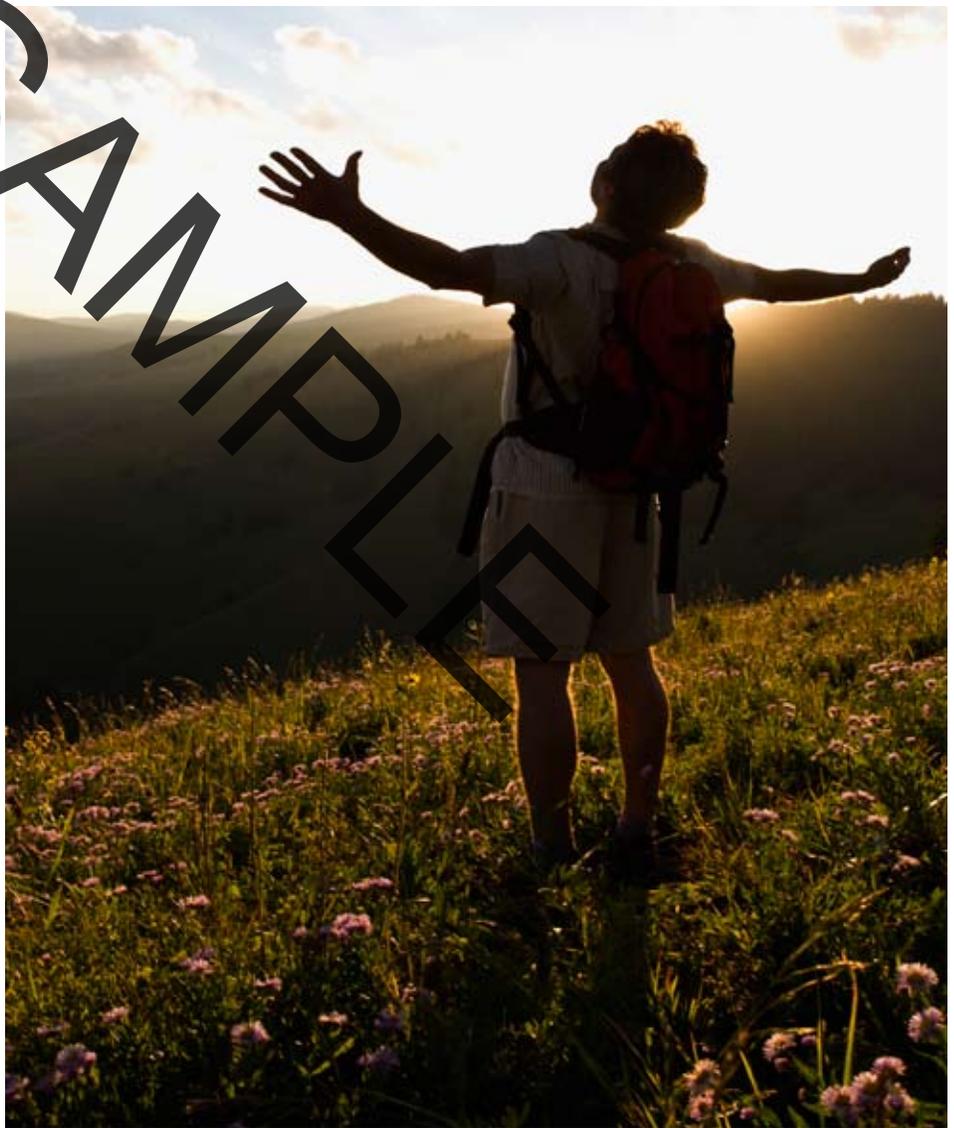
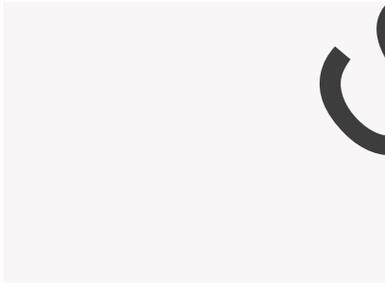




# *real* WORSHIP





# REAL WORSHIP

## *Introduction*

C.S. Lewis once said, “A man can no more diminish God’s glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word, ‘darkness’ on the walls of his cell.” If it is true God is not endangered by our lack of worship then why is it so important? The answer is found in what happens to us when we fail to worship God with our whole heart and what happens when we do worship him.

This study focuses on what it means to worship God and why it should be an integral part of every believer’s life. While music, preaching, and other forms of corporate praise are important, they are not an end in themselves. Real Worship reaches deeper, further, and higher than what happens on Sunday mornings.

As you lead this study, it is important to get the word out every way possible. The following session titles and objectives are structured for use in newsletters, church bulletins, e-mail, and other sources such as Facebook and blogs.

## *Session One: Worship Where Spirit and Truth Meet*

A noontime meeting between Jesus and a wayward Samaritan woman became an opportunity for our Lord to provide a sound theology of worship. In this session we will discover acceptable worship is where spirit and truth meet.

## *Session Two: The Place of Real Worship*

It only takes a few chapters in the first book of the Bible to realize God declares worship to be non-optional. This session explains why worship is so important and where real worship occurs. True worship is not centered in a place at all but rather in a Person.

## *Session Three: Enemies of Real Worship*

Our study emphasizes what God calls acceptable worship. So what can make worship unacceptable? Singing, praying, and church attendance do not ensure we have truly worshipped God. In this session we will examine four enemies of real worship and how to avoid them.

## *Session Four: The Scope of Real Worship*

Real worship reaches deeper, farther, and higher than most of us tend to understand. This session focuses on the three dimensions of worship and how it affects the whole man.

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## SESSION ONE

“The Church has slipped into a philosophy of ‘Christian humanism’ that is flawed with self-love, self-esteem, self-fulfillment, and self-glory. There appears to be scant concern about worshiping our glorious God on His terms. So-called worship seems little more than some liturgy (high or low) equated with stained-glass windows, organ music, or emotion-filled songs and prayers. If the bulletin didn’t say ‘Worship Service,’ maybe we wouldn’t know what we were supposed to be doing.”

– John MacArthur

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# WORSHIP – WHERE SPIRIT AND TRUTH MEET

## Materials Needed

- Bibles
- Extra pens and pencils
- Handouts
- White board or poster board

## Lesson Objective

A noonday meeting between Jesus and a wayward Samaritan woman became an opportunity for our Lord to provide a sound theology of worship. In this session we will discover acceptable worship is where spirit and truth meet.

## Connect

This study will consider what it means to worship God in every area of our life both individually and corporately. Distribute the handout “Worshiping God Together” and ask participants to write out Colossians 3:16-17. During each session there will be times to share in worship to our God in various ways. Encourage the group to keep this handout as a guide for those times of corporate worship. Have participants with different Bible versions read the passage and then ask someone to lead in prayer as you begin this important study.

## Consider

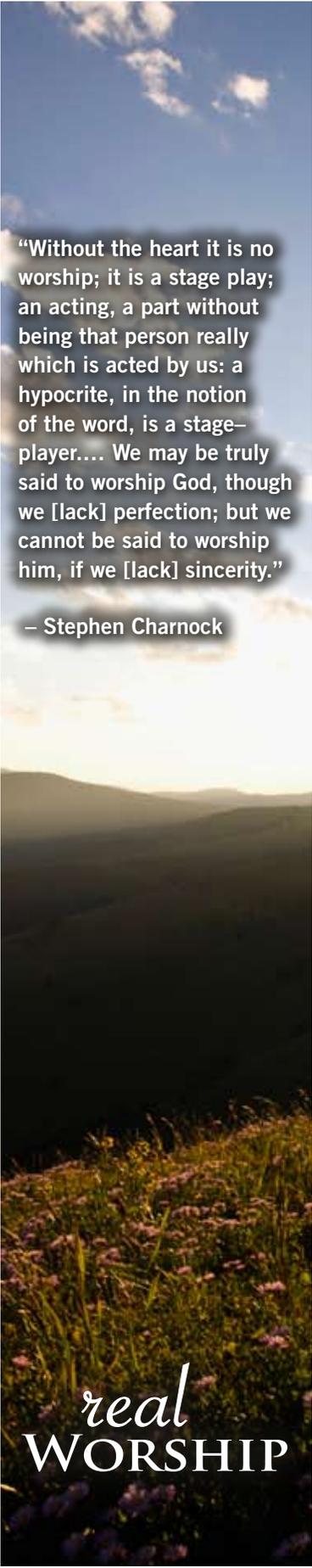
Ask: *What do you think are some of the key elements in real worship?* Use a white or poster board to record the answers given. Now ask: *What do you think the average person in church would say worship consists of?* Many churches experience what could only be called “worship wars” as they have been divided over worship styles and music. It may surprise you to know this is nothing new.

Call on someone to read John 4:7-20. Of all the things the Samaritan woman could have said after Jesus confronted her about her lifestyle, she turned to an argument about worship. In verse 19-20 she illustrates two extremes of worship as seen in the Samaritans and the Jews.

## Two extremes to avoid

**Spirit Without truth** – The Samaritans worshipped what they didn’t know (John 4) because they rejected all but the first five books of the Old Testament. Because of that they created their own form of worship center on Mt. Gerazim. Ask: *What problems do you think might occur when people have worship that is not centered in the truth of God’s Word?* Worship at Mt. Gerazim was enthusiastic but lacked any real substance.

**Truth Without Spirit** – The Jews had truth but their religion was dominated by barren orthodoxy. Call on someone to read Mark 7:6-7 and then ask: *What advantages did the*



“Without the heart it is no worship; it is a stage play; an acting, a part without being that person really which is acted by us: a hypocrite, in the notion of the word, is a stage-player.... We may be truly said to worship God, though we [lack] perfection; but we cannot be said to worship him, if we [lack] sincerity.”

– Stephen Charnock

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*Jews have that should have led to worship?* Using a dry-erase, PowerPoint or poster board lead the group in listing things such as:

- The Scriptures
- The Temple
- Their spiritual heritage

Lead the group to discuss the advantages they have in their own church fellowship that should lead to real worship.

### *Worship at the Intersection of Truth and Spirit*

Real worship always begins with truth. Refer to the handout “A Different Kind of Worship Service” and lead participants to list what the average church member would name as characteristics of a great worship service. Divide participants into three groups. Assign one of the three passages on the handout to each group and have them report back the main characteristic of worship seen in their passage.

Nehemiah 8 and 9 shows the power of God’s Word to motivate real worship. Based on these chapters, real worship:

- Is empowered by and founded on God’s Word (Nehemiah 8:1-7)
- Results in heartfelt celebration and rejoicing (Nehemiah 8:9-18)
- Produces changed lives (Nehemiah 9:1-5)

While real worship begins with truth it is summed up by what we know. Worship must be in truth but also in spirit. This is why David often talked about worshipping God with his spirit (read Psalm 45:1 and 51:15). Read the quote on the handout and call on participants to offer their impression of Stephen Charnock’s words. Too often, more attention is paid to the environment or the externals of a worship service than to the spirit that creates true worship. Ultimately, real worship is an overflow of an inward reality. Call on different participants to read the following Scriptures and then lead the group to discover the timeless truths concerning worship found there.

- Real worship required being yielded to the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:9-16).
- Real worship centers our thoughts on God (Psalm 57:7; 86:11; 108:1).
- Real worship begins with a repentant heart (Psalm 139:23-24)

Have everyone turn to Isaiah 6 and read verses 1-6 silently. Isaiah was a prophet but also a priest. Ask: *Do you think he was doing anything unusual when he entered the Holy of Holies?* Isaiah did what every high priest would have done on this special day. He prepared himself for worship as he always did. As a result, his heart was receptive to the worship experience God had planned for him.

### *Commit*

Lead the group to consider practical things they can do to have a receptive heart before they come before God for worship. Have them list these on the handout “A Different Kind of Worship Service.” Be sure and leave plenty of time for discussion as it is



important to consider ways we prepare for worship as well as things that can hinder worship.

Read Nehemiah 8:1-7 again and challenge participants to actively seek God's direction in how they can be better prepared for corporate worship. Remind them real corporate worship begins with real private worship. For a project, invite them to go to their church leaders and ask for ways to help promote worship in spirit and truth. As you lead the group in prayer, ask God to shine the spotlight of His Word and Spirit on each of you as individuals, just as He did Isaiah, so your worship individually and corporately will be pleasing to the Lord.

SAMPLE

# WORSHIPING GOD TOGETHER

Colossians 3:16-17 –

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## *Four Ways to Worship God Together*

**Prayer**—Do our prayers focus on Who God is and what He has done? While it is good to share our needs in prayer we must resist turning corporate prayer time into a shopping list of petitions for healing and finances. Worshipful prayer begins and ends with the One we are talking to and hearing from. The Psalms and a list of the names and attributes of God are helpful in prayer that is focused on God Himself.

**Testimonies** – David often wrote of what God had done in his own life and how God had shown His goodness to Him. What has God done or shown you that you might share with this group?

**Singing and Music** – Make a list of songs God has most used to lead you toward worshiping Him in a deeper way. Who could you invite to share a worship song with this group?

**Proclamation of the Word** – Preaching and teaching of God's Word is an act of worship to be shared together as we are drawn closer to the true God in the process. What is something you have learned about God in recent sermons or Bible lessons?

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# A DIFFERENT KIND OF WORSHIP SERVICE

*Today's Worship*

*Real Worship*

Nehemiah 8:1-8

Nehemiah 8:9-18

Nehemiah 9:1-5

“Without the heart it is no worship; it is a stage play; an acting, a part without being that person really which is acted by us: a hypocrite, in the notion of the word, is a stage-player.... We may be truly said to worship God, though we [lack] perfection; but we cannot be said to worship him, if we [lack] sincerity.”

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