

Worship

and the **WORD**

a Bible study



Pamela Haddix

"...an awesome study that oozes with rock solid theology and incredibly practical application. It will challenge you to your core."

DAN WEBSTER, Authentic Leadership, Inc.

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and the **WORD**
a Bible study

Pamela Maddix



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Worship and the Word
by Pamela Haddix

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Blessings . . .

I've been so very blessed to serve alongside my husband, John, in music and worship ministry from the time when we first met throughout our married lives. His love encourages me, and his faith and gifts inspire me. And I've had the pleasure of being led to the throne by him on most Sunday mornings over the past 25 years. Thank you, honey, for showing me daily who our Heavenly Father is and how faithfully He loves by leading and loving me so very well. And thank you for encouraging and helping me along this journey - (especially with that first rough draft). What an amazing gift you are to me. I love you so.

My heart is also filled and inspired by the love and faith of our two daughters and their husbands - Lindsay and Jordan, and Krista and Ben. God out-did Himself (as if He really could) when He gave me you. You truly help me see more of Him - and you just make me smile. (Giving us Jude and Isaac doesn't hurt either, Linds.) Girls, thank you for your support and help with this project - especially, Lindsay, for your work on that first edit, and both of you for answering those emails asking for help with words when my brain had just gone numb. Couldn't love you more.

And I mustn't neglect a moment like this to remember my precious grandmother, Effert Lewis, who read the word of God to me often when I was young and who I know prayed for me much more. She was the first example of a truly God-seeking woman that I had in this life. (I can hear her singing hymns from her kitchen now.) I can't wait to see you and worship our God beside you again one day, Granny. Thanks for leaving me your well-worn, note-filled Bible.

Finally - only You, my Awesome God, could raise something like this out of this bowed-down, humbled-before-You, unworthy-apart-from-You, still-learning, still-growing person that I am. Only You could take someone who absolutely hated writing papers in school and give them a driving passion to communicate through the written word. (Yes, I know Your sense of humor well.) So I ask that You would work through this life's journey that You've had me on and use this resulting work in the life of another - so they can experience the absolute joy and fulfillment of worshiping You with abandon that I've come to know. You are far greater than I could ever comprehend or communicate. May I stay bowed before You.

~ Pam/Mom



Do you want to get tips or share ideas on leading others through this study? Or do you just want to join in a conversation about worship?

Check out my *Worship and the Word* facebook page or visit www.pamelahaddix.com.

I look forward to hearing from you!

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PRELUDE

Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name;
Bring an offering and come into His courts.
Worship the LORD in holy attire;
Tremble before Him, all the earth.

Psalm 96:7-9

Lesson One

PRELUDE to a Journey



“It is certainly true that hardly anything is missing from our churches these days – except the most important thing. We are missing the genuine and sacred offering of ourselves and our worship to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . Worship acceptable to God is the missing crown jewel in evangelical Christianity.”¹

A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer’s words about today’s Christian church are strong, and I believe they’re true. If they are true, how do we find, return, and rightfully cherish the crown jewel that is “worship acceptable to God?” (as in Romans 12:2). It’s my conviction that all followers of Jesus must embark on a worship journey – and a life-long one at that. It’s the most important journey we’ll ever take, and it’s one that impacts every other venture, big or small, that we find ourselves in along the way. It’s a journey that knows no bounds in its significance nor on its impact in our lives. And it’s a journey that has no limits and yet has very firm limitations. It has no limits, because the object of our worship, God Himself, is *limitless*. And it has firm limitations, because not everyone can come. Oh, don’t get

me wrong; everyone is invited. More than that, everyone's presence is longed for by the One True God, who desires – no, is *jealous* for – our worship. And those of us who choose to accept the invitation to be a God worshiper can expect an adventure like none other. It will find us exploring His unsearchableness and pausing often to respond to His indescribability. The only map is the Word of God, and our only guide is the Holy Spirit.

This study is the result of my growing passion to expose the veil that hides people's understanding and experience of worship, so it can be lifted, as mine has begun to be. I come to this place still a student, knowing that I won't fully grasp it all until I finally arrive at the biggest worship service imaginable. And I can't wait!

My story: A number of years ago, I attended a three-day conference that set in motion a new journey of my heart, mind, and soul to better understand what the Bible teaches about worship. I was amazed to find myself so intensely on this journey, because I thought I understood all there was to know about worship, since I had been extremely involved in it for years and enjoyed it so much. But I went into this conference carrying quite a few burdens: a difficult physical struggle, extended family health problems, and family and friends going through the rigors of divorce and custody issues. I walked in there exhausted – physically, mentally, and emotionally – from it all. However, that all changed dramatically while I was there, and I knew why.

You see, we were led in not only incredible, Spirit-led worship each day, but we worshiped for an hour or more, three-times a day, for each of those days. I really believe we worshiped for at least twelve hours in that short three-day conference! And each of those hours found me closer to the throne of God, with a clearer view of who He was in all His glory, and craving more. The result was an incredible peace that flooded my heart and mind, even as I considered all of the various problems that surrounded me and my loved ones. The change was so profound that I knew that I couldn't ignore the

powerful effect of gazing intensely at my Lord and offering to Him all I could in worship.

I left there thinking, *Wow, what just happened? And what happened when people in the Bible worshiped? How can I become that kind of worshiper regularly?* I suddenly had such an incredible, inner drive to understand God's plan for me as His worshiper, that I began my study immediately. I started with finding any story I could in scripture where people worshiped. And I must admit that even after being a Christian for over twenty years at that point, and after being in vocational music ministry for close to that, I was still amazed at what I discovered. Maybe my heart and mind were just finally sensitive enough to get a deeper understanding of something I had been taught before. Or maybe it was being in a different place in life's journey that showed me my need. Regardless, it's changed my view of God, my relationship to God – my life. Am I saying that I had never worshiped or been a worshiper before? Not at all. I *am* saying that I didn't regularly get to that place of truly transforming worship nearly often enough for a variety of reasons, and therefore, I was missing out on much of God's plan for me as His child. And I don't want to go back there.

Before I begin with the definition of worship, I want to make a distinction between *praise* and *worship*. Simply, *praise* is *about* God, exalting Him for others to hear. We read in Psalm 66:8, "*Let the sound of His praise be heard.*" *Praise* is not a difficult concept to understand, for we praise our children when they do something well. We praise each other for accomplishments or good deeds. So we, too, praise God for all that He is and has done, either to Him or to others. This comes easily, the more we grow to recognize His absolute greatness and to see its impact in and around our lives.

It is harder to define *worship*, for there are few human words to adequately capture the experience. But unlike *praise*, *worship* is always a vertical, intimate communion with the heart of God,

setting our spirit free to intimately and humbly respond to His Spirit. It is to God and for His ears only. Praise and worship often go hand in hand, for when we find ourselves praising the glories of our matchless God, it often prepares and compels us to bow our hearts in worship.

While my focus in this book is on worship, you'll hear both words being used, sometimes interchangeably, depending on the source. That being said . . .

Worship Definition:

In the Old Testament we see several Hebrew words used for worship, and most of them have far more original meaning than how they are generally translated in English, so much more depth than I could convey here. Some of these are:

HALAL - the most commonly used, expresses an unbridled, exuberant worship: *"My soul will **make its boast** in the LORD"* (Psalm 34:2). Our English word "hallelujah" comes from a combination of this word and Yahweh/God.

BARAK - to kneel or bow and bless God: *"**Bless** the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, **bless** His holy name"* (Psalm 103:1).

SHACHAH - bowing down before: the Israelites *"bowed low and **worshipped** the LORD with their faces to the ground"* (Nehemiah 8:6) and *"Come, let us **worship** and bow down"* (Psalm 95:6).

YADAH - taken from two words that mean "to extend the hand" and "to God," either in adoration or surrender: *"My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart exults, And with my song I **shall thank** Him"* (Psalm 28:7b).

ABAD – to do service or work for God: “You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you **shall worship Him**” (Deuteronomy 6:13) and “**Worship the LORD with reverence**” (Psalm 2:11).

SHABACH – declare the glory of God to God: “Because your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips **will praise You**” (Psalm 63: 3).

The New Testament also uses several Greek words for worship. Two of the most commonly used are:

LATREUO – suggests rendering honor, or paying homage. “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual **service of worship**” (Romans 12:1).

PROSKUNEO – literally means “to bow and kiss” in humble adoration: “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true **worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth**; for such people the Father seeks to be His **worshippers**. God is spirit; and those who **worship Him must worship in spirit and truth**” (John 4: 23-24).

I’ll never forget when our pastor, Larry Kayser, taught on the meaning of *proskuneo* a number of years ago and challenged us with the question, “Are you getting close enough to God in your times with Him to bow and kiss Him?” I was incredibly challenged by that, and I try to make it my goal in my personal times of worship to not leave until I’ve been close enough to bow and kiss my Savior.

These Hebrew and Greek definitions show us that worship truly melds outward expressions with our most intimate attitudes toward God. We see expressions of exuberance, adoration, and surrender, as well as blessing, bowing, and serving. Warren Wiersbe said, “True worship is balanced and involves the mind, the emotions, and the will. Worship is personal and passionate, not formal and unfeeling, and it is our response to the living God, voluntarily offered to Him as He has offered Himself to us. . . . **Worship is the**

response of all that we are to all that God is and does” (emphasis mine).² I love that definition: “. . . ALL that we are to ALL that God is . . .” That consuming, selfless desire to give to God is the essence and the heart of worship. In the process, we are exposed to His holiness, His truth, His beauty, His love, and His purpose. We are exposed to His glory!

We shouldn't be surprised that the concept of worship dominates the Bible. The Bible establishes that God's priority always has been, and always will be, worship. Worship was His idea – His greatest passion. Before all of creation – before the earth was formed, before a single beast was created – worship was taking place. *“You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them and the heavenly host bows down before You”* (Nehemiah 9:6). The heavenly hosts were worshipping!

All of creation proclaims God's glory. *“The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands”* (Psalm 19:1). *“All you have made will praise you, O LORD; your saints will extol you”* (Psalm 145:10). When we look at all that His hands have made (as if we really could), we are struck by the greatness and majesty of our God. We're overwhelmed by how incomprehensible He truly is. And we struggle to see past our smallness and insignificance, to fathom just how infinitely valuable of a treasure we are to Him. As David expressed: *“O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens! . . . When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty!”* (Psalm 8:1,3-5).

Then God gave us the Ten Commandments, where he called for and regulated worship in the first two commands: *“You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the*

form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:3-5). Throughout the Old Testament, it is clear that worship was very much the focus of many of God's people. In a song that Moses and the sons of Israel sang to the Lord, they sang, "Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?" (Exodus 15:11). From the design of the Tabernacle, to the religious, social, and even political activity, to the significance of the burnt offerings, worship was constantly held up as the priority. More than that, it was an unswerving call to worship God wholly and unrestrained.

The magi were the first people to seek after Jesus, and their initial response was to worship. *"And they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11). Actually, the first person to worship Jesus may have been prenatal John, leaping in his mom's womb at the presence of Jesus (Luke 1:39-45). Elizabeth knew immediately from her baby's response that Mary was carrying her Lord. The presence of Jesus is that powerful!*

Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, He drew people's worship wherever He went, often after the display of one of His many miracles. (Find examples in Matthew 14:22-33; Matthew 15:22-28; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 13:10-13; John 9:1-38.) But I believe my favorite is the story found only in Luke 7:36-50: *"And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume" (v.37-38). I imagine this to be Jesus' favorite picture of worship – the broken, repentant heart humbly bowing to its accepting, forgiving Savior. This is why He came, after all. Of course, the prideful Pharisee, Simon, couldn't*

understand why Jesus wouldn't just reject the display of that "sort of person" (v.39). He couldn't grasp a forgiveness that's free to all who will receive it. And he couldn't respect the great lengths that she had gone to so that she could express her great sorrow for her sin, as well as her deep gratitude and love for her Savior. This is the picture of *proskuneo* worship that He longs for – sinners bowing and kissing their Deliverer.

After Christ's earthly ministry, Paul states the true mark of a believer, saying, "for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3). Paul is making a statement (if you back up to v.2) against what was legal worship, consisting of rules regarding times, places, and outward acts. And he's calling for true Christian worship, which is a result of the inner working of the Holy Spirit in a person's life in response to the glory of Jesus. We should pray that we could see Jesus' glory as clearly as those who first saw Him in Mary's arms and be so driven to fall before Him in worship.

The book of Revelation so magnificently gives us a picture of what we expect in our eternity in heaven. Of the angels and the living creatures and the elders, it says, "and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.' And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, 'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever'" (Revelation 5:11c-13). Wow! I believe we'll find eternity and worship to be synonymous. I'm sure there are no words to describe the overwhelming depth of love, and power, and awe that we will experience there, as we finally gaze in our heavenly state upon the God of all creation – the Savior of the World! Our compulsion to worship won't be denied, and we will never grow tired of it!

Our goal now is to consider what the Bible teaches us about worship, so we can understand what its call is for us today. Though the aim of this study is on those specific times set aside to put our focus on extending our worship to God, I need to make sure to emphasize that much, if not all, we do can be, and should be, acts of worship. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “. . . *whatever* you do, do *all* to the glory of God” (emphasis mine). Then there’s the command in 1 Corinthians 6:20: “*For you have been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.*” And what about Jesus’ answer to the Pharisees’ trick (so they thought) question: “*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?*” And He said to him, ‘*You shall love the Lord your God with **all** your heart, and with **all** your soul, and with **all** your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment*’” (Matthew 22:36-38, emphasis mine).

I don’t see any exceptions listed in those verses. I only see words like “whatever” (not the way it’s said these days) and “all” used repeatedly. I don’t see “unless,” or “except,” “if you’d like to,” or even “if you feel like it.” We’re obviously being challenged to walk daily with an acute God-awareness, so we can glorify Him in *whatever* and in *all* we do. Those words are all-inclusive. That means that we can even glorify God while we’re in the midst of our daily work routine: doing the laundry AGAIN, taking our daily jog, mowing the lawn, picking up groceries, dealing with the difficult co-worker or neighbor, carting the kids to their next event, or WHATEVER (apart from sin, of course). Dare I say that some may worship God more while doing those things than others do while sitting in church pews singing? (Ouch!)

In *Destined for the Throne*, Paul Billheimer writes, “To be most effective, then, praise must be massive, continuous, a fixed habit, a full-time occupation, a diligently pursued vocation, a total way of life. This principle is emphasized in Psalm 57:7: ‘*My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise.*’ This suggests a premeditated and predetermined habit of praise, ‘*my heart is fixed.*’”³ David wrote this psalm when he was running from Saul,

so it was obviously not a time of being emotionally elated. It went far beyond his circumstances, because worshipping God was the pattern of his life.

Again, this does not happen accidentally. We each need to make the decision that we want to grow and develop the habit of walking in God-awareness, morning 'til night, striving to please and love Him in all respects. It means beginning each morning by giving yourself to God – body, mind, and soul – and inviting Him into your day. And it means allowing the Holy Spirit to draw us into an intimate relationship, attuned to His love-filled proddings and gentle corrections moment by moment. We have Jesus' promise in John 14:26: *“But the Helper, the Holy spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”* This is not something that God ever intended for us to do on our own power. But He needs our agreement, willingness, and diligence to seek and walk with Him whole-heartedly.

So if our whole life should be an act of worship to God, why do we also need to focus on specific times of offering worship to Him? Just as we're commanded to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17), we obviously also need times set aside for uninterrupted prayer, as Jesus modeled during His earthly life (Matthew 14:23). We'll see throughout this study that the same goes with our worship life. Plus, our times of focused worship serve as a catalyst for living a lifestyle of worship. Worship is a vital element for victorious Christian living, because the presence of God transforms us – compels us.

Join me on this important and transforming journey called worship. Let's see from the word of God what His intent and purpose regarding worship is for all of us. I promise you will never be the same. And it's how we'll return the crown jewel of evangelical Christianity – one worshiper at a time.

Pause: to reflect and pray

How am I doing when it comes to daily walking with acute God-awareness? What steps should I take to grow in that area?

How have these initial definitions and verses about worship opened my eyes to what God intends for me as His worshiper?

Is worship the priority that it should be in my life? Explain.

What am I hoping to gain from this study?

Write out a prayer asking God to open your heart and mind to better understand His call to you as His worshiper. (There are blank pages in the back of this study to provide additional writing space, if needed.)

PROFILES

It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;
to declare Your lovingkindness in the morning,
And Your faithfulness by night,
With the ten-stringed lute, and with the harp;
With resounding music upon the lyre.
For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done,
I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands.

Psalms 92:1-4

Lesson Two

PROFILES in Worship



What happened when people in the Bible worshiped? My personal journey studying worship began with fervently seeking an answer to that question. These first two stories we'll look at were ones I had probably read or heard taught dozens of times, but my eyes were opened in a jaw-dropping way this time. What I learned could have huge implications for my life, if I let it. To take you on the same journey I was on, let's begin where I did, with Paul and Silas.

Note: I encourage you to look up any of the verses used throughout this study in your own Bible, both for gaining insight from different translations and for marking verses that impact you, so you can more easily return to them later.

Paul and Silas - Acts 16:16-33

Read verses 16-21: *"It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling. Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, 'These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.' She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and*

turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!' And it came out at that very moment. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, 'These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.'"

This is one of many Biblical examples of followers of Christ being condemned for doing absolutely nothing wrong. Casting out the evil spirit that was plaguing this woman was obviously pleasing to God, and you'd think that men would be grateful, too. But their only focus was on losing the financial profit that they made from her terrible affliction. (It's interesting to note that the fortune-teller was saying nothing incorrect at this time, but it was still considered evil because of its source.)

Read verses 22-24 from your own Bible.

Paul and Silas are obviously now in physical pain, but what kinds of emotions might they be feeling at this point? Anxiety? Fear? Anger? How about hopelessness, discontentment, self-centeredness, powerlessness, faithlessness, and a whole slew of other negative responses that we could come up with? I don't think any of us would blame them for feeling any of these things, either. After all, they were human, just like us. What would I be feeling at this point, if I had been beaten and chained for simply doing what was right? (Unfortunately, this still happens in the world today.) More specifically, what would I be feeling towards God?

Read verse 25.

What a truly amazing moment. This was not a response that came out of any of the probable emotions that we just listed. This was the response of men who knew, loved, and still trusted their God, in spite of their circumstances. This was the response of men

who knew that their only source of strength in their weakness, and their only source of grace in their agony, was the God whom they worshiped with their whole hearts. We can only imagine the intense prayers that poured from their lips that night. But we know that their God was present and attentive, and that He ministered to their battered bodies, minds, and souls. And out of that place of much-needed grace came their heart-felt songs of praise to Him. Who was listening to this very unnatural response of worship that was loud enough to carry throughout the prison? The other prisoners undoubtedly heard, and maybe even saw, Paul and Silas being taken into the inner prison earlier. Can you imagine what they might have been thinking about this spontaneous midnight worship? I'm sure that their initial response was to think that the new prisoners had surely gone insane. But as they began to really "listen" (v.25), and not just hear, I imagine they quickly began to wonder *what* God can elicit such powerful words of praise and glory from such unexpected mouths. And *what* God can turn broken and beaten bodies into vessels full of such unbridled joy. Paul and Silas' worship was even more compelling, because they were probably singing one of David's psalms or hymns; and the Word of God always goes out with power!

Read verses 26-28.

Wow! What powerful results! Earthquakes were seen as evidence of the presence of God in response to His children's seeking of Him (such as in Acts 4:31). And the unfastening of everyone's chains would not be a result of your average earthquake. But why didn't Paul and Silas run? They were free! Honestly, that would've been my first reaction. But I think that there were several reasons. They absolutely believed that their God, who had already put on that great display of power for them, would continue to move on their behalf. Plus, I think that they wanted to both guarantee the jailer's safety and take advantage of the incredible audience they had with a bunch of awe-struck, fellow prisoners! So against all human inclinations, they stayed.

I believe there's more to this story, though. I believe that it's possible that the chains that dropped from Paul and Silas as a result of their worship were not *merely* the ones on their feet. But the chains of all of those difficult emotions that we listed a moment ago – chains of anxiety, fear, anger, hopelessness, and more – also fell. Their choice to worship is an example of how God can work in our hearts despite our circumstances and feelings. Both the physical and emotional chains dropping are an example of His power released in praise – a power that set them free in more than one way. What a great example of how our offering of praise and worship invites God to work and opens our hearts to His changing power.

Read verses 29-34.

The end result of Paul and Silas' faithfulness to turn to God in an attitude of worship was the powerful salvation story of the jailer and his family. After witnessing God's power in the earthquake, in the physical releasing of the chains, and in Paul and Silas' implausible attitudes, he asked, "*What must I do to be saved?*" (v.30). His heart turned from fighting, to keep them captive, to hungering to know their kind of freedom. He wanted to know their God. And he wanted to help these men who had just opened his eyes to true salvation. So Paul and Silas got the unforeseen opportunity to share Jesus with the jailer's entire family and to baptize them. Powerful.

(I encourage you to read the rest of Acts 16, as Paul and Silas chose to go back into the prison after their time with the jailer's family in the middle of the night. I love their courage and boldness!)

We face situations all the time that aren't nearly as difficult as this but that still bring us face to face with very similar emotions. What keeps us from choosing to worship God in each situation? I think it's because we struggle to take our eyes off of ourselves and what's going on around us, and we therefore fail to focus on God and seek His help. We let our chains, big and small, weigh us down, because we don't know or believe He can free us from them. I'm not saying

it's easy, or that God's response will always be this dramatic. But choosing to seek and worship God in the midst of those chain-bound moments invites His work, His presence, and His freedom. In our powerlessness, He is our strength. Worship can free us from life's chains as we put our focus on Him.

Though Paul and Silas' story is incredible and challenging enough, there's more! Keep reading!

King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah

- 2 Chronicles 20: 1-24

Read verses 1-4: *"Now it came about after this that the sons of Moab and the sons of Ammon, together with some of the Meunites, came to make war against Jehoshaphat. Then some came and reported to Jehoshaphat, saying, 'A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, out of Aram and behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar (that is Engedi).'* Jehoshaphat was afraid and turned his attention to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to seek help from the LORD; they even came from all the cities of Judah to seek the LORD."

The first thing that Jehoshaphat did, upon hearing that this multitude was coming to make war against him, was to acknowledge his fear, seek God, and proclaim a fast throughout Judah. It's hard to not point out what most kings would have done – call together an army!

Read verses 5-13 from your own Bible.

I love how Jehoshaphat began his prayer by acknowledging who God was and proclaiming His power and might. He worshiped! He then continued his prayer by restating God's promises, recounting God's past faithfulness, and admitting his own powerlessness and lack of wisdom. He boldly proclaimed his trust in God, as he and

Judah sought the Lord together in this time of crisis. Many lessons for us there!

Read verses 14-19.

What a powerful message and response: “Do not fear. Trust Me.”
“We trust You. We worship You.”

Read verses 20-24.

Receiving instructions like these and then following through with them are two very different things. They stepped out in faith and trusted God before any physical signs of the answer came. There would have been so many barriers to standing weaponless in front of a multitude of warriors like that: fear, faithlessness, helplessness. But Jehoshaphat reminded his people when they got there to put their trust in the Lord and succeed. And then the really cool part (to me)? He appointed singers and worshipers to go out in front before the army to declare the lovingkindness of the Lord! I find it interesting that they weren't singing about God's strength and might but about His *love*. His everlasting love. And then their enemies all dropped dead, destroying each other. Again, the power of faith-filled worship is exhibited in an amazing way.

This incredible story led me to ask myself several questions: *What if I worshiped God first in the midst of fear and tribulation? What if I was more diligent to acknowledge who God was as the first step in my battles? Am I missing out on seeing the power of being true worshiper? Could God be waiting to do things on my behalf that I miss out on, because I don't stop to acknowledge or worship Him first?*

It's my prayer that as this study progresses, we will learn more from people like Paul and Silas, as well as from Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah, that will help us to become more diligent, faith-filled worshipers.

Before we reflect on what we've just read, I need to make one more comment. Early in my study I shared some of my thoughts with Joe Horness, a friend, a gifted worship leader, and a teacher on worship. He warned against seeing worship as a consumer activity – as a way to get something out of God. God blesses us indeed when we worship, *but the focus of our worship needs to be remembering and exalting God for who He is* – period. Our worship's purpose is not seeking any resulting blessing, though God does graciously bless us. *He* is the focus. *He* is the purpose. His glory alone.

Pause: to reflect and pray

Considering Paul and Silas:

What chains, emotional or otherwise, are tying me down or keeping me from wanting to worship right now?

Considering King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah:

Am I quick to seek and worship God in the difficult times of my life? Or do I struggle? Explain.

As a result of reading these two stories, what steps is God leading me to take in my worship life?

Ask God to help you see the importance of bringing Him into every area of your life. Ask Him to help you grow in your understanding and experience of worshiping Him as a way of life - in any circumstance of life.

Now spend some time in worship before Him.

Next: As I studied these stories, and many others in the Word, I felt compelled to continue to examine all that makes up this incredible thing we strive to do, called worship. The process took me down a road of distinguishing eight different facets of worship that we'll now look at individually. So "*may the eyes of your heart be enlightened*" (Ephesians 1:18) as you continue on this journey!

RESPONSE

Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD, O my soul
I will praise the LORD while I live;
I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.
How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
Whose hope is in the LORD his God,
Who made heaven and earth,
The sea and all that is in them;
Who keeps faith forever;
Who executes justice for the oppressed;
Who gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets the prisoners free.
The LORD opens the eyes of the blind;
The LORD raises up those who are bowed down;
The LORD loves the righteous;
The LORD protects the strangers;
He supports the fatherless and the widow,
But He thwarts the way of the wicked.
The LORD will reign forever,
Your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the LORD!

Psalms 146:1-2, 5-10

Lesson Three

The PERSON We Worship



Knowing the PERSON of God is crucial for true worship to happen.

It's essential. It's foundational. Without it our worship would be like a choir without a song or a Super Bowl without a football team. It is the crucial necessity of intimately knowing the person of God.

*"For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in **knowledge of God** rather than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6).*

In Jesus' priestly prayer He said, *"And this is eternal life, that they may **know You**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).*

These verses elevate the knowledge of God to extreme importance. In fact, the Hebrew word *da'at*, translated as "*knowledge of God*" in Hosea 6:6, most accurately expresses an experiential knowledge. It's way beyond the mere acknowledgement that God simply exists, for even the demons acknowledge that (James 2:19). But it expresses a personal, intimate awareness of who God is and what He's done that results in an awe-inspired, complete, and utter devotion to Him.

If we could pray but one prayer, it should be that we would grow to know and love God more. When those two things are happening, all other aspects of the Christian life – such as prayer, obedience, serving, and giving – grow as a direct result. And that includes our worship life. True worship is grounded in the critical issue of knowing and loving God.

Here's the problem. There's a tendency to view God in human terms, as actually being no different from ourselves. Now no one will quickly agree that they do that. But how often do we consent with the voice in our head that whispers, "God can't (or wouldn't) do that" or "He doesn't really care (or listen)"? That list of doubts could go on and on. We sing the great songs, mouth the verses, and nod in agreement. But when it comes down to what we really, deeply believe, so many of us have little ambition to want to get to know, or especially bow in worship to, *that* God. In Psalm 50:21, God confronted those who didn't honor Him with, "*You thought that I was just like you.*" So the question needs to be asked: Are we worshipping the God of the Bible who is *infinite* and *holy* – or a god that's limited by what our minds can grasp and our society can accept?

Psalm 145:3 says, "*Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable.*"

And in Romans 11:33, 36 we read, "*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.*"

According to these verses, praise and glory belong to the unsearchable, unfathomable God! None of us will ever understand God perfectly on this side of heaven, for He cannot be limited by any kind of human definition. But we get into trouble when we try to make God too much like what we know and don't try to grow in the true knowledge of Him.

Proverbs 2:3-5 says, “For **if** you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; **If** you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; **Then** you will discern the fear of the LORD, and discover the **knowledge of God**” (emphasis mine).

The writer of this proverb is describing an active pursuit of knowing and understanding God and the things of God. How active? Do we “cry,” “lift our voice,” “seek as silver,” and “search as for a hidden treasure” in our quest to understand God?

Remember, Warren Wiersbe said, “Worship is the response of all that we are to *all that God is and does*” (emphasis mine).¹ We can’t react to what we don’t know. We can only worship God to the degree that we know Him. Otherwise, it’s much like trying to go deep sea diving with a snorkel.² We’ve heard that so many amazing things lie in the vast waters far beyond what we can see. But if we’re only willing to float on the surface of the water with a snorkel, then we can never truly experience or attempt to *know* that vastness. We settle for the shallowness. Yes, we can keep talking about that pretty orange, spotted fish that came up close, but that’s not even a speck on the expanse of all that lies waiting to be revealed. And that ocean? Well, it’s merely a speck on the vastness of all that is waiting to be revealed of God. After all, He created it – along with the rest of the universe. But unlike the ocean, God *longs* to reveal Himself to us. He relishes those times that we’re willing to dive in headfirst and search with great expectancy for what He has for us next. Will it be the greater wonders of His love? His faithfulness? His power? His mercy? His holiness?

Worship leader Matt Redman says, “The *revelation of God* is the fuel for the fire of our worship” (emphasis mine).³ If you remove the fuel to a fire, what happens? The fire goes out. But increase the fuel supply, which is the increased revelation of God, then the greater, and brighter, and more powerful, and more intimate the fire of our worship! It’s in that place of focusing completely on *Him only* in worship, that we then finally see ourselves and our circumstances,

in light of all that He is. And we can do nothing else in response but humbly bow in awe and worship.

The psalmist prayed, “O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your dwelling places. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; And upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God” (Psalm 43:3-4). He’s asking God to reveal Himself and that his response to that revelation would then be to worship.

The next question should then be - how do I get there? How do I “fuel the fire” of my worship? How do I dive in to truly search the depths of my unfathomable God?

Remember the conference I went to that motivated me to begin this study? If you remember, I said that each hour found me closer to the throne of God and with a clearer view of who He was. In other words, each time we worshiped, I found it easier to release those burdens, to forget what was going on around me and to focus less on me and more completely on God. I call it having *tunnel vision* for God. In high school, I had a friend named Al, who really had tunnel vision. His eyes quickly darted back and forth all of the time, trying to catch the whole picture in front of him, because he had no peripheral vision. He could only see where he was directly looking. God *wants* us to have tunnel vision for Him in our times of worship. He wants us to stop our minds from darting back and forth, so we can temporarily forget everything around us and see only Him. But that type of worship intimacy isn’t going to happen in just 20 minutes every Sunday morning. We need to be seeking God throughout the week

So we’re obviously not talking about mere head knowledge. We need to continually ask God to help us see Him more clearly and more fully; and we need to respond by pursuing a greater intimacy with the God who’s revealing Himself to us. We do that by

spending priority time with Him in the Word and in prayer. Only then will our relationship and heart knowledge of Him grow.

What's the key to seeking God? Two words:

Be still.

Be still. Stop. Let go. *"Cease striving and know that I am God"* (Psalm 46:10a).

We live in a society that no longer knows how to be still. But stillness is crucial for gaining knowledge and intimacy with God. It's crucial for calming the heart and mind. It's crucial for seeing, and it's crucial for truly hearing. We gain nothing with the drive-by glance mentality. Our heavenly Father is always calling us to Himself, saying, "Come to me. Be still and commune with My Spirit. Let Me pour out My love and grace over you. Come often. Stay long. Be still. I have so much for you here." And the second half of Psalm 46:10 shows the incredible results of being still. *"Cease striving and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth"* (Psalm 46:10). Worship out of *that* place is the worship that God so longs for from us.

When it comes to times of personal worship, many find it helpful to have a list of the names of God and of His attributes as a prompt to remind us of who He is. If we had been able to eavesdrop and hear the words that Paul and Silas used in their worship of God in prison in the midst of their pain, fear, and powerlessness, I think we would've heard them worshipping those attributes about God that they most needed to see and experience. I think they would've been worshipping the God Who Sees, the God Who is in Control, the God Who is All-Powerful, the God Who Loves, and the God Who is Faithful! And remember how Jehoshaphat began his prayer to God as he stood before the people of Judah at such a fearful time? He said, *"O LORD, the God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations?"*

Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You" (2 Chronicles 20:6). He began by proclaiming and exalting who God was and continued by remembering what God had already done. No wonder their perspective on their situation was so incredibly affected when they chose to focus on, seek, and worship the incredible God that they undoubtedly knew so intimately!

There are many Biblical examples of those who chose to focus their attention on their glorious God. One of my favorites is David's prayer before all the assembly of Israel after they had all brought offerings for the temple that was to be built. David said, "*Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone. Now therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious name" (1 Chronicles 29:11-13). Then, after he finished his prayer, he said to the assembly, "Now bless the Lord your God.' And all the assembly blessed the LORD, the God of their fathers, and bowed low and did homage to the Lord . . . " (v.20).*

"There's definitely a different dynamic in worship that kicks in when we fix our eyes firmly on Jesus," Matt Redman says. "I worry that too often we spend our worship times reflecting on how we are doing and what we have gained. As Anthony Bloom once said, 'So often when we say "I love you," we say it with a huge 'I' and a small 'you.' But there's a wonderful biblical dynamic in worship when we lift our eyes off ourselves and gaze upon the beauty of God."⁴ That's when we're different when we come down off the mountain, like Moses in Exodus 34:29, "radiant for all to see, and shining with the glory of God."⁵

A line in one of Matt Redman's well-known worship songs, "Let Everything that Has Breath," expresses it well: "If we could see how much You're worth, Your power, Your might, Your endless

love, surely we would never cease to praise You.”⁶ What a great line and how true!

Each glimpse – every breath-taking disclosure – is a divine gift that leaves us with the greater realization that there’s still *so much more* to our Savior. It increases our passion to keep seeking Him. And though every glance is merely a drop in that vast ocean that’s beckoning for our exploration, we need to keep nurturing that fascination with our unsearchable God. Our breath will then be taken away in worship.

Additional reading: Psalm 29:1-2; Psalm 103:1-5; Psalm 115:1

Pause: to reflect and pray

Do I struggle to fix my eyes firmly on Jesus or to have tunnel vision for Him during my times of worship? Explain.

How am I doing at seeking to know God more? Am I good at being still before Him?

What steps should I take to pursue growing to know and love God more intimately?

Included is a list of the names and titles of God to use in times of prayer and worship (see Appendix). Reading over them now, what characteristics about God or what names of God do I need to see moving in my life?

Write out in the form of worship the attributes/names of God that correspond to your current needs or desires.

Examples: In Psalm 27:1-3, when David was still surrounded by enemies, he said, *“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread? When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, my adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.”* He’s remembering who God is, as well as His past faithfulness.

Or for example: “Lord, you know that I feel completely incompetent at [insert]. But You are All-Powerful. When I am weak, You are strong. You are All-Wise and promise to give me wisdom when I ask. When I am faithless, You are Faithful. You are always good . . .”

Now write your own.