

Session Five: Worshipping Focuses Our Wavering Hearts

Aim

To explore how true worship of God is fuelled by love and how worship also inspires a deeper love for God and others.

Materials

Bibles

Core Text

Revelation 2:1-7

Feedback (optional)

Think back to Sunday: did you notice anything that was said, seen or sung in the service that would be helpful in conditioning your heart, making you more likely to respond well to situations on your frontline?

Introduction 10 MIN

Imagine you have just moved to a new area and you have been looking online to find local churches. You come across a church called St. Perfecto, and they have a very impressive and up-to-date website. That Sunday you turn up and the building is both beautiful and functional and includes some very comfortable seating. A team of children's workers provide a fun time for the young ones while the adults listen to a doctrinally sound sermon, delivered by the impeccably dressed senior leader. At the end of the service, you enjoy an unusually high quality cup of tea/coffee before you leave. The experience seemed to tick so many boxes... except for one thing: you're left with a vague sense that a genuine love for God and people had somehow been lost along the way.

- If you were invited to preach at St. Perfecto what sorts of things would you want to say to them?

Video (optional) 5 MIN

Watch Video Five: Worshipping Focuses Our Wavering Hearts
Available at: licc.org.uk/wholelifeworship

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

- What struck you as you watched the video?

**“Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were
an offering far too small; Love so amazing, so
divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.”**

—

Isaac Watts

**“If worship forms us to be a people who dwell
in that reign, then we will carry God’s kingdom
wherever we go – and we will be equipped to
reach out to the culture around us with words of
gospel truth and deeds of gospel faithfulness.
God grant our churches such worship – for his
glory and for the love of the world.”**

—

Marva J. Dawn

The church in Ephesus made a great start despite severe challenges from the off. We know from Acts chapters 19 and 20 that Paul spent a long time teaching there (2–3 years) and specifically warned the elders of the church about the dangers of false teachers (20:28–31). In this church’s early years, we see not only a hunger for knowledge, but also a heart of love (Acts 20:36–38 and Ephesians 1:15–16). It is also widely believed that the Apostle John, who writes about love so much in his gospel and letters, was an overseer of the Ephesian church for some time. However, by the time John’s letter to the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2 is read to them near the end of the first century, some things have changed.

Read Revelation 2:1–7

- In what areas has the Ephesian church excelled? What have they failed to hold on to?
- What will be their punishment if they fail to repent? Why do you think it’s so severe?
- What will be their reward if they do repent? Why is this reward so special (it may help you to refer to Genesis 3:22–24 and Revelation 22:15)?
- Imagine that you were part of this church back then, how would you have felt hearing these words read to you?

We don’t know exactly what was meant by losing their first love. The emphasis could be on their love for Jesus, their love for those within the church or even their love for those outside of the church. However, we know from the rest of the Bible and from our experience that love for God and others is inseparable (1 John 4:7–21).

- Why do you think Jesus was so exercised by this loss of their first love?
- How do you think it’s possible that they could be doing so much good stuff but not notice such an important change had taken place?

Time and again God calls his people back to their love relationship with him.

- In what ways do you think our worship together can strengthen our love for God, focus our wavering hearts?
- Are there any ways in which you think you might be distracted by superficial things in your Sunday worship?
- In what ways does your Sunday worship guard the priority of love?
- What differences do you notice in worship when you are caught up in the joy of God’s love for you?

Looking Ahead 10 MIN

- As we encounter Christ's love in gathered worship, how does this impact our capacity to love others in our day-to-day lives? Is there anything you can do to help this process happen more?

Prayer 15 MIN

At the end of this series, where you have been exploring how Sunday worship services connect with and shape us for everyday life, spend some time together praying about the following:

- Thank God for his interest in the whole of your lives and how you see God at work in your church and in your daily lives.
- Repent of ways in which you are failing to love God and the people he has made, whether inside or outside of church.
- Ask God to help you grow in worship together on Sundays in ways that will help you worship him more lovingly wherever you are, Monday to Saturday.

Takeaway

- Think about one thing that you want to remember from this series of studies or want to commit to doing differently. What things might help you to keep remembering/doing this?

Ideas:

- Something visual that you place in a spot you will see regularly.
- Develop a new habit, setting a reminder on your phone or putting a note in your diary to remind you to do it.
- Ask somebody that you trust to keep you accountable.
- Read a book or listen to talks online that will help you to explore your 'one thing' further.