

Teacher's Guide for Living Holy

Theme: Holiness in Worship

Life Application:

Recognizing that the holiness of God requires holiness in our worship of Him.

Key Verse for Meditation:

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

– Psalm 29:2

Focus Scriptures:

Exodus 3:1-7; 1 Chronicles 16:29; Psalm 26:4-8; John 4:23-24; Hebrews 10:19-22; 12:28-29

Lesson Key:

To worship God is to recognize His holiness and His worthiness, and to acknowledge in appropriate ways the value of what we see in Him. The Bible speaks of this as “glorifying God” or “giving glory to God,” and views it as the primary duty of man. Our methods of worshipping together as part of the Body of Christ can never be a substitute for direct and personal fellowship with Him in prayer, praise, and devotion.

Introduction:

In order to worship God rightly, we must regard Him rightly. This means that we understand that He is the origin of all holiness—that God alone establishes the standard for what is righteous and what is wicked. We acknowledge that He is totally holy; holiness is an essential part of His nature, just as His omnipotence and omniscience are part of His nature. He is completely free from any moral evil, and is the absolute essence of purity. As such, He alone is deserving of our worship.

While many forms of worship are mentioned in the Bible, true worship comes from a heart that is wholly dedicated to and one with God. It is a heartfelt acknowledgement of God, and is expressed by an attitude of sincerity, reverence, obedience, thanksgiving, and humility. As an interaction between God and His people, it can—and should—take place both corporately and privately, and both outwardly and inwardly.

Opener Ideas/Activities:

The downloadable video clip “Too Busy to Listen to God” would be a good opener or discussion starter on this topic. Search for the title at <http://sermoncentral.sermonspice.com>.

Prepare a brief, humorous skit about methods of approaching the President, to portray the way some people approach God. These could include:

- The sleepy approach
- Distracted with other things
- Ceremonial and pompous
- Very brief
- Disrespectful
- While doing something else

The skit should conclude with a small child coming in and addressing the President simply, with respect, etc., as a complete contrast to the other approaches. Make the point that we would not approach the President in a casual or disrespectful manner, so we should be careful that our approach to God is appropriate, worshipful, and respectful.

Bring printed advertisements of a food item. No matter how descriptive or eloquent the words or how vivid the pictures, they really offer only a limited understanding of the product itself. Pictures cannot reveal it fully. Then produce the food item and share it with the class. Bring out that while we can read about God and His awesome holiness in His Word, we really do not fully understand it until we personally experience Him.

Open your class session with some odd detail as part of your appearance. For instance, a woman might have a curler in her hair. A man might have a rubber band around his coat sleeve just above his elbow. Make no reference to the oddity at first. After awhile, point it out and ask whether your students found it distracting. The point should be made that small distractions can keep us and others from focusing on worship. We must be careful that nothing about us is a “distraction” to others who want to worship God.

Questions from Student Handout:

1. The word *worship* occurs 111 times in the King James version of the Bible. What does worship mean to you?

According to the dictionary, worship is “reverence offered to a divine being or supernatural power; also: an act of expressing such reverence; a form of religious practice with its creed and ritual; extravagant respect or admiration for or devotion to an object of esteem.” Other words that define worship are “pray, glorify, praise, exalt, and magnify.”

In most cases the English word worship is used to translate a Hebrew or Greek word that means one of the following: prostrate, fall down, pay homage, reverence, honor.

Class discussion should bring out that worship is not merely getting upon our knees out of a sense of obligation and reciting a few rote phrases. It is the response of the heart to His worth or worthiness. It is the act of adoring, exalting, honoring, and thanking God. True worship comes from an attitude of sincerity, reverence, and humility, and may occur in the form of prayer, praise, reflection, Bible reading, or song.

2. Use the following Scriptures to identify some elements that are necessary if we want God to accept our worship. 1 Chronicles 28:9; 2 Chronicles 5:13; Isaiah 29:23; 66:1-2; Amos 5:21-24; Hebrews 11:6; 12:28

The following elements are identified in these Scriptures:

- *Willingness (1 Chronicles 28:9)*
- *Unity (2 Chronicles 5:13)*
- *Holiness (Isaiah 29:23)*
- *Humility (Isaiah 66:1-2)*
- *Righteousness (Amos 5:21-24)*
- *Faith (Hebrews 11:6)*
- *Reverence (Hebrews 12:28)*

3. Why is it important to worship God? See 1 Chronicles 16:29 and Revelation 4:11.

The Bible commands it, and we were created to worship God. Worship draws our hearts closer to Him and makes us more receptive to His guidance and directions for us. It intensifies our love for God, and through worship we experience joy regardless of our circumstances and trials. Psalm 22:3 tells us that God inhabits the praises of His people. When we worship, the Lord often sends comfort and deliverance for difficult situations.

4. What do you think is meant by the phrase, “the beauty of holiness,” in 1 Chronicles 16:29? In what ways could holiness be considered beautiful?

David was not speaking about an outward beauty, but an inner righteousness and beauty and holiness of character. David sought after this “beauty” during his lifetime (see Psalm 27:4). Having a pure heart before the Lord causes the beauty of Christ to permeate our lives, and this will permeate our worship.

The most beautiful thing about holiness is the Lord Himself: “Let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us” (Psalm 90:17). The one who worships in holiness is a beautiful reflection to the world of the holiness of God.

The beauty of holiness is in direct contrast to the darkness of sin and the world. Sin is repulsive to God, but He is pleased when a heart that has been cleansed from sin comes before Him to worship. What the world deems foolish (such as submission to God, or denying self and following God’s will) God considers beautiful and delightful.

5. Why do you think this phrase, “the beauty of holiness,” occurs in conjunction with the concept of worship in the above verse?

The beauty of holiness glorifies God and not man, and this is the kind of beauty the Lord longs for in our devotion to Him. It is not outward beauty that gratifies God, but inner purity that produces outer sanctity and the fundamentals of a sincere heart, passionate spirit, and a reverent manner.

6. What are some attitudes that hinder true worship? See Proverbs 15:29; Matthew 5:23-24; Luke 18:13-14; John 4:24.

Answers should include:

Wickedness in the heart (Proverbs 15:29).

Something between ourselves and another believer (Matthew 5:23-24).

Lack of humility (Luke 18:13-14).

Lack of honesty with God—Jesus said God must be worshiped in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

Additional Questions:

What are some ways we can prepare our hearts for true worship?

Thoughts offered by your class may include:

- *Setting apart a dedicated time for worship.*
- *Purposefully eliminating distractions.*
- *Thinking about and thanking God for His works, creation, past blessings.*
- *Submitting to God.*
- *Having a teachable spirit.*
- *Singing and praising.*

What do Isaiah 57:15, Ezekiel 39:7, and 1 Chronicles 16:35 tell us about God’s name? How should this understanding affect our worship?

These verses indicate that God’s name is holy. When we approach God in prayer, the fact that even His name is Holy should help us to remember that we are in His Holy presence. We must treat His name with the reverence that is also due to Him. It should never be used lightly.

In the following Scriptures, where did worship occur? What does this teach us? Exodus 5:1; Psalm 63:6-7; 111:1; Jonah 2:1-2; Acts 16:23-25

It might be interesting to make a list with your students. They may be able to offer some other Scriptures or suggestions along the same line.

- *Exodus 5:1 – in the desert*
- *Psalms 63:6-7 – in bed*
- *Psalms 111:1 – in the assembly of the upright*
- *Jonah 2:1-2 – in the belly of a whale*
- *Acts 16:23-25 – in prison*

Your class should understand that true worship can take place wherever a person lifts his heart in reverence and gratitude to the Lord.

How can we make even our routine or ordinary actions (such as cleaning the church or attending a musical rehearsal) be a form of worship?

In order for our actions to be a form of worship, our hearts must be right before God, and our attitude must be one of joyful service. If we are begrudging, we are not worshipful.

Why is corporate worship, as well as personal worship, important?

In the public worship of the church, Christians have their primary experience of identity as a faith community, and as people of God. We are commanded not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25). Some of the benefits of corporate worship include encouragement from one another, help from a sermon or song, and the opportunity to help others toward the way of salvation.

The article “Entering God’s Presence” in the student handouts says, “We should try to hold off thoughts relating to job, home, hobbies, or activities when we enter into worship.” That can be a challenge! What are some possible helps in this endeavor?

Suggestions might include:

- *Paper and pencil to note distracting things that come to mind so you can lay them aside and not worry about remembering them.*
- *Praying out loud.*
- *Turning off your cell.*
- *Finding a quiet, secluded place where you can be uninterrupted.*
- *Selecting a time for devotions when other members of the household are not around.*

How can we worship if we are facing great difficulties in our lives?

This is a time to think about God—His power, faithfulness, love for us, etc. Also, we can consider times in the past when the Lord has answered prayer, and we can thank Him. We can remember testimonies of others whose prayers God has answered. We can sing when we do not feel like singing. As we focus on God in these ways, we will be uplifted and encouraged in spite of our challenges.

What attribute of God is highlighted in Isaiah 6:3 through repetition? What conclusion can we draw from the fact that this is the only attribute of God ever given this special emphasis in Scripture?

Isaiah 6:3 emphasizes the fact that God is holy. This means that holiness is an essential part of His nature. He is morally pure, righteous, and forever perfect. Because it is the only attribute of God emphasized in this way in Scripture, we realize that it is at the very center of His nature.

In a time when moral and spiritual laxity was prevalent in Israel, it was critically important for Isaiah to see God in His holiness. Today, too, the moral dissolution of the world can reduce and obscure our view of God. We need the Biblical view of God as One who is high and lifted up in order to fully understand our own lack and desperate need of Him, who is our holiness (see 1 Corinthians 1:30).

What does the absolute holiness of God mean to us?

Class discussion could bring out a number of thoughts, including the following.

God's absolute holiness should be a source of great comfort and assurance to us, because we can be confident that His actions toward us always will be perfect and just.

God's holiness means He does not overlook sin; He hates sin. This fact shows why the prevailing mindset in the religious world—that we sin in thought, word, and deed every day—is so absolutely contrary to God's nature.

Because God is holy, He will never tempt us to sin (see James 1:13).

God never will put us in a situation where we have no alternative than to sin; He promises that with every temptation there will be a way of escape (see 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Because God himself is holy, everything associated with Him is also holy. Read the following Scriptures, and note with your class what things were deemed holy by their association with God.

Exodus 12:16 – holy assembly

Exodus 16:23 – holy Sabbath

Exodus 20:7 – holy name

Deuteronomy 7:6 – holy people

Psalms 2:6 – holy hill of Zion

Psalms 20:6 – holy Heaven

Psalms 47:8 – holy throne

Bible Background:

We read in Hebrews 12:28, “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve [render religious homage, or worship] God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” There may be a danger of practicing a type of worship that is acceptable to ourselves, or to those attending the worship service. While worship must communicate clearly to the gathered congregation, the Bible insists that it must above all be acceptable to God. And we can only know what is acceptable to God by a careful study of His Word.

Word Search:

The Prophet Isaiah had a vision of God that was unforgettable. He recorded in Isaiah 6:3 how angels, in the presence of God, continually said to one another, “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” In the Hebrew language, the repetition of words was to give them a profound emphasis. It would be equivalent to using bold letters, capitalizing the word, or concluding with multiple exclamation marks.

Supplemental Resources:

“In the Presence of Almighty God” by Clif Kasper, *Higher Way* Vol.94-4

“The Sacrifice of Praise” by Pete Friesen, *Higher Way* Vol.91-2

“Enter the Holy Place” by Howard Wilson, *Higher Way* Vol. 91-3

“Entering God's Presence” by Polin Ho, *Higher Way* Vol.90-4