



## ***Session 4 - The Essential Practices of Worship and Prayer***

Individuals were created by God to be worshippers. We all worship something. The Bible tells us that individuals (and nations) often replace God with something that is made by our hands or something that we think we need. Anything that takes the place of God becomes an idol and the Scripture is full of warnings to flee from idolatry. In his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A.W. Tozer declares that “*what comes to our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.*” This requires us to worship the God that is revealed in the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit and not a god of our own making. In Session 4, we will emphasize the importance of true worship and its role in God’s people by looking at three questions. Then, we will consider how prayer is part of our worship.

What is worship?

### ***Worship***

**How would you define worship?**

In the simplest sense worship is glorifying God. It is ascribing or displaying the worth of God. John Piper says that “*True worship is based on a right understanding of God’s nature, and it is a right valuing of God’s worth.*” Our understanding of who God is and what he has done will affect the worship that comes from our hearts and minds.

**Read Hebrews 13:15-16.** Remembering that a sacrifice was the center of worship in the Old Testament, how might these verses help us understand worship?

In John 4:24, Jesus states that we must worship the Lord in spirit and truth. How do we understand what Jesus is saying to the woman at the well?

**There are two other ways that we worship God. One way would be with our mouths** when we praise God, declaring his worth and humbling ourselves before him. This usually takes place in a worship service but may also happen in small groups or in our personal time with God. **The other way we worship can be with our actions**, acts of love and service that emulate the love of God.

**What do you learn about worship from the following verses?**

I Chronicles 16:23-29

Psalm 95:1-7

Psalm 100

Isaiah 6:1-5

Romans 12:1,2

2 Kings 17:29-39



Can you find and share any other verses regarding worship?

**How does the church practice worship?**

When we worship as the church, it is important that we always remember that worship is God-centered. We worship God the Father, through Christ, led by the Holy Spirit. Worship is really not about those who come to worship. It is not about pleasing or entertaining the worshipers; we praise and glorify God in worship.

Most worship in the church takes place on a Sunday morning with an entire local body of believers coming together as one body before God. In any worship service you will find a combination of several worship activities taking place.

What are some of the activities that you have experienced in a worship service?

Here are several activities of worship you might find in a local church. Which of these are practiced in the church where you worship? Are you gifted and equipped to lead any of these activities? What experience or training might encourage you to step into leadership of these and other worship activities?

Reading the Word

Preaching the Word

Repentance of sins

Prayers

Giving of our tithes and offerings

Communion, baptism, dedication of children

The sharing of testimonies

Music - instruments, singing, (poetry)

Dance

Media- sound and visuals

**How can you practice worship?** Worship is done in corporate settings and done personally.

We are to *“Teach and admonish one another with spiritual wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God”* (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16)

We are to enter *“The Most Holy Place,”* a place of worship, how are we to respond? Read Hebrews 10:19-25. What are the four things that we are told to do?

We are to *“Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy”* (Exodus 20:8). Every Christian needs to be a part of regular worship with others. You should be a participant but you may also take a leadership role.

Any other thoughts?

***Personal Response – What must change in your life to worship in both your personal life and in the life of the church? List your answers and then pray with another person about keeping them.***

## *Prayer*

Earlier, it was stated that prayer is an important part of corporate and personal worship. There are many types of prayer, but first we ask you to define prayer.



### **What is prayer?**

In its simplest sense, prayer is talking to God. James Houston describes prayer as “*keeping company with God.*” This allows us to think of prayer as part of a relationship. One which includes both talking to God and listening to what he has to say to us; especially as he communicates to us through his Word.

We can ask God to act for our own concerns or we can pray for the concerns of others. This is called intercessory prayer. We might pray for families, work, neighbors, our church, our food sources, government, global issues, and injustices (the list goes on and on).

***Small Group Discussion*** – Some of the prayers found in Scripture instruct our understanding of prayer. In your small group, take one of the prayers and be ready to share what the Lord is teaching you about prayer.

1 Chronicles 29:10-13

2 Kings 19:14-19

Nehemiah 1:4-11

Ephesians 3:14-21

### **In what ways does the church practice prayer?**

A praying church is said to be a powerful church. As we think about the church, it is important to realize that each of the “essential elements” of the church need to be covered by prayer. The church needs to be in prayer for its mission and how that mission is carried out in its community.

### **When does the church pray?**

Prayer is included in the Sunday morning worship service.

Often a specific meeting time or several times during the week are set aside to meet in prayer.

Prayer may be offered during any one of the church’s other meetings such as leadership meetings, educational classes, small groups, practice for worship, etc.

The church body is often given specific prayer requests to pray for at home.

## How does the church pray?

The disciples came to Jesus and asked him to teach them to pray. In Matthew 6:1-11 and Luke 11:1-13 we discover Jesus teaching. What does he teach them and us about prayer?

**It is often helpful to have our prayers directed by four points of view:**



**Adoration** – praising God for **who** he is. In adoration we are led to worship God.

**Confession** – saying the same thing that God says about our sins, repenting, and turning from them.

**Thanksgiving** – praising God for **what** he has done.

**Supplication** – humbly and earnestly asking God to act. This is how we seek God’s guidance.

Some ways that the church prays- Can you add to the list below?

- One-person prayers with the entire group listening and praying along silently.
- Everyone prays silently.
- Different individuals take turns praying.
- Everyone prays the same prayer out loud together – such as the Lord’s Prayer.

**How can prayer be more central to the life of the church where you serve?**

**Personal Response - How can you practice prayer in your personal life?**

***Time to Practice*** -On the back of this page, write a prayer that unites the worship of God and the requests you bring before the Lord. Why is it important to keep these threads together?