



Core Seminar How to Grow Class 2: All of Life Worship

I. Introduction

How often do we worship God every week?¹ The way we answer this question depends on how we understand what worship is. Is worshipping only something that we do when we come to church on Sunday, or is it more than that?

Today's class has two goals:

- (1) To hear what the Bible says about worship, and
- (2) To understand the relationship between worship and the spiritual disciplines.

Worship is central purpose of our lives. The Westminster Assembly said as much in their Shorter Catechism: "Question: *What is the chief end of man?* Answer: *Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.*"² When we think about worship, we must first determine our basic duty. This duty is defined by the God who created us in his image and redeemed us by the blood of his son, Jesus.

Let's unpack the catechism statement. What does it mean to glorify God? Puritan Thomas Watson says it consists of four things: (1) Appreciation, (2) Adoration, (3) Affection, and (4) Subjection.³

(1) Appreciation: To glorify God is to set God highest in our thoughts. It means to abound in thanksgiving toward Him for what He has done for us through Jesus Christ.⁴

(2) Adoration: To adore God is to ascribe to Him all honor and praise. It is to acknowledge that He alone is worthy of all our reverence and worship.⁵

(3) Affection: To love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Our entire person is given to love the One who is altogether lovely.⁶

(4) Subjection: To dedicate ourselves completely in obedience to God. We submit to His will and are ready to serve Him. **Subjection is how a believer enters the kingdom.** "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). **Subjection is how we live in the kingdom!** Philippians 2:5-7: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus who, although He existed in the form of God...but emptied Himself..."

¹ Pause here to let them consider the question.

² *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 2003), 287.

³ Watson, Thomas *A Body of Divinity* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 7-8.

⁴ **The hindrance to this is pride:** To acknowledge God as the giver of all things we must admit we are poor. For this reason Christ began the Sermon on the Mount by saying, "Blessed [or happy] are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God." (Matt. 5:3)

⁵ **Faith alone makes worship possible,** "He said, 'Lord, I believe,' and he worshiped him." (John 9:38)

⁶ **Our faith must be focused on a person to love,** "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but **faith working through love.**" (Gal. 5:6)⁶ Whenever faith is not focused on a person to love it is supplanted by dead works!

In Summary, faith in the person of Christ makes worship possible. The outcome of our faith is a love for Christ and it is accompanied with an emptying of ourselves. Worship then, involves a life that is wholly directed toward God as the Lord of all and the Savior of the Redeemed. ***The spiritual disciplines are means of growing in godliness that find their place in a life completely consecrated to worship God.***

Romans 12:1

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, **which is your spiritual worship.**⁷

Why should we worship God? Revelation 4 and 5 give us two reasons: He is our **(1)** Creator and **(2)** Redeemer.

Creator:

Revelation 4:10-11

¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

Redeemer:

Revelation 5:9-14

⁹And they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

¹¹Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might
and honor and glory and blessing!”

¹³And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

¹⁴And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

We belong to God twice over. **First**, by means of creation and **second** because of redemption or the price God paid to save us from His own judgment upon our sins. God is a God on mission to save sinners through the cross. This theme of our missions is founded on worship. In John 4:23 Jesus describes the advance of the gospel as the work of the Father seeking true worshipers. A true worshiper is one who worships in Spirit and

⁷ My emphasis.

truth. John Piper puts it this way: “Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t.”⁸

II. Understanding Worship

A. Three Central Concepts of Worship: Homage, Service, and Reverence

What do we mean by worship? Interestingly, nowhere in Scripture is worship actually defined. But, when key biblical terms for worship are examined, it is clear that the central concepts are **homage, service, and reverence**.

(1) Homage: The Hebrew verb most commonly translated “to worship” literally means “bend oneself over at the waist”.

Exodus 34:8

⁸ And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped.

This is at the second giving of the law. In the Old Testament, this gesture expressed surrender or submission to God. It expressed recognition of God’s majesty and holiness and a desire to acknowledge Him as king.

Contrasted with this term for worship is the frequently used term “you are a stiff-necked people” referring to those who would not bow in worship to God.

(2) Service: Another Hebrew term often translated “to worship” literally means “to serve”. The language of service implies that God is a great king, who requires faithfulness and obedience from those who belong to Him. This implies devotion to God as a pattern of life.

Deuteronomy 12:3-4

³ You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and destroy their name out of that place. ⁴ You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way.

(3) Reverence: A final group of terms was used to indicate the fear, reverence, or respect due to God. This involved keeping God’s commandments, walking in His ways, turning away from evil, and serving Him.

Psalms 95:6

Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

In the Old Testament, worship is focused at the sanctuary⁹ appointed by God. It follows the rituals laid down by God and is facilitated by the priesthood He has ordained. At the same time, such worship is only pleasing to God when accompanied by sincere obedience to God from the heart.

In the New Testament, the same terminology of worship is transformed to portray the work of Christ and the response that pleases God. Jesus, our great High Priest, fulfills the types and shadows of the old covenant and replaces the way in which we approach God. Jesus’ incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension make it possible for us to engage with God.

⁸ Piper, John, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 11.

⁹ Tabernacle and temple.

Acceptable worship means approaching or engaging with God on the terms that He proposes and in the manner that He makes possible. True worship is revealed by God, and it is made possible by His redeeming work.

B. The Means of Acceptable Worship: Revelation and Redemption

1. *God has revealed Himself through His Word*

In the Old Testament, God at Mount Sinai set forth in great detail the pattern for acceptable worship. Israel was to abide by these regulations in order to worship God in an acceptable way. Any deviation was regarded as idolatry. Besides these ritual stipulations, the Ten Commandments governed Israel's personal relationship with God.

In **Leviticus 10:1-3**, God insists He be approached in accordance with His Word.

Leviticus 10:1-3

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. ² And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ³ Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD has said: 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and **before all the people I will be glorified.**'" And Aaron held his peace.¹⁰

Similarly, in the New Testament, we encounter commands on how to live and also stipulations for public worship. The New Testament also makes clear that the Bible is central to public worship. In 1 Timothy 4:13, Paul commands Timothy to devote himself to the, "public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching."

Ligon Duncan writes that when we gather for corporate worship, we should read the Bible, hear the Bible, pray the Bible, sing the Bible and see the Bible (as it is displayed in baptism and the Lord's Supper).¹¹ Don Whitney writes, "*Bible reading and preaching are central in public worship because they are the clearest, most direct, most extensive presentation of God in the meeting.*"¹²

God alone determines how He is to be worshiped. This is what is meant by what is called the "regulative principle,"¹³ which refers to how Scripture must shape and regulate our corporate worship. The principle states that nothing should be required as essential to corporate worship except that which is commanded by the Word of God.

2 extremes can lead people away from New Testament worship: *Experientialism* and *intellectualism*.

J. I. Packer in "A Quest for Godliness", describes *experientialism* this way: "Their outlook is one of casual haphazardness and fretful impatience, of grasping after novelties, entertainments, and 'highs', and of valuing strong feelings above deep thoughts. They have little taste for solid study, humble self-examination, disciplined meditation, and unspectacular hard work in their callings and their prayers. They conceive the Christian life as one of exciting extraordinary experiences rather than of resolute

¹⁰ My emphasis.

¹¹ Duncan, Ligon. *Give Praise to God, A Vision for Reforming Worship, Celebrating the Legacy of James Montgomery Boice*. Edited by Philip Graham Ryken, Derek W. H. Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan III (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2003), 35.

¹² Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NAVPress, 1991), 88.

¹³ The other main philosophy of worship is called the "normative principle". This basically means that whatever is not in Scripture is permitted in worship. Namely, if Scripture doesn't prohibit it either explicitly, or through biblical wisdom and implication, then it is permissible to incorporate it into methodological expressions of worship. A good book to read that works through some of these ideas would be: *Perspectives on Christian Worship: Five Views*. Edited by J. Matthew Pinson. Nashville: B & H Academic, 2009. Another might be *Worship by the Book*. Edited by D.A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

rational righteousness. They dwell continually on the themes of joy, peace, happiness, satisfaction and rest of soul with no balancing reference to the divine discontent of Romans 7, the fight of faith of Psalm 73, or the 'lows' of Psalms 42, 88 and 102. Through their influence the spontaneous jollity of the simple extrovert comes to be equated with healthy Christian living, **[and I might add worship]** while the saints of less sanguine and more complex temperament get driven almost to distraction because they cannot bubble over in the prescribed manner. In their restlessness these exuberant ones become uncritically credulous, reasoning that the more odd and striking an experience the more divine, supernatural, and spiritual it must be, and they scarcely give the scriptural virtue of steadiness a thought."¹⁴

Then there is the intellectualist, Packer describes him this way: "Constantly they present themselves as rigid, argumentative, critical Christians, champions of God's truth for whom orthodoxy is all. Upholding and defending their own view of that truth, whether Calvinist or Arminian, dispensational or Pentecostal, national church reformist or Free Church separatist, or whatever it might be, is their leading interest, and they invest themselves unstintingly in this task. There is little warmth about them; relationally they are remote; experiences do not mean much to them; winning the battle for mental correctness is their own great purpose. They see, truly enough, that in our anti-rational, feeling-oriented, instant-gratification culture conceptual knowledge of divine things is undervalued, and they seek with passion to right the balance at this point. They understand the priority of the intellect well; the trouble is that intellectualism, expressing itself in endless campaigns for their own brand of right thinking, is almost if not quite all that they can offer, for it is almost if not quite all that they have. They too, so I urge, need exposure to the Puritan heritage for their maturing."¹⁵

The Christian life of worship is not a quest for *experience* or *intelligence*, even though both are in part what it means to be human and more importantly spiritual, it is a quest for an intimate relationship with God in the person of Jesus Christ.¹⁶

2. God has revealed Himself supremely in His Son, Jesus Christ

Hebrews 1:1-2

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2** **but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son**, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.¹⁷

John 1:18

18 No one has ever seen God; **the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.**¹⁸

Scripture bears witness to the ultimate revelation of God in Christ. God fully and finally manifested Himself in the person of His Son. Jesus Christ is thus at the center of New Testament thinking about worship. The

¹⁴ Packer, J. I. *A Quest for Godliness, The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), 30.

¹⁵ Packer, J. I. *A Quest for Godliness, The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), 31-2.

¹⁶ John Owen goes right to the heart of the matter in Corporate and private worship: "What do men come to hear the Word of God for? What do they pray for? What do they expect to receive from Him? Do they come unto God as the eternal fountain of living waters? As the God of all grace, peace and consolation? Or do they come unto His worship without any design as unto a dry and empty show? ...Or do they think they bring something unto God, but receive nothing from Him? ...To receive anything from Him they expect not, nor do ever examine themselves whether they have done so or not? ...**It is not for people who walk in such ways, ever to attain a due delight in the ordinances of divine worship.**" Packer, J. I. *A Quest for Godliness, The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), 253 quoting Owen's Works I:319. [My emphasis]

¹⁷ My emphasis.

¹⁸ My emphasis. Also, note this explanation:

- God has revealed Himself through what is seen.
- The speech is not audible but by way of reason.
- Reason is based upon cause and effect and as we contemplate our way back to the beginning God is the first cause.

revelation of God in Christ has brought salvation to all who would repent of their sins and trust in Jesus to save them.

3. God has revealed Himself through creation

Psalm 19:1-3

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

² Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

³ There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.¹⁹

Romans 1:20

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.²⁰

The beauty of a sunrise and sunset, the crashing of the surf, and the awesome display of a thunderstorm all evoke our spontaneous awe of God. Such scenes give us a glimpse of God's greatness, majesty, wisdom and power; however, we can only know God and worship Him through what He has revealed in special revelation, Scripture.²¹

4. God has redeemed us through His Son, Jesus Christ

Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament tabernacle and temple. He is the decisive means of reconciliation between God and sinful humanity. He is the center of salvation and blessing for all nations. Christ makes possible a new, restored relationship with the Father by means of His death, resurrection, ascension, and the subsequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Christ's death is the ultimate sacrifice provided by God to cleanse His people from the defilement of sin. Christ's death also consecrates his people to himself in a relationship of heart-obedience. We do not draw near and engage with God on the basis of our own merit, but on the finished work of Christ's death and resurrection. If we are in Christ, we can approach God with the assurance that our sins have been forgiven and that we have been reconciled to fellowship with God.

David Peterson: "Fundamentally, worship in the New Testament means believing the gospel and responding with one's whole life and being to the person and work of God's Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit."²²

¹⁹ My emphasis.

²⁰ My emphasis.

²¹ God's glory revealed in creation elicits acceptable worship if it is combined with what is revealed in special revelation about what God accepts as engaging Him in worship, namely through the gospel of Jesus Christ. If the "feeling" of awe is not connected to the truth in the Bible it could end in with a flavor of pantheism, or something else. This being said, there is a logical connection to the gospel from what God has made – but apart from faith the connection cannot be made completely. The wisdom literature of the Bible makes this connection all the time. Also, this is a logical connection that can easily be made after one is converted.

²² Peterson, David *Engaging with God, a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1992), 286. This quote may also be found in a more brief article by Peterson titled *Worship in Perspective, an Overview of Biblical Teaching*. This can be found at his website: <http://davidgpeterson.com/worship/worship-in-perspective-an-overview-of-biblical-teaching/> (last accessed on November 29, 2010).

C. The Manner of Worship: In Spirit and Truth

John 4:23-24

(Jesus meeting the woman at the well)

²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

In John 4:20-24, a Samaritan woman inquires about the appropriate place to worship God. This leads Jesus to speak more fundamentally about *how* to worship God acceptably: it is in Spirit and truth. This truth means that **worship is essentially God-centered, made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in personal knowledge of and conformity to God’s Word-made-flesh**. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. He is the one who has uniquely made known to us the Father and His purposes.²³

Jesus Christ is the one who reveals the Father to us. He is the means by which the Father obtains true worshipers. Worshiping in spirit and truth involves acknowledging Jesus as the truth. It also means receiving from Him the Holy Spirit who is available to all who believe in Him. Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, the true temple of God is raised up and the Holy Spirit is poured out on God’s people. Unless we are born of the Spirit, we cannot worship God.

Therefore, **worshiping in Spirit cannot be distinguished from worshiping in truth**. The provision of the Spirit is made possible by the work of Jesus who is the truth. By the glorification of Christ through His death and resurrection, the Spirit, who is called the Spirit of truth (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13), is given. It is the Spirit who reveals Christ to us. Because of the Spirit’s work in us, we are able to respond in faith and obedience to Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:3

Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:6-14

⁶ Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. ⁷ But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” —

¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

²³ Jesus, the only Son of God, is the eternal Word made flesh. In him dwells the fullness of deity in bodily form. God has exalted Christ and given him “the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil 2:9-10).

¹⁴The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

III. How Should We Worship God Through the Spiritual Disciplines?

We have considered what the Bible says about worship. Now let's consider the second goal of this lesson, "to understand the relationship between worship and the spiritual disciplines." Our all-of-life worship is expressed through the disciplines both individually and corporately. The worship is both a spiritual discipline, and yet it also expressed through practicing all the spiritual disciplines individually and corporately.

A. As Individuals

Worship ought to manifest itself in all our living. It is not limited to a certain time each week. A. W. Tozer wrote in this vein, "If you will not worship God seven days a week, you do not worship him on one day a week."²⁴ Our God is worthy of our worship every day of our lives. This brings us again to Romans 12.

Romans 12:1

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

As we saw earlier, this verse makes clear that worship involves our whole lives. In response to what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, we are to present ourselves to Him as living sacrifices. Christ's obedience makes possible a new obedience for God's people. As those who have been brought from death to life through Jesus' death and resurrection, we belong to God.

The sacrifice we offer is not some specific form of praise or service, but our bodies themselves. The sacrifice we are called on to make requires a complete dedication to the service of God. This means obedience to God that is motivated by what Christ has done for us in the gospel. Individual worship includes praising God with our words (Heb 13:15), gospel ministry (Rom 15:16), financial giving (Rom 15:27), and serving one another (Phil 4:18). Notice here how worship encompasses some of the other spiritual disciplines, such as evangelism, stewardship, and service.

Corporate worship does not excuse individual worship. Don Whitney writes:

Can we expect the flames of our worship of God to burn brightly in public on the Lord's Day when they barely flicker for him in secret on other days? Isn't it because we do not worship well in private that our corporate worship experience often dissatisfies us?²⁵

The New Testament emphasis is that the people of God worship Him in their individual lives and in their family lives. Then when they come together, they worship Him corporately. Such times of corporate worship are only one aspect of the continual worship that each of us is to offer the Lord in the sacrifice of our bodies day by day.

B. Together With Other Believers

Corporate worship is a particular expression of the total life-response of worship that we are to render to God. Gathering together is an important means of encouraging one another to persevere in Christ – in love and obedience to Him. In other words, our corporate worship fuels our individual worship. As Christians come together as a local body of believers, we engage with God corporately as the family of God.

²⁴ Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NAVPress, 1991), 95.

²⁵ Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NAVPress, 1991), 93-4.

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

The apostle Paul also regularly uses the terminology of edification, rather than the language of worship, to indicate the purpose and function of Christian gatherings.²⁶ The church in assembly not only approaches God, but it provides encouragement to its members. In the assembly, Christians build one another up. When Christians gather together to minister the truth of God to one another in love, the church is manifested, maintained, and built up. In the giving and receiving of various ministries, Christians may encounter God and submit themselves to Him afresh in praise and obedience, repentance and faith. Ministry exercised for the building up of the body of Christ is a significant way of worshiping and glorifying God. We don't attend the Sunday service in order to obtain some private spiritual experience.

Scripture knows nothing of an individualistic, lone-ranger Christianity. Scripture does not know of a Christian living in isolation from other believers. The New Testament describes the church as a body (1 Cor. 12:12-13) and a household (Eph. 2:19-20). Therefore, to be a Christian is to be a part of, and involved in, a body of believers—a local church. A major in which we worship corporately is through encouraging and being encouraged by others. For instance, when we sing praises, we not only sing to God but we also edify one another by speaking truth to one another through our songs. We address one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19).

This is the reason why we cannot engage in corporate worship through a TV or radio broadcast, or over the Internet. Scripture commands us to assemble with other believers for the purpose of approaching God with other Christians and for mutual edification.

V. Concluding Thoughts

Worship is both an end and a means. Worship is an end in itself because worship is for God's glory. It is engaging with God on the terms He proposes and in the way that He alone makes possible. At the same time, worship is also a means to godliness. We become like whom or what we worship.²⁷ As we worship God in Spirit and truth, we grow in conformity to the image of His Son.

Consider the object of our worship – the glorious and majestic Creator and Redeemer God. Remember what He has graciously done for us in Christ. Read God's Word and pray that the Spirit would stir our hearts with the truth. Allow Scripture, prayer, song and our relationships with other Christians to encourage us in our worship. Let us also eagerly long for the day when we gather around God's throne with an innumerable multitude to praise Him for all eternity.

²⁶ 1 Cor. 14:3-5, 12, 17, 26; 1 The. 5:11; Eph. 4:11-16.

²⁷ Rom. 1:18-32. Also, see – Beale, G. K. *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Worship*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008. – for a more in depth study of this.