



# Wired to Worship

## Session 2: Be Consumed

### Recap

We began our series on worship last week looking at how worship is “a whole-life response to who God is and what he has done.” Over the next three weeks we’re going to be looking at how we respond to God in worship- what should our response to this amazing God look like?

Today, we’re exploring how we worship as we meet together as the family of God.

### Consumer model of worship

If we’re honest too often our focus in worship can easily be directed to the wrong place, which is brilliantly demonstrated in the following video.

### Video: Me Worship

This is an extreme example, but sometimes we can come to church and expect stuff to happen for us, as if it’s all about us. But this is consumer worship not consumed worship. Worship like this becomes self-indulgent and self-centred.

**So how do you know if you’re stuck in consumer worship?** Well, imagine it’s like you’re processing an ‘invisible’ survey in your head where you...

- Rate the worship leader
- Rate the band
- Rate the song choice
- Rate the congregation
- Rate the preacher

And if we don’t rate things well – we opt out and we find ourselves thinking, sometimes saying, things like **“I got nothing out of the worship today.”**

Have you ever said this?

Of course, we all have our preferences in terms of style and music etc – but this stuff should never stop us from giving ourselves in worship to God.

This is an extract from an **American Newspaper** objecting to new trends in church music: *“There are several reasons for opposing it. One, it’s too new. Two, it’s often worldly, even blasphemous. The new Christian music is not as pleasant as the more established style. Because there are so many new songs, you can’t learn them all. It puts too much emphasis on instrumental music rather than godly lyrics. This new music creates disturbances making people act indecently and disorderly. The preceding generation got along without it. It’s a money making scam and some of these new music upstarts are lewd and loose.”*

Who were they attacking? It wasn't Tim Hughes or Matt Redman. They were attacking the hymn writer Isaac Watts, famous for writing 'When I survey,' in 1723!

It's so easy isn't it for us to have the wrong focus. For us to be silently singing 'It's all about me'.

And this kind of thinking not only damages us, but it also damages the church body as we find ourselves sharing and seeding these thoughts with others.

**Worship is not something I consume – it's something I'm consumed by – in fact – it's someone I'm consumed by.**

The worship offering is not the song, or the prayer, or the silence – we are the worship offering.

### **Consumed model of worship**

Consumed worship is a response "to God" – not a response to ourselves, or the worship leader, band, or whatever. This means that rather than evaluate someone else's contribution you're asking about your own contribution.

- **Did I play my part today?**
- **What did God get out of my worship?**

I love it when I'm involved in a service where every one has come to worship – right from the start. They don't need warming up.

Soul Survivor experience – focus on the centre cross, people come ready to worship.
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We need to move to a place where we are overflowing with worship for God. We're not concerned with whether we like the songs, the band, the leader, whether it's too loud or too quiet, but we just want to give ourselves.

Environment should not dictate our worship response

In Acts 16, Paul and Silas are mobbed by a crowd of people after they heal a woman who has been oppressed by a demon which helped her tell fortunes. Because the owners of the girl realize that they're not longer going to be able to make money out of her they stir up the crowd who proceed to strip Paul and Silas naked, beat them, have them severely flogged, and then they're thrown in prison – into the darkest, wettest, smelliest part of the prison, with their feet bound in stocks. How would you respond to this?

### **Verse 25 tells us...**

*"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them."*

Let me tell you – environment does not dictate our worship. Worship is an overflow from the heart – not a response to our surroundings.

Let's look more closely at an example of consumed worship.

### **(Mark 14: 3-9 New Living Translation)**

*Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy. While he was eating, a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard. She broke open the jar and poured the perfume over his head.*

*Some of those at the table were indignant. "Why waste such expensive perfume?" they asked. "It could have been sold for a year's wages and the money given to the poor!" So they scolded her harshly. But Jesus replied, "Leave her alone. Why criticize her for doing such a good thing to me? You will always have the poor among you, and you can help them whenever you want to. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could and has anointed my body for burial ahead of time. I tell you the truth, wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman's deed will be remembered and discussed."*

This is an example of consumed worship. This is an example of someone who is connected to God – it's as if there is nobody else in the room; she is meeting Jesus. She comes in and breaks all conventions – for the audience of ONE.

John's account of this story in John 12 tells us that this lady is Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Mary has known Jesus for a while. She knows that the things he does, the things He says, who He is – He's amazing.

Her worship is therefore a response to the massive view she has of Him. It's such an amazing act of worship that Jesus makes the comment at the end...

***"I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."*** (Mark 14:9, NIV)

So here we today, two thousand years later, learning from this woman's example – just like Jesus said we would.

So what can we learn from her? Four things for us to consider...

### **1. BE PREPARED - COME READY**

The woman was prepared. She came in *with* the alabaster jar. She didn't just turn up out of habit or on a whim, bumble around the room and with nothing to offer. She had thought about what it would mean to meet with Jesus in advance. She had realised the significance of the event. She had decided that she was going to bring the jar of perfume as an offering. She had prepared for worship. She didn't want to take this moment for granted.

When we come together to worship God we should be prepared.

In 1 Corinthians 14:26, Paul writes...

*When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church*

Elsewhere in Ephesians 5:19, he reminds us to...

*Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord*

Our worship should be an overflow of the life we have been living through the week so we come ready to worship God together.

When we come together on Sundays, before we leave home (or as we're driving), let's prepare ourselves for worship. Let's give ourselves an attitude check. Let's come with an expectation of meeting with Jesus. What would you bring him? Let's come prepared, saying

*"Today God, I want to show you that I love you. Today, God, I'm going to bring a song, a prayer, a heart bowed before you. You deserve God".*

Be ready with your offering – remembering that the most important thing you have to offer is yourself.

## 2. BE UNSTOPPABLE

There are a lot of barriers this woman has to break through to give this act of worship to Jesus.

- She's a woman interrupting a male dominated gathering
- She faces indignation and rebuke – in fact the word “rebuke” is the same word that Jesus used to rebuke demons. The others at the party really shout at this lady.
- She has to break through her own comfort zone in the hope that Jesus will be ok with what she's about to do. There is some risk to this. Now, it was a common custom for honoured guests to be anointed with oil at some Jewish meals but it wouldn't be expensive perfume like nard – and it wouldn't be the whole load.
- She even faces the subtly about being made to feel guilty that she's wasted money on perfume when she could've given the money to the poor.

This wasn't an easy thing for her to do. She is determined - there is no way she will be put off. Her mind is made up. She is going to be unstoppable – whatever battles she faces.

If we are true worshippers there will be a battle at some point.

Worship is so valuable that the devil will do anything he can to divert and redirect our worship away from God.

Right at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, when He's tempted by Satan in the desert, one of the temptations that Satan lays out is a challenge about who Jesus is going to worship.

In Matthew 4:8-9, we're told...

*“Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.””*

Imagine if Jesus had given in to this temptation, his whole ministry, God's whole plan for the rescue of the world would have gone down in flames.

Sometimes when we come to church we don't feel like worshipping. Maybe we've had a bad morning, maybe we've had bad news or something horrendous has happened, maybe we're tired or feel apathetic, maybe we're bogged down or our mind is elsewhere.

Let's remember worship is a battle and make a *decision* to engage, to seek after God – and not retreat. Let's not let whether we feel like it dictate our level of engagement with God (that's a consumer model again).

I'm always inspired by one of the Old Testament prophets Habakkuk who writes in 3:17-18

*...Even though the fig trees have no blossoms,  
and there are no grapes on the vines;  
even though the olive crop fails,  
and the fields lie empty and barren;  
even though the flocks die in the fields,  
and the cattle barns are empty,  
yet I will rejoice in the Lord!  
I will be joyful in the God of my salvation*

What's great about these words is that it's a reminder that we can be honest about the stuff that's going on with our lives but we don't let this stuff dictate our response to God.

Habbakuk is facing some tough times but it drives him closer to God. God is all he's got and he knows that worship is the place where he gets closer to God and that's what he needs.

This is about making a decision in advance, having a determined mindset, not just going with the flow. Sometimes worship needs to be an act of the will. Let's make our worship unstoppable!

### **3. BE SACRIFICIAL - OFFER SOMETHING OF VALUE**

The perfume in the alabaster jar was valuable. In fact the jar itself is pretty special. An alabaster jar was a beautiful and expensive vase with a long, slender carved neck. This vase was holding Nard - the most expensive perfume available (most likely imported from India). It was used only by the wealthiest elite. It was as good as it gets – worth a year's wages.

It was most likely that this jar of perfume was like a family heirloom for Mary. Passed down from generation to generation. It was almost like a status symbol. People would probably come to their house and look at this beautiful jar of expensive perfume and Mary would comment on how it's been in the family for decades.

But in this act Mary recognizes that this family heirloom is nothing compared to Jesus – she'd rather give up her status symbol and have Jesus.

To worship means to 'give worth'. Mary recognizes that Jesus is so precious so she gives him something precious – it's worship that costs something.

Genuine worship costs something. Worship that costs us nothing is worth nothing.

There's a story in the Old Testament where David wants to construct an altar to worship God in a particular place. The land belongs to a guy called Araunah the Jebusite who offers the land and all the animals for sacrifice for free so that David can worship God – but David insists that he pays for the land "*I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing*" 2 Samuel 24.

Worship – should be costly.

What could our worship cost us? It could be:

- It could cost us a lie in – Keith Green sang a song where he wrote "Jesus rose from the dead, and you can't even get out of bed"
- Moving beyond a comfort zone of experience, bringing something new - bringing a prayer, exploring a spiritual gift, raising my hands, writing a poem, singing a spontaneous song - being prepared to look foolish
- Moving beyond what we feel like doing, praising through circumstances, lifting myself from apathy. Psalm '*bring a sacrifice of praise*' – Hebrews 13:15.
- Giving something to God which I am holding on to. Laying down what is valuable from my life.

Corporately, our worship will never rise to a level higher than what we believe God is worth. When you think of all that God has done for us.

God gave everything to us so we should want to give everything back to Him.

### **4. BE WHOLLY DEVOTED - HOLD NOTHING BACK**

This woman came in with a beautiful jar of the most expensive perfume and she held nothing back. She smashed the jar and poured the perfume over the head and feet of Jesus. There are no half measures here. She was intent on giving Jesus the lot. She is not measuring out.

*"She did what she could."* (Mark 14:8, NIV)

...and she did it to the full.

Her worship was total, there were no reserves, she couldn't do better.

Earlier in Mark's Gospel we're told how Jesus is one day asked what the most important commandment is – Jesus replies in Mark 12:30

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength”*

Our love, our worship, should be an all encompassing response:

- Our feelings
- Our bodies
- Our minds
- Our soul/our spirit

### **(a) Respond with your heart (emotional)**

Right in the middle of our Bibles we have the book of Psalms – 150 songs and poems of worship which cover the full range of emotions...

- Songs of joy - *“Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord”* (Psalm 95:1, NIV)
- Songs of distress - *“When I was in distress, I sought the Lord”* (Psalm 77:2, NIV)
- Songs of sadness - *“Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God for I will yet praise him”* (Psalm 42:5, NIV)
- Songs of hope - *“Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls”* (Psalm 42:7, NIV)
- Songs of praise - *“I will praise you, O Lord, with all of my heart... ..I will be glad and rejoice in you.”* (Psalm 9:1-2, NIV)
- Songs of repentance

The list goes on. God is not looking for us to check our feelings at the door but to bring what we feel to his feet.

In this story a broken vase of perfume is poured out to Jesus – and this vase is also a picture of our lives. We are broken people – but will we surrender our broken lives to Jesus? As an act of worship and surrender will we give ourselves to Him so fully?

### **(b) Respond with your body (physical)**

*“...she anointed Jesus's feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair.”*  
(John 12:3 New Living Translation)

Mary's worship is embodied in a physical act. She would have had to kneel. His feet would have been dirty, and washing somebody's feet was a hugely significant act. But she chose to wipe his feet with her hair. In Jewish culture a woman's beauty was in her hair, hair was hidden - it displayed beauty and was for a husband. This was not just a gift of wealth, but of intimacy.

Let's go further in our physical worship. Physical expressiveness as an act of worship is both exemplified and commanded in the Bible.

Physical expressiveness could include: Kneeling, Singing, Lifting hands, Dancing, Clapping, Bowing prostrate, etc.

Think of some of the Psalms...

*“I lift my eyes up”, “Lift up your heads to the coming King”, “I will lift up my hands”, “Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker”* (Psalm 95:6)

When the writers wrote these songs these weren't metaphors – it was actually what they meant.

If we, as a church, are worshipping God then there will be some kind/level of physical expression.

Have you ever been a rock concert or a football match? People get engaged. You can tell that they're enjoying what's happening because they're cheering, shouting, jumping.

Then people come to church and we want to say to them 'We think God is the best ever, can't you tell' – and yet our bodies, mouths and expressions are disengaged.

Now obviously just because someone is being physically expressive doesn't mean that they are worshipping God but it is a key part of our worship.

The language of worship is not just saying words, it's also expressed with our bodies. *Let's be free* to worship God physically here, to offer every part of ourselves in genuine worship.

### **(c) Respond with your mind (intellectual)**

One of the reasons we sing in worship is so that the truth of the words we sing can feed our minds. One of my favourite Hymns is 'In Christ Alone' by Stuart Townend...v4 says...

*"No guilt in life, no fear in death  
This is the power of Christ in me  
From life's first cry to final breath  
Jesus commands my destiny  
No power of hell, no scheme of man  
Can ever pluck me from His hand  
'Til He returns or calls me home  
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand"*

These are amazing words. Don't just sing songs mindlessly. Meditate on the words and phrases, let your mind explore them, ponder them, and respond to God.

### **(d) Respond with your soul (spiritual)**

Psalm 42 talks about how when we thirst for God in our worship there's a sense of deep calling to deep. Something with the deepest part of God connecting into the deepest part of our spirit – our soul.

This is the place where God speaks. This is the place where God whispers. It's when we're up close and personal where we hear the still small voice of the Spirit.

Mary's act of worship had a prophetic spiritual significance. As she's close to Jesus in this moment He tells her that she's actually preparing Him for burial. Within a week He would be crucified – His life poured out for the sins of the world. And because He will die shortly before the Sabbath begins they will quickly put his body in a tomb and no-one will have time to pour perfume on it. But they won't need to. Because Mary's will have done this.

*"She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial."*  
(Mark 14:8, NIV)

Let's allow the Holy Spirit to move and work through us, revealing God to us in our worship times. Let's be open to God using us through the Gifts of the Spirit.

Let's set our hearts to follow the course, promptings and insight of the Holy Spirit.

### **Summary**

Mary of Bethany gives us an incredible model of consumed worship.

She burst into a room and broke poured perfume of Jesus and yet the fragrance would have affected everybody. It was a catalyst – no-one could have ignored it. It would've smelt beautiful.

This is what our worship should be like – it flows from our heart in adoration of Jesus, and it affects those around us.

Don't you want to be part of a corporate experience of worship where the atmosphere is changed?

We need to be prepared to step out, to press on, to give more.

**Let's give everything we have. When coming through a time of worship together, we should be spiritually, emotionally, physically, intellectually spent at the end of it!**

*"We are fools for Christ"* (1 Cor 4:10) - who's fool are you?

What could our worship look like if we all did this?

In the story Prince Caspian – part of the Narnia Chronicles...Lucy sees Aslan and comments that He has grown huge. Aslan says 'no' – it's Lucy that has grown. Lucy says no he has definitely become larger. Aslan tells Lucy that as she has grown she has realized how much bigger he is.

This is what we want – to grow in our worship and as we do so we discover that God is even bigger and even closer than we ever imagined.



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