

FACTORS OF FAITHFULNESS

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUPS

LESSON TWO: FAITHFUL IN WORSHIP

JOHN 4:19-24

MAIN POINT

Worship of God is our greatest need, ultimate privilege, and supreme duty. God calls us to pursue the true meaning, method, and motivation of worship.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- When you hear the word *worship*, what comes to mind?
- Everyone worships something. What are some of the most common things that people in our community worship today?
- What are some things that keep us from worshiping God more wholeheartedly?

God created us for His glory. (See Isaiah 43:7.) This tells us that we exist to know, love, and worship God. Thus, it is essential for us to carefully consider how God would have us worship Him. While the Samaritan woman questioned Jesus about the proper place where people of God should worship, Jesus seized this opportunity to teach us a far more important lesson on worship.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Have a volunteer read John 4:19-24.

- What was the issue the woman raised? How does this passage relate to our discussion of worship?
- How did Jesus redirect the woman's question to a more important issue? How might debates about worship style, dress, and location distract us from the heart of worship?

- How did Jesus describe true worship? What role does Jesus perform in the true worship of God?

The woman at the well tried to divert the exchange away from her and her sinfulness to a less personal issue. She pointed out that Jews worshiped in the Jerusalem temple and Samaritans worshiped on Mount Gerizim. In response, Jesus guided the conversation to a more important matter—the object of worship. He emphasized that God is interested in quality of worship, not the place of worship—in how people worship, not where.

What is true worship? Jesus said to this woman, you worship, but you don't know what you're worshipping. Worship is the adoring, contemplation of God revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Worship is all that we are, responding to all that God is. All that we are includes our body, soul (mind, emotion and will) and spirit. The English word *worship* comes from the old term *worth ship*. That is, we worship according to the worth that we place on God. We worship what we feel is worthy or “of worth”.

- What does it look like to worship God “in spirit”? (See John 3:3-8; John 1:12-13.) Is it possible to worship God without the Holy Spirit? Why or why not?
- What does it look like to worship God “in truth”? (See Eccl. 5:1-3.)

Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit on our hearts to breathe new spiritual life in us, we will not wholeheartedly worship God. Those who do not have the Holy Spirit may appreciate God on some level but their hearts are still cut off from Him. By commanding the Samaritan woman to worship God in spirit, Jesus revealed that true worship requires spiritual transformation. Before approaching God in worship we must make sure that we have trusted Christ as Lord and Savior. To worship in truth means to worship God as He truly is. Our worship must be focused on the character of God as it is revealed in Scripture.

If you worship God in spirit without truth, you will be a fanatic. If you worship God in truth without spirit, you will be a Pharisee. But if you worship God in spirit and in truth, you will be worshipping as God intended. God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

- How do you prepare your heart for worship?

Worship, though expressed in a variety of forms, will always be a matter of the heart—the response of our hearts to God's revelation of Himself. Put another way, true worship is our spirit's response to God's Spirit.

- Why does our motivation for worship matter?
- John 4:23 tells us that God seeks true worshippers. How might this inform the way you approach Him in worship?

Have you ever been in a boring worship service? Never. You've been in some services that were not worship services, but you've never been in a worship service that was boring. What could be more thrilling than worship of the true God? What could be more glorious? What could be more energizing? What could be more wonderful than when people come to worship the great God of eternity and lift our hearts to Him in praise?

If there is a problem with our worship, it is never a problem with God as the object of the worship. Instead, it is likely that our motivation for worship is wrong, or we are misguided in the thing we are worshipping.

- Where might you have held the wrong motivation for worship? How will you ask God to redirect you to true worship of Him based on today's study?

APPLICATION

Help your group members identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- What can you read or do this week that might lead you to a new posture of worship?
- What are some ways to keep the sacrifice of Christ central to your thinking as you seek to worship God throughout the week?
- Whether our worship is at church, in our group, or at home, what are ways that we can ready ourselves daily and weekly to meet with God in worship?

PRAYER

Lead your group in prayer, thanking God for His work on the cross and for the joy that is found in responding to His work through worship. Ask Him for forgiveness for placing focus on anything other than Him. And ask Him to make the Church more powerful for sharing the Gospel as believers become more passionate spiritual worshippers.