

Session Two: Worshipping Offers Us Fresh Insight

Aim

To see that worship enables us to see the world differently – in the light of God’s big story, and how we play our part.

Materials

Bibles

Core Text

Ephesians 1:15–23

Introduction 15 MIN

- What is your favourite story (whether book, film or TV series) and in what ways has it impacted you?

Stories have incredible power to draw us in – this is why it’s very hard not to listen in when someone is telling a story in the staff kitchen or at the end of a class. Stories also have incredible power to transform us. They offer us a new perspective on life, stir our emotions, and may prompt us to act differently – we may speak slightly more eloquently after watching ‘The Crown’, or decide not to go on a cruise after watching ‘Titanic’!

The Bible, of course, tells a big story, a story that can radically shape the way we think, feel and live. But the Bible isn’t the only story we get caught up in. Every culture has its own story/stories that attempt to explain the origin, purpose and destiny of human life, and these shape us too.

- Think about someone you know well who is not a Christian. How do they understand the origins, purpose and destiny of life? How do their beliefs shape their actions and priorities?

Sometimes, when we meet together as Christians, our times of gathered worship can simply become a form of escaping from the world and its stories. But God’s intention for these times goes much deeper than that: in our worship our eyes and hearts are drawn into God’s great story, and when this happens, we see life in a new light.

Video (optional) 5 MIN

Watch Video Two: Worshipping Offers Us Fresh Insight

Available at: licc.org.uk/wholelifeworship

Easy Access available at <https://vimeo.com/channels/wlwbmont2019>

- What struck you as you watched the video?

**“Worship is subject that should dominate our
lives seven days a week.”**

—

David Peterson, *Engaging with God*

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

Ephesians 1:15-23 is one of several prayers of Paul recorded in the New Testament. It follows an outpouring of praise, reminding the believer of God's incredible redemption story (1:3-14). In his prayer, Paul prays that we might know the author of this story (v17), see the goodness of the story (v18), and be filled with God's power so that we can play our part in the story (vs19-23). This chapter presents us with a great example of how the Bible doesn't merely inform our minds but also thrills our hearts and inspires our prayer, our worship, and our life.

Know the author of the story (v17)

- The 'gods' that were worshipped in the ancient world were often depicted as distant, impersonal and uninvolved. In what ways does v17 show that God is not like this?
- How might being reminded that God is not distant or impersonal affect our worship?

See the goodness of the story (v18)

- The stories that the Ephesian people believed did not generally inspire much hope. Look back at vs13-14. What is it about God's story that gives us hope?
- In what ways do worship services remind us of the goodness of God's story?

Be filled with power to play your part in the story (vs19-23)

We know from archaeology and ancient texts (including the book of Acts) that Ephesus was a place where people lived in fear of evil spirits. The magic and superstition practised were based on fear, manipulation and control: trying to gain leverage over spirits in order to get them to do what they wanted, namely leave them alone but harm their enemies!

- In light of this, what do you think is the significance of Paul's description of God's power and Christ's position above all things?
- How is God's power accessed, who is it available to, and what is it for?
- How might this set us free from seeing life and God through a lens of fear, manipulation and control?

Looking Ahead 10 MIN

Theologian-philosopher James K. A. Smith says that gathered worship plays a key role in 're-storying' us: it reminds us of who we are, of who God is and what life is ultimately about. Regular reminders of God's story in gathered worship fuel and direct our desire to live for God in the world.

- Having thought about the ways that worship draws us back into the story of God, how might that affect your engagement with Sunday worship services?
- If Jesus really is above everything, how will this shape the way that you pray in church services and as a small group?
- How might this hope we've reflected on transform our everyday lives this week?

Takeaway

When you are next attending a church service, do the following:

- Before the service: Pray that you and fellow-worshippers will be shaped by God's story.
- During the service: Be on the lookout for elements of God's story being communicated through the songs, prayers, liturgy, sermon, sacraments, decorations, architecture etc. Think about how these might inspire and shape you for what you will be doing in the coming week.
- After the service: Write down one or two things you noticed. Refer back to these during the week and use them as prayer points. It would also be very encouraging for the person/people leading the service if you let them know a way that the service was helpful to you.

Prayer 10 MIN

Use the passage as a basis for your prayers.

- Pray that you may know God, see the goodness of his story and be filled with power to play your part within it.
- Pray for your church and all involved in leading worship activities, that God will inspire and guide them.

- Pray for yourselves, that your small group gatherings and church worship services will continue to shape your thinking and living.