

Session Three: Worshipping Transforms Our Ordinary Actions

Aim

To see how worship flows from understanding our identity as beloved children of God into 'whatever we do.'

Materials

Bibles

Core Text

Colossians 3:12-17

Feedback (optional)

If you have attended a church service since you last met as a group, did anybody notice any elements of God's story being communicated during the service?

Introduction 15 MIN

It's one thing to believe that anything we do can be a way of worshipping God. But to think, feel and live this reality in the midst of the tasks and jobs we do during the week is not always easy. We get tired, bored, distracted, frustrated and so on. This means it can be much easier to feel like we are worshipping God when we sing, pray and take communion in church services than it does when we are inputting data, packing a lunch box or walking a customer to where the ground almonds are located.

Think about a task that you perform regularly, whether it's something in your workplace, in your voluntary activities, or something around the home or garden.

- To what extent do you typically see it as a form of worship?
- What makes an action an act of worship?

Video (optional) 5 MIN

Watch Video Three: Worshipping Transforms Our Ordinary Actions
Available at: licc.org.uk/wholelifeworship

Easy Access available at <https://vimeo.com/channels/wlwbeltmont2019>

- What struck you as you watched the video?

Read Colossians 3:12-17

Though small in size, the letter to the Colossians beautifully reveals the depths of Christ's love, the scope of his mission and his absolute centrality to all of life. Jesus changes everything: bringing freedom, meaning, hope and a whole new way of living. We don't know exactly who was in the congregation to whom Paul wrote, but we do know that at least a good number were slaves.

Slavery was common in the Roman Empire. Historians estimate that between a third to over half of the population were slaves. They did a wide range of jobs, including cooking, childcare, teaching, mining, practising medicine, farming and asset management. Conditions varied greatly: some fared well under thoughtful owners, whereas others were subjected to incredibly harsh treatment, including physical beatings and sexual abuse. Regardless of what they did or how they were treated, slaves had no legal rights and were thought of as 'speaking tools' rather than people worthy of dignity and respect.

- What does Paul say about our identity as Christians in 3:12?
- Bearing in mind the people he was writing to here, what impact might his words have had upon the way they viewed themselves?
- 3:12-16 describes actions and characteristics appropriate for God's chosen, holy and dearly loved people. What are these?

According to these verses, what role can gathered worship play in helping us to become people who live and act this way?

Take a look at verse 17

- What do you think it means to do all things 'in the name of the Lord Jesus'?
- How might this help you see your day-to-day tasks in a fresh light?

How might seeing your day-to-day tasks as worship help you to feel more connected to God throughout the week?

- What could you do to remind yourself at the start, middle and/or end of the day that we worship God through our actions?
- As a group, how could you help one another in this?
- How might this hope we've reflected on transform our everyday lives this week?

Use the verses below, each of which refer to our hands, to guide you in your prayers for the things you have been discussing and the tasks that lie ahead this week. You may find it helpful to read one verse, have one or two people pray around it, then read the next one, pray again, and so forth.

Commit to worship: 'I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands'. (Psalm 63:4)

Pray

We may sin, but through Christ we may know forgiveness: 'Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.' (Psalm 24:3-4)

Pray

God grants us strength and courage: 'They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed." But I prayed, "Now strengthen my hands."' (Nehemiah 6:9)

Pray

We depend on God: 'Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand'. (Isaiah 64:8)

Pray

Takeaway

One way that Christians throughout the centuries have found helpful to reflect on where God has been at work in the ordinary is the 'Prayer of Examen'. It can help us become more 'tuned in' to where God is at work in the present too.

This week, aim to set aside 5-10 minutes at some point each evening to try this. Don't worry if you miss a day; just pick it up again the next day.

There are various ways to practise the Examen but the following is a simple guide that focuses on thanksgiving. Try to keep your focus on thanksgiving. If during the Examen you suddenly remember that there are things that you need to do or things that you want to pray about, consider doing it afterwards when you have finished.

The Prayer of Examen

- Find a quiet and comfortable place to sit, put your phone on silent. If you live with other people, give them strict instructions not to interrupt you!
- Take a moment just to breathe, allowing your muscles to relax.
- Thank God that he loves you and has been with you throughout the day.
- Cast your mind back over the day, starting from the moment you woke up. Mentally re-live the highlights of your day, taking a moment to pause and think about the ways that God was with you and blessing you at various points. Allow yourself to enjoy these moments again and thank God for them.
- If something comes to mind which did not go so well, perhaps something you ought not to have said or someone you hurt, ask for God's forgiveness and be ready to receive his grace.
- Stop when you arrive back at the present.
- If you wish, you may want to jot down particular things that stood out.