



Session 6: Worship



The first and greatest commandment of Jesus is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12.30).

If we truly believe that Jesus is Lord of all, then worship must have priority in our lives. Worship is the only right response to God who loves, seeks and pursues us. Worship also changes us and leads us into the world with new love and compassion for the lost, the least and the last.

Previous session review

- Recap on your experience of the previous challenge. How did it go? Was it helpful?
- If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question: Where and how did you experience God last week?

Read

Read the passage several times through, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. At the end of the text you will find helpful background information in our 'Setting the Scene' section.

As you read, look out for shockers and blockers.

Shockers – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

Blockers – something from the text that raises questions for you.

Psalm 148

Shout praises to the Lord!
 Shout the Lord's praises in the highest heavens.
 All of you angels, and all who serve him above, come and offer praise.
 Sun and moon, and all of you bright stars, come and offer praise.
 Highest heavens, and the water above the highest heavens, come and offer praise.
 Let all things praise the name of the Lord, because they were created at his command.
 He made them to last forever, and nothing can change what he has done.
 All creatures on earth, you obey his commands, so come praise the Lord!
 Sea monsters and the deep sea, fire and hail, snow and frost, and every stormy wind, come praise the Lord!
 All mountains and hills, fruit trees and cedars, every wild and tame animal, all reptiles and birds, come praise the Lord!
 Every king and every ruler, all nations on earth, every man and every woman, young people and old, come praise the Lord!
 All creation, come praise the name of the Lord. Praise his name alone.
 The glory of God is greater than heaven and earth.
 Like a bull with mighty horns, the Lord protects his faithful nation Israel, because they belong to him. Shout praises to the Lord!

Setting the scene:

- Angels are not to be worshipped, nor are the stars in the sky to mediate our destiny – but they are called, along with all of creation above the earth and on earth to worship God. They, like us, are created by the word of God himself. This hymn of praise calls all of God's creatures to unite in worshipping the creator.
- The second part of the psalm contains a theme that recurs in all the Psalms for all people to praise the Lord. He is the one true God, whose name is above all names, the one who has called Israel and all people to belong to him.
- The final part of the psalm finds its fulfilment in Revelation (7.9), a great multitude of people from all nations and places on earth standing before the throne of God. For now we see in part, but one day we shall see Jesus face to face.

Reflect

After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.

Begin your reflection time by each naming your shockers and blockers. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.

You might also like to explore these questions:

- Q1.** Recall a time when creation literally 'took your breath away' and caused you to praise God?
-
- Q2.** Worship inspires us to serve and love God. Have you ever got this the wrong way round? How easy is it to serve God from an empty heart?

Respond

Worship challenge: Come up with a challenge that will help make worship a priority for you this week or choose one of the following:

Challenge ideas:

1. Practice the Presence of God

Make a conscious, intentional effort to return to God in your thoughts throughout this week. The Bible encourages us to 'pray without ceasing' – throughout your day, as often as you can, offer inward (or audible) whisperings of thanks and praise to God. Create a 'holy expectancy' throughout the day – invite God into all your work, your interactions, the mundane and the exciting and ask him to speak to you and guide you.

2. Sacrifice of Praise

If you are going through a time or season when God seems absent, this week set aside time to quietly read through the following Scriptures and feel free to pour your heart out to God about feelings of abandonment (Psalm 22.1–5, Psalm 31.1–10, Hebrews 10.32–38a, Romans 8.31–39, Job 19.1–27). Even if you don't feel like it, even if worship seems discouraging and dry, keep praying, keep expecting and keep looking out for God. Using other people's words (including the Psalms) can be helpful when life is tough.

3. Responding to Worship

We cannot worship God freely and authentically without it changing us or the world we live in. True worship always leads to obedience. What might obedience to God mean for you this week? What might God be calling you to do – to put right a broken relationship, to confess a sin, to bring love and compassion to someone, to serve the lost, the least or the last? Be open to prompting of the Holy Spirit this week and respond with obedience.



'The divine priority is worship first, service second. Our lives are to be punctuated with praise, thanksgiving and adoration. Service flows out of worship.'

*Richard J Foster,
Celebration of Discipline*



Group Prayer

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group this week as you look to explore and experience more of the Spirit.