

Wired to Worship

HCC, September 2009

Homegroup Workbook



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SESSION 1: See God

Requires: Bible, lots of pieces of card (small scraps of paper will do), pens, blutack. If someone can bring a guitar or instrument, or a worship CD, that would be fantastic.

LOOK INWARD (10 MINS)

seek, desire, pursue, value, submit

The session on Sunday talked about how, as humans, we all naturally worship something.

Do: Look at the words above (there's a big version to hold up on the next page)

Discuss: Do you recognise these verbs as worship words?

Can you recognise the things in your life which have become objects of worship?

Which things can you apply these words to in your day-to-day life? These things can be subtle (e.g. material comforts, financial security, reputation, power, control, etc.)

Pray: Spend a couple of minutes in silence together, asking God to reveal anything or anyone that has become a worship object in your life and ask God's help in dealing with that.

LOOK ROUND (10 MINS)

Read: Exodus 32: 1-6

Explain: While Moses was up the mountain communing with God, the Israelites got restless and needed something to hold their attention. They built an idol, a golden calf, something to get excited about, something with wow factor. This can remind us so much of the way things grab our attention now (e.g. adverts, fame, gossip etc.).

Discuss: Think about our culture, how it influences you and where you focus your attention. Ask yourselves if you're getting bored at the bottom of the mountain, finding a shiny but short-term channel for your enthusiasm?

Should we be waiting on God rather than filling our eyes and ears with non-God?

LOOK UP (30 MINS)

We heard on Sunday how our worship is a response. If our focus is on God then our worship will be a natural response to seeing God, to who he is and what he has done.

Read: Colossians 3: 1-2

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”

Discuss: If we have died and been raised, then our preoccupation with the temporary things of this world makes no sense. But “set your minds on things above” is still a huge challenge.

What are the “*things above*”?

Is the time when your brain focusses on the “things above” limited to a “quiet time” slot or do “things above” permeate every situation?

Make: Together, make a load of cards of the “things above” you will attempt to fix your eyes on. Write or draw the “things above” on the cards - they could be aspects of God’s character, personality or nature, they could be things God has done or action he takes (e.g. holiness, truth). Stick the cards all over the ceiling, or as high on the wall as you can reach (bear with me here, there is a reason for this!).

Worship: Spend some time looking up at the cards together and praising God for who he has revealed himself to be. This would be a good time to sing a worship song or two together if you’re brave enough, or maybe put a worship track on.

Pray: To finish, think through each part of your average day. Pray together that God helps you to keep “looking up” and see him in every situation.

TO TAKE HOME...

Take some of the cards home with you. Stick them on your own ceiling as reminders to keep “looking up” and worshipping him.

seek, desire, pursue,
value, submit

SESSION 2: Be Consumed

Requires: Bible, pens and small pieces of paper.

*** Note: Just for one week, we’re talking about worship in the context of our Sunday meetings together. This week, when we talk about “worship” we mean worship together as part of our Sunday morning and any other worship services (e.g. 3rd Sunday, Unplugged).**

CONSUMER WORSHIP (10 MINS)

On Sunday we thought about two models of worship:

	Consumer worship	Consumed worship
Motive	Worship is for me	Worship is for God
Action	I am a receiver	I am a contributor

Discuss: Think about our “consumer” society.

Which attributes of a consumer approach to life can we find sometimes carry over into our approach to worship on Sundays?

Do you recognise any of this consumer approach to worship in yourself?

CONSUMED WORSHIP (10 MINS)

Read: Mark 14: 3-9

Discuss: What strikes you about this passage in relation to Mary’s worship offering (from Sunday or from just now)?

Explain: On Sunday, we looked at this incredible model of consumed worship as Mary of Bethany breaks an alabaster jar of perfume over Jesus. Her worship is prepared in advance, unstoppable in the face of obstruction, genuine and all-out, coming from every part of her being (emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual).

Discuss: Thinking about when we gather together on Sundays, can you find something in Mary’s approach to worship that will help you move forward in your own worship?

PAY TO PRAISE (30 MINS)

Explain: The story so far:

David has sinned by putting trust in facts and figures over faith in God (have you ever done that?) He has wasted time counting the number of men in his armies. He prays for forgiveness and is given three options - three years' famine, three months' fleeing from enemies, or three days' plague. David goes for the plague but is appalled at the outcome, as Jerusalem is left on the point of annihilation. However, God is even more appalled and stops the angels of death at Araunah's house. He tells David to go and build an altar there to save his people.

Read: 2 Samuel 24: 18-25

Think about verse 24:

"I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."

Discuss: What do you think David meant by this?

How does that verse make you feel?

How many of your "offerings" of worship cost you very little at all? If you're honest, some of us quite like singing songs on Sunday and getting that warm fuzzy feeling that comes when people get together and share a common belief and purpose.

David's worship, and Mary of Bethany's perfume (Mark 14), embodied a cost. This cost was a genuine reflection of how much God was worth to them. What is your worship saying about how much you value God?

How can we let our worship of God on Sundays cost us something? Think together about cost in terms of comfort: maybe to your schedule, maybe to your comfort zone, maybe to your self-respect, maybe to your credibility.

Consider: Can you challenge yourself to step out of your comfort zone, to let your worship of God cost you?

For example: If you normally stand motionless in worship, can you decide to move or dance? If you are normally very active and buzzing, can you be still and silent? If you are usually late on Sundays, can you turn up to church early? If you normally avoid worship events like the plague (e.g. 3rd Sunday), can you give it a go? If you "turn off" when you don't like a song, can you stay engaged? If you inwardly sigh when a new song is introduced, can you decide to be the first to worship God through it? Can you sing at the top of your voice? Can you kneel or lie prostrate? Can you come prepared with something to offer?

Decide: What are the practical things you can do to offer God more of yourself in worship in our services? (Take some time to think and pray about this individually)

Privately commit to God to do something in worship that costs you personally.

Action: Write down what you have committed to on a small piece of paper. As a reminder that you have something to give God, carry the paper around with you until you have done it.

Pray: Have a look at “To take home” below and pray together for the worship life at HCC.

TO TAKE HOME...

Imagine a big picture of worship at HCC where every member of our church is fully committed to worshipping God with everything they have to give. Wouldn't it be amazing? Can you see how it depends on each one of us as individuals to make that happen? Can you be part of that? Can you take a lead? It won't be easy, but as we've learnt, that's kind of the point!

Let's engage and move on in worship. To do this, we all have to own our worship individually. We need to be prepared to step out, to press on, to give more, to really express his worth to us in tangible ways. As you next come to worship God at church, think about some of the things you've been challenged over and committed to tonight. Be brave, be bold, and give God something that costs.

Session 3: Be transformed

Requires: Bible

BE TRANSFORMED (10 MINS)

On Sunday we learnt that worship isn't a static event; it changes us. We become like that which we worship.

Discuss: Do you think this is true? Look again at the worship words from Session 1:

seek, desire, pursue, value, submit

Do you agree that you become like the things you seek, desire, pursue, value and submit to?

Explain: Our worship is our response to God as he reveals himself to us. As we see God, as we learn more about him, as we encounter him in worship, as we spend time in his presence, we gain a fresh appreciation for who God is and what he has done.

Read: 2 Corinthians 3:12-18

Discuss: What do you think it means to "*reflect the Lord's glory*"?

Explain: To see God is to become like him. As our knowledge of who Jesus Christ is and what he has done increases, it changes everything! Knowing and seeing the true nature of God impacts and transforms us.

Read: Exodus 34:28-35

Discuss: Moses has been meeting God. What is the result?

TRANSFORMED FOR WHAT? (10 MINS)

Explain: Moses is transformed by meeting with God and comes down from the mountain to engage with his community. He has been given a purpose.

Read: Amos 5:21-24

Discuss: What is God objecting to in the worship practice of Israel at this time?

Think about how you approach worship. Is worship an escape from reality for you, or is it fuel for the fire of your life lived for him?

Explain: God is not just "up there somewhere" totally detached from the world. Neither should we be. As we worship him and become more and more like

him, we are bringing heaven to earth right now. This is not about “pie in the sky when we die”! We are letting God’s Kingdom live in our environment, with our family and friends, in our community, in our workplace. We are becoming the people we were made to be.

BE CREATIVE (30 MINS)

Read: Isaiah 45:18.

God is a creative God.

Consider: Think about all the everyday objects in your life. Everything in your life that you now take for granted was one stage a crazy, risky experiment (or accident) - the light bulb, the car, penicillin, ice cream, bridges.

A great definition of creativity is simply “Bringing into being something that has never existed before.” We all have the image of our endlessly creative Creator within us.

Discuss: What is stopping you from “seeing the unseen”, and bringing things into being that have never existed before?

Consider: We can too easily buy into the lie that creativity begins and ends with arty or musical types of people, leading to the popular excuse, “Oh, I’m not creative.” God’s creativity will be expressed in different ways in different people. It’s about newness. A new plan for information flow in an office is just as new as a new song.

What is your forte? Maybe it’s cooking, or throwing parties, or software programming, or teaching children.

Explain: To worship is to reflect the God who loves to create and share his creation. We become creative ourselves, enriching God’s world with sounds, colours, words, tastes, smells, structures, shapes, thoughts and ideas which are inspired by him.

Pray: Stop and pray in turn for each member of your group. Pray that more of the Creator’s creative energy would flow through them in the area they identified as their forte. Pray that through this they would bring new life and light to people’s lives.

TO TAKE HOME...

As we worship God, as we meet with him, as we see him in all his glory, our lives are transformed into reflections of him on earth. A life of worship is to live in intimacy with God in such a way that we get to know what God is like, to start to take on that character ourselves. It’s to see as God sees, to feel what he would feel, to do what he would do. It’s to become like him, to reflect him on the earth, to bring his Kingdom to the world through the way we live our lives. We begin to realise that every circumstance we face, every situation we find ourselves in, every thought and action is an opportunity to worship God or do the opposite.

As you go through the next week, try to see the everyday situations you face as opportunities to reflect God on the earth. Pray and expect God to work through you and use you to bring peace, justice, love, goodness, energy, life and light to your environment. And when he does, praise him.

Session 4: Be engaged

Requires: Bible, pens and paper.

FIND JESUS (10 MINS)

Read: Luke 2:41-51.

In our culture, we find it almost impossible to believe that Mary & Joseph simply lost track of Jesus for a whole day. But children were often looked after by extended family members and friends in one big interacting throng. The men and women would travel together separately, so perhaps they both assumed he was in the other group.

Discuss: How often do we lose sight of Jesus in our everyday life? We get so used to our way of doing things (often successfully) that we can miss God altogether. This isn't usually a conscious decision. It just happens gradually and imperceptibly.

Consider: How would you go looking for Jesus in your life? Think about each aspect of your days, where are the opportunities to meet God and praise him?

WORSHIP AT HOMEGROUP? (10 MINS)

Discuss: How often is worship part of your activities as a small group (homegroup)? Setting aside the idea that everything we do can be worship, how intentionally worshipful is your homegroup meeting?

When we think about worshipping with others, we usually think about a crowd, and we usually think about music. It's also possible to worship together in small numbers and with no musicians present.

Discuss: Think together about ways in which you could worship God together. Can you find a way(s) that you can regularly grow in worship together? (see the Appendix below for ideas)

CREATE A PSALM (30 MINS)

When we think of creation, we tend to focus on the vastness of the heavens, or the power of nature reflecting God's own greatness. But we can also see God and learn more about him in the less spectacular, familiar things around us.

Read: Romans 1:20

This is an amazing verse. We cannot see God, but he has made his character and power clearly visible to every man and woman he has made.

Get active: Go outside for no more than 3 minutes, and each find something connected with nature. The most conventional place to do this is a garden, but there are

still things to see in the street - the electricity that powers the streetlights, animals, the rain, various sounds, sights and textures etc.

Discuss: When you're back inside, each describe in detail what you have found/seen/heard. Some of the items, although simple and commonplace, may stimulate wonder and worship.

Read: 2 Samuel 23:4

*"He is like the light of morning at sunrise
on a cloudless morning
like the brightness after rain
that brings the grass from the earth."*

It's familiar enough: the sun rises every morning, and the rain falls regularly. But every time we stop to look at it, it comes as a fresh, glorious experience.

Create: Use the experiences you described from outside to put phrases together which say something about God and his creation. There might be people in the group who respond to images rather than words - they could draw or paint round the themes, or maybe collage some things you collect from outside.

Congratulations! You've created your own Psalm.

TO TAKE HOME...

Everything we see is a testament to God's glory. It reminds us of his provision to us, of his power to create and sustain, and of his extravagance. As you go about your daily life, try not to take things for granted. Stop regularly and respond in worship.

Appendix: Homegroup Worship Ideas

- Spend time in prayer together, restricting your prayers to worship, praise and thankfulness.
- Listen to a worship CD.
- Go out and gaze at the stars, read Psalm 104.
- Use a book - e.g. Stuart Townend: 50 Small Group Worship Ideas
- Each share something God has done and praise him together.
- Draw or paint together as an act of worship, choosing an attribute of God's character to meditate on and praise him for.
- Praise God for answered prayers during the week.
- Take communion.
- Read some Psalms, taking it in turns to read verses.
- Have a time of silence before God to hear his voice and worship.
- Choose a hymn or worship song. Read it and discuss how it relates to your lives. Pray it to God. Then sing it together.
- Read the Scriptures about various physical expressions of worship and practice one or two. Position is more important than we think; the outward is a reflection of the inward. It says something. Often when we use our body in worship our heart responds and we are able to enter into God's presence more easily and quickly.
- Sing some songs.
- Create your own Psalm together.
- Discuss a worship related thought together - e.g. Describe a time in which you really sensed God's presence in a close way. What are things you do to draw close to God?