

SESSION ONE

With All the Company of Heaven

Lesson Summary

Why devote eleven weeks to studying and discussing worship? That's the central question that we'll be exploring in this introductory session—why worship matters and why it's worth so much of our time and attention. And the answer that is given in this video is threefold: (1) worship matters because it's what we are made for; (2) worship matters because it's unavoidable; and (3) worship matters because it's how God forms us.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Psalms 96** as a group. Why does the psalmist begin by telling other people to worship? Who is instructed to worship? What reasons are given for worshipping the LORD? If a society of people actually listened to this psalm and followed its instructions, what effects do you think their worship would have on their society?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. If someone asked you why worship matters, how would you answer? Why do you yourself participate in worship?
3. Discuss the following quote by David Foster Wallace:

In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship.

How true to life do you think that is?

4. The video suggests that one of the reasons worship matters is because worship is often the means by which God forms our hearts. How is your heart trained when you participate (not passively, but actively) in worship? How do the different elements of worship (praying, singing, listening to Scripture, confessing sin, receiving communion) shape your heart?

Continued...

5. In the Sunday liturgy every week, we heart these words:

It is right, our duty, and our joy, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

Talk about those words. What does it mean to say that is worship “right” or fitting? How is it our duty? How is it our joy?

6. What is one way that you are hoping to grow as a worshiper over the course of this study?

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

Weekly Practice

This week, encourage all group members to write down and recite this prayer at the beginning and ending of each day.

It is right, our duty, and our joy, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. And I want to do just that. So, please, lift up my heart to you.

SESSION TWO

Gathering Together

Lesson Summary

Why go to church every Sunday? Why not just stay home, listen to a great sermon, read an inspiring devotional, and spend some time in prayer by yourself? If you're a regular churchgoer, that may seem like a rather strange question. But for millions of contemporary American Christians, who have stopped attending Sunday worship, it is a question for which they apparently do not have a good answer. So, in this session, we're going to try to answer that question. Why is it so important for us to gather together for public worship?

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Hebrews 10:25** and **Colossians 3:16**. Why is it important to meet and gather together, as the author of Hebrews tells us to do? And why would Paul, in Colossians, tell early Christians to sing hymns and spiritual songs "to one another"?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Why do you think the rate of weekly worship attendance among Christians has declined so much in recent years? In other words, why have people stopped going to church every week?
3. If someone asked you why they *should* attend a worship service, rather than simply staying at home to pray and listen to a sermon by themselves, how would you respond to them? What do you think early Christians would say to us about our worship habits?
4. Discuss the following quote by T. David Gordon:

When you're present with those who praise and adore God, who acknowledge their sins, who thank him for his dying and rising Son, that's where you meet God now. Later [in the next life], we meet Him in other kinds of ways, but that's where we meet him now. So what we call 'worship' could

Continued...

also be called 'meeting with God,' and we could call our assemblies 'God's house,' because the apostles call it God's house. Peter does, Paul does, the author to Hebrews does. Those assemblies, and those who gather there, are called God's house, and that's where He is to be met, if we wish to meet Him in this life. Might we find Him, on occasion, somewhere else? Yes, you can sometimes find a dime on a mountaintop, [but if you're a coin collector, that's hardly the first place you'd go to look].

5. When you come to Sunday worship, what do you do to prepare your heart and mind as you enter in? How do you respond when you see people around you praying and singing? How might your presence and participation be an encouragement to them?

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

Weekly Practice

If you do not attend public worship every Sunday, recommit this week to making weekly attendance a top priority for you and your family. If you do already attend every week, think about one person whom you could invite to attend worship with you sometime in the near future.

SESSION THREE

Singing Praise

Lesson Summary

Praise songs are a central part of Christian worship, and have been so for a very long time. But why do we praise? Does God need to be bolstered by our adoration of Him, and if not, then why is it so important? In this session, we'll talk about these questions and discuss the reasons for praise and its effects upon us.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **John 17:1-5**. In these five verses, John uses the word "glorify" or "glory" five separate times. What do you think he means by this? What would it mean for the Father to glorify the Son and the Son to glorify the Father (verse 1)? After reading this passage, how would you describe the relationship between the Father and Son?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. What is your favorite song of praise? Do you have any memories of a time in church praising God that were particularly meaningful? What is your biggest personal challenge when it comes to praising God?
3. Discuss the following quote from C.S. Lewis: *In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him*. How might singing praise help us to enjoy God?
4. How might the relationship of the Father and the Son (who eternally adore and glorify one another) help us understand what we're doing when we praise?
5. What do you do when you're in church and you don't feel like praising God? How might participating even when you don't feel like it benefit you?
6. C.S. Lewis suggests that we need to practice praising God even when we don't want to, because practicing prepares our hearts to experience praise. How might you practice praising God during the week when you're not at church?

Continued...

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

Weekly Practice

This week, try to spend at least ten minutes each day listening to praise music or hymns. After doing this for a week, describe how listening to that music affected your mindset and mood.

SESSION FOUR

Hearing the Word

Lesson Summary

"Unto a Christian man there can be nothing either more necessary or profitable than the knowledge of Holy Scripture." Those words, penned by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer in 1547, exemplify the absolute centrality of Scripture for Anglican Christians. Nothing is more necessary or profitable for Christians than knowing, hearing, reading, and studying God's word. And nothing is more central to our worship gatherings than hearing the word of God. In this session, we discuss why that is. What is it about the Bible that makes it so essential for us? And how does that relate what we do when we come together for worship?

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Psalms 119:9-16**. Why does the psalmist cherish the words of God so much? Read verses 11, 13, 15, and 16 again. What different things does the psalmist do with God's word in these verses? What would it look like for you to do the same in your own life?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. What do you most appreciate about the Bible when you read it or hear it? What is most difficult or challenging about it?
3. Read 2 Timothy 3:16 together. Which part of this verse stands out to you the most?
4. How have you learned from the Bible? How has it taught you?
5. Most of us are pretty self-defensive and don't like to admit when we're wrong. How can we make ourselves open to hear the reproof and correction of God's word? How might we experience that in a worship service?
6. John Webster says that listening to Jesus ought to be "the basic dynamic of our lives." How do you listen to Jesus during the week? How could you be more intentional about listening to Jesus in the week to come?

Continued...

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

Weekly Practice

This week, spend at ten minutes each day reading the Gospel of John. After you finish reading each day, take another ten minutes and write down a response to the following questions: What is God teaching me in what I just read? How am I being reprovved or corrected through what I just read? How should I live in response to what I just read?

SESSION FIVE Confessing the Faith

Lesson Summary

In the year 589, a church council in Toledo, Spain, declared that “before the Lord’s Prayer is said, the creed shall be chanted aloud by the congregation.” In other words, every Sunday, in every worship service, Christians should be confessing their faith with the words of the Nicene Creed. Most Christians around the world, Anglicans included, continue to do this in our weekly worship. But why? Why are creeds so important? And why include one in worship?

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Matthew 16:13-20**. Why would Jesus ask Peter the question, “Who do you say that I am?” In what way is Peter’s response a confession of faith? How would you compare Peter’s response to what Christians do when we confess the faith in the words of the Nicene Creed?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week’s teaching that stood out to you?
2. The video mentions two reasons why creeds were historically important: (1) to give Christians a concise way to summarize their faith, and (2) to guard the faith against error or distortion. Do you think that creeds are still necessary today? Why or why not?
3. Discuss the following quote by Dorothy Sayers:

“It is worse than useless for Christians to talk about the importance of Christian morality, unless they are prepared to take their stand upon the fundamentals of Christian theology.”

Why is theology (what we believe about God, Christ, the world, etc.) so essential for talking about morality (how we ought to live)? If what we claim in the Nicene Creed (about God, Jesus, his return, etc.) is true, how should it affect the way we live in the world?

Continued...

4. The Apostles' Creed, which we say in Morning and Evening Prayer, begins with the words "I believe." The Nicene Creed, which we say on Sundays, begins with the words "we believe." How would you describe the difference in saying "we believe" rather than "I believe"? Why do we need to say both?
5. Modern culture emphasizes the importance of individual freedom and right to personal beliefs. "You do you," people say. Or, "I'm just speaking my truth." How does the Nicene Creed challenge that attitude? Why would modern people want to confess such an ancient set of beliefs?
6. Discuss this quote from John Webster:

"Sin is, in part, the refusal to confess...Confession is a repentant act, a turning, and therefore a decisive 'no' to silence about God or to that murmuring against God that is the response of the wicked to God's generosity."

Of what false beliefs or false attitudes are we repenting when we confess the faith?

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

Weekly Practice

Write down the words of either the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed. Begin each day by reciting that creed and by asking yourself, "If what I am saying is true, what difference should it make to my life today?"

SESSION SIX Making Petition

Lesson Summary

Prayer. It's not just something Christians do. It's something all religious people do everywhere. To be religious is to pray, you could say. But what makes Christian prayer unique? And how can we pray well, rather than poorly? And why do we even need to pray in the first place, if God already knows everything about us? In this session, we tackle some of those basic questions as we discuss prayer and its role in Christian worship.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**, **1 Timothy 2:1-4**, and **Matthew 6:5-8**. What do each of these passages teach us about prayer? How might they address the way that we pray when we come together for worship?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. What do you find challenging about prayer? What challenges do you face as you try to pray during the week? What challenges do you face as you try to pray with others in Sunday worship?
3. Discuss the following quote from John Jewel:

Whomsoever we are bound by express commandment to love, for those also we are bound in conscience to pray; but we are bound by express commandment to love all men as ourselves; therefore we are also bound to pray for all men.

How is the obligation to pray "for all men" reflected in the way we pray on Sundays? How can it be reflected in the way we pray during the week?

Continued...

4. How would you answer the question: "Why should we pray if God already knows what we need?" What about this question: "Why should we continue to pray when God doesn't give us what we ask for?"
5. Discuss Michael Ramsey's description of prayer:

...to be with God with the people on your heart.

How well would this description fit the way that Jesus himself prayed? How well does it describe your own experience of prayer?

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

Weekly Practice

This week, take the Sunday worship bulletin home with you. Then, every day during the following week, pray "The Collect of the Day" and use the petitions in the "Prayers of the People" to guide your own personal prayers.

SESSION SEVEN

Asking Forgiveness

Lesson Summary

Why are we always asking forgiveness for sin? Why do we include prayers of confession in every worship service? Shouldn't we focus on more uplifting things? Whether or not you've ever asked these questions, many Christians have. Some have even suggested that regularly confessing sin and asking forgiveness demonstrates an unhealthy and overly morbid spirituality. This session insists otherwise and explains why asking forgiveness is so important not only for our relationship to God, but also our relationships with one another.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Psalms 51**. Which verse stands out to you the most? Can you relate to the feelings of the psalmist? Why or why not? Where do you see hope in this psalm?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. How often and how urgently do you ask God to forgive you? What makes asking forgiveness difficult?
3. What do you think of Karl Menninger's claim that the language and idea of sin have largely vanished in American culture today? What about Cornelius Plantinga's suggestion that contemporary Christians also treat sin with less seriousness than Christians in the past? Is this a good thing? Why or why not?
4. The video suggests that one of the reasons we should ask forgiveness is that, by doing so, we will become more thankful for God's kindness toward us? Have you found that to be true?
5. Discuss this quote by C.S. Lewis:

Those who do not think about their own sins make up for it by thinking incessantly about the sins of others.

Continued...

6. Why would asking for mercy make a person more merciful? Why would asking for forgiveness make us more likely to forgive?

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

Weekly Practice

This week, memorize the prayer that the tax collector prays in Luke 18:13 ("God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"). Try to pray this prayer for yourself at least twice a day. Each time you pray, add this petition: "And teach me to be merciful to others in return."

SESSION EIGHT

Sharing Peace and Offering Gifts

Lesson Summary

Passing the peace and giving tithes. These two actions are always included in Anglican worship services, but rarely do we reflect on them. Why pass the peace? Is it just an overly spiritualized way of saying “hi” to people on a Sunday morning? And why do we offer gifts of money in worship? Is it just an old-fashioned method for fundraising, or is there something more to it? Those are the kind of questions we take up in this session.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Matthew 5:21-26**. Why does Jesus equate murder with anger and insult? Is it simply that anger can lead to murder, or is there something more to it? Why does he put so much emphasis on being reconciled? How can we apply Jesus’ teaching to Christian worship and church life?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week’s teaching that stood out to you?
2. How have you thought about passing the peace and giving tithes in the past? How would you like to think differently about them in the future?
3. Discuss what Paul says in Romans 14:19:

So then let us pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding.

How have you experienced this within the church? How could you make this a greater priority in your own life?

4. What do you think of the early Christian practice of sharing the kiss of peace? What do you think other ancient Romans would have thought about that practice? What can we learn from the example of those early Christians?

Continued...

5. Why is generosity an appropriate response to the gifts we have received from God? What keeps us from being more generous than we already are?

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

Weekly Practice

This week, whether you give money in person or online, think about God's generosity to you and the offering you've given in return when the congregation says: "All things come from you, O Lord, and of your own have we given you."

SESSION NINE Receiving Christ

Lesson Summary

The Lord's Supper—it is perhaps the most central and most distinctive act of Christian worship. And yet, it has often been a source of division and theological debate within the church. Is it a memorial of Jesus' past death? Is it a present reception of the risen Christ? Or is it an anticipation of something still yet to come? Christians have taken different positions on these questions, but in this video, we discuss why all three of these ways of understanding this meal are essential to what we're doing when we share the bread and wine.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **1 Corinthians 10:15-17** and **11:23-26**. In the first passage, what does Paul mean when he says that the bread and wine are a "participation" in the body and blood of Christ? How does he relate that to Christians' relationships with one another? In the second passage, how does Paul describe the Lord's Supper? To whom are Christians "proclaiming" the Lord's death when they celebrate this meal (11:26)?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Talk about your experience of the Lord's Supper. What is most meaningful to you about that part of the service? How do you prepare yourself mentally or spiritually to receive the bread and wine?
3. Have you received the Lord's Supper in a non-Anglican church before? If so, what did you appreciate about that experience? What is one thing that you enjoy about the way that Anglicans celebrate this meal?
4. One way to think about the Lord's Supper is as an act of remembrance. As we partake of it, we are remembering the crucifixion. What most often comes to your mind as you remember Jesus' death upon the cross? Why do you think Jesus wants us to have a continual reminder of this every time we gather together?

Continued...

5. In Holy Communion, we are not only remembering Jesus' death but also receiving him and being united with him afresh each week. What does being united to Jesus mean to you? What do you think of when you are receiving the bread and wine each week?

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

Weekly Practice

For the next three weeks, each time you go forward to receive communion, pay attention to the people next to you and around you and remind yourself that you are being united not only to Jesus, but to them as well.

SESSION TEN

Giving Thanks

Lesson Summary

All of life, and all of new life in Christ, is a gift. It is grace. And Christian worship is a response to that grace. For this reason, it makes sense that gratitude and thanksgiving lie at the heart of worship and pervade our prayers and praises. What is more, weekly worship culminates in a long prayer and act of thanksgiving, and this thanksgiving follows us as we make our way home.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Psalms 100**. What stands out to you about this psalm? How would you compare it to your own expectations when you come to worship? Why does the psalmist put so much emphasis on thanksgiving?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Discuss the following quote from Dietrich von Hildebrand:

He is awakened from the apathy and superficiality of taking things for granted to astonishment at the gifts of God and the inexhaustibly blissful mystery of the infinite love and mercy of God.

How do you take things for granted? How might worship help us to feel astonishment at God's gifts?

3. What are some of the different things that the priest gives thanks for in his eucharistic prayer (for example, "In your infinite love you made us for yourself...")? What do we give thanks for in the post-communion prayer (see the *Weekly Practice* below)?
4. What practical suggestions would you make to someone who said that they have a hard time paying attention to this prayer and easily get distracted? How could they be more intentional about following along with this prayer in their heart?

Continued...

5. What do you think about Susanna Hopton's suggestion of praying "A Thanksgiving at Home after the Holy Communion." How could you do something similar?

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

Weekly Practice

Each day this week, recite the Post Communion Prayer. As you do so, choose a different phrase to meditate on throughout the day (e.g., "feeding us," "assuring us," etc.).

Heavenly Father, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal Kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.

SESSION ELEVEN

Going Forth

Lesson Summary

Worship does not end when the Sunday service concludes for, to quote what Archbishop William Temple once said, how you conduct your life during the week is the true test of whether your worship is genuine or not. In this session, we look at what the Bible has to say about the relationship between life and worship and why God cares so much about what we do as we “go forth” into the world.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Amos 5:4-24**. Why is God angry with his people in this passage? How does he describe their conduct? And how does this impact his attitude toward their worship?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Discuss this claim made by Archbishop William Temple:

Worship is of supreme importance and conduct tests it. Conduct tests how much of yourself was in the worship you gave to God.

How is conduct a test of worship?

3. The video gives multiple examples of the Bible criticizing hypocritical worship. Why does God care so much about the hypocrisy of those who worship him? Where do you see the impact of Christian hypocrisy in the world today?
4. Discuss what the deacon says at the end of our Sunday liturgy:

Let us go forth in the name of Christ.

What does this mean? How would you compare it to what we say in the Post Communion Prayer, when we ask to be “sent out by God to love and and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord”?

Continued...

5. What is one thing that you have gained from this study? How has your understanding or attitude toward worship changed? What is one thing that you would like to study further?

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.