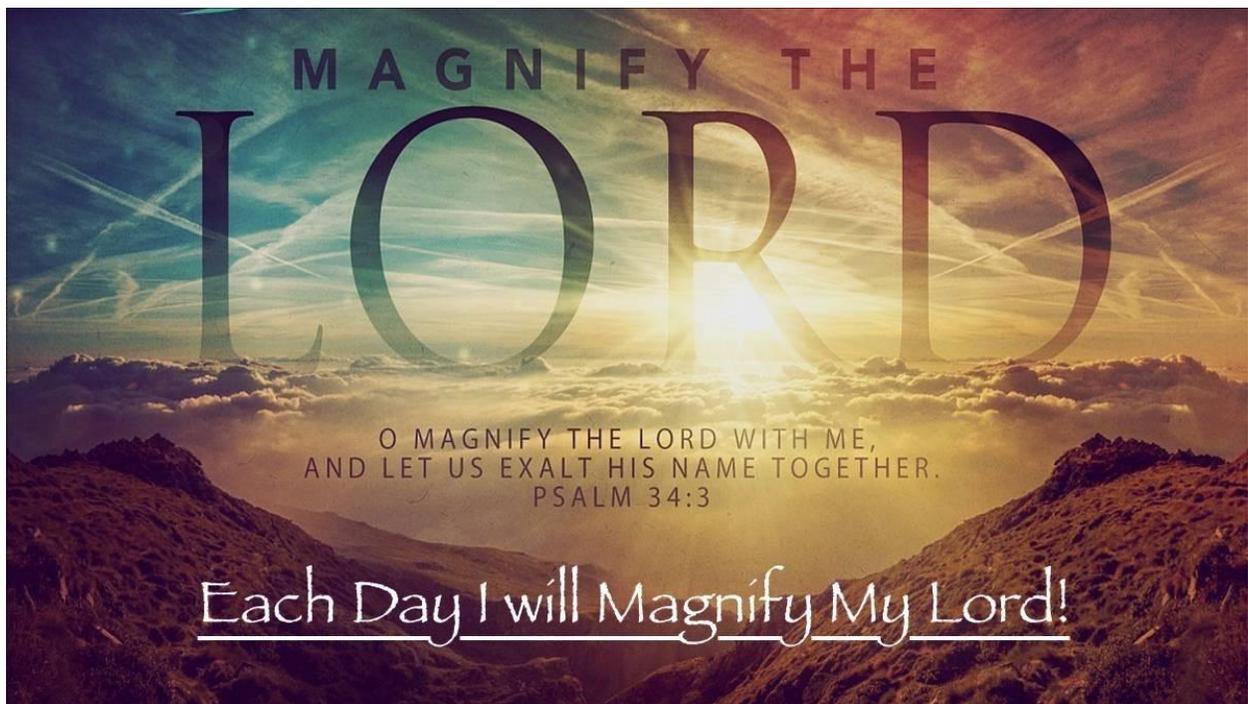

A SWEET SAVOR

Worship that Honors and Edifies



Prepared by Jonathan Caldwell

1st Quarter 2021

www.wearesimplychristians.com

INTRODUCTION

“Each day I’ll magnify my God!” What an awesome goal. What an awesome God who is worthy of such praise. This year we want to continue our focus of being “Doers of the Word” with an emphasis on our worship. But as our theme for the year implies, such worship is not confined to our church building. We should spend parts of everyday worshipping God. Notice that I said “parts.” This is not something we do just one time, but throughout the day.

This quarter’s material will especially focus on the action(s) of worship. We will consider many aspects of worship: God’s worthiness, some history, and our collective worship (the five acts). This is not designed to make our singing sound better or our prayers more poetic. Our desire is to enhance our understanding and increase our hearts’ involvement so that our worship honors God and edifies one another.

There are some people with whom it is simply a joy to worship. What I have noticed about those individuals is that their hearts and minds are focused and involved. They are wrapped up not in the news of the day or where we will eat lunch, but on giving God the worship due Him and in the love of those around them. Jimmy Campbell is such an individual. It was always a pleasure to sing with him because of the effort he put into his worship of God.

These lessons are preparatory and designed to get you thinking about the topic. The actual classes will not always follow these questions. I will be doing the Wednesday lessons with various guest speakers. I think this will help us stay engaged and challenged – something a little different while things are a little different.

Let’s get our hearts right. Let’s get our minds right. Let’s get our fellowship right. And let us learn to worship in a way that honors God and edifies one another.

Jonathan Caldwell

Due to the ongoing pandemic, this workbook is only for Wednesday nights.

A Sweet Savor: Worship That Honors and Edifies

Schedule of Lessons

Wednesday, January 6	1. What Is Worship?
Wednesday, January 13	2. God's Worthiness
Wednesday, January 20	3. Worship in the Old Testament
Wednesday, January 27	4. Worship in the New Testament
Wednesday, February 3	5. True Worship and Our Heart
Wednesday, February 10	6. Authority
Wednesday, February 17	7. The Lord's Supper
Wednesday, February 24	8. Prayer
Wednesday, March 3	9. Time with the Word
Wednesday, March 10	10. Is Giving Worship?
Wednesday, March 17	11. Singing
Wednesday, March 24	12. Instrumental Music
Wednesday, March 31	13. Worship through History

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

We are about to spend a year focusing on worshipping God. But let me ask you a simple question – what is worship? Most likely, we have an idea of what it is but when pressed for a definition we would probably just end up supplying some synonyms. Let's think through some basics of worship and other related words.

- Without looking it up, how would you define worship?
- Now look it up, Consult an English dictionary and a Bible dictionary.
- Is worship physical or mental?
- Who or what is the object of our worship?
- In your opinion, what does worship require?
- What book of the Bible focuses on worship most?
- Look up these synonyms for worship: praise, glory, honor, extol (can you think of others?)
- What are the five acts of worship? (This language will be discussed more)

GOD'S WORTHINESS

If we are going to focus on worship, we might ought to begin by discussing the object of our worship—God. Why is He worthy of our worship? What right does He have to demand and specify the type of worship He will accept? If someone told us that they expected a gift from us and it better be a bracelet, we would not like that and would probably accuse them of arrogance. Why is this not true of God?

- According to Genesis 1 and Revelation 4:11, why is God worthy of worship?
- According to Exodus 14, why is God worthy of worship?
- According to Isaiah 6, why is God worthy of worship?
- According to Luke 1-2, why is God worthy of worship?
- According to Acts 2, why is God worthy of worship?
- According to Romans 5, why is God worthy of worship?
- According to Matthew 2, why is Jesus worthy of worship?
- According to Philippians 2, why is Jesus worthy of worship?
- According to Matthew 14:33; 28:9; 28:17 (Luke 24:52); and John 9:38, why is Jesus worthy of worship?
- According to Revelation 5:9-14, why is Jesus worthy of worship?

WORSHIP IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This lesson will take us on a quick journey through the Old Testament while focusing on stories involving worship; some good, some bad.

- What is the first act of worship in scripture? Why was one act accepted and the other rejected?
- What is the first thing Noah did when he left the ark?
- Read Genesis 12:7, 12:8, and 13:18. What was the first thing Abraham did when he relocated?
- Why was Bethel such an important location? What does “Bethel” mean?
- What is the people’s response to the Passover in Exodus 12?
- What is explained in Leviticus 1-5?
- What went wrong in Leviticus 10?
- Describe the pattern which unfolded during the period of the kings in regard to worship.
- What was one of the main jobs of the prophets?
- Does God accept worship without personal piety?
- What do the Psalms teach us about worship?
- Consider the stories of Ezra and Nehemiah as they try to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem. When they begin to reestablish monotheistic worship, what do they use as their guide?

WORSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

While we can learn much about the nature of worship from the Old Testament, we understand that the New Testament provides our authority, pattern, and example of worship specifics. Let's take a 10,000-foot journey through the New Testament and see what it says about worship.

- Who is the first recipient of worship in the New Testament?
- How does Jesus critique the worship of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 15:1-9?
- For what reasons is Jesus worshiped in the New Testament?
- According to Romans 1:25, what often happens in worship?
- What are some of the instructions for our assemblies given in 1 Corinthians 14?
- When singing, in what directions do our words go? Cf. Ephesians 5:18-21 and Colossians 3:16.
- For all the instructions concerning music and instruments in the Old Testament, what is completely missing from the New Testament?
- What is the "fruit of our lips" according to Hebrews 13:15?
- What is the main activity around the throne of God in the book of Revelation?

TRUE WORSHIP AND THE HEART

Text: John 4:1-26

There are two extremes we may face when it comes to worship. The first is a cold, calculated, heartless adherence to rules and regulations. The second is a fiery, passionate, heartfelt, and spontaneous worship which offers what one feels will be accepted by God. What makes worship “in spirit and in truth”? What role do our emotions and feelings play in worship?

- Who were the Samaritans?
- What did the Samaritans believe?
- Where was the appropriate place of worship: Mount Gerizim or Jerusalem?
- What does it mean to worship God in “spirit and truth”?
- According to John 4:23, what is God seeking?
- What is the food Jesus speaks of in 4:32?
- Does it matter where one worships?
- Read Acts 7: how does Stephen address this point?

AUTHORITY

We often feel as if we must serve in the realm of grand gestures, as if we must sell everything and give to the poor or renounce all earthly blessings. But sometimes it is the thoughtful phone call, letter, hug, or plate of food that brightens one's day. In Micah 6, the people want to know what grand gesture God wants from them and Micah says that all God wants is justice, mercy, and humility. What three attributes better define a servant?

- Consider Cain and Abel: how does their worship relate to the subject of authority?
- Consider Nadab and Abihu: how does their worship relate to the subject of authority?
- Consider Korah's Rebellion (Numbers 16): how does their worship relate to the subject of authority?
- Consider Jeroboam and the other kings of Israel: how does their worship relate to the subject of authority?
- Consider King Uzziah: how does his worship relate to the subject of authority?
- Does submission to authority in matters of worship rob our worship of passion?
- What role do our desires play when it comes to the worship of God?
- Why is such submission to authority often referred to a "pharisaical"?

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Text: Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-22; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

With this lesson we come to the first of our five acts of worship. I am not the biggest fan of that terminology, as worship is not limited to these five acts. It is convenient terminology because these are the things we do when we come together for corporate worship. Could it also have something to do with the fact that we have five fingers? The Lord's Supper, one could argue, is the activity around which everything else is centered in our worship assemblies. Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 11:20 seem to imply that the main reasoning for gathering on Sunday was to partake of the Lord's Supper.

- In what way is partaking of the Lord's Supper worship?
- How do we know what is involved in this act and how to "perform" this activity?
- What Old Testament activity was a shadow of the Lord's Supper's reality?
- What is the danger in participating in this activity in an un-authoritative manner?
- How had the Corinthians abused the Lord's Supper?
- Is partaking of the Lord's Supper a vertical or horizontal activity?
- What debates have centered around the Lord's Supper throughout history?

PRAYER

Text: Ephesians 3:11-12, 14; Hebrews 6:16; Revelation 4; the Psalms

Our first passage hits me hard. What is it we are doing in prayer? We are bowing the knee. We are submitting ourselves to God as sovereign. We are entering the very throne room of God. We are recognizing the work of Jesus Christ in making such possible. It is not just in singing that we praise God. This is something that absolutely should be done in our assemblies and in our daily lives.

- Why do we need “boldness and access” to come to God? How does this differ from Gentiles?
- The Hebrews author says we can approach the throne of grace with confidence. How does this differ from the Israelites?
- What is going on around the throne of God? How does prayer bring us to the throne of God?
- Pick a few Psalms at random. We would agree that many of these Psalms are prayers. But what activity is referenced in almost every Psalm?
- With what attitude must we approach God in prayer?
- In what way is prayer worship?

TIME WITH THE WORD

Text: Nehemiah 8-9; Psalm 1, 19, 119

We all understand the extreme need for time with the word of God. But is it something we would normally think of as worship? I believe our texts will help us to understand that it is, in fact, worship as we collectively submit ourselves to the word of God. There are numerous passages we could list (and some will be in the questions), but I ask you to read carefully Nehemiah 8-9 as this will be the basis of our lesson online.

- Is there a connection between time with the word and other acts of worship? Consider Acts 2:42; 20:7; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19
- What three things did Ezra and the leaders do in Nehemiah 8 concerning the word?
- What did the people do when Ezra began to read the Word of God?
- In response to the word of God, the people were commanded not to mourn but to do what instead?
- Consider 1 Corinthians 14:15. What is essential for proper worship? Where does that come from?
- What is the reaction of the people on the day of Pentecost? How does that connect to the idea of worship?
- Just as we praise God in prayer and song, how might we praise Him in our preaching?
- In what way is our time with the word worship?

IS GIVING WORSHIP?

Text: 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9

If we are being honest, when it comes to our giving, this may be the act on which we spend the least amount of time. In most assemblies it is an afterthought and usually done after the Lord's Supper as a convenience without much said. Our congregation would be an anomaly in this regard. Of course, giving is not like singing or even praying. But is it worship?

- When are we to participate in this activity and for what reason?
- How is this related to the grace of God (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:1)? What does Paul call this activity in 2 Corinthians 8:6?
- What preceded the generosity of the Macedonians?
- What is the outcome of this activity (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:19)?
- Paul most often relates this activity as a gift. To what Old Testament activity is this a parallel?
- Not only was sacrifice a part of Israelite worship, many of these sacrifices provided what for the priests?
- According to 2 Corinthians 9:11, to what does this giving lead?
- In what way is our giving worship?

SINGING

Text: Acts 16:25; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 13:15; James 5:13; the Psalms

Finally, we come to the act of worship that we probably consider the most prominent. If I simply said the word worship, what image would be in your mind? Probably praise through song. There is a connection with prayer and preaching as all three involve praise, glory, and honor being given to God.

- Personal opinion: why do you think God included music in worship?
- How can we teach through song? Consider Acts 16:25.
- What (if any) difference is there in “Psalms” and “hymns” and “spiritual songs”?
- What does the phrase “fruit of lips” mean?
- When we are blessed or joyous, what is an appropriate response?
- The Psalter was the hymnbook of Israel. These were the songs sung in worship. Which Psalms would be especially appropriate for worship? What Psalms do we regularly sing?
- Is our singing worship to God or conversation with one another?
- What is the connection between the phrases “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” and “singing Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs”?
- In what way is singing worship?

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

This lesson is a bit different from the others. When it comes to acts of worship, however, this is one of the biggest differences between us and much of the religious world. Not only will this help us better appreciate the concept of singing, it is also an exercise in Biblical authority. Some of these questions may require some internet research.

- When was instrumental music introduced to worship in churches?
- For all the discussion of music and instruments in the Old Testament, what is deafeningly absent from the New Testament?
- We understand that many things of the Old Testament were symbols and types of greater and fuller actualities in the New Testament. Sacrifices are fulfilled in Jesus. The temple is fulfilled in the church. The priesthood is fulfilled in Christians. Consider Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; and Hebrews 13:15. Instruments are fulfilled in what?
- What arguments have you heard for the use of instrumental music? Divide these arguments into two groups: emotional and scripture.
- How should we respond to these arguments?

WORSHIP THROUGH HISTORY

It is good that this lesson is last because I will need some time to prepare for the actual class. Since we have already looked at instrumental music, we will not have much to say about the change in music through the centuries. To prepare for this lesson, you may need to use the internet.

- Define the term “liturgy”?
- What debates have taken place concerning the Lord’s Supper through the years?
- What is a lectionary?
- How have church buildings changed through the years?
- What and why was there a clergy/laity distinction?
- Opinion: Why do worship styles change every so often? Right now the emphasis is on praise bands and entertainment.
- What was the goal of men like Barton W. Stone and Thomas and Alexander Campbell?
- What does the Bible teach about our “order of worship”?