



Part 2: Prioritize Worship

Psalm 95

Prioritize worship with God's People.

I. Humans are Incurable Worshippers

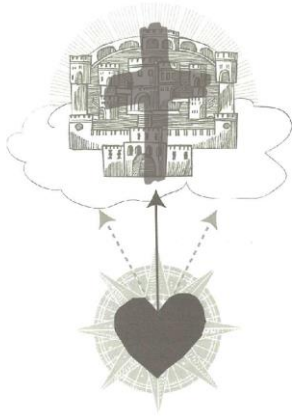
A. We All Worship Something

In his famous commencement address to Kenyon College, David Foster Wallace said the following:

“In the day-to-day trenches of life, there is no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. **Everybody worships.** The only choice we get is what to worship...The insidious thing about these forms of worship is not that they're evil or sinful; it is that **they are unconscious. They are default settings.** They're the kind of worship you just gradually slip into, day after day, getting more and more selective about what you see and how you measure value without ever being fully aware that that's what you're doing.” David Foster Wallace, Commencement Address to Kenyon College (quoted by Jame Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 23).

Foster Wallace is wisely putting his finger on something crucial for us to understand this morning – what we worship is usually unconscious – our hearts have default settings that we may not be aware of (like the attachment theories of brain science from last week's message by Jasona).

We may not worship what we think. We are influenced by the ideas and the habits and practices of our culture that index our heart towards a certain vision of the good life.



Question for disciples of Jesus is what are the rhythms, commitments, and practices that we can embody that will index our hearts towards King Jesus and his beautiful Kingdom?

B. Next Steps: Core Commitments in the Way of Jesus

The conviction behind this Guide is a statement by Eugene Peterson: “The Jesus way wedded to the Jesus truth brings about the Jesus life.”

Prioritize Worship with God’s People.

“I want to speak up on behalf of one weekly habit that is utterly essential to any healthy, life-giving, joy-producing Christian walk: corporate worship. And it is all too often neglected or taken very lightly in our day of disembodiment and in our proclivity for being noncommittal. In fact, I do not think it is too strong to call corporate worship the single most important habit of the Christian life.” – David Mathis

Question: Why is this commitment so important? What is the wisdom of the Church for 2000 years that we are dismissing rather casually? What may we expect to happen to us and our children if we seek to faithfully embody this commitment?

II. The Commitment of Worship in the Way of Jesus

A. Jesus Lived with This Commitment

“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went to the synagogue, as was his custom.” Luke 4:16

B. The Early Church Embodied this Commitment

“And they devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Acts 2:42

“On the first day of the week, we came together to break bread.”
Acts 20:7

As you read through the New Testament, it's clear that the Christians gathered weekly to worship together. Fairly early after Jesus' resurrection, they moved the day of their communal worship from Saturday to Sunday (day of Jesus' resurrection) that came to be known as "the Lord's Day" (Acts 20; 7; 1 Cor. 11:18; 14:23; 16:2; Rev. 1:10).

C. The Communal Essence of Biblical Worship (Psalm 95)

1. Worship is Communal: a Gathering with God's Covenant People

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

We are summoned out of our personal lives and rhythms to gather with other Christians to worship the Triune God revealed in Jesus Christ.

"The gospel pulls us into community. One of the immediate changes the gospel makes is grammatical: we instead of I; our instead of my; us instead of me...The same salvation that restores our relation with God reinstates us in the community of persons who live by faith. A believing community is the context for the life of faith." Eugene Peterson, *Reversed Thunder*

Our gathered worship includes singing – we sing our theology and our prayers to the Lord with one another. Music is one of God's gifts that he uses to access our hearts. Worship is about right affections as well as true thoughts.

2. Worship is coming into the Lord's Personal Presence.

Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and extol Him with music and song. Psalm 95:2

"Let us come before Him (His face = His Presence).

We gather together to meet with the Living God to receive His revelation of Himself and to respond accordingly. Christian worship is meeting together with the living God – coming before His throne of grace. It's not a concert or a pep talk.

3. Worship is expressing God's ultimate worth and our loyal love to Him.

"For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods...Come let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care." Psalm 95:3, 6-7
We are always responding to the Lord's grace in our life. We are always responding to His personal summons to come before Him. Of course, we do this personally in a variety of ways throughout our week, but the Lord has called us together one day a week.

Question: Does it matter if we gather together? Why is it so important?

III. Our Reformation to Be Like Jesus

A. Rhythms, Commitments & Practices as Counter-Formation Liturgies.

Researchers speak of “super brands” such as Apple and Starbucks – analyzing brain activity of product fanatics, they found that “the Apple products are triggering the same bits of their brain as religious imagery triggers in a person of faith.” (Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 52).

Starbucks invited its customers to sign up for its own liturgical rhythms – “Take comfort in rituals” the campaign exhorted.

“The practices of Christian worship train our love – they are the practice for the coming Kingdom, habituating us as citizens of the Kingdom of God. Christian worship, we should recognize, is essentially a counter formation to those rival liturgies we are often immersed in, cultural practices that covertly capture our loves and longings, mis calibrating them, orienting us to rival versions of the good life. This is why worship is at the heart of discipleship.” – James Smith, *You Are What You Love*

We learn to love by practice. All faithful love is saying no to other lovers.

B. God’s Promised Presence with His Gathered People.

When we gather in worship together, we experience the Presence of the Lord in a way we cannot when we are alone.

“Where two or three are gathered in my Name, there I am with them.” Matthew 18:20

The Lord is pleased to use the liturgy of the gathered worship to form us, often in ways that are imperceptible to us in the moment. At other times, the Lord speaks to us or otherwise ministers to us in a personal way through His manifest Presence.

“Worship is the arena in which God recalibrates our hearts, reforms our desires, and re-habituates our loves. Worship isn’t just something we do; it is where God does something to us. Worship is the heart of discipleship because it is the gymnasium in which God retrains our hearts.” – James Smith, *You Are What You Love*

“You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” – Augustine

Recommended Readings:

1. *The Life with Jesus Guide: Discerning Your Next Step*, p. 13-16. **Access the “Life with Jesus Guide” [here](#).**
2. *The Practice of Worship in Community* (<https://greenwoodcc.com/corporate-worship/>).
3. *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* by James K.A. Smith. This book is brilliant in its critique of the way we have mistakenly believed we are mostly defined and changed by what we think rather than what we desire/love at the core of our beings. Smith shows how we are formed by cultural liturgies that rival the gospel more than we may think.