



LifeGroup Study

2023-11-19

YOU ARE WHAT YOU LOVE

The Practice of Meeting Together

Leader Notes

OVERVIEW:

Welcome back to our series, You Are What You Love. Our hearts are like magnets that pull us toward a desired end or outcome. God has designed our hearts to be fully satisfied in him. A key way that God orients our hearts toward him (or back toward him) is in our practice of meeting together to worship him. Corporate worship (Sunday church gatherings for example) are a place where God can recalibrate our hearts away from a love of things in this world and back to him. We have a role to play in this as well. When we come to worship on a Sunday morning we should come expectant and looking to offer worship to God. The goal of today's study is to grow our understanding of the purpose of corporate worship and to intentionally prepare our hearts to participate fully in what God wants to do in us as we gather.

ICEBREAKER: My Church Experience Growing Up

My family attended church together regularly when I was a kid. My early memories of church are of sitting and standing with my family in a church pew, listening to a sermon and singing from a hymnal. While some of these experiences seemed a little boring to me as a young boy, I have many good memories of church in those early days, and several of the hymns we regularly sang are still embedded deep in my heart today. What about you? What was your church experience like growing up? Maybe your family rarely or never attended church. If that is your story, what was your impression of church? **Share your story with the group.**

STUDY:

Worship is the arena in which God recalibrates our hearts, reforms our desires, and rehabilitates our loves. Worship isn't just something we do; it is where God does something *to us*. Worship is the heart of discipleship because it is the gymnasium in which God retrains our hearts.

James K.A. Smith [You Are What You Love](#)

WHY CHURCH?

Each of us has a unique story when it comes to church. Our story often informs why we attend church. God has a wonderful plan for us in the experience of church. He wants to form our heart and retrain our heart. His plan should inform why we would make a commitment to prioritize gathering together for worship.

1. Imagine you are having dinner with friends who are not church attenders. One of them asks you, "So, why do you go to church?" **What would you tell them?**

LEADER NOTES: There are many possible answers we might give to this question. For some of us, we might talk about how our family we grew up in regularly attended church, so we have continued the habit. Others might share about how attending church encourages us and gives us a good boost for the week ahead. We might share about how our kids enjoy their Sunday school, or how we enjoy the connection with friends there. Still others might say we attend to be encouraged and blessed by hearing God's Word (the sermon).

2. "Worship is the arena in which God recalibrates our hearts, reforms our desires, and rehabilitates our loves." **What do you think of this idea? How might this definition help inform *why* you go to church?**

LEADER NOTES: For some of us, the idea that worship is a time where God "recalibrates our hearts" may be new to us. Some of us may have grown up in an experience of worship that is mainly focused on the intellectual – the goal is *learning*. Others may have experience where the focus was emotional – the goal is to *feel or experience* God. Worship, according to this quote, is a place where God *recalibrates* our hearts away from the pull of secular liturgies and back to him. This is something God does *to us* and this is why we gather together to worship.

WORSHIP AS COUNTER FORMATION

Often our hearts are formed in ways that orient us off course from God's plan for lives. There are cultural liturgies that call for our devotion and love. These cultural liturgies have a powerful shaping

influence in our lives because they orient our heart often in ways move us off course from God. God uses worship as a counter formation to re-orient our hearts toward Him.

3. "Cultural/secular liturgies" is a unique phrase we've been using in this series. What does this phrase mean?

LEADER NOTES: Cultural/secular liturgies are habits or practices in our culture that shape our heart toward a certain end. In our series we have looked at the secular liturgies of shopping and Self. Building my life around material things or living for self, orients me in a secular way, a life direction that is off course from God's plan for my life.

4. READ: Romans 6:11

"In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." NIV

- **How might God use worship to help us count ourselves as "dead" to the liturgies of our culture, and "alive" to God?**

LEADER NOTES: Worship is a counter formation that God can use to reorient our hearts back to Him. In worship we are reminded of who God is and who we are. For example, God is our loving heavenly Father and we are deeply loved by Him. In worship we receive his love once again and we open our hearts to his work in us. Worship puts the things in this world that draw our hearts (cultural/secular liturgies) back in perspective. They do not compare to God's love for us! Worship helps us count ourselves as "dead" to those cultural liturgies and "alive" to who God is and what he is up to in our lives.

5. READ: Daniel 1

The story of Daniel and his friends is an example of resisting cultural pressures through devotion to God. In verse 8, we read, "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way."

- **How is Daniel's life an example of counter-formation?**

LEADER NOTES: In Daniel 1:8 we read that Daniel "resolved not to defile himself" by the cultural liturgies of the royal food and wine of Babylon. Rather than being formed by the culture by drinking the wine and eating the royal food, Daniel resolved to remain faithful to God's shaping influence in his life. David's religious upbringing served as a counter formation in his life, orienting his heart to God rather than to the ways of the world.

WORSHIP AS REORIENTATION

Regularly gathering together for worship is a practice God can use in our lives to reorient our hearts to him and help us agree with his way and will for our lives.

6. READ: Psalm 95:6

"Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." NIV

- **How does this Psalm invite us to be reoriented in our worship?**

LEADER NOTES: In this Psalm, God invites us to come before him and honour him. The two physical descriptions (“bow down” and “kneel”) help us see what the posture of our hearts should be in worship. When we honour God as our king, we put ourselves in a place where he can shape our hearts and reorient us toward him and his ways.

7. When we gather for worship, we are to come with expectant hearts, waiting for God to meet us as we open our hearts to him. Think back to your times of gathering with others to worship.
What obstacles to God’s reorienting work have you experienced in those times?

LEADER NOTES: When we gather for worship, the main obstacle we experience to God’s work in our hearts comes from within. A good question to ask – “Is my heart ready to worship?” Is my heart distracted, closed, stubborn, cold toward God? Ask God to give you a receptive heart to what he wants to do in you as you worship him.

THE POWER OF CORPORATE WORSHIP

8. READ: John 4:21-24

²¹ “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.” NIV

- In this passage we read a conversation Jesus has with a Samaritan woman about the essence of worship. What does Jesus tell us about true worship? **How might this inform our worship gatherings today?**

LEADER NOTES: In John 4:19, the Samaritan woman asked Jesus about the proper location to worship God. The Samaritans believed the proper location to be on a mountain in their homeland, while the Jews believed the proper location was Jerusalem. In his reply to her question, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that when it comes to worship, the issue is not over location but our heart. True worshipers, Jesus says, “worship the Father in Spirit and in truth”. True worship should engage both the heart (Spirit) and the mind (truth). God wants to ignite our hearts with His love. He also wants to engage our minds. The more we know about God through what he has revealed to us in the Scriptures, the more we are thankful for his work in us. Our thankfulness wells over in worship of him. This is the potential power of worship.

9. READ: Mark 12:30

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.' NIV

- **Why is loving God central to the power of corporate worship?**

LEADER NOTES: The goal of corporate worship is not to have our tastes pandered to or to have a certain type of experience. Our goal is to love God in response to his love for us. The more we know and appreciate God's love for us, the more he is able to work in our hearts as we love him with all we are. Loving God is not something he expects us to do on our own. He has given us his Spirit to empower us to love him well. (see John 14:15-18)

PREPARING YOUR HEART FOR WORSHIP

10. When we gather with others for worship, our heart attitude and posture matters. Here are four heart postures that can help us experience God in worship. As a group, think together about what you might do to prepare your heart in each of these areas.

- Come with an *expectant heart*
- Come with a *humble heart*
- Come with an *open heart*
- Come with a *thankful heart*

LEADER NOTES: There are a number of important things we can do to prepare our hearts for when we gather together for corporate. To have a prepared heart, I should allow God to speak to my heart and shape my heart during the week. Daily habits such as bible reading and prayer as well as other spiritual disciplines put us in a place where God can shape our heart on our own so we are ready to gather with others for worship. Before the worship service begins, take a moment to thank God and to ask him to work in your heart. Confess and sin he brings to your mind. Quiet your heart before God. These simple habits help put us in a place where we are ready to worship him.

PRAYER:

Read Psalm 100 out loud together as a group, then spend some time thanking God for this practice he has given us of meeting together. Ask him to give you a heart ready to worship well!

A psalm of thanksgiving.

¹ Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth!

² Worship the LORD with gladness.

Come before him, singing with joy.

³ Acknowledge that the LORD is God!

He made us, and we are his.^[a]

We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving;

go into his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him and praise his name.

⁵For the LORD is good.

His unfailing love continues forever,
and his faithfulness continues to each generation.