

7 Practicing Worship

The tour guide had just completed his talk, explaining to the visitors what the skilled factory workers were doing.

“Can you do what they are doing?” one of the visitors asked.

The guide smiled and shook his head, “I’ll have to be honest. I know how it is done, but I have never done it.”

Knowing how to do something and doing it are not always the same. Skill comes through practice. No one can learn to play the guitar without also practicing on it. And no one can learn to worship without also worshipping.

The purpose of this lesson is not to tell you how you must worship, but to share what other believers have learned about worship. Some of these believers lived in Bible times; others are living today. As you practice what you are learning, you will in turn help others.

The Plan

- A. Individual Worship
- B. United Worship

The Goals

1. Describe ways to improve your own devotional and worship time.
2. Discuss principles and practices of group worship.

A. INDIVIDUAL WORSHIP

Goal 1. Describe ways to improve your own devotional and worship time.

When did the worshippers in the Bible seek God? Daniel prayed three times a day. David sought the Lord morning and evening. First Chronicles 16:11 says, “Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.” Our worship is continuous when we are totally committed to Him. There should be, however, a special time each day when we can have close and personal communion with the Lord.

Many people face situations that make it difficult to find a time and place to be alone, but they make a way. A housewife gets up an hour before her family does so she can have private devotions; a working man walks to a park during his lunch break so he can be alone. Whatever your circumstance, the Lord can help you set aside a time for fellowship with Him. During this time you will want to worship, for in worship you get to know the Lord personally.

A friend gave me a schedule for my devotions. I followed it for a while, then changed it to fit my own needs. I want to share this same schedule with you and hope that it will furnish practical guidelines for organizing special time with the Lord.

You will appreciate having your devotions in a place where you can worship out loud. You may want to include songs and

choruses and sing in the Spirit. You may weep before the Lord during your devotions, or you may laugh with joy. You can clap your hands and lift your arms in praise and adoration. You can kneel, sit, stand, or walk. We cannot lay out a pattern for everyone to follow because the Holy Spirit, like the wind, does not move in only one direction. He understands each one of us and knows exactly what we need.

Also, keep a daily devotional notebook in which to jot thoughts and notes. Some people like to make notes of their Bible reading, underlining verses that seem to speak directly to them. If you write names of people and situations which the Lord brings to your mind, you will find it exciting to look back later and see how God has answered your prayers. Your notebook can be your spiritual diary.

Now put a marker in this book at the page with the “Quiet Time” schedule. Keep it with your Bible and use it as a daily guide during your quiet time for a week before you decide on changes. I know you will find this hour with the Lord becoming more valuable as the months go by. If you have experiences you would like to share with your instructor, please feel free to do so. Worship is a part of our lives too, and we will rejoice with you.

QUIET TIME

“Quiet time” is time spent alone with the Lord— time to talk to Him and listen to Him. It is time used to establish a personal and intimate relationship with the living God. James urges, “Come near to God and he will come near to you” (James 4:8).

TIME SCHEDULE

PREPARATION (5 minutes)

- a) Ask yourself: Is my heart clean and my conscience clear? (Psalm 24:3–6; Psalm 139:23–24; Psalm 51)
- b) Obedience: Tell the Lord you are ready to obey whatever He tells you. (John 14:21)

- c) Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (John 14:26; Romans 8:26)

PRAISE AND WORSHIP (10 minutes)

Worship in your prayer language. Pray in the Spirit. Meditate on who God is. Praise Him for what He is like. If you have trouble knowing what to say, read aloud one of the worship psalms as your worship to God.

READ THE WORD (25 minutes)

Study a book of the Bible, reading two or three chapters every day. Read them a second time and underline key verses. Meditate on those verses and how you would apply them to your life. Write your thoughts on them and pick one to memorize.

PRAYER (20 minutes)

Get ready to listen to the voice of the Lord. Ask Him to control your thoughts, desires, and imagination (Isaiah 55:8). Rebuke the voice of the enemy (James 4:7). Thank the Lord in faith for what you are to receive.

Spend time in silence. Write thoughts that come to mind. Meditate on them, check them out in God's Word. Pray over them and for situations that the Lord brings to your mind.

Take time for personal needs and present them to God.

Thanksgiving. Finish your time of devotions with thanking your wonderful heavenly Father for His goodness and for the answers He sends your way.

Application

- 1** Which of the following statements are true?
 - a)** We should worship only in a holy place.
 - b)** We learn more about worship as we worship.
 - c)** The Lord desires fellowship with every believer.
 - d)** Silence and meditation are not important in Christian worship.

2 Read the following questions carefully. Write YES in front of each one that is true for you.

- ... **a** I set aside regular time for personal devotions each day.
- ... **b** I spend time during my devotions to worship God.
- ... **c** I sing and praise the Lord even when things go wrong.
- ... **d** I read God’s Word every day.
- ... **e** I give the Lord an opportunity to speak to me.
- ... **f** When I worship, I forget about myself and others and concentrate only on God.
- ... **e** I pray in the Spirit every day.

Now go back and write “N” (Needs improvement) where you could not write YES. Ask the Lord to help you where you need improvement in your personal devotional time with Him.

B. UNITED WORSHIP

Goal 2. Discuss principles and practices of group worship.

The apostle Paul was imprisoned for preaching the gospel. Perhaps it was this experience that made him realize more than ever the importance of believers coming together to worship. He reminded the believers in Colossians that they were called to peace as members of one body (Colossians 3:15). Therefore, “let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrew 10:25).

It is just as important for believers today to get together for united worship, for the presence of the Lord is with those who gather in His name. Jesus said, “Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20).

There is strength in unity. Ecclesiastes 4:12 reads, “Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord

of three strands is not quickly broken.” The strength of unity applies to spiritual things as well. On the day of Pentecost the believers were gathered in one place when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 2:1). God honored their oneness of heart and purpose.

We live in a sinful world and need each other. If I come to church discouraged and hear others praising God, it helps me to forget about my problems and praise God too. Someone else may tell what the Lord has done for him and it would be exactly what I need. The Lord uses other people to minister to me. Another day it will be my turn to minister to someone else. Little wonder that God’s Word encourages us to get together for fellowship.

Each time we meet we should plan for a period spent only in worship. Our songs and Bible reading should be worshipful, thus getting our minds away from ourselves. Our earthly cares seem smaller when we realize how great God’s love is toward us. His love is ready to provide for all our needs.

We cannot design a time of worship because the Holy Spirit leads in different ways at different times. We will, however, give a few suggestions. Your meetings should be open for others to share their experiences in the Lord, and to give Scriptures that have meant something special to them. Sometimes, in small groups, each person can pick a worship verse and read it aloud. The worship time should be comfortable, where all feel free—not forced—to participate.

In one group I know, the believers take turns offering the Lord just one sentence of worship. Perhaps someone will say, “Lord, I praise You for Your faithfulness.” Another might say, “I thank you for your love.” This gives everyone an opportunity. The new converts and timid believers are especially encouraged to enter in. Time for individual prayers and bringing needs before the Lord can follow after worship.

After individual prayers, the group may move on to worshipping in another manner. The group leader should be seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit about when to change the order.

Another beautiful form of worship is united prayer. Perhaps there will be a soft murmur around the room as all the voices are heard together—like a gentle river of love flowing out to God. Other times voices are raised, and the sound is like a mighty fountain of praise rushing toward heaven. How beautiful this must sound to the Lord!

The apostle John said that our prayers are like incense kept in golden bowls before the throne of God. (See Revelation 5:8.) During prayer in unison the Holy Spirit often moves on congregations to worship in their prayer language. Or, He may prompt them to sing in the Spirit. The blend of voices reminds us of the heavenly choirs that offer praise night and day.

In contrast, a holy quietness may sweep over us as we worship. Let us not be afraid of silence. During these times the Lord can speak through thoughts that He gives us. Sometimes the stillness will be broken as the Holy Spirit speaks through one of the believers with a prophecy or a message in tongues and interpretation. So, if a hush suddenly falls during worship, do not disturb it. Silence is important too.

Our worship as a body of believers should be orderly. Otherwise unbelievers may become confused and turn away. Our worship should not be cold and formal, for then they will not be drawn to our warm, loving heavenly Father. But if our worship is Spirit-led, people will feel the gentle pull of the Holy Spirit. Unbelievers will get saved and believers will be filled with the Holy Spirit. In all this God is glorified.

Application

3 Draw a circle around the letter in front of each correct sentence completion. Worshipping together in a group is important because

- a)** Jesus is there when we gather in His name.
- b)** it can lift our spirits when we are troubled or depressed.
- c)** it is the only way to worship.

4 Complete the following sentences.

a) Hebrews 10:25 says we should not give up the habit of

.....

b) We need two kinds of prayer, individual prayer and

..... prayer.

c) People are drawn to the Lord if our worship is warm and

.....

5 List three ways of worshipping the Lord in a group.

.....



Check Your Answers

- 1** **b)** and **c)** are true.
- 4** **a)** meeting together.
b) united
c) Spirit-led.
- 2** Your answers
- 5** Your answers. You might put reading Scripture, praying individually, singing in the Spirit, uniting in praise, or other ways mentioned in this lesson.
- 3** **a)** Jesus is there when we gather in His name.
b) it can lift our spirits when we are troubled or depressed.

