *giving* or *showing* but it really is much more than that. Instead of the call to just give or show "the Lord the glory due his name" the idea of ascribe is to point to God as the source and the originator of the glory due his name. More than a direct command to give glory to God the meaning here is to worship God in a way that glorifies Him as the source or the reason for His glory.

We worship God because God is worthy to be worshipped. Of course there is to much more to it than this and so many more reasons why God deserves our worship but at the core God's glory is about God and His glory. So when we ascribe glory to God we're pointing other people to this same God and inviting them into this great glorification.

Our opportunity this week is to simply worship God because of who He is and invite others to do the same. Whatever your role you have a part to play in ascribing to the Lord His glory. Don't miss your chance to do this!

RESPONSE

? How does thinking about this word 'ascribe' impact how you think about God's glory?

? Have you been impacted in your own worship by the worship of someone else? Have other people pointed you to the glory of God?

PRAYER

God of all glory, we say together that You alone are worthy of our worship and that the desire of our heart is that all glory would go to You and You alone. We don't take lightly this opportunity we have to point other people to You through our worship and we ask that You would be glorified as we do this. God, we want to be in the splendor of Your holiness as we worship so that many more people would see You and give You glory. Amen.

PSALM 47:1

> *Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.*

REFLECTION

There are all kinds of opinions on whether verses like these are instructive or descriptive of how our worship should be. Are we being told to clap our hands or is this just a natural response to what happens when we "shout to God with cries of joy"?

Either way (and there are lots of great books you can read on this topic) there is no question that our worship is so much more than what happens in our hearts or even only with our voices. Clapping, shouting and hands raised are only a few of the ways that we show our worship of God engages all of who we are.

Every culture and even every church is going to respond in different ways but take this verse and many others like it as a clear invitation to all your worship to be both heartfelt and joy-filled in away that people can hear *and* see.

RESPONSE

? Our physical expressions of worship easy for you or difficult?

? When you see other people clapping or raising hands in worship is it helpful in your own worship or did you find it distracting?

PRAYER

God of the whole earth, we want our worship to fill every part of who we are in a way that would spill over to every nation. God we shout and sing and clap in our worship for Your glory, as an expression of the joy we have found in You. Remind us that you have created us spirit, soul and body and have invited us to love You with all of our mind, soul and strength. We want to love You like this even in our worship so that every nation would join in with shouts to God. Amen.

PSALM 47:6-7

> *"Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise.*

REFLECTION

It's pretty tough to read passages like this and so many others in scripture and not be convinced that singing is meant to be the primary way we worship God together. Not every church would be on the same page with this and every church is going to emphasize or deemphasize singing based partly on their heritage and tradition and partly on who they believe they're called to reach.

One of the common areas of understanding for the most traditional church as well as the most seeker sensitive is that when we gather together to sing we are involving ourselves in a fairly peculiar countercultural activity. Think about it, when is the last time you just got together with a bunch of people and sang? In public?! Karaoke, baseball games and birthday parties are pretty much the only places where singing happens in our culture and at those times the involvement of the crowd is half-hearted, at best.

One of the indications of a heart changed by God is the volume of that person's singing during a church service. When you see (and hear!) someone singing and belting out their praise to God it's one of the ways you can tell that God has done a great work in their life.

RESPONSE

? Do you find singing as part of your worship something that comes very naturally or something you've had to explore over time?

? How can we encourage more people to sing more as part of their worship to God?

PRAYER

God and King of all the earth, thank You that we have the privilege and the opportunity to join together and sing praise to You. We don't take this opportunity lightly and we want our singing to be praise to You! We remember and celebrate that the whole earth is Yours and that You are worthy of all of our praise. Would our church and our lives be filled with songs of praise to You this week. Amen.

PSALM 63:8

> *"I cling to you; your right hand upholds me.*

REFLECTION

Ever been in a place where you've been down to your last hope, your last chance, your last shot and you know that you've got nothing left on your own? Ever come to the end of your own strength, your own abilities, your own ways and realized that you have nothing left to give? It's in moments like these when our last chance, our only strength is to cling to God with everything we have.

"Cling" is this beautiful word that means so much more than grab or reach or hang on to. Cling is "Stuck like glue!" Cling is "Holding on for dear life!" Cling is "If I let go I'm doomed and that would be bad!" And make sure you get the full picture - the One doing the upholding is not you, it's God who upholds us when we cling to Him. How incredible that even in our most desperate moments it's His strength that holds us up, not our own.

This weekend there are people coming to worship who have given it all, tried it all, bet it all on things in this life which have not upheld them. They're coming because in their clinging to God they need to be upheld by Him in this most desperate moment. He's all they've got left! As we lead worship this weekend remember the ones who are holding on for dear life!

RESPONSE

? What's the encouragement for you in seeing this picture of God upholding us with His right hand when we cling to Him?

? Have you ever been in a moment or season of life where your last hope was in God and how He could uphold you?

PRAYER

God of all strength, we confess together that our strength alone is not enough and our ability alone is not enough. We remember how much we need Your strength and we say thank You that You are strong enough and able to uphold us when we cling to You. We pray for the ones in our church and in our community who have lost hope and lost strength. Remind them that Your right hand upholds them and You invite all of us to cling to You for strength. Amen.

PSALM 73:25

> *"Whom have I in heaven but you?*
> *And earth has nothing I desire besides you.*

REFLECTION

We live in a world where our affection and our attention are under incredible competition! Never mind the demand for every dollar from our bank account as we're bombarded with thousands upon thousands of marketing messages every single day.

Part of our worship is an active expression that every desire is answered in Jesus and what He has done. The question in this verse is rhetorical and reminds us that Jesus is truly the only one we do have in heaven and the response is a way to gently lead our heart toward the one who truly meets every longing and satisfies every desire. Jesus is really that good!

RESPONSE

? Is there a song or a particular lyric we're singing this week that expresses your desire for Jesus?

? What are some things this week that reminded you that our world desires so many things other than Jesus?

PRAYER

God in heaven, we say that when our desires our focused on You we find You to be faithful and fulfilling. Thank You for creating a longing within us for who You are and thank You that our longings find their purpose in You. Jesus, as we gather to worship this week would our church come with a deep desire to meet with You, to celebrate You and to follow You. Amen.

PSALM 78:72

> *"And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them.*

REFLECTION

Before David is anointed as king, before David is known as the man after God's own heart, before David gives voice to the church's worship for the next thousand generations, before all of it David is a man with integrity of heart and skillful hands. God sees this in David and calls him to shepherd and lead His people.

The need for people to be shepherded and led continues on. This week our church will come and we need to care-fully, lovingly, pastorally shepherd them as we follow Jesus together. We need to point them to the grace, mercy, faithfulness, forgiveness and goodness of God as we lead them.

Leadership is never about the person on the platform. Leadership is always about the one we are leading people to - Jesus. Shepherding is always about stewardship of the flock for the sake of Jesus the great shepherd. May we be found to have integrity of heart and skillful hands as we lead our church!

RESPONSE

- ? How can something like integrity of heart be measured? Is it possible?
- ? Do you find it difficult to balance heart and hands in your position on the worship team?
- ? How can skillful hands be part of shepherding and leading our church in worship?

PRAYER

God our great shepherd, give us opportunity this week to remember the incredible privilege we have to shepherd and lead Your people through worship. Thank You for calling us to be part of this flock and for the calling to be people of integrity and skill. Remind us this week that both integrity of heart and skillful hands are important as we shepherd and lead your people and show us how we are growing together to be more like Jesus as we follow You together. Amen.

PSALM 84:4

> *"Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.*

REFLECTION

Gathering together as the church to worship is something we're invited to do, something we're instructed to do and something we know to be beneficial but at the end of the day it is up to us to choose to both attend and participate in the worship service. There's no shortage of options when it comes to how people can spend their time but the decision to join together with the church for worship is never time misspent.

We know that the full benefit of dwelling in the house of God won't be seen or known on this side of heaven but it is the church of Jesus together around the world who are now God's temple and when we join together it is God who dwells among the praises of His people.

Our response to the dwelling together with one another, to the dwellingwith- us by God and to the dwelling that is to come is simple - praise! We celebrate, honour, worship and adore God when we dwell in His house. This week let's remember the importance of worship as we are together, invite as many as possible to join and praise God together in His house.

RESPONSE

? Can you remember a time when the decision to be in church ended up in a blessing for you?

? How are you aware of the way God dwells among His people when we gather together to praise Him?

PRAYER

God of all blessings, we say that when we gather together this week with our church we are gathering as Your people in Your house. We remember the privilege and the honour that it is to know that when we come to worship You, You promise to dwell among Your people. So we say now that our response when we are together is to praise You, to worship You, to celebrate You and to adore You so that many more would come and dwell in Your house forever. Amen.

PSALM 86:12-13

> *"I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead.*

REFLECTION

No matter how many years we have left to live on this earth we can never, ever, ever get to the bottom of the depths of the goodness of God. We could never sing every song that tells of His goodness. We could never express all the praise that He deserves. Even if every day of the rest of our lives were spent praising God with our whole hearts the truth is that our forever future is to glorify His name!

When we remember how God has delivered us, what He has delivered us from and what He's invited us to our response is to praise and glorify Him for what He has done. His love toward us is great and so our response of praise to Him should be great as well!

This week when we gather as a church it will be another chance for us to praise God with our whole hearts together and to be reminded that we'll glorify God's name together forever. We get to help remind each other that the things God has delivered us from are not our reality anymore and that the great love of God toward us rescues people from every depth.

RESPONSE

- What does it mean for our praise of God to be with our whole heart?
- Are you aware of the depths that God has rescued you from and does that impact how you praise God?
- Does the perspective of glorifying God's name forever impact how you worship God now?

PRAYER

God who delivers and saves, we say together that our desire is to praise You with our whole heart today, this weekend, every day of our lives and into forever. We remember how You have delivered us from the depths, saved us from the dead and given us new life because of what Jesus has done. We remember Your great love and we want our praise to demonstrate how amazing You are. Please deliver and rescue people this weekend as we gather with our church to worship You! Amen.

PSALM 96:1-4

> *"Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.*

REFLECTION

God has given us a new song to sing and when we allow our praise to be what people hear in our lives we get to demonstrate how God has saved us, how He's deserving of all glory from all people and how His great works are on display throughout history. The song we sing with our lives tell other people that God is worthy of the praise we give and invites them to join their song with ours. A new song of praise that continues around the whole world.

Scripture speaks often of new songs as a way we can show that the change in our life is from God and what He has done. Some of those new songs are meant to be sung by you and you alone, some new songs are written and become anthems for the church around the world and across generations. Don't shy away from the new song God is giving to you. Sing it to Him!

The invitation for the whole earth to sing these new songs reminds us that we are not alone in our journey with Christ and that the community of faith in every country at every time is given new songs to sing because God is continually at work, changing lives and building His kingdom. Our new songs give words to what God is doing and also give praise to Him for what He does.

RESPONSE

? Have you ever thought of singing a new song to the Lord as a way to demonstrate how He has changed your life?

? How is your faith encouraged when you think about the church around the world being part of the body of Christ?

? What do you think about the idea of writing new songs for the church to sing?

PRAYER

God of every new song, we remember and acknowledge how You've changed everything for us. We say that You have saved us, redeemed us, rescued us, set us free and You've given us a new song to sing for the rest of our lives. Thank You! We can't sing loud enough, we could never sing enough songs to tell of all the incredible things You've done. Would the songs that we sing together with our church declare and demonstrate that You are most worthy of praise. Amen.

PSALM 98:4-5

> *"Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth,*
> *burst into jubilant song with music;*
> *make music to the Lord with the harp,*
> *with the harp and the sound of singing,*

REFLECTION

The invitation to worship is extended to every person in every place at every time. All the earth can join in this great shout of joy to the Lord! Our worship is meant to be loud, passionate, faith-filled, expectant and worthy of the God of all joy. Christian worship is characterized by the volume and the jubilant praise of the people of God joining together to shout and sing loud because of what God has done.

Whether we are singing or playing instruments, the sound of our worship is meant to express something within us that can only come out through music. God has created every human to be musical and so music truly is a universal language of praise to God. No matter the language, no matter the form, no matter the style, music can be used to honour, worship, celebrate God in all the earth.

So whatever role you have to play on our team this week you are part of the great shout of joy that will give God worship in our church. We make music together as a way of inviting people here to join into the great song that can be sung all around the world.

RESPONSE

- ? Do you prefer to worship loud or quiet?
- ? How do you see your role as part of the worship team making music together?
- ? Can you think of a time when someone else's joy-filled worship inspired you to do the same?

PRAYER

God of joy, we want to sing and shout and celebrate You this weekend as we gather to worship. Thank You for Your church around the world and how she has been faithful in singing worship to You for thousands of years. Thank You that the jubilant songs of Your people continue to tell the incredible story of what You have done. We want the music we make this week to be played for You so that people in our church would shout for joy to You. Amen.

PSALM 99:9

> *"Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his holy mountain, for the Lord our God is holy.*

REFLECTION

The word "exalt" doesn't happen all that often in our modern vocabulary but the simplest definition is that it means to raise, to lift, to set at a higher level in terms of rank, power or authority. To exalt God means that we consciously acknowledge that He is higher than we are, higher than any other god, higher than any other power which may compete for our attention.

And when we exalt God we need to exalt to a place that is holy. That is, at such a high level that there is no other thing, person, name or power which can assume that same authority.

The exaltation of God is not about placing Him among the highest things in our life but it's about recognizing that He is holy and that there is no other worthy of the place in our lives which He rightfully deserves.

Because God is like no other, because He is holy, He deserves to be raised up to the highest level in our lives. We don't lift God a little bit, we lift Him all the way up - as high as we can! If we're going to go somewhere to worship Him we should go up a mountain because that describes how high He should be exalted. All the way up!

RESPONSE

? How can we exalt God all the way up this week to show that He is holy?

? Are there things in your life you know you are exalting or lifting up higher than God?

PRAYER

God who is worthy of all exaltation, we exalt You, to lift You higher than any other, remember together that You are holy. We say that there is none like You and there is none who deserves to be lifted higher than You. We want to do that with our church this week as we gather for worship. We want to to say that You are the one who is worthy of all praise, all power, all majesty, all honour and all worship forever and ever. God, be exalted in our praise so that everyone would know You are holy. Amen.

PSALM 100:2

> *Worship the Lord with gladness;*
> *come before him with joyful songs.*

REFLECTION

You may or may not feel like you are in control of many things in your life. Depending on your stage of life, your family circumstances, your work schedule or your financial obligations you may or may not have as much freedom as you'd like. That might have changed for you over time and it will probably change again in the future but we are all wrestling with the things which control us and making sure we give the right attention to the things we can control.

Regardless of our circumstances there is one thing we can all control in every situation, every circumstance and every day. Our attitude. We can choose to approach every situation (including our worship!) with any kind of attitude which seems appropriate to us in that moment. Psalm 100 invites (or perhaps instructs) us to choose to worship Jesus *with gladness*. We should choose an attitude of gladness and joy when we come before the Lord to worship.

Of course God hears and honors our worship when we are not glad and not joyful but remember that your attitude is at your control. When we come to worship Jesus with gladness we remember that He is the source of every good thing in our lives, that His mercy is unending and that His faithful love endures through every generation.

RESPONSE

- Do you feel like you are in control of many things in your life?
- Do you find it difficult to control your attitude?
- How does your perspective shift when you come to worship Jesus with gladness?

PRAYER

God of all joy, we remember with gladness that You invite us to worship You and love You with our whole being - heart, soul, mind and strength. Give us opportunity this week to worship You with gladness and to sing our songs to You with joy because of Your great love and mercy. Use us to lead Your people in worship that helps us to lift our eyes to You with hope, joy and gladness. Thank You that we can come before You with worship and bring our whole selves to You. Amen.

PSALM 116:17

> *"I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the Lord.*

REFLECTION

We don't have to really think about sacrifice very much and certainly not nearly as much as it was part of Israel's religious celebrations. Sacrifice and offerings were common expressions of worship to God and part of maintaining signification relationships both within the community and with God Himself.

Our sense now of sacrifice is that we are giving up something we are owed, losing out on something which we think is good or putting off something we deserve. All of these are true but we also remember that everything we have now and will ever have comes from God Himself. Any sacrifice we ever make comes out of what God has abundantly, generously, sacrificially given to us.

A simple expression of gratitude to Jesus from a sacrificial heart is lifted up as a beautiful act of praise to a God who is completely worthy of everything we have to give Him. We are free to call on Him and cry out with everything we need because our hearts are already in a place of gratitude, thankfulness and sacrifice. He deserves it all.

RESPONSE

- ? Is there something you've given up all at once or over time which was a real act of sacrifice for you?
- ? Do you normally think of the connection between sacrifice and gratitude?
- ? What is something you are thankful for right now that you know has come from God?

PRAYER

God who gives every perfect gift, we say thank You for how You provide above and beyond everything we need. We remember that sacrifice is first about our hearts and so we say from our hearts that we are grateful for who You are and what You have done for us. We remember the great gift of Jesus and how He has forgiven us, rescued us and given us new life and we say thank You! This week s we gather with our church we call on You because we need You. Hear us as we do this together. Amen.

PSALM 121:1-2

> *"I lift up my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.*

REFLECTION

There is such simple, profound beauty in the opening of this psalm which speaks to so much of what we do as worship leaders and as a worship team. When we gather together with our church to worship this weekend part of what we are doing is inviting people to lift their eyes away from the cares and concerns of their lives to see their Helper, their Maker, the Lord of heaven and earth.

Originally this psalm was a call and response with the leader calling out the first verse and the people responding in unison with the econd. As a worship team part of what we're doing is inviting people and reminding them that they have the opportunity to lift their eyes away from the things they may have been focusing on all week.

And we are also inviting the people to answer together and say yes, Jesus IS my help. He IS the Lord. He IS the one who has made all of heaven and earth and He IS worthy of my worship and worthy of my attention and worthy of my focus so today I'm choosing to lift my eyes to Him and give Him all of my worship.

RESPONSE

- ? Are there some things in your life that has been getting too much attention this week?
- ? Is it helpful to have people in your life who can invite you to lift your eyes again to see Jesus?
- ? How can we help our church worship this week in a way that helps them to see Jesus?

PRAYER

God who is our helper, we acknowledge that there are so many things in our lives which are begging for our attention and our affection and so many things we have given our focus to this week. We confess that our eyes have not been fixed on You like they should and we know that You have been with us in every one of those moments. We want our worship this weekend to be done in a way that celebrates Your presence and that You are Lord who has made all of heaven and earth. Remind us how to lead others to lift their eyes so we would all together see Jesus and give Him all of our worship this weekend. Amen.

PSALM 136:1

> *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.*

REFLECTION

We can search and scramble and explore the depths for reasons to give thanks and yet this verse is a beautiful reminder of this incredible simple reality - we ought to give thanks to God just because He is good. That's it. God is good and we give thanks. We don't need to rack our brains for reasons to be thankful when the profound eternal declaration of God's goodness is right in front of us. And so we give thanks.

How do we know God is good? We see His love and how it's endured from the very beginning of time. This endurance is not simply about a length of time, in the sense that His love has been constant and so it has just always been there, although that is entirely true. The endurance here is a committed, faithful, overcoming, strong and powerful love that is *fighting* for you. The love of God has endured through every difficulty, every struggle, every obstacle and by His love God proves Himself to be good.

So once we again we have the opportunity and the invitation to lead our church in worship and to give thanks together to our God because He is good. The songs we sing, the prays we pray, the very act of gathering itself is a reminder of the love of God enduring forever and how we have been changed by this love, now and forever.

RESPONSE

Take 30 seconds and remember the things in your life you should be thankful for. Go.

? How long is your list?

? What is one example of God's goodness in your life right now?

PRAYER

God of enduring love, we know that every good and perfect gift comes from You and that You are good in everything we do. We know that Your love has been enduring and constant and faithful and free since the very beginning of time. So we say together that we are thankful and we give thanks to You for who You are and what You have done. Would we know Your goodness and Your love this week as we gather with our church to worship You. Amen.

PSALM 139:16

> *"Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*

REFLECTION

God sees all things and knows all things but, even more than that, God ordains all things to be. Every single one of your days was set out by the Creator and Overseer of the whole universe. His plans for you are good because He cherishes you and He sees each of your days from the very first to the very last.

So that thing you've been wrestling and struggling and fighting against even today, God sees it and He knows it. He's ordained this day for you and He's written it in His book. That thing you're celebrating and rejoicing about and thanking God for, God sees that too and He knows it. He's ordained this and before it ever came to be He knew about it.

We have nothing to hide from God and in the seeing and knowing and ordaining He does everything He can to invite you into His presence because He cherishes you and He wants to hear your worship and your rejoicing and your struggling and your fighting. So in the day we have today that's been ordained by God we have the amazing opportunity to discover and uncover what God has written in His book.

RESPONSE

- Does it excite you or inspire you or concern you that God has ordained all of your days?
- Can you recognize God at work in your life even today?
- How does knowing that God sees you and knows you change how you worship Him?

PRAYER

God of all of our days, we recognize You as the one who knows and sees every single one of our days. We know that You formed us and You have ordained good things for us before we were even born. Just like Your eyes see us we want to see You at work in our lives every single day whether we are struggling or fighting or celebrating. We continue to worship You and say that You are the one who writes every one of our days in Your book. Amen.

PSALM 150:2

> *Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.*

REFLECTION

Praising God is always an invitation and an instruction. Praise is a choice and a command. Praise is a response to revelation. When the hearts of people who love Jesus are focused on God and we remember His power and His greatness we will naturally turn to praise - because He's worthy and because we want to.

God's power is unlike any other power we have ever known. From the dawn of creation to what we see all around us, God's power is on display so that we are without excuse. Kingdoms rise and fall, nations come and go, strength withers and great leaders fail but the power of God will never cease.

In the same way, God's greatness is unmatched by anything we might ever call "great" in all of human history. No person, no discovery, no achievement comes close to the greatness that is inherent in the identity and activity of God. Whatever you can point to as the greatest thing in your life, God's greatness surpasses that.

RESPONSE

- Do you have a story of God's power of greatness in your own life?
- How can we help our church choose to praise this weekend as a response to the power and greatness of God?
- What happens in your life when you respond to the invitation to praise God for who He is and what He's done?

PRAYER

God of power and surpassing greatness, we remember how You have shown Your power through creation, through Your covenant of love and protection, through Your miracles and through Your salvation through Jesus. We choose today to praise You and we say that we want to lead our church to praise You this weekend as we gather for worship. Thank You for the invitation to praise You because of Your power and greatness. We do this so that Jesus will be celebrated and that His greatness would be seen. Amen.

ISAIAH 6:1

> *In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple.*

REFLECTION

The glimpse Isaiah gets of who God is and how exalted He is in this moment and for all eternity is what spurs him on to respond with a yes to the call God gives him. “Here I am, Lord, send me!” comes only after seeing the majesty and the glory of God seated on His throne.

Our response to what God is calling us to do must come first from a glimpse of the glory and majesty of God so that the fuel for our calling is always who God is and not what we bring to the table by saying yes. Our devotion to God and our work on His behalf for the sake of His kingdom will be sustained only as much as we are grounded and rooted in the reality of who God is.

Part of our worship individually and corporately is to fuel again the fire of devotion and mission because God is seated on His throne, high and exalted, and we are invited to come close and to worship Him. We get to see again a glimpse of our God so that we can continue to say “Here I am, Lord!”

RESPONSE

- ? Have you ever had the sense that God has given you a calling to serve Him in a specific way?
- ? How do you nurture your own personal relationship with God?
- ? Have you ever thought how you would respond to invitation like Isaiah received after he saw God’s glory and greatness fill the temple?

PRAYER

God of all glory, we want to see you seated on your throne just like Isaiah did. Would our worship together as a church be worthy of how high and exalted You are and would Your glory and presence fill our lives and this place just like the train of Your robe fills the temple of heaven. Remind us that You are on Your throne, all authority is Yours and You are in complete control. Give us faith to say yes to the lives You are calling us to live. Amen.

MATTHEW 2:1-2

> *"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."*

REFLECTION

Part of the Christmas story so familiar that we might as well glaze over when we read these words and yet we do at the risk of missing a beautiful image of devotion, seeking, worship and fulfillment found in Jesus. We have Magi (maybe three kings but certainly coming from the east!) who are convinced that the star they have seen in the sky represents something significant, something worth a journey and bringing gifts.

They are committed to finding the one who has been born, even asking other people where he can be found. There is a commitment in the direction of seeking out this new baby so that they can worship him. They bring gifts, they bring their adoration and they bring their recognition that he is a special baby that many generations have been waiting for.

Ultimately they find Jesus and their devotion, seeking and worship are fulfilled in Jesus. They were right to be devoted to this new king because He is the King above all kings. They were right to seek Him because He is the one who has come to save His people from their sins. They were right to worship Him because He is Emmanuel, God with us.

RESPONSE

? Are there parts of the Christmas story that have become so familiar to you that they've lost their significance?

? Do you have your own story of devotion, seeking and worship that led you to meeting Jesus?

? How can we help our church bring their gifts to Jesus this weekend?

PRAYER

God who is with us, we remember the story of the Magi and we are inspired by their devotion and how they sought for the one they were looking for. We are grateful that they found Jesus and brought Him their gifts and that they story is captured forever in scripture. Thank You that we can come to worship You together just the way those wise men did over 2000 years ago. Amen.

MATTHEW 16:24

> *"Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."*

REFLECTION

To be a disciple of Jesus simply means that we have decided to follow Jesus and to pattern our lives after His. Every rabbi has disciples and every disciple has a rabbi. The uniqueness of Christian discipleship is that we are called to be disciples who become disciple-makers of Jesus instead of becoming rabbis with our own disciples. The life of a disciple of Jesus is marked by a denial of ourselves and a self-sacrificial following of Jesus.

Part of our worship is an admission of our willingness to place Jesus at the very center of our lives and to say that everything we do and everything we are is focused on following Jesus. Our worship says that Jesus is worthy of our following and our efforts are placed in active denial of the desires we have for our own lives.

The result of a disciple faithfully following Jesus for a lifetime is a legacy of other disciples of Jesus who together are denying themselves for the sake of the rabbi who is better than anything we would ever want for ourselves. Our worship of Jesus celebrates this truth and helps to reshape and reorient our priorities.

RESPONSE

- ? Can you think of something in your life that you have actively denied since you decided to follow Jesus?
- ? What does it look like for you to take up your cross as you follow Jesus?
- ? Can you see how your life is helping to make other disciples of Jesus?

PRAYER

God who is worth it all, we confess that denying ourselves is not our first or second or third desire but we say that we want Jesus more than any other thing that we would follow. Jesus we have not always denied ourselves as we follow You but help show us how we can do that so that others would become Your disciples. Help us reshape and reorient our hearts this weekend as we gather to worship with our church. We want to follow You always. Amen.

JOHN 4:23-24

> *"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the 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."*

REFLECTION

One of the few direct conversations Jesus has about worship happens not with religious leaders or his disciples but with a Samaritan woman who is doing her best to take care of her basic needs, gathering water at the least ideal time of day. Jesus tells her (and tells all of us thanks to this conversation being recorded by John) that God the Father is seeking a certain kind of worshiper and a certain kind of worship.

The Father is seeking the kind of worshiper who worships in a certain way, worships who worship the Father in Spirit and truth. Worshipers who direct their worship directly to God the Father and to nobody else. Worshipers who acknowledge that worship is more than the physical and engages the Spirit. Worshipers who measure their worship by the integrity and truth of God's word and of God's ultimate truth, Jesus himself.

Knowing that God the Father is seeking certain kinds of worshipers who worship in a particular way (note that this has nothing to do with musical style or volume or location) should impact every moment of every day but particularly our times when we gather together for corporate worship. As people who lead other people in worship we must participate in this kind of worship and invite others to do the same.

RESPONSE

? Have you ever thought of this idea that God the Father is seeking certain kinds of worshipers and a certain kind of worship?

? What does it mean to worship in Spirit and truth?

? How can you help lead this kind of worship when our church gathers together?

PRAYER

God our Father, we say together that we want our worship directed toward You and You alone. You are worthy of all of our worship and we respond now together by saying there is no other god beside You. Spirit of God, receive our worship and remind us that You are present as we worship together. Jesus, You are the way, the truth and the life and we want our worship to celebrate You as the King above all kings. Amen.

JOHN 8:54

> *Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.*

REFLECTION

Glory is a big deal to Jesus and so glory should be a big deal to us. Glory is why football is played in huge stadiums and shown on TV around the world. Glory is about attention and fanfare and recognition. Glory is done in public with gusto. Glory is meant to engage the recognition of the ones who are not paying attention so that they also give glory to the object of your adoration.

For the Christian, glory is about Jesus and how we celebrate - that means BIG worship! - Jesus outwardly reflects how we feel about him inwardly. God the Father glorifies Jesus and so we respond in a similar way and say that Jesus and Jesus alone is worthy of all of our glory and all of our adoration. We celebrate Jesus big because there's nobody else in the entire universe who deserves the glory Jesus gets.

Glory and celebration of Jesus means that we should be passionate, we should sing loud, we should give it all we've got so that others around us are encouraged to give glory to Jesus as well. Ultimately we want the glory of Jesus to be seen by others so that they would join in the great celebration. In the end, glory is the goal and Jesus is the one we're going after.

RESPONSE

? Do you find it easy or difficult to give glory publicly to Jesus?

? Can you think of a time when someone else's worship of Jesus impacted your life?

PRAYER

God of all glory, we say that You are the one worthy of all of our worship and all of our celebration. Jesus, You are the one who is glorified by the Father and so we want to join in with this glory so that many more would join in as well. Help us this weekend to lead our church in worship that glorifies You and celebrates all that You are. Jesus, You deserve it all! Amen.

JOHN 12:28-30

> *"Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine."*

REFLECTION

Sometimes the idea of giving Jesus glory and celebrating big in our worship is misrepresented as a desire for God's ego to be stroked and for His people to simply do His bidding so that somehow He'll be more God-ish as we give Him glory. We're reminded here very clearly with the direct words of Jesus that the reason Jesus is glorified is for the benefit of the people who are around us, not so that Jesus is somehow puffed up and made to feel good.

Public glory results in more glory. Public worship results in more worship. Public celebration results in more celebration. When Jesus is the subject and object of our glory it encourages and causes others around us to turn their glory and their worship and their celebration to Jesus as well.

Regardless if a public worship gathering is a few, a few hundred or a few thousand, our collective focus together is for Jesus to be celebrated and for our voices to give Him glory - not for the benefit of Jesus but for the benefit of others who are gathered and those who are yet to come.

RESPONSE

? Do you ever feel like worship is just about puffing up God's ego?

? How can we lead our church in giving glory to Jesus for the benefit of others this weekend?

? How do you personally feel about celebrating Jesus with big worship?

PRAYER

God whose name is glorified forever, we want Jesus to be the focus of our glory and our celebration this weekend as we gather together with our church to worship You. We pray that as we glorify Jesus there would be a benefit for others who are there with us, that they also would glorify Jesus and celebrate Him with their worship. Help us to lead our church in worship that is focused on Jesus and glorifies Him in the way that He deserves. Amen.

JOHN 15:8

> *"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*

REFLECTION

We've talked about this idea of glory before and it's a theme that will continue to be associated with worship, worship services and worship leaders. The glory of God is not dependent or reflect by the attendance of your services, the lights on your stage, the volume of your guitars but ultimately by how you and your church live out your faith every moment of every day.

To be a disciple of Jesus for the glory of God the Father means that we are driven by a desire to know Jesus and to see His kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. In one sense all we can be responsible for is our own personal discipleship and yet in our role as worship leaders (or leaders in general) we get to help point our whole church in an orientation that leads them to celebrate and follow Jesus.

The fruit of our ministry can take many forms - church growth, people meeting Jesus, baptisms, all great things! - and chief among those is the personal ministry that happens in our own lives away from the platform. Our own discipleship and how we personally follow Jesus will be the fruit that will bring God much glory.

RESPONSE

- ? What are some things you think about when you hear people talk about God's glory?
- ? How do you invest in your own personal relationship with Jesus?
- ? What is some of this fruit that Jesus is talking about in this verse?

PRAYER

God our Father, we want to be people who are focused on Your glory and who see much fruit for Your kingdom. We recognize that our first calling is to be disciples of Jesus, following You closely and hearing Your voice. Thank You for the privilege and the opportunity to be known first as Your disciples and that Your Spirit is growing fruit in our lives and in our church. Keep our hearts focused on You and allow us to see Your glory grow more and more in our church. Amen.

ACTS 16:25-26

> *"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose.*

REFLECTION

I don't have all the answers and I can't explain everything going on in this scene but all I know when I read this story is that there is power in our worship. Something about the focused praise of Paul and Silas moved the hand of God in such a way that led to their freedom.

Could God has shaken the foundations of the prison without their worship? Of course. God can do anything He wants. Would God have done that if they hadn't worshipped? We'll never know. But what we DO know is that still in prison here are Paul and Silas calling out to God to rescue them and that's exactly what He did.

And God doesn't stop with them. Chains on every person come loose! Capture that picture in your mind as you get ready to lead your church in worship this weekend. The praise of some can lead to freedom for all. Focus your praise on God just like Paul and Silas and ask God to set free the ones in your church who need their chains removed.

RESPONSE

? How have you seen God's power on display through worship?

? Do you have a "shake the foundations" story in a way that God has worked in your life?

? How can we lead our church to pray and worship in a way that leads to freedom?

PRAYER

God of all freedom, we know that You love to set captives free and You invite Your people to be part of that through prayer and through worship. We know that freedom is not only about prisoners set free but this weekend we say that we want to see You move in such a way that foundations would be shaken, chains would be broken and people in our own church would be set free. Remind us that all power and glory are Yours as we come before You on behalf of our church seeking freedom. Amen.

ROMANS 12:1

> *"Therefore, 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.*

REFLECTION

This is likely one of the most quoted verses when it comes to worship and perhaps one that is most often misused to downplay the importance of musical worship. While we can certainly say that all of our worship is not encompassed through singing and music we of course recognize that music and singing together as a church is one of the vital ways we express our worship to God.

This verse helps reset our entire lives - not just our singing - to be lived primarily in view of God's mercy. Sometimes the thrust of this verse is on what we do ("offer your bodies as a living sacrifice") but Paul's urging is to consider first God's mercy. Because of the life, death and resurrection of Christ we are now called together as brothers and sisters and given the privilege of offering our bodies as living sacrifices, as an offering of worships that is pleasing to God.

The worship in this verse is not as much about what we do as it is about what God has done and the life that He now invites us to live. A life lived as a living sacrifice - including our musical worship, how we treat our spouse, how we love our neighbours, how we deal ethically in our business - is all about living in view of God's mercy. Only with that right perspective can we offer true and proper worship to God.

RESPONSE

? Have you recently considered God's mercy and what it means in your life?

? How do you actually live your life as a living sacrifice?

? How can our worship this weekend as a church be true and proper worship to God?

PRAYER

Merciful God, we remember that the life we live in view of Your mercy is a gift and we say thank You. We say thank You for the life of Jesus, we say thank You that He has saved us and we say thank You that now You invite us together as brothers and sisters to worship You. Our prayer is that our lives would be holy and pleasing to You and that the worship we offer would be true and proper. Help us to accomplish this for Your sake. Amen.

ROMANS 15:5

> *"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

REFLECTION

Sometimes we think of glory only as loud singing or strong preaching or lives surrendered or people baptized (and all those things are true!) but we're reminded here that also how we think is a way that we can glorify God. We know this makes sense since how we behave is impacted by what we believe but our desire to glorify God is as much about our attitude as it is about our actions.

The invitation here in this passage is that we together would have one voice (that's what we do when we sing in our worship services) and also one mind to glorify God together. Of course this isn't about being brainwashed into some mindless collective but instead we acknowledge that our attitude impacts our behaviour and ultimately results in God being glorified.

Interesting that this verse starts with a reminder that God gives endurance and encouragement because He knows we will need this as we pray for our attitude and for our minds and for the way we treat each other. This is not easy and it will not happen overnight but we continue to long for God's glory because we love Jesus and we love one another.

RESPONSE

? Is it easier for you to think about God being glorified with your actions or your attitude?

? Have you been at a place in your life when you needed endurance and encouragement so that God could change your attitude?

? What are some ways we can have "one mind and one voice" to glorify God together?

PRAYER

God who gives endurance and encouragement, we say together that we do want to glorify You together with one mind and one voice. Help us this weekend to lead our church in worship so that they would sing together with one voice and give You praise. Help us also to have one mind and an attitude like that of Jesus. We want You to receive all of the glory through our songs, through our lives and also through our attitudes. We need Your help so that this will happen and we are thankful for your encouragement as we do this. Amen.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:26

> *"What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.*

REFLECTION

The corporate gathering of the church is this strange animal where everyone brings 100% of who they are and we are 100% committed to what God is doing in our midst. This collective of individuals following Jesus together means we change, we adapt, we grow and we develop over time. What our church looks like today probably doesn't look like it was 10 or 50 years ago and 10 or 50 years from now we'll look different again because together we are being built up by what God is doing among us.

Pastors and elders are given a unique responsibility as far as the content of the worship service but each of us are expected as brothers and sisters to come together in full participation so that we can each give and receive what God is doing among us. We sing, we instruct, we share about what God has been speaking to us and we understand together how to live in light of that.

The goal ultimately is that we may be built up - grow in numbers, yes, but also grow in character and in maturity and in depth of our love for Jesus so that as we continue to gather together and we continue to bring 100% of who we are the building up of the church continually happens. For 2000 years this is the only way the church has continued on and this pattern of gathering together and building up is what will sustain the church in the years ahead.

RESPONSE

- ? Can you recognize how you've been built up in your own life by coming together to worship services?
- ? Have you thought before about how you are contributing to the building up of our church through your participation in our worship services?
- ? What are you praying our church is built up to over the next few years?

PRAYER

God our Father, You have invited us into Your family and we now have the privilege to call each brothers and sisters. This is only because of what Jesus has done for us and we say thank You for the privilege and honour of being part of Your family. We want to be built up together as a family in a way that glorifies You and displays how You are at work in our church so remind us that when we come together we are invited to bring everything we are and to participate fully in what you are doing. God, please continue to build us up so that we grow both in numbers and in depth of how we love You. Amen.

GALATIANS 5:16-18

> *"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

REFLECTION

This conflict between flesh and spirit is a lifelong struggle and ultimately will never end this side of heaven. Our spirit is made new when we meet Jesus and as we follow Jesus we are led by the Spirit so that the desires of our flesh no longer need to be satisfied. What the Spirit desires for us is in conflict with what our flesh wants but we do have the opportunity to gratify the desires of either the flesh or the Spirit.

Worship is one of the strongest ways the desires of the Spirit can be gratified in our life. Corporate worship services are designed for us to put away the desires of the flesh and to focus everything that we have on Jesus and what He has done for us. We don't pretend that the flesh is no longer a real part of our existence but we affirm again that we are not under the law and that our desire is to follow Jesus.

Worship is for the glory of Jesus and for the sake of His name and yet there are also benefits in the life of the believer which are seen over time as we gratify the desires of the Spirit in our lives. Don't give in to the conflict and don't give in to the desires of the flesh. Not because you are under the law but because the desires of the Spirit are so much greater.

RESPONSE

? How have you grown to recognize when the desires of the flesh become more present in your life?

? Have you had times in worship services where you've recognized the desires of the Spirit and how to gratify those?

? What does it mean to be led by the Spirit and not by the law?

PRAYER

God who has saved us, we remember that the desires of our flesh point to our need for You and we recognize with overflowing gratitude that we are no longer subject to our fleshly desires and we are no longer under the law but we've been rescued and saved by You to now live and be led by the Spirit. Open our eyes to show us how to walk by the Spirit and how to gratify the desires of the Spirit. Keep us from the desires of our flesh and strengthen us so that we will not gratify its desires. Show us how to be led by the Spirit more and more every day of our lives. Amen.

EPHESIANS 2:6-7

"And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

REFLECTION

Perspective is a powerful thing which can shift so much about our reality. These verses help remind us that our perspective should be as sons and daughters of the King who have been raised up with Christ and seated now with Him. We get to see our lives and everything we are from the now-andnot- yet heavenly realm perspective that is as much a part of our reality as the room we are in right now.

The opportunity for God to display His grace and His kindness through our perspective-shifted lives is one we have to take seriously as we gather together with our church for worship. If we worship and lead worship from this kind of perspective we will see God do incredible things in our church this weekend.

As we lead people in worship this weekend part of what we do is to help shift their perspective. We get to remind them that what they see in the here and now is not all there is to life and that a shift in perspective can alter our entire reality.

RESPONSE

? What do you remember about the time in your life when you said yes to following Jesus?

? What has changed about your perspective as you've grown as a disciple of Christ?

? How have you seen the incomparable riches of God's grace in the lives of people around you?

PRAYER

God of all grace, we remember that You have poured out Your incomparable riches of grace on us through Christ and You have saved us. You have set us free and seated us with Jesus in the heavenly realms. We confess that our perspective often doesn't reflect this reality so we ask that You would give us eyes to see You as You are and how You see us. We want Your grace and kindness to be on display through our lives this weekend as we worship so that more and more people would be raised to life in Christ. Amen.

PHILIPPIANS 3:7-8

> *"But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.*

REFLECTION

As we gather for worship this weekend part of our declaration of praise is that Jesus is better anything that we have ever known or will ever come to know in this life. When we lift our voices together and celebrate our Saviour there is part of our celebration which is an affirmation that we would give everything we have in exchange for the privilege of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord.

Depending on the exact circumstances it may not be likely that you will literally be called to give up everything - or even anything - for the sake of knowing Christ but there is an aspect to our worship as we exalt Jesus that simply says He is better than life itself. Should the day ever come when we are called to give up anything - or even everything - for the sake of Christ we must remember in those moments that the satisfaction we have in Jesus now is just the same as the satisfaction we will have then.

And whatever we gain we have the opportunity to consider those as losses for the sake of Christ if the thing that is gained attempts in any way to be better than everything we have in Christ. Worship helps us to remember the supreme exaltation of Christ and gives us the opportunity to declare that together.

RESPONSE

- ? Have you considered before that part of our worship gatherings are meant to declare the supreme exaltation of Jesus in our lives?
- ? Has there ever been a time when you lost anything for the sake of Christ?

PRAYER

God who gives every good and perfect gift, we say together that there is nothing we have in this life that can compare to what we have in Christ and because of what Jesus has done for us. Give us the faith to say that we are willing to give up all things for the sake of Christ and give us the courage to declare together this weekend as we worship that Jesus is the best thing we could ever gain. Use us as we lead our church in worship to celebrate and exalt Jesus above all things. Amen.

COLOSSIANS 3:16

> *"Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.*

REFLECTION

We have so much great stuff wrapped up in this one verse as it relates to corporate worship! First the reminder the importance of the message of Christ (the gospel itself) to be so present in our own lives and in our gatherings that it would be said it dwells among us richly. What a beautiful picture. The gospel should inform and impact what we do and how we do it when we gather to worship.

Of course our songs take many forms and have always done so. Whether it's the poetry of psalms, theology of hymns, spontaneity of songs from the Spirit the end result is that we would teach and admonish one another and that gratitude in our hearts would be overflowing as we gather together to worship.

As we gather for worship this weekend let's remember the encouragement and the opportunity for us to do this with gratitude rather than grumbling. We're reminded in this verse hat how we worship is almost as important as the content of our worship services and yet the gospel is the primary focus when it comes to content.

RESPONSE

- ? Do you prefer to worship with psalms (songs that are more poetic), hymns (songs that are more theological) or songs from the Spirit (songs that are more spontaneous)?
- ? How can we together allow the message of Christ to dwell among us richly?
- ? Are there times in your life when you have been taught and admonished through worship?

PRAYER

God of all wisdom, we say that it is our desire that the message of Christ would dwell among us richly. Would You grow our love for the gospel and our love for what You have done so that it would be said of us that this great news is the thing that marks our times of worship together. Gives us the opportunity this weekend to teach and be taught and to grow in wisdom as we worship together through song. Give us the gratitude we need to express our love for You and for what You are doing in our church. Amen.

1 TIMOTHY 1:17

> *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

REFLECTION

Such a beautifully simple yet powerfully earth-shattering reality laid out for us in this one sentence. Jesus is our King who will reign forever, who will never die, doing His unseen work at all times, who is the only Divine Reality and He is worth every recognition, every celebration, every ounce of our worship and praise. Not only in this moment right before us but in every moment that is to come for all eternity. Wow.

Our worship this weekend is part of this declaration that Jesus is unlike every other authority in our world - nobody else is this kind of king and nobody else is worthy of this kind of honour and glory we will give to Jesus together when we gather. Our music is only one small part of the way we express honour and glory to Jesus but the honour and glory need to be a big part of the music!

Our songs will point people to this reality of who Jesus is and will encourage them to declare together this truth about our great King. The voices of people lifted together will bring honour and glory to Jesus and we know this is only a moment in the forever enduring and eternal sound of praise Jesus deserves!

RESPONSE

- How does the reality that Jesus is eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God impact our worship this weekend?
- What does it look like for us to give Jesus all honour and glory in our worship services?
- What are some non-musical ways Jesus receives honour and glory in our lives?

PRAYER

God of all eternity, we confess together that You are our King, that You are eternal, immortal, invisible and the only God. We say together that our desire is for You to receive all honour and glory this weekend as we gather together with our church family to worship You. Remind us that You are the only King worthy of our praise and that there is no one else like You. Receive our worship now and forever. Amen.

HEBREWS 10:19-22

> *"Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

REFLECTION

As we gather to worship this weekend with our church one of the issues which demands our highest attention is the *how* and the *why* of what we do. How we get to worship and why we get to worship are crucial understandings and if we get this wrong we run the risk of causing serious damage and leading to not only misguided worship but idolatry.

How we worship is by drawing near to God with the assurance of faith, with hearts cleansed and with purity of new life. We sing, we pray, we lift our hands and we are together in the presence of God without the presence of fear or worry or the duty of performance.

Why we worship is simply and solely because of Jesus, His blood shed for us and how He has made a way to restore the relationship between us and God the Father. There is no other mediator between humanity and God other than Jesus Himself and it is this life, death and resurrection of Jesus that allows our worship to happen.

There is no other *how* and there is no other *why*. Thank God for both and the privilege we have to worship Him together with our church this week.

RESPONSE

? Can you remember a time of worship when it was clear that you were drawing near to the presence of God?

? How can we remind our church of the full assurance our faith brings when we worship?

? What songs help encourage our church to remember that what Jesus has done is the *why* of our worship?

PRAYER

God who is Most Holy, we remember the blood of Jesus our Saviour and that we are now able to draw near to Your presence only because of what He has done. We come with full assurance because of the faith that You have given us and we come to know Your presence, to say thank You for what You have done. We look to Jesus alone as the great priest and we remember that He has cleansed us and made us pure. Give us the strength and grace we need to lead our church as we together draw near to You in worship. Amen.

HEBREWS 12:28-29

> *"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."*

REFLECTION

Whatever your starting point is when it comes to worship, this verse helps reshape and reset everything about what we do. Start at the end - "God is a consuming fire." Without the grace and the mercy of Jesus this means everything in His presence is burnt to a crisp and reduced to nothing.. and yet there's Jesus!

Because of Jesus we know we *can* worship God acceptably and still we are encouraged to do so with reverence and awe, not flippantly or casually or in a way that reduces anything about who God is. Remember that He is a consuming fire!

And because of Jesus we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Our worship is partly in response to this new life we have been given and this new kind of living we've been called into, and so we worship with reverence and awe to show our gratitude and our thankfulness for what we have been given. Part of our role as worship leaders is to display and demonstrate this unshakeable kingdom while also inviting people into acceptable worship that reveres and honours our all-consuming God.

RESPONSE

- ? Have you ever considered what it means to worship God acceptably?
- ? Can you describe some moments where you were filled with reverence and awe for who God is?
- ? What does it mean for you to be part of a kingdom that cannot be shaken?

PRAYER

God of the unshakeable kingdom, we lay everything before You and we say that our desire is for our church to worship you this weekend with reverence and awe. We want people to recognize who You are and what You have done for them and we want to proclaim together that we are part of this kingdom that cannot be shaken. Accept our worship as we gather so that more and more people would know You and Your kingdom. Amen.

HEBREWS 13:15

> *"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.*

REFLECTION

Whenever we see a *therefore* in scripture it should cause our ears to perk up a little. Very early in my faith a wise friend gave me a little saying, "What's a *therefore* there for?" Why is this therefore word in the passage and what is it doing?

We need the whole context but right in this verse the *therefore* is there for the purpose of reminding us that our praise is a sacrifice which can be offered continually through Jesus. Jesus is the focus of this verse and is the only reason the praise described in the second half of this verse can be described.

Through Jesus and because of Jesus we can continually - not only on Sunday morning, not only when circumstances are right, not only when things go our way - offer praise to God. And this praise should be offered as a sacrifice to Him, in a way that honours God and displays His value and His worth. So as our voices loudly celebrate the name of Jesus that becomes a declaration of celebration that honours God and tells others about how incredible He is and how worthy He is of our praise. We have the amazing privilege to this continually - even this weekend with our church! - only because of what Jesus has done.

RESPONSE

- ? What are some ways we can continually offer praise to God?
- ? Do you find it easy or difficult to worship God away from church?
- ? Does worship ever feel like a sacrifice for you?

PRAYER

God who is worthy of all praise, we want to continually offer you praise and worship as a way to demonstrate how incredible You are and we want to do that especially this weekend when we gather with our church. We want the lips of every person who comes to our services to openly profess Your name, the name of Jesus through whom we have the opportunity to do this. Make our praise a sacrifice that speaks of how amazing You are and how worthy You are of all of our worship. Amen.

JAMES 5:13

> *Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.*

REFLECTION

Sometimes we make things too complicated and look for complex solutions before we remember the simple invitations here in this verse. Sometimes when we try to get out of trouble we're looking for seven steps to sanity or ten tricks to freedom or any other combination of things to do when instead God's very own word says that when we're in trouble, let's pray. Overly simple but overwhelmingly simplifying. Let them pray.

And when we're happy we can celebrate in all kinds of ways that allow our happiness to find all kinds of expression but again right here in God's very own word we see that the response to happiness is let them sing songs of praise. In trouble, let them pray and in happiness, let them sing.

This weekend when we gather together with our church there will be people who are in deep, over-their-head, nowhere-left-to-turn, soulcrushing trouble and we create an environment to let them pray. There will also be floating-on-cloud-nine, joy-filled, light-shining happy people and we need to lead them to sing songs of praise. In trouble and in happiness we all have our part to play in ways that expresses and affirms our dependance and reliance on a God who saves and a God who sustains.

RESPONSE

- When you are in trouble what are all the different ways you look to get out of it?
- When you are happy what are some of the ways you look to celebrate?
- How can we help lead worship when we know there are people in trouble and people who are happy gathering this weekend for our services?

PRAYER

God who hears every prayer, we acknowledge that some on our own team and some in our own church are in trouble right now and so we pray together knowing that You can rescue and save. We also know that there are some on our team and some in our church who are very happy and so we are thankful that we have the opportunity to sing songs of praise together. In all things our desire is to glorify You because You are the God who saves those who are in trouble and You are the God who sustains those who are happy. Thank You for hearing both our prayers and our songs. Amen.

1 PETER 2:9

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

REFLECTION

One thing we must never get out of order is how our worship happens. God initiates, we respond. Always. We can never get that mixed up and believe that our worship somehow causes God to do something in us. God initiates, we respond.

We see here that we are a chosen people - chosen by God, called by God, gathered by God and brought in by God to be part of His family. We are a royal priesthood - ordained by God, set apart by God to do the holy work of God He has created us to do. We are a holy nation - not first by ethnic heritage or birthplace but a global nation set apart to demonstrate the goodness and grace of our God. We are God's special possession - owned by God, valued by God, protected and treasured by God because we belong to Him.

And then.. the response. God initiates all that we are and then we respond by declaring His praises. We sing, we shout, we celebrate, we live to the glory of God because we are chosen, called, gathered, ordained, set apart, owned, valued and treasured by a God who dwells in wonderful light and invites us to be part of the work He is doing. God initiates, we respond. Never the other way.

RESPONSE

- How would the worship of our church change if we truly saw ourselves as this verse describes us?
- What are the different ways we "declare the praises" of God?
- Can you recognize how God has called you out of darkness into wonderful light?

PRAYER

God of wonderful light, we recognize that You have chosen us and called us, ordained us and set us apart, treasured us and protected us so that now we can declare Your praises along with our church. Thank You for Jesus and how He gave Himself so that now we can be part of Your family. Thank You for bringing us from darkness to light, from death to life and for making us Your people. Help us to lead Your people this weekend in declaring Your praises so that many more would move from darkness to light by knowing Jesus. Amen.

REVELATION 4:11

> *"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."*

REFLECTION

Everything in our culture is competing for our attention and our affection in a way that demands an expression of worthiness. Celebrities want our attention and worthiness through headlines, products and brands want our attention and worthiness through dollars, the world wants our attention and worthiness through our time and our talents.

God reshapes the fundamental understanding of worthiness simply by being worthy because of who He is. There is no competition and there is no other who is worthy of the glory, honor and power we ascribe to God. No other has created all things, no other has the will to bring anything into existence out of nothing. God alone does that so God alone is worthy of it all.

No headline is great enough for God but God is worthy of every headline that brings attention to Him. No money can purchase what God does but God is worthy of every dollar being used for His glory. No time or talent can compare to God's power but God is worthy of all of our time and talent to be used for His name and His kingdom.

God is worthy. Period. Our worship gets to point hearts and lives toward this fundamental truth around which our entire lives can be oriented. What an incredible privilege we have this weekend to lead our church in this kind of worship.

RESPONSE

- What are some of the things in our culture which beg for your attention and affection?
- What are some of the ways that you give glory and honor to God?
- How can we lead our church this weekend to get a deeper understanding of the worthiness of God?

PRAYER

God who created all things, we want to say over and over again that You are worthy. God, You are worthy of all glory and honor and power and we want our whole lives to demonstrate that. We want everything we are and everything we have to be a demonstration of Your worthiness so that the whole world would know how great You are. God, begin with us here this weekend as we gather together to worship You and declare with glory and honor and power that You are worthy of it all! Amen.

REVELATION 5:9-10

> *"And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."*

REFLECTION

The emotional expression of praise found here in this song is just a glimpse of the eternity-changing impact of Jesus and what He has done for us. We can never forget the unbridled praise that comes from a life desperate for salvation which is found in Jesus and in Jesus alone.

Jesus alone is worthy, Jesus alone has purchased us, Jesus alone brings us from every trie and language, Jesus alone make us a kingdom and priests to serve our God, Jesus alone secures our eternal destiny so that we forever will reign with God.

I don't know about you but I can't wait to sing this song! I can't wait to pour out praises forever and ever to Jesus alone for what He has done. But I don't want to wait until heaven to do that!! I want to do it today.. and tomorrow.. and the day after. I want to do that this weekend when we worship with our church.

I want this song to fill my mouth and my heart for every day that I have left to live, both here on earth and in heaven. Jesus alone is worthy of this song for all of eternity and Jesus alone is worthy of this song in every moment of our lives here on earth.

RESPONSE

? Do you spend time dreaming about what heaven will be like?

? How does the reality of what Jesus has done change the way that you praise Him today?

? How can we lead our church to worship in a way that declares that Jesus alone is worthy?

PRAYER

God of all time, we say together that Jesus alone is worthy of all of our praise now and forever. Jesus alone is the Lamb who has taken away the sin of the world and because of Jesus we now belong to You. We thank You and we praise You for this truth! We want our songs this weekend to be full of this kind of praise so that our church would be focused on Jesus alone so that Jesus alone would be exalted and worshiped and celebrated in our church. Jesus, receive all of the glory because You alone deserve it all! Amen.

REVELATION 7:9-12

> *"And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"*

REFLECTION

It's sometimes - or often times! - easy to forget that our worship here on earth is simply joining in with the worship which is already and always happening right now in the throne room of heaven. We're not doing something which isn't already happening around the throne of God.

The great invitation and opportunity we have this weekend is not to invite God to come visit us in our worship but for us to join in with what is happening in God's presence even right now in this very moment. The song of salvation and worthiness, of praise and glory, of power and strength is happening by these angels, creatures and elders all around the throne of God and part of what we do is to join in with what's already happening.

Our call to worship is much less about the presence of God filling the place that we inhabit and much more about turning our hearts and minds to the place where God inhabits now and where praise is the eternal reality. In many ways our services this weekend are simply a glimpse of our future reality and should give people even a small taste of the glories of heaven.

RESPONSE

? Knowing that worship is what's happening right now and forever in front of the throne of God, how does that impact our worship here this weekend?

? Are you able to be aware of the eternal reality of worship happening in heaven?

? How can we lead our church in worship in a way that reminds them of what is happening now in heaven?

PRAYER

God who reigns for ever and ever, we want to remember the reality of worship happening in this very moment around Your throne and we want to join in with the song which is happening there even right now. Help us lead our church in the kind of worship that's happening now in heaven and give us more and more opportunities to worship You in this way. We say along with all the saints that salvation belongs to You and we want our worship to be marked by Your salvation this weekend. All praise and glory goes to You, for ever and ever. Amen.

REVELATION 19:6

> *"Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.*

REFLECTION

Over and over in scripture we're reminded of the power of creativity and how it helps us grasp concept which are simply to big or too overwhelming for us to comprehend. Even in this verse we hear of something which sounds LIKE a great multitude, LIKE the roar of rushing waters, LIKE loud peals of thunder. We know what each of those things sounds LIKE but it's also a little difficult to describe exactly what those things are like or to replicate those things in a way they can be understood.

And yet when we thing about multitudes and roars and thunder and shouts and we apply our understanding of those things to the "Hallelujah!" shouts in this verse we begin to get an understanding of how bit and how overwhelming and how majestic this shout actually is.

The creativity of describing the "Hallelujah!" by using other things which this sound is like helps us grasp the majesty of God, how powerful He is in His reigning, how worthy He is in our praising and how we should worship Him in our celebration. We worship loud now because our worship around the throne of God will be even louder than we can imagine!

RESPONSE

- Do these creative descriptions of the worship of God help you grasp the concept of worship in a different way?
- What does this kind of worship lead you to think about who God is?
- How can we lead our church in worship that demonstrates the worthiness of God in this way?

PRAYER

God who is worthy of all of our praise, we want to join in with the sound of this great multitude who is shouting "Hallelujah!" to You because we do believe that You are the Lord God Almighty and that You do reign forever. We want our praise this weekend to demonstrate Your greatness and Your majesty and how worthy You are of all worship and celebration. God, use us this weekend to lead our church in the kind of worship that is worthy of who You are and what You've done. We want all honor and glory to be for You and for You alone. Amen.

Chris Vacher is a pastor and worship leader living near Toronto, Canada. Chris has been in full-time ministry since 2003, leading worship and building worship ministry teams for three different churches.

In 2007 Chris began to blog and share resources and encouragement with churches around the world, helping both worship leaders and senior pastors grow in their understanding of creativity and leadership.

Released initially as an email subscription, this worship team Bible study is reaching over 1,000 churches in 30+ countries around the world every week. Now available in print format this resource will help you as a worship leader as well as your team in helping lead your church in worship every week.

More resources from Chris available at www.chrisvacher.com



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