

Session One: Worshipping Engages Our Whole Lives

Aim

To see that worship is a response to God's mercy and involves the whole of our lives.

Materials

Bibles
Pens
Post-it Notes

Core Text

Romans 12:1-2

Introduction 20 MIN

Worship is a central theme in the Bible. It's found explicitly on many pages, and implicitly on all. It's to be found in every stage of God's big story: from Eden, where Adam and Eve live before God and one another without distance or shame; to Egypt, where the groans of slaves catch the ear of Heaven. From the wilderness, where God's Law is fearfully received; to Israel, where a nation under God is established. From Jesus, who only does what he sees his Father doing; to the ends of the earth, where disciples of this Jesus are made. And ultimately, to the glorious garden-city, where sin and death are no more, and people from every tribe and tongue dwell in the light and presence of the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb.

It's big, it's glorious, it's central. It's what we are made for! So it's pretty important that we fully understand it... and not just understand it, but live it.

- Split into twos and threes, with each mini-group looking at one of the following passages. Taking a few minutes to discuss it, summarise in one sentence what the passage says about worship, before sharing with the whole group.

Psalm 95:1-7

1 Kings 18:30-38

Amos 5:21-24

Generally speaking, we recognise we are worshipping when we sing a song in church, but not when we sign off the accounts; when we are praying for an overseas missionary, but not when we are paying for our shopping. But as the passages we looked at show, worship is wide-ranging, and can cover all aspects of who we are and what we do.

Video (optional)   5 MIN

Watch Video One: Worshipping Engages Our Whole Lives
Available at: licc.org.uk/wholelifeworship

- What struck you as you watched the video?

**“Biblical worship is... a response to God’s
revelation of himself, empowered by the Holy
Spirit, which finds expression in every aspect
of human life and experience.”**

—

John Risbridger

Read Romans 12:1-2

Some members of the group may be very familiar with this passage, and may have even studied it in a fair amount of detail. The great thing about Romans 12:1-2 is that it is like a great piece of art; every time we return to it there is something new to be seen!

Having outlined in chapters 1-11 the grand sweep of God's spectacular redemptive actions in human history, Paul starts off his appeal to a new way of life by reminding Christians that Christian worship is a response: it is 'in view' of God's outrageous wisdom and mercy.

- What are some of the highlights of what God has done for us? Feel free to flick through Romans 1-11.
- Why do you think Paul says we need to keep these things 'in view'?

Having reminded us of what God has done and that we must keep this 'in view', Paul goes on to talk about our response. He says that our lives (literally bodies) should become a sacrifice. The Christians that Paul wrote to in Rome, whether they were from a Gentile or Jewish background, would have had a particular understanding of sacrifice. Almost without exception, offering a sacrifice was a clear-cut, one-off moment. You bring your animal/produce, a priest offers it to the 'god' in question, and it is then cooked and consumed – a 'supply, die and fry' model if you like.

- Although we don't offer sacrifices in this way anymore, we might be tempted to see Sunday and our church activities as more significant to God than the rest of the week. How might this passage challenge us to think differently?

Note that the sacrifice is offered. Our living for God is not something that just happens automatically, it's something we must choose to give him.

- What might this mean for you in your day-to-day life?

Our sacrifice is also holy and pleasing. It is amazing to think that God views our lives in this way. The reason why we are able to live lives that are holy and pleasing is because of the holy and pleasing sacrifice that has already been made for us and because God's Holy Spirit lives within us (cf. Romans 3:20-26; 4:23-5:2; 5:8-11; 5:16-19; 8:1-4).

- What do you think is significant about the fact that the sacrifice is living?

Looking Ahead 10 MIN

- What might it look like for you to worship God this week in your work, study, chores or relationships?

God calls us to worship him in the ordinary everyday areas of life. So it makes sense that the time that we spend together as Christians encourages and equips us for these activities and places. How might this understanding of whole life worship affect:

- Our worship together on Sundays?
- The things we talk and pray about in small groups?

Prayer 10 MIN

On a post-it/scrap of paper, write down your name and a couple of things that you will be doing this week that you generally find easy to see as acts of worship.

On the other side, write down one or two things that you will be doing this week where you generally find it hard to feel like you are worshipping.

When everybody is done, put these notes together in the middle. Take some time to thank God for his incredible mercy. Ask that, in the light of his mercy, he will help you to respond by offering yourselves as living sacrifices.

Takeaway

Take the post-its and randomly assign them around the group, making sure you don't have your own.

During the week, pray for the person whose note you have and for the activities they will be doing. Perhaps you could send them an encouraging message at some point.