

St. Matthew AME Church
Orange, New Jersey
Rev. Melvin E. Wilson, Pastor/Teacher

Women's Bible Study

November 8, 2025

Fall Series: "True Worship"

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and truth."

John 4:24 KJV

Session III: "Worship Costs"

"But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." II Samuel 24:24

I. Review of Session I: "It Is All About God"

"Jesus answered, "It is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only." Luke 4:8

- Worship is the cornerstone of the Christian faith, reflecting our reverence and adoration for God.
- Worship is when we give our deepest affection and highest praise to God. True worship is when we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Deut.6:5
- It is when we put God above everything.
- Real worship happens when our spirit responds to God's Spirit. Worship acts as a bridge connecting us with God.
- By worshipping, we recognize God's greatness and submit to His authority, which allows us to have a closer spiritual connection. Worship keeps our focus on God and His Word, which guides us in our daily lives.
- Worship is not for us. Our motive is to bring glory, honor, and pleasure to God. Offering yourself to God is what worship is all about. Worship is how we tell God we love Him.

II. Review of Session II: "Where Should I Worship?"

"Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem." John 4:20

- Our fathers" refers to the woman's Samaritan ancestors. "You people" were the Jews.
- The religious and social gulf between Samaritans and Jews in Jesus' day was incredibly wide.
- The Samaritans had developed their own system of worship because they were not welcome at the temple in Jerusalem, and this was the key to Jesus' conversation with the woman. The Samaritans only accepted the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, as Scripture, and they established their own temple on a mountain called Gerizim.

- So, when the Samaritan woman says, “Our fathers worshiped in this mountain,” she is saying, My people have their place of worship on this mountain right behind me. You, Jews, go to your temple in Jerusalem.
- Jesus declared, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.” John 4:21
- The location of worship is not nearly as important as the attitude of the worshipers.
- “God is Spirit” means He is not a physical being limited to one place. God is present everywhere at any time. It is not where we worship that counts, but how we worship.
- If you limit worship to where you are, the minute you leave that place of worship, you will leave your attitude of worship. Worship has less to do with where you go on Sunday morning than who you are in touch with all week long.
- God’s presence is no longer centered in the temple of Jerusalem, or on any mountain. He now lives inside His people. It’s not where you are, it’s who you are.
- Does this mean we don’t have to go to church anymore to worship God? NOT AT ALL!
- Private temple worship always leads to corporate worship, if you are worshiping in private, you can’t wait to worship in public.
- You are the temple of God.” Do you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?” I Corinthians 6:19 You are the temple of God. That’s why the Bible says you cannot do whatever you want with your body.

“You were bought with a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.” I Corinthians 6:20

WORSHIP IS NO LONGER A PLACE. IT’S WHERE YOU ARE. YOU ARE THE TEMPLE.

III. Introduction of Session “Worship Costs”

- It is easy to worship God when things are going great in your life-when He has provided food, friends, family, health, and happy situations. But circumstances are not always pleasant. How do you worship God then?
- The deepest level of worship is praising God in spite of pain, thanking God during a trial, trusting God when tempted, surrendering while suffering, and loving when you feel unloved.
- When Jesus said, “Love God with all your strength,” he pointed out that worship takes effort and energy. It is not always convenient or comfortable, and sometimes worship is a sheer act of the will, a willing sacrifice. Passive worship is an oxymoron.
- One thing worship costs is our self-centeredness. You cannot exalt God and yourself at the same time. “You shall have no other gods before me.” Exodus 20:2

IV. Scripture Background for Session III

“But the king replied to Araunah, “No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” II Samuel 24:24

- What was wrong with taking a census? A census was commanded in Numbers to prepare an army for conquering the promised land (Numbers 1:2; 26:2). A census amounted to a draft for the army. The land was now at peace, so there was no need to enlist troops. Israel had extended its borders

and had become a recognized power. David's sin was pride and ambition in counting the people so that he could glory in the size of his nation and army, its power, and defenses. By doing this, he put his faith in the size of his army rather than in God's ability to protect them regardless of their number. Even Joab knew a census was wrong, but David did not heed his advice. WE SIN IN A SIMILAR WAY WHEN WE PLACE OUR SECURITY IN MONEY, POSSESSIONS, OR THE MIGHT OF OUR NATION. II Samuel 24:1-3

- The king's word overruled Joab, so the census of the army was taken. (II Samuel 24:4-9)
- David was conscience-stricken after he had counted the fighting men. (II Samuel 24:10-11)
- Both David and the Israelites were guilty of sin (II Samuel 24:1). David's sin was pride, but the Bible does not say why God was angry with the people of Israel; perhaps they put their security in military and financial prosperity rather than God, as David did. God dealt with the whole nation through David, who exemplified the national sin of pride.
- SIN, EVEN FORGIVEN SIN, ALWAYS HAS CONSEQUENCES.
- God gave David three choices. Each was a form of punishment that God told the people they could expect if they disobeyed His laws (disease — Deut. 28:20-22; famine— 28:23,24; war— 28:25-26). David wisely chose the form of punishment that came most directly from God. David knew how brutal and harsh men in war could be, and he also knew God's great mercy. II Samuel 24:12-13
- When you sin greatly, turn back to God. To be punished by God is far better than to take your chances without him. II Samuel 24:14
- When David saw the angel striking the people, he pleaded with God to let the judgment be against his family alone. (24:17)
- This is a reminder that we never sin in a vacuum. You may think that your sinful choices affect no one but you. But, this is mainly not correct. When we choose to sin, we leave spiritual harm in our wake-whether or not we see the results immediately.
- God ordered David to go to the threshing floor of Araunah to set up an altar so that the plague might be stopped. David obeyed immediately. When Araunah saw David coming, he paid homage to the king with his face to the ground (II Samuel 24;19-20)
- Once Araunah learned the reason for David's visit. He was more than happy to give him not only the threshing floor, but everything else he needed for the sacrifice. II Samuel 24:22-23
- David refused the offer, insisting that he would pay for everything at full price. David stated one of the greatest biblical principles of sacrificial giving. "I will not offer to the LORD my God burnt offerings that costs me nothing." II Samuel 24:24b

IV. Different Forms of Worship

1. ***Singing and Music***- Many bible passages highlight singing as a form of worship. Music allows us to express our joy and gratitude towards God.

“Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.” Psalm 95:1-2

This psalm is an invitation to worship God. This psalm reveals a corporate emphasis in worshipping God. Praising the Lord by oneself is not sufficient. We need to praise God in community.

“Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.” Psalm 33:1-3

David, who some believe wrote this psalm, was an accomplished harpist (I Samuel 16:15-25). He frequently spoke about musical instruments throughout his psalms. He undoubtedly composed music for many of the psalms, and he commissioned music for temple worship.

2. *Why Prayer Matters For Worship*-Worship through prayer centers on God. While prayer is not synonymous with all forms of worship, it is an integral part of it because it involves community with God and showing reverence to Him. Prayer allows for a more interactive relationship with God.

- The Lord’s Prayer provided by Jesus begins with worshipping God’s name and kingdom, showing that the focus of prayer is to be on God first. Prayer sets a tone for worship. “This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.’” Matthew 6:9
- I Thessalonians suggests that prayer is a continuous act of devotion and worship,
- “Pray continually” I Thessalonians 5:17 NIV
- “Pray without ceasing” KJV
- “Never stop praying” NLT
- “Pray all the time” Message
- We cannot spend all our time on our knees, but it is possible to have a prayerful attitude at all times. A prayerful attitude is not a substitute for regular times of prayer, but rather an outgrowth of those times. Paul’s exhortation to pray without ceasing is not a charge to constantly walk around muttering prayers, but rather to have a life characterized by prayer. God’s people are quick to pray in all circumstances, not only when emergencies arise.

3. *Reading and Meditating on Scripture*-Reading scripture is a form of worship that helps us understand God’s will and promises. Reading the scriptures is like having a conversation and a way of seeking a deeper relationship with God.

“I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me.” Psalm 119:19

- The psalmist says that he is a stranger on earth, and so he needed guidance. Almost any long trip requires a map or guide. As we travel through life, God’s Word should be our roadmap, pointing out safe routes, obstacles to avoid, and our ultimate destination. We must recognize ourselves as pilgrims, traveling here on earth, who need to study God’s map to learn the way. If we ignore the map, we will wander aimlessly through life and risk missing our real destination. “Do not let this book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” Joshua 1:8 Meditating on Scripture is a form of worship that keeps God’s Word central in a believer’s life.

- “And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was sitting above all the people, and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the Great God. Then all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” While lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Nehemiah 8:5-6
- Ezra was standing above the assembly on a platform that allowed all the people to see and hear, but it was also an outward expression of the importance of elevating the Word of God. He was in the center of the crowd as he read-exactly where the Word of God ought to be.
- Spiritual renewal and worship are inseparably linked to the Word of God.

4. **Obedience** - True worship involves obeying God’s commands and living according to His teachings. The Bible emphasizes that our actions and choices should reflect our devotion to God.

- I Samuel 15:22 teaches that God values obedience over ritual sacrifices. But Samuel replied: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”
- This is the first of numerous places in the Bible where the theme “to obey is better than sacrifice” is stated(Psalm 40:6-8,51:16-17, Proverbs 21:3; Isaiah 1:11-17, Jeremiah 7:21-23; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8; Matthew 12:7, Mark 12:33, Hebrews 10:8,9)
- Was Samuel saying that sacrifice is unimportant? NO, he was urging Saul to look at his reasons for making the sacrifice rather than at the sacrifice itself. A sacrifice was a ritual transaction between man and God that physically demonstrated a relationship between them. But if the person’s heart was not truly repentant or if he did not truly love God, the sacrifice was a hollow ritual. Religious ceremonies or rituals are empty unless they are performed with an attitude of love and obedience. “Being religious” (going to church, serving in a ministry/committee) is not enough if we do not act out of devotion and obedience to God.
- “I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, “ I desire mercy, not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent.” Matthew 12: 6-7
- The Pharisees were so concerned about religious rituals that they missed the whole purpose of the temple-to bring people to God. And because Jesus Christ is even greater than the temple, how much better can he bring people to God. God is far more than the created instruments of worship. If we become more concerned with the means of worship than with the One we worship, we will miss God even as we are worshipping Him.

A SURRENDERED AND OBEDIENT HEART IS MORE PLEASING TO GOD THAN PERFORMING CEREMONIES AND OFFERINGS WITHOUT GENUINE SUBMISSION.

5. **Sacrifice and Giving**- In the Old Testament, sacrifices were a common form of worship. While animal sacrifices are no longer practiced, the principle of giving remains. Offering time, resources, and talent to serve God and others is a form of worship.

- When Jesus said, “Love God with all your strength,” he pointed out that worship takes effort and energy. It is not always convenient or comfortable, and sometimes worship is a sheer act of the will, a willing sacrifice. PASSIVE WORSHIP IS AN OXYMORON.

- “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest, if we do not give up.” Galatians 6:9
- When you praise God even when you don’t feel like it, when you get out of bed to worship, when you’re tired, or when you help others when you are worn out, you are offering a sacrifice of worship to God. THAT PLEASES GOD!
- There can be a release and a real freedom in worshiping in the hard times, but it works. And through it, God does something in your heart. Things might continue to be tough for a while, but the burden suddenly doesn’t feel so heavy.

6. Acts of Service- “This service that you perform is not only supporting the needs of God’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.” II Corinthians 9:12

- “For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:8-10
- We become Christians through God’s unmerited grace, not as the result of any effort, ability, intelligent choice, or act of service on our part. HOWEVER, out of gratitude for this free gift, we will seek to help and serve others with kindness, love, and gentleness, and not merely to please ourselves. While no action or work we do can help us obtain salvation, God’s intention is that our salvation will result in acts of service. We are not saved merely for our own benefit, but to serve Christ and build up the church.
- “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” I Peter 4:10
- All our abilities should be used in serving others, none are for our own exclusive enjoyment.

PLEASE REMEMBER

Session I. “It Is All About God.”

1. The most common mistake Christians make in worship today is seeking an experience, rather than seeking God.
2. If we fail to worship God, we always find a substitute, even if it ends up being ourselves.
3. Worship is the magnification of God and the minimization of self.
4. A worship service should be for an audience of One.
5. Worship is not a matter of sincerity alone, but of truth also.
6. Worship in truth alone is deficient unless it is also worship in “spirit.”

Session II. “Where Should I Worship?”

1. Worship is not a matter of where, but who.

2. “God is spirit” means He is not a physical being limited to one place. He is present everywhere, and He can be worshipped anywhere at any time.
3. Worship has less to do with where you go on Sunday morning than who you are in touch with all week long.
4. God’s presence now lives inside His people. So, where can you worship? Anywhere!

Session III. “Worship Costs”

1. True Worship occurs even when circumstances are not favorable. We actively participate in congregational worship (singing, praying), meditating and reading the Word of God, and giving our monetary resources.
2. We worship God by serving others.
3. Real servants do what’s needed, even when it’s inconvenient.
4. Real servants do their best with what they have.
5. When God puts someone in-need right in front of you, He is giving you the opportunity to grow and worship Him by serving.

“YET A TIME IS COMING AND HAS NOW COME WHEN THE TRUE WORSHIPERS WILL WORSHIP THE FATHER IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH, FOR THEY ARE THE KIND OF WORSHIPERS THE FATHER SEEKS.”

John 4:23