

BIBLE STUDY: Living Worship

by Brandon Metcalf

Introduction:

Too often in the church we can get tunnel vision on the issue of worship. We focus so much time, energy and resources on our weekly worship services that it is easy to see that as the extent of worship. With that mentality also comes the divisive issue of worship style and all the arguments and bitterness attached to that. This can lead to an improper focus on worship as merely something that we do for God, which is really just a glorification of self. Instead, we must see worship as what God does for us, eliciting our response to His grace. Rather than focusing on the worship service, I think it would be wise for the leaders of the church to look at the broader concept of worship itself. When we take off the blinders and look at more than just Sunday mornings, I believe that the arguments that surround the worship service itself will also be solved. Once we return to the very biblical and very Lutheran idea of worship as an everyday lifestyle, we see that everything we do (except sin) can be done as worship to God, in response to the grace He has given us. If everything can be worship to God, the issue of worship style becomes irrelevant and we can focus on receiving God's gifts given to us in Christ Jesus and then responding with our praise, no matter what form that comes in. If the people around us saw us worshipping with the entirety of our lives, I believe that Christianity would have a much different reputation in the world today. I pray that this Bible study can be used to dive into the concept of the worship lifestyle. It is a concept that changes lives because it draws our focus constantly to the God who changes lives. So take the leap, and let worship change your life.

Structure:

The four lessons in this Bible Study follow a similar format. They consist of an opening discussion, video or activity; a main lesson using Scripture as well as quotes from theologians and other sources to help enhance discussion and learning; and finally, there is a closing activity or challenge and a prayer. The discussions can be done in small groups and then shared with the large group or as a whole group. The point is for the youth to make some of the connections on their own and not have it spoon-fed to them. Please don't just lecture to them or give them the answers, as that will greatly hinder their personal learning. The teaching style is generally discussion based, with some Socratic elements, as well, where a concept or quote is introduced and then the group proceeds to evaluate and apply it.

There are not separate leader/group handouts, although giving the youth either a journal or at least some paper to write on is recommended, as they will be writing down some goals at the end of each lesson. The purpose of the goals is not to be legalistic. In our own power or by our own efforts, we cannot come to Christ. It is only through the Holy Spirit given to us through the means of grace that our faith can be strengthened. Within that framework, the purpose of the goals is to challenge the youth (as well as yourself) to actually take steps toward living a life of worship instead of just talking about what a nice concept this is.

I would not recommend making a PowerPoint that would reveal all of the parts of the outline, as they may detract from discussion if the youth think there's just one answer that you're looking for. However, I think a visual aid for the Bible passages, quotes and some of the key points would prove useful in keeping everyone's attention. Some video clips are used in the study and are generally gathered from YouTube. While the outline does provide many examples, please make this study your own and use stories from your own life, introduce resources that you have or use other things that can help the message connect with the youth apart from the study. The goal is that we start seeing worship as a lifestyle and something that is done all the time as part of a continual walk with God, in response to and in the power of the grace of God given to us in Christ. That is a huge step in faith maturity and I pray that this study can be a tool toward that goal.

Lessons:

Lesson 1: Made to Worship

Lesson 2: "Ordinary" Worship

Lesson 3: Fuel for Worship

Lesson 4: Worship in the Storm

Part One: Made to Worship

Opening:

- What comes to mind when you hear the word “worship”?
- What is worship? As a group, list out some definitions of worship.
- Watch this Youtube video showing the reactions to the USA’s game winning goal in the World Cup in 2010: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbn3rOPmR9w>. {Note: If you are unable to access this video, either a different video about sporting events or talking about your favorite local sports team would suffice.}
- Does this video change your definition of worship at all? Was what was happening in the video “worship”? Is our standard view of worship too narrow? What are some other examples of worship?

Study:

- Quote: “Worship is our response to what we value most.” –Louie Giglio, author of *The Air I Breathe*
- Reactions to that definition? How does this compare to our previous definitions? To the world’s definition?
- Read Luther’s explanation of The Third Article of the Apostle’s Creed from the Small Catechism. What does this have to do with worship? Is worship just something we do? What is worship in response to? Who is it that works in us to allow us to worship?
- If worship is something that occurs constantly, what are some implications? What does this mean for the church?
- What is our worship in response to? (The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the life and salvation we receive from that.) What happens when we lose sight of what our worship is responding to? (Our worship is then for our own glory rather than God’s.)

If we see all that God has done for us in Christ, then a partial response isn’t much of a response at all. We respond to God through singing and at church, but that can’t be our only response. Worship is a 24/7 thing and if we’re only worshipping God when we’re at church, then what are we worshipping the rest of the week?

- We are created to worship. Look up Colossians 1:16. According to this verse, who were we created by? What were we created for?
- “All things are created by him and for him,” or said a different way, we are created to worship God.
- Quote: “For the Christian, worship is co-extensive with life. Life is already an expression of worship.” –Ravi Zacharias

As Christians, can we choose not to worship? No, we’re always worshipping something. But can we choose not to worship God? Yes, but that’s not what we’re created for. We can worship other things, but they will not satisfy us.

- Why do we worship? As a group, list some reasons for worshipping in general and then for worshipping God specifically.
- Quote: “God wants us to worship Him. He doesn’t need us, for He couldn’t be a self-sufficient God and need anything or anybody, but He wants us. When Adam sinned it was not he who cried, “God, where art Thou?” It was God who cried, “Adam, where art thou?” –A.W. Tozer
- What are your thoughts or reactions to this quote? How does it feel to be wanted by God? What does this mean for your worship?
- Look up Revelation 4:8 and Psalm 19:1-4. What do these verses say about worship? Does God need our worship? If God doesn’t need our worship, then why do it?
- God wants your worship, but does it impact your life as well? Look up Psalm 115:4-8. What does that passage say about our worship, specifically verse 8? (We become like what we worship.)
- If we become like what we worship, what implications does this have for when we worship God? (Through the Holy Spirit, our response to God’s grace is a way that God molds and shapes us.)

Closing:

You and I are made to worship. More specifically, we are made to worship God. During worship services, we receive God’s best in Christ Jesus and as a result, we are free to respond in thanksgiving with our whole lives. We are going to talk in depth next week about what this looks like in our everyday lives, but for now take some time to reflect on the importance of worship. If I become like what I worship, then how important is it that I worship God with my whole life? What could this look like? Take a few moments to write out some thoughts and application points for your life.

Write down two to three specific goals for this week on how you can take steps towards living a life of worship.

Before closing in prayer, have the group summarize key learnings or thoughts from the study. Try to mention as many different points, quotes or passages as possible. Also bring in ideas or stories from the discussions, not just the outline.

Give an opportunity for those in the group to lift up prayer requests before the group and write them down. Then close the group in prayer, specifically mentioning the requests and that we would see our everyday lives as worship and be filled with a desire to become more like God as we worship Him.

Part Two: “Ordinary” Worship

Opening:

- What’s your favorite billboard/ad? Have the group come up with examples. If you have access, you could even watch a couple clips online if they’re available and appropriate.
- What makes these advertisements memorable?

The vast majority of advertisements do not emphasize the ordinary aspects of their product or company. Cars don’t emphasize cup holders, restaurants don’t talk about their straws and TV shows don’t highlight their reruns or long commercial breaks. Our culture is focused on the extraordinary, and yet the majority of our lives are spent doing the ordinary.

- What does this focus on the extraordinary do to the everyday or ordinary things?

Study:

- We’re in a series about living a life of worship. Have a couple of people say the main points that they remembered from last week’s lesson. (definition of worship, we are created to be worshippers, worship is a response to what God has done for us, God wants our worship, we become like what we worship, etc).
- Take some time to have youth share experiences from this past week of how they saw this worship lifestyle in action. Did they meet the specific goals they set last week?
- We don’t go to worship and receive the gifts He gives us through the means of grace (Word and Sacraments) and then just go about our day as if nothing happened. What does God give us in the worship service? (His best in Christ Jesus.) How do we get this? (Word and Sacrament) What do we do? (The Holy Spirit does the work, we just receive it.) What do we do in response? (We respond with thanksgiving, song and loving our neighbor.)
- So, I know God wants me to glorify Him and serve my neighbor as a response to His grace, but what specifically does that mean? What does that look like? Let’s turn to God’s Word for the answer:
- Look up Micah 6:8. What is God looking for? Does this seem to be an extraordinary or an ordinary thing? Is it an event or a lifestyle?

The Big Question: How do you view your life? Is it extraordinary versus ordinary, holy versus regular or is it all worship? The world wants us to compartmentalize our lives into different sections, and that includes our faith. Our faith can get a section of our life, but it isn’t supposed to influence the rest of it. This appeals to our sinful nature, but God wants our whole life to be a response to the grace He has given to us through His Son.

- Surely we can’t worship God with everything, right? There has to be some sort of an exception! Look up Colossians 3:17, Colossians 3:23 and 1 Corinthians 10:31. What do these passages say about our worship? Are there exceptions to what can be done in response to God’s grace given to us in Christ?
- Quote: “Worship is simply glorifying God; this means there is nothing required of us that cannot be done as an act of worship.” –John MacArthur, author of *The Glory of Heaven*
- There is one exception to this. Can anyone name it? (Hint: it’s what separates us from God). Sin is the only thing that cannot be done for God’s glory. Aside from that, everything else can be worship. What are the implications of this, or to rephrase it in a Lutheran way: What does this mean?

Our natural reaction is to think, “How is this possible? How can I worship God with my whole life? That sounds impossible!” But remember Micah 6:8 and how walking with God in relationship is what He wants from us. That makes this whole idea of a life of worship much more manageable. Keep in mind, this task is impossible on your own. Worship must begin with the Lord serving us through the Word and Sacraments before we can even start talking about our response. Loving our neighbor by living a life of worship must always be a response to what God has done for us. We cannot separate the two.

With this in mind, let's turn to some wisdom from a church father to find another way to look at this seemingly huge task of living a life of worship:

- Quote: "Start by doing what's necessary, then what's possible, and suddenly you're doing the impossible." –St. Francis of Assisi
- Let's break this quote down a bit. First, we are to do what's necessary. Put another way, we are to do what we have to do. What does this look like in your life? What are the things that you have to do?
- How can these ordinary things be worship? Do we have to add something to them to make them worship?
- Quote: "The maid who sweeps her kitchen is doing the will of God just as much as the monk who prays, not because she may sing a Christian hymn as she sweeps but because God loves clean floors." –Martin Luther (hope the name rings a bell for some of you)
- What does this mean for our ordinary worship? Can our everyday tasks bring glory to God?
- Returning to the quote from St. Francis of Assisi, once we do what we have to do, then we do what's possible. Put another way, we do what we can do. What are some things that you can do? (pray, sing, talk to a friend, comfort someone, listen, donate money, serve with your time or talents, give God the credit)
- Quote: "Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do." –John Wooden, Hall of Fame college basketball coach
- What are some things you cannot do? Can you think of a time when you let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do? As a group, come up with some examples of this.

When we combine what we have to do with what we can do, we will go about our ordinary lives differently than the rest of the world. Then, we will find that we are doing the impossible. We are reaching the world for Christ. We are walking with God. We are living a life of worship! This is not by our own doing, but through "Christ in us, the hope of glory" (Col 1:17). When we open our ordinary lives to God and let Him work through each and every moment in our lives, God starts to do the impossible in us and through us.

Closing:

As a closing activity, break everyone up into groups of three to four and have them come up with (in five to seven minutes) an advertisement for the worship lifestyle. It could be a poster, billboard, skit, etc. The goal is to emphasize the ordinary aspects of worship and how that looks in their everyday lives. Have each group present and briefly explain their advertisement and what it means for their lives this week.

God has called us to walk with Him not only on Sundays or during church events, but in our everyday lives. Everything we do can be done for His glory, as a response to His grace. This life of worship is not a boring, unfulfilled life, but one that is full of the joy that comes from being in relationship with God. As Brother Lawrence, a 17th century monk (and author of one of the most influential books on the worship lifestyle, *Practicing the Presence of God*) put it, "There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God." May our lives be defined by the joy that comes from that continual conversation with God in our everyday walk with Him.

What is necessary and possible for you to do in your life? What does this look like in your life? Take a few moments to write out some thoughts and application points for your life. Write down two to three specific goals for this week on how you can take steps toward living a life of worship and loving your neighbor in response to and because of God's grace.

Give an opportunity for those in the group to lift up prayer requests before the group and write them down. Then close the group in prayer, specifically mentioning the requests and that we would see our everyday lives as worship and be filled with the joy that comes from being in constant communication with God.

Part Three: Fuel for Worship

Opening:

- We're going to talk about fuel today. What is fuel? What kinds of things need fuel?
- If you could invent a type of fuel what would it be? What would it do? How would it work? Take some time to share these ideas as a group. (Keep in mind, the inventions don't have to be realistic. Don't let the group fall into critiquing the ideas based on plausibility).

Study:

Fuel is what makes things run. Cars need gasoline, flashlights need batteries, and people need food and water. Without fuel, things don't work as they're supposed to. It's really hard to function when you're running out of fuel. It's the same way with our spiritual and worship life. We need fuel in order to continue to run the race of faith. Oftentimes it's hard to worship when we're out of energy, aren't paying attention to God or are too focused on ourselves.

The Big Question: What can I do to fuel my worship? How can I sustain my life of worship?

One thing to keep in mind about fuel: not every fuel works the same way for every device. It would be silly to put a hamburger in a car and expect it to run or for a person to drink gasoline in order to rehydrate and get energy. Similarly, the different types of fuel for worship may not all work in the same way for each individual. Pay attention and try out each of the worship fuels and see which ones really connect with you and fill you up. {Note for leaders: In the section following there are some next steps listed for you and your youth to take in order to fuel your worship. These are just some ideas and I encourage you to load your youth up with other resources and ideas for them. This is an opportunity for you to equip them to lead their own worship life. Please make the most of this opportunity.}

1. The Cross of Christ: How can we find fuel in the cross? What does the cross tell us about ourselves? What does it show us about who God is?
 - Quote: "There is, however, equally great incentive to worship and love God in the thought that, for some unfathomable reason, He wants me as His friend, and desires to be my friend, and has given His Son to die for me in order to realize this purpose. Not merely that we know God, but that He knows us." –J.I. Packer
 - Are you overwhelmed by the love shown at the cross? Is worship and praise your natural response after revisiting the cross? Can you not help sharing the message of the cross with others?
 - Next steps: If you said yes to the above questions, then this might be an area to focus on. Put crosses in places that you will see daily in order to remind you of God's love, regularly read the Gospel account of the Passion of Christ, watch the movie **The Passion of the Christ**, tell others the Gospel story or find other ways to journey to the cross daily in order to fuel your worship.
2. Means of Grace: Who is it that strengthens our faith? (the Holy Spirit) How does the Holy Spirit come to us? (through the Word and Sacraments, also known as the means of grace)
 - Unlike the other fuels listed here, this one needs no questions attached to see if this would benefit you, because the means of grace are for ALL who believe. The means of grace are THE fuel that God uses to equip us to worship and serve our neighbor. God promises that these will strengthen your faith. How does God deliver on this promise? Why are we in need of the means of grace?
 - Look in the Small Catechism at Luther's Explanation of Baptism. What does our Baptism mean for us each day? What is God's claim on us in Baptism?
 - Look in the Small Catechism at Luther's Explanation of the Lord's Supper. What are the benefits of this Sacrament? (forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation) Why do we need this?
 - Next steps: Be in worship and in the Word. Receive the best that God has to give you in His Son Jesus Christ. Only then are you able to worship and love your neighbor. Whenever we try to separate our work and worship from God's work, we fail every time. We must see and receive God's gifts for us in order for us to respond with our service and lives.
3. See God: How can we "see" God? Look around at His creation. Marvel at what He has done. What are some way in which we can do this?
 - Video: Laminin- the cell adhesion protein (clip from the full video "How Great is Our God" by Louie Giglio) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fo-NPPIeeRk>
 - Does this video get you fired up about God? Are you amazed by the ways science points to God? Does creation just fascinate you? Are you blown away by the human body and how intricate it is? Do the miracles of the

Bible and today astound you?

- Next steps: If you answered yes to the above questions, then this might be an area to focus on. Watch Louie Giglio's videos "Indescribable" and "How Great is Our God," spend time out in God's creation, visit the Hubble Space Telescope website and marvel at God's vast creation, read about the miracles of the Bible, go outside and pray or find other ways to see God around you each day and marvel at His creativity, power and love in order to fuel your worship.
4. Who He is: How can we learn more about who God is? What are some His qualities?
- Do you love learning more about the qualities of God? Does God just amaze you? Do you get excited when you learn something new about God in His Word? Are you interested in hearing how God is at work in other people's lives?
 - Next steps: If you answered yes to the above questions, then this might be an area to focus on. Dig into Scripture and look for the different names of God, read the book *Knowledge of the Holy* by A.W. Tozer, journal each day about a different attribute of God, join a small group, journey through the Psalms and focus on a descriptor of God and His work each day, share with others about how great your God is, talk to others about how God is working in their lives, spend time in corporate worship, actually take notes during the sermon or find other ways to daily focus on who God is in order to fuel your worship.
5. Focus on the alternatives: Is anything else worthy of your worship? Can anything else satisfy you? What does this world really have to offer you?
- Quote: "I wish everyone could get rich and famous and everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that's not the answer." –Jim Carrey (yes, the actor/comedian)
 - What is it that you wish for? What if you got everything you ever dreamed of? What would it take to satisfy you?
 - Quote: "Nothing makes God more supreme and more central in worship than when a people are utterly persuaded that nothing—not money or prestige or leisure or family or job or health or sports or toys or friends—nothing is going to bring satisfaction to their sinful, guilty, aching hearts besides God" –John Piper, author of *God's Passion for His Glory*
 - Do you believe that this world cannot really satisfy you? Are you disappointed by the promises of the world and culture? Do you want to live for something more? After your successes, do you feel like there's something missing still? Are you tired of chasing after fame and riches?
 - Next steps: If you answered yes to the above questions, then this might be an area to focus on. Use your time to daily serve others, jealously guard your time in God's Word each day, donate money to a charity or someone in need, tithe, give glory to God after successes, be humble in victory and gracious in defeat, talk to others about what will make them happy, share with your friends how you are only satisfied in Christ, spend time in corporate worship seeking after God with others or find other ways to daily remind yourself that God is the only One worth worshipping in order to fuel your worship.

Closing:

This is not an exhaustive list of the fuels for worship and the next steps given the only ones that can be taken. Hopefully it is a starting point to being able to draw near to God in your everyday life by not only adding some routines, but also continually refocusing yourself on God, which will impact the rest of your day as well. You cannot live a life of worship if you're trying it on your own and not receiving and responding to the gifts that are given to us in Christ. Paul tells us in Romans 12 that your "spiritual act of worship" is to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind." Take some time to write down some of these ways or others that you come up with on your own that can help renew your mind by focusing you on Christ. Write down at least one specific fuel of worship (other than the means of grace, which is a constant fuel for all believers) that connects with you and two to three different steps to take this week to help you live that life of worship.

Give an opportunity for those in the group to lift up prayer requests before the group and write them down. Then close the group in prayer, specifically mentioning the requests and that we would daily pursue God and be filled with a desire to worship Him, a desire that comes only through the Holy Spirit and a relationship with God.

Part Four: Worship in the Storm

Opening:

- What stories have you heard about or read in the news recently? How many of them are about sad events, disasters or death?
- These tough times are often termed the “storms of life.” What storms have you or your family been through? Are you currently in a storm?

Study:

- Where is God in the middle of these storms? Is He just waiting for us to come through it? Does He even care?
- Quote: “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” –C.S. Lewis
- What does this quote mean for you? Does the pain in your life open you up to listening to God?
- Do you pursue God more when times are hard or when times are good? Share some examples.

The Big Question: What happens to my worship when I’m in a storm? Where do I turn when trouble comes?

- Read John 16:33. What does Jesus say about trouble? Can we avoid it altogether?
- What does Jesus mean when He says He has “overcome the world”? Can that still give us hope today? What about His words, “It is finished,” that He said on the cross? Does it still apply to this life here on earth?
- Read Matthew 14: 22-33. What happens to the disciples when they’re in a storm (literally)?
- Key in on verses 31-32. Pay attention to the order of events here. Jesus catches Peter, they walk to the boat and then the storm is calmed. In the time in between catching Peter and reaching the boat, what was Jesus doing? He was walking with Peter through the storm! Does He do the same for us?
- Quote: “Your most profound and intimate experiences of worship will likely be in your darkest days—when your heart is broken, when you feel abandoned, when you’re out of options, when the pain is great—and you turn to God alone.” –Rick Warren
- What happens to our worship during the storm? Have you experienced this in your life or in the lives of those around you?
- Quote: “We’re all broadcasting something with our lives. Suffering is a megaphone that amplifies what’s in our hearts.” –Louie Giglio
- When suffering and troubles come, what message are you going to be sending? What is going to be amplified from your heart? Are people going to learn about how bad your life is or about how great your God is?
- The message of how great your God is can only be amplified in your life through the Holy Spirit. Remember the fuels we talked about last week? We need to look to those fuels (especially the means of grace through which the Holy Spirit comes), particularly when we’re in the middle of a storm. It is the work of God that will get you through the storm, not anything that you can do on your own. Cling to the life and salvation given to you at your Baptism and in the Lord’s Supper. Take comfort in the Gospel of Christ each and every day.
- Read Hebrews 6:19. What affect does hope in Jesus Christ have on our lives? What does this “anchor for the soul” do for us in the middle of a storm?

Closing:

When we are faced with the storms of life, our worship and our message is amplified. What kind of a message are we going to be sending? We are meant to worship God and to amplify the message of an overcoming Savior, Jesus Christ, who has defeated sin, death and the power of the devil. In the midst of pain, we amplify the message of a God who has a plan for our lives and is always working for good, whether we can see that God right in front of us or not. Our anchor lies in the cross of Jesus Christ and the salvation won for us there. We cling to that cross in the midst of the suffering because the cross reminds us that suffering does happen. Jesus suffered more than we can imagine on that cross, and yet God worked through that horrible suffering in order to work the salvation of all mankind. The disciples couldn’t see it at the time, but God was working His plan in the middle of that suffering. It’s the same way in our lives. What is going to happen to our worship when we face storms? Do we give up or do we cling to Christ because there’s nowhere else that we can turn? Remember, God will never let go of you, so cling to Him and His promises.

As a closing activity, have everyone write down what message they want their lives to show other people. Once they have written it down, have them cup their hands around their mouth like a megaphone. Go around the room and have everyone individually shout out through their “megaphone” the message that will be amplified when they go through storms. Ex. “I am trusting in Jesus! Even though I can’t see what He’s doing, I know He is working His good plan through me! I’m going to use my pain for His glory! I cling to the promise of the resurrection and eternal life in heaven!”

Following the megaphone sharing, write down any prayer requests from the group. Before the group prayer, listen to the song “Never Let Go” by David Crowder Band during a time of reflection and personal prayer on how and who to worship during the storms of life. Following the song, close the group in prayer, specifically mentioning the prayer requests. Also pray that we would continue to cling to the cross in the middle of life’s storms, continually worshipping God not because of the circumstances, but because of who God is and the promises He gives us.