CQ is written by Seventh-day Adventist young adults and their friends around the world.

Editorial Office: Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, U.S.A.

Place orders with Pacific Press® Publishing Association, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353, U.S.A.

Other than the King James Version, Scripture versions used in this Bible study guide are as follows:

NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE (NASB)

NEW CENTURY VERSION (NCV)

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV)
Texts credited to the NIV are from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

NEW KING JAMES VERSION (NKJV)
Texts credited to NKJV are from The New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION (NRSV)
Bible texts credited to NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

CQ (ISSN 0744-2939). Volume 34, no. 3. Published quarterly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A., and printed by Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1350 North Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-5193, U.S.A.


POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CQ, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353, U.S.A. Send editorial inquiries to CQ, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A. Send circulation inquiries to Pacific Press® Publishing Association, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353, U.S.A. When a change of address is desired, please send both old and new addresses.

Copyright © 2011 by the Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®.

Printed in the U.S.A.
Worship

10 Lesson One Worship in Genesis: Two Classes of Worshipers
Melissa Breetzke, Jeffrey Georges, Kimberly Danielle Phillips, Nicholas John Reichert, Dustin Serns, Gregory S. Taylor

19 Lesson Two Worship and the Exodus: Understanding Who God Is
Maureen Gatharia, Maroria Oroko, Adam Ramdin, Ruth Reider, Jerry Smith, Ann Stewart

28 Lesson Three The Sabbath and Worship
Yogeld André, Helyne Frederick, Keisha McKenzie, Raul Peters, Shirley Roberts, Arlette Wildman

37 Lesson Four Rejoicing Before the Lord: The Sanctuary and Worship
Leonardo del Rosario Jr., Glenn Brian Ente, Rachel Leer, Farrah Paterniti, Ever Santillan Tandug, Lyn Van Denburgh

46 Lesson Five Happy Are You, O Israel!
Elizabeth A. Adonu, Kenneth Boachie, Abena Marfowaa Boateng, Kwasi Oppong, Silas Owusu-Nkwantabisah, Kofi Kermah Wagya

55 Lesson Six Worship in Song and Praise
Kerry Arbuckle, David Edgren, Peempahn Henley, Hannah Hogg, Bianca McArthur, Talitha Simmons

64 Lesson Seven Worship in the Psalms
Jared Bosire, Gary Case, Dallas Éstey, Tanya L. Henry, Lawrence Kiage, Francis Wokabi
Lesson Eight *Conformity, Compromise, and Crisis in Worship*
Bongga L. Agno, Allen Y. Bano, Felixian T. Felicitas, Madonna Lourdes Morenos-Felicitas, Dulce Regachuelo-Bano, Eva Veronica A. Regachuelo

Lesson Nine “Trust Not in Deceptive Words”: *The Prophets and Worship*
Bentley Chambers, Kaydian Gordon, William Gordon, Orande Thomas, Glensee Tulloch, Diana Wright

Lesson Ten *Worship: From Exile to Restoration*
Jonathan Merlin Burt, Paula Graham, Chrisella McDonald, Catherine Parris, Noel Reid, Pascal Selugy

Lesson Eleven *In Spirit and in Truth*
Yonata Bastian, Fritz and Joice Manurung, Daniel Saputra, Victor Joe Sinaga, Maria Soeharto-Manalu, Osvald Taroreh

Lesson Twelve *Worship in the Early Church*
Ann Adoyo, Gorety Atieno, Hellen Atieno, Seline Khavetsa, Andy Mwanzia, Silas Onyango

Lesson Thirteen *Worship in the Book of Revelation*
Tresa A. Beard, Gianluca Bruno, Santhosh Jackson, Stephanie Sahlin Jackson, Monte Sahlin, Norma Sahlin
There are times when life is more than the update on Facebook, the tweets, the IMs, and texts. Sometimes, the important times, it's about looking beyond the abridged, the instants, the clichés. It's about discovering what God is really trying to say to you.
There are times when life is more than the update on Facebook, the tweets, the IMs, and texts. Sometimes, the important times, it’s about looking beyond the abridged, the instants, the clichés. It’s about discovering what God is really trying to say to you.
SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER PREPARATION IN MINUTES...

http://www.cqbiblestudy.org/article.php?=3

JUST CLICK AND SERVE!
Rosalie Haffner-Lee Zinke says we understand worship best in the light of two great truths: First, we are living in the last days of the great conflict between good and evil. And second, the intercession of Christ can make our faulty offerings beautiful with the incense of His righteousness.
This Quarter’s Illustrator

Daniel Avilés is a graduate of Montemorelos University in Mexico where he studied graphic design. He writes: “I really enjoy what I do, and most of all I love doing it to share the gospel. I really hope that the illustrations for this edition of CQ Bible Study Guide help you to have a better understanding of God and a closer walk with Jesus.”
Getting the Most Out of CQ

FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

CQ is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. CQ’s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the Adult Bible Study Guide find that because CQ deals with the same topics, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

About four hundred Adventist young adults contribute to CQ each year. The wide variety and occasional repetition of the content reflect the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Circulation of CQ is about 72,500.

POINTERs FOR STUDY

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit’s guidance as you study.

2. The Bible passages on which each week’s lesson are based appear in bold type in the “Logos” portion of the lesson. Read these entire passages.

3. The Bible passages for the week are usually divided into sections on the “Logos” pages. When studying these sections, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the headings.

4. Read the other sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passages.

5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the Bible study guide:

   - **Introduction** is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week’s theme.
   - **Logos** is a guide for direct study of the Bible passages for the week.
   - **Testimony** presents Ellen White’s perspective on the lesson theme.
   - **Evidence** approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.
   - **How-to** discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.
   - **Opinion** is a personal viewpoint on the lesson meant to encourage further thought and discussion.
   - **Exploration** provides the reader with a variety of open-ended, creative ways to explore the topic of the week’s lesson.

CQ AND THE CHURCH

CQ is the General Conference–approved Bible study guide for the young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.
Worship in Genesis: Two Classes of Worshipers

“Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.’ And he was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!’ ” (Gen. 28:16, 17, NKJV).
Comical skits from Disney movies, cheery ukulele performances, and words recited by impassioned artists fill tonight’s talent show. Even I, the very embodiment of an amateur, couldn’t resist the opportunity to share a little piece of me. I do wish I had rehearsed more, though. But it’s too late for should-haves now. My turn comes after this group.

Desperate to distract myself, I study the four girls on the stage. Each wears dark jeans and a black shirt. They line up facing the audience and bow their heads. The music begins. One girl steps forward. In perfect synchronization with the voice on the track, her hands begin a choreography that “sings” along with the lyrics. “Bless the Lord,” the speakers boom. “Bless the Lord,” her hands implore. The volume amplifies. Her gestures intensify. Her arms and hands grasp and mold the air before her. With grace and conviction, she paints the lyrics in sign language. As the music grows in spirit, the first verse is overcome by an impassioned choir and the other three girls step forward, pause, and thrust their hands high in one harmonious gesture as they wordlessly exclaim, “Bless the Lord, oh my soul, bless the Lord!”

With a singleness of mind and a unity of spirit they cry out to the Lord and praise Him for His goodness. I watch as they each pour all of their spirits into these few moments of praise, and I long to be there with them. I want to praise God like that, with all my soul.

This is what real praise is about. This is lifting up holy hands. Parts of the Psalms pour into my heart. “Sing unto the Lord, all the earth.” “Gracious is the Lord!” (Pss. 96:1; 116:5).

This song and the show are over too quickly. In a flash, a twinkling of an eye, the night ends, and we all head back to our dorms, chattering about how nice the show was. Though life doesn’t hesitate to tumble in upon us once again, and the music and memories are soon buried beneath piles of homework and mysterious cafeteria food, the song was not “sung” in vain. Moments of praise, however brief, are cities on a hill, salt mixed with earth. Heartfelt worship draws others in and guides them on. It gives flavor and meaning to life. “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord” (Ps. 150:6, NIV). This week, as we study two classes of worshipers, think about which class describes you.

Melissa Breetzke, Entre Rios, Argentina
The Fateful Fall (Gen. 3:1–13)
The very beginning of the Bible (Genesis 1 and 2) and the very end (Revelation 21 and 22) portray God’s kingdom as a place where true worship reigns. Everything between these passages portrays the conflict between God and a created being who desires to be worshiped. This enemy continues to make the case for his own selfish ambition and to promote self-worship. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve fall for his lies. This controversy of whether to worship God or ourselves has plagued humans ever since that fateful fall. From the beginning, we see two very different types of worship—true worship based on faith and false worship based upon works.

Worship prepares us for the tasks God wants us to accomplish.

In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve fall for his lies. This controversy of whether to worship God or ourselves has plagued humans ever since that fateful fall. From the beginning, we see two very different types of worship—true worship based on faith and false worship based upon works.

Misplaced Worship (Gen. 4:1–4)
That sin leads to death is evident in Genesis. The conflict between Cain and Abel involved a misunderstanding of the purpose and function of worship. Cain didn’t take the Lord’s commands seriously. He thought he could replace God’s requirements with his own ideas. His offering was not accepted and so began the conflict that killed his brother. This scenario brings up an important point. Worship is about God and giving Him the glory. When we worship God, we must ask whether we are actually offering Him what is required of us or we are simply going through the motions. Worship is about letting go of our sinful ambitions and clinging to God. Worship is about our faith in Him. We must never come to worship believing we are justified by our good works, because “all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6, NIV).

The Wickedness of the Earth (Gen. 6:1–8)
God’s people married unbelievers, causing them to forsake God. Thus, an extreme wickedness took over the land, and God made His special call to Noah. Read 2 Peter 3:5, 6. Peter says the people deliberately forgot God’s word. True worship includes remembering and claiming His promises. The truth of His character must ever be foremost in our minds. This is why Paul says, “I die daily” (1 Cor. 15:31, NKJV).

A Blessing to All (Gen. 12:1–8)
As a Bible teacher, I often asked my students whether they had been to another denomination’s church to worship. Quickly we would have a list of the other churches they had visited. I next asked them how they felt when
they were in those churches. One individual said, “I felt like I was behind en-
emy lines.” This perception, however, is a mistake. Many people have the
impression that it was God’s desire to save only the Israelites. When we study
Genesis 12, however, we realize that God’s plan was to have a “peculiar”
special people who would portray His love and bring others into the fold.
From Abraham’s call, we understand that all creation is destined to serve God
and to be blessed by Him. He is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9).
Our worship should thus be inclusive and accepting, bringing others to God.

**Faith Strengthened Through Worship (Gen. 22:1–18)**

The story of Abraham and Isaac reveals one of the greatest truths about
worship. Read John 8:56. Abraham was not around to see Christ, so how
does this verse make sense? Abraham wanted to know God. Yet he and
Sarah decided not to wait for the son God had promised them. God, how-
ever, did not give up on them. He gave Abraham another test. He com-
manded Abraham to sacrifice his own son. What similarities do we see
between Isaac and Christ? Both were willing to be sacrificed. They both
brought the wood upon which they were to be slain. However, the pivotal
moment comes when Abraham lifted the knife to slay Isaac. Just then, a
ram was provided, and God commended Abraham for not withholding his
only son. This experience was not just a part of leadership curriculum. With
the heartache that came from agreeing to kill his own son, Abraham experi-
enced a pain similar to what God would experience in sending to earth His
own Son to die for our sins. Thus, John 8:56 points out that truly Abraham
did see Christ’s day. Furthermore, Abraham learned that true worship means
surrendering everything to God. Likewise, we are blessed when we worship
God. Worship prepares us for the tasks God wants us to accomplish.

**The Lord Will Provide (Gen. 28:10–22)**

Jacob experienced God in a way that reminded him of his own need and
of the truth that “the Lord provides.” “The ladder was a visible symbol of the
real and uninterrupted fellowship between God in heaven and His people
upon earth.”* Because of this experience, Jacob vowed to depend on God’s
power and to pay a tithe on the blessings he received.

To pay tithe is a form of worship. It gives us the opportunity to trust that the
Lord will provide and to acknowledge that He indeed is in control. Read Mal-
achi 3:10. We are to always acknowledge God’s goodness and fellowship. We
are to proclaim to others that the Lord will provide. Genesis paints a picture of
a misplaced worship, yet reminds us chapter by chapter where this worship
truly belongs. Let us worship Him who made the heavens and the earth.

**REACT**

1. What blessings have you received through worshiping God?
2. When in worship, what is our role? What is God’s role?
3. Is there one true form of worship? If so, why, and what is it? If not,
   why not?

*The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 382.

Gregory S. Taylor, Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A.
“The tree of knowledge, which stood near the tree of life in the midst of the garden, was to be a test of the obedience, faith, and love of our first parents. While permitted to eat freely of every other tree, they were forbidden to taste of this, on pain of death. They were also to be exposed to the temptations of Satan; but if they endured the trial, they would finally be placed beyond his power, to enjoy perpetual favor with God.”1

“The angels warned them to be on their guard against the devices of Satan, for his efforts to ensnare them would be unwearied. While they were obedient to God the evil one could not harm them; for, if need be, every angel in heaven would be sent to their help. . . .

“The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden. . . . But absorbed in her pleasing task, she unconsciously wandered from his side. On perceiving that she was alone, she felt an apprehension of danger, but dismissed her fears, deciding that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it. Unmindful of the angels’ caution, she soon found herself gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration upon the forbidden tree. The fruit was very beautiful, and she questioned with herself why God had withheld it from them. Now was the tempter’s opportunity. . . . ‘Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’ Eve was surprised and startled as she thus seemed to hear the echo of her thoughts. . . . Instead of fleeing from the spot she lingered wonderingly to hear a serpent speak. . . .

“When she ‘saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat.’ ”2

**REACT**

1. Where did Eve go wrong when being tempted by Satan? Where in the Bible does it describe Jesus being tempted by Satan? How did He resist the devil?

2. What does the Fall teach us about worship?

---

1. Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 48, 49.
2. Ibid., p. 56.

Kimberly Danielle Phillips, Laurel, Maryland, U.S.A.
In November 1865, Lady Tichborne received a letter from her dead son whose ship had sunk in the Atlantic 11 years before. Suddenly, however, a miracle had occurred, and an ecstatic Lady Tichborne quickly sent money in order for her son to return home. Upon arrival, Roger appeared to have changed drastically. The once dark-haired, thin young man was now overweight man with light hair. He also was unable to speak French, which he had learned as a child. Nevertheless, Lady Tichborne accepted him and gave him a large allowance of money. Although many family members were convinced that the man was an impostor, the desperate woman went to her grave believing her son had returned home. After her death, her “son” was exposed as a fraud and brought to justice.

Yes, the old woman was gullible. But many of us are gullible when it comes to worshiping God and following His will. Consider Cain, the world’s first murderer. How different his life would have been if he had established a strong relationship with God! Why did he not know that his sacrifice would be unacceptable in the eyes of God? Did he know, but not care? Did he not know the very Being he was supposed to be worshiping? Would Cain have reacted so violently had he known God’s desired sacrifice and plan of salvation?

As we strive to discover who God is and to build a relationship with Him, we learn more about who He is and the type of worship He deserves. When we are not striving to discover God’s truth, then, like Cain, we will eventually fall into the trap of worshiping the way we think is best. Perhaps this is why so many people have left or never entered God’s community. They believe that true faith is based on works instead of grace. Don’t be fooled into doing something against God’s nature the way Cain did. Don’t contort your worship into something you desire. If we desire to please God and to worship Him, we must build a relationship with Him that enables us to recognize His character and His commands. There are indeed two types of worshipers—those who worship based upon what they desire, and those who worship based on a God whom they love and know well.

If we heed the warning from the world’s first murderer and, for that matter, Lady Tichborne, then we hold the keys to a fulfilling life in Christ and to a fulfilling worship.
God told Abraham to leave his country and his people and go to a land he did not know. He promised Abraham that He would make from him a great nation and that He would bless him.

Imagine having to give up the only home you’ve ever known, the place where you found daily comfort. Imagine having to leave behind your own people and culture. Would you have done it? Would you do it now? Notice in Genesis 12:4 that Abraham did not question God about where he was going or what he would find when he got there. Instead, he did what the Lord had instructed without any signs of doubt. This portrayal of genuine faith should be a model for the foundation of our worship. Abraham trusted the Lord and worshiped faithfully.

Often there are factors in our lives that cause us to question our faith and doubt God’s grace. Credit card debts, job layoffs, bad exam scores, divorce, or physical or mental illness can weaken faith. So how can we build our faith to worship God? Here are a few ideas:

Pray without doubt for God’s will to be done. We sometimes pray for something without trusting that it is God’s will or without believing that God will even hear us. Let us remember 1 John 5:14, 15: “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him” (NIV).

Trust the Word of God. Believe what He tells you. “The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony. Our own views and ideas must not control our efforts. Man is fallible, but God’s Word is infallible.”

Base your actions on faith. God will test our faith in Him. Therefore, trust that God is always with you and act in accordance with the faith you have in Him.

React

1. Why do you think our faith falters when we are in difficult situations?

2. In what other ways do we use our faith to worship God?

*Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 416.

Jeffrey Georges, Miami, Florida, U.S.A.
Cain’s walk with God too often resembles the way we live our lives as Christians. Cain believed in God (Gen. 4:3). He grew up in a godly family with morals and values (verse 1). He knew about God and the plan of salvation. He was a hard and successful worker, giving to God out of his blessings (verse 3). He followed God’s command to bring the first fruit of the soil as a thank offering to God (verse 3). He approached God in an act of worship (verse 3).

However, Cain was missing one thing: he failed to also sacrifice a lamb, the symbol of faith in the promise of his Savior’s death. He understood the need to show his faith in the blood of Christ as the promised atonement of sin, but instead he chose to depend on himself. “He presented his offering as a favor done to God, through which he expected to secure the divine approval.”

We hear that we can be saved by the evil we have not done.

Cain had given almost everything to God. But by giving God almost everything, Cain had given Him nothing.

We live in an age where many tell us it’s OK to be Christians just like Cain. As long as we believe in God, as long as we know the right stuff, as long as we go to church, as long as we are good people, then we’re set for salvation. We hear that we can be saved by the evil we have not done. But Cain’s example reveals that if we do not recognize our desperate need of a Redeemer, we are lost. If we don’t give God 100 percent of everything that we do and are, we give Him 0 percent.

We have sinned and someone has to die for it: the Lamb or us. Like Cain we can show what generous people we are yet not admit our need of a Savior and Lord, and die. Or we can choose to admit we need the Lamb, and live. “Lord, help me to admit my need of Your blood every day. Help me not to trust in my worship, my offerings, my deeds of kindness, or my knowledge. Amen.”

**REACT**

1. How does accepting the Lamb’s blood change how we live as Christians?
2. In light of Cain’s example, how should we approach God?
3. What are you not surrendering completely to God?

---

2. Ibid., p. 72.
CONCLUDE
God—full of goodness and love and salvation—is worthy of our worship! We can worship in various ways. We can come to God while still relying on ourselves, as Cain did, or we can worship in full surrender as Abraham worshiped. Worship is not concerned with our ideas about what God should do with our lives. It’s about having a relationship with our heavenly Father who loves us beyond measure and who wants to have a close personal friendship with us. Worship deepens our connection with God and prepares us for the life of joy He has planned for us.

CONSIDER
• Spending time in a natural setting and allowing that setting to enhance your worship experience with God the Creator.
• Constructing a ladder like the one Jacob saw in his dream to remind you that God desires continual, personal communication with His people on earth.
• Listening to a worshipful piece of music and allowing God to speak to you through that music.
• Journaling about your worship experiences, both good and bad, and reflecting about what could improve your future time with God.
• Memorizing a Bible passage about God that tells how He is worthy of our worship.
• Discussing with friends how faith is connected to worship.
• Rewriting the story of Abraham’s friendship with God in a modern setting.

CONNECT
Psalm 29; Psalm 95; Psalm 100; Isaiah 29:13.
Worship and the Exodus: Understanding Who God Is

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exod. 20:2, 3, NKJV).
The words a and the are so often used incorrectly that while I am not an English professor, I do know that one is used before a noun that is single and countable while the other is used before a noun that refers to one of a kind. For example, when a man finds that special woman with whom he wishes to spend the rest of his life, he sometimes refers to her as “the one.” If he were to refer to her in a way that was nonexclusive, such as “she is a special woman,” he would be implying that he had more than one woman of special interest. Imagine the problems that would cause for him!

When the children of Israel left Egypt, they had not been worshiping God as devoutly as they should have been. In fact, many had forgotten about Him altogether, and because of their lengthy time in Egypt where many gods were worshiped, the exclusivity of the one true God had faded in its importance. Therefore, a process needed to occur whereby God would reintroduce Himself to them. We witness the beginning of this process, along with its attendant growing pains, in the book of Exodus.

One of the main concepts God needed to impress upon the minds of the Israelites was that He alone was God. He did this by showing how He was vastly different from anything anyone had ever claimed was a god.

Today there are still many people, objects, and ideas that vie for our attention and for supremacy in our lives, many of which can easily turn into a god. Understanding who God is, is crucial to how we worship Him. Some say He is a place. Others say He is an experience or a feeling. “At the heart of every religion is an uncompromising commitment to a particular way of defining who God is and accordingly, of defining life’s purpose.”*

This week we will look at early accounts of the children of Israel and how their encounters with God reveal to us the nature of the God we also profess to serve and worship.

---

*Ravi Zacharias, Jesus Among Other Gods (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2000).
The title of this week’s lesson is astounding. How can we possibly understand who God is when the Bible indicates that the fullest sense of His presence is found in heaven, where there is no sin? God is so far above and beyond us, that it stands to reason there is nothing we can do to learn about Him unless He chooses to reveal Himself to us.

In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis expounded on God’s *unknowableness* by arguing that the God dimension, so to speak, is fundamentally *other*.¹ It is as if we live in a two-dimensional world—able to comprehend anything from a line to a square on a piece of paper—whereas He dwells in a three-dimensional world, a more complex reality. Our square is His cube. We can see only one face, when, in reality, there are six. Given His unknowable quality then, is it really essential to understand Him in order to worship Him?

When Paul visited Athens, it became clear to him that the Athenians worshiped many gods, at least one of which they knew nothing about (Acts 17:23). Some scientists, as Einstein did,² believe in an impersonal force they may call “god” that is behind the undisputable wonders of the natural world. Perhaps you have friends who believe in a “god” of some form and pray to it despite having no proof of revelation other than their own personal beliefs. So it is possible to worship what we do not understand. The only problem is that our God *wants* to be understood (John 4:22, 23).

The Exodus account is packed with God’s self-revelation, most ostensively in His Ten Commandments. He hears Israel’s cry. He delivers Israel from bondage. He shows them His might at the Red Sea and then at Sinai, where He reveals the values of His kingdom. He could have chosen to accept their worship when they knew Him as a pillar of cloud, a raging fire, a gale-force, sea-splitting wind; but that is not all He is. He wants to be worshiped in spirit and in truth (John 4:23) because that way we can have a real relationship with Him now and forever more—especially forever more, when we will join Him in the 3-D glory of heaven (1 Cor. 13:12).

---


*Maroria Oroko, Glasgow, Scotland*
A number of fascinating themes emerge from a study of the book of Exodus. The following are just some of them.

**He Is the One Worthy of Worship (Exod. 3:1–5)**

God is worthy of our worship because there is no one else like Him. Thus He commanded Moses to remove his shoes so as not to bring the common world onto the unique and holy ground where He was at that time. Similarly today, it would seem the wisest thing to approach God in a unique fashion. Let us give respect where respect is due (Eccles. 5:1, 2). Let us be quick to obey the directions He gives, for obedience also is a form of worship (Eccles. 12:13).

**God Is the One Who Sees and Hears (Exod. 3:7–9)**

In Abraham’s day, when Hagar and Ishmael had been cast out of the camp and were wandering in the wilderness, God heard their cry and offered His compassionate aid (Gen. 21:9–21; note especially verse 17). In Exodus, God told Moses that He is a God who has both seen and heard the plight of His people, and that He intended to do something about it. He is One to whom we can turn at any time. We can trust that we shall not be overlooked or unheard.

**God Is the Deliverer and Redeemer of Israel (Exod. 3:8, 10–12)**

God is not just some passive cosmic observer who watches the universe swirling around Him. He is a God who corrects the wrongs that happen. No matter the size of the issue, He promises liberation from oppression and enslavement, especially from the oppression caused by our sins. The same is true today, whether that oppression comes from something as common as unfair economic practices or whether it is something practiced in the shadows of society (such as the tyrannical practices of the sex-slave trade). God has plans to liberate all those whom evil has oppressed or abused. He calls us to do the same as best we can (Isa. 58:6, 7; Amos 5:14, 15; Mic. 6:8).

**God Is the Great “I AM” (Exod. 3:13–15)**

“I AM.” This mysterious name has created much conjecture regarding its meaning. Practically speaking, when it comes to helping us understand who God is, this name describes One who is forever present, One who is never absent (Exod. 33:15, 16), One who will never forget the promises He has made to His people. Thus, the writer of Hebrews categorically proclaimed,
“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8, NIV). He is faithful always, especially when we need Him the most, which would be now, today.

God Is the Solution to Death (Exod. 12:1–13, 21–30)

In these verses, God prescribed a ritual that we might deem to be barbaric in that it shed the blood of innocent animals. However, those who allow themselves to be “covered by the blood” are protected from the evil forces that seek to destroy them (Psalm 91). Thus the ritual was intended not only to demonstrate God’s trustworthiness (by obeying His instructions, no life was lost) but also to foreshadow the Lamb of God (John 1:29; Rev. 5:6, 9, 10), Jesus Christ. It is His blood that will free the world one day from the seemingly unbreakable grasp of sin and death (Heb. 2:14, 15).

God Calls for Our Worship (Exod. 20:4, 5; 32:1–6)

The second commandment warns of penalties associated with idolatry. Exodus 32:1–6 demonstrates why this is necessary. When we forget who has brought us every blessing we have, we also forget the true and only Source of life itself. As the proverb teaches, “He who finds me finds life, / And obtains favor from the Lord. But he who sins against me injures himself; / All those who hate me love death” (Prov. 8:35, 36, NASB). If we forget whom we worship, we will forget who we are, since we are made in His image (Gen. 1:26, 27). This is what happened to the Israelites in the desert. And it led them to sin.

God Is the Giver of Rest (Exod. 33:14)

So often we treat God as just another task or person to be attended to and addressed. We will sometimes look for a “break” from Him, as well. But the Bible describes Him as the Source and Giver of rest (Gen. 2:1–3; Exod. 20:8–11; Matt. 11:28–30). How foolish we are to try to find rest anywhere else!

God Is the One Who Is Hidden; the One Who Reveals (Exod. 33:12, 13, 18–23)

Sometimes our connection with God is too intangible. He is surrounded by seemingly “clouds and thick darkness” (Ps. 97:2, NASB) so that we cannot understand His ways. As we read in the book of Job, “Can you discover the depths of God?” (11:7, NASB). The apostle Paul described Him as “unfathomable” (Rom. 11:33, NASB). Yet God gave Moses a revelation of His glory. He also manifested to John the book of Revelation, which tells us about His character as revealed through Christ. Thus we learn that if we would know anything about Him, we have to be ready to listen to Him!

REACT

What else might you learn about God from these particular sections of Scripture?

Jerry Smith, London, England
“I AM means an eternal presence; the past, present, and future are alike with God. He sees the most remote events of past history and the far distant future with as clear a vision as we do those things which are transpiring daily. We know not what is before us, and if we did, it would not contribute to our eternal welfare.”

“Christ was using the great name of God that was given to Moses to express the idea of the eternal presence.”

“And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, “I AM has sent me to you” ’ ” (Exod. 3:14, NKJV).

“Let not money be made a god.”

“It is the glory of God to be merciful, full of forbearance, kindness, goodness, and truth. But the justice shown in punishing the sinner is as verily the glory of the Lord as is the manifestation of his mercy.

‘Thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.’ The Lord God of Israel is jealous for his honor. How, then, I inquire, does he regard the inhabitants of this world, who live in his house, and from his liberal treasury are provided with food and clothing, but who never so much as say ‘Thank you’ to him? They are unmindful of his goodness. They are like the inhabitants of the antediluvian world, who were destroyed because they worked continually in opposition to their Creator.”

“Let men worship and serve the Lord God, and Him only. Let not selfish pride be lifted up and served as a god. Let not money be made a god. If sensuality is not kept under the control of the higher powers of the mind, base passion will rule the being. Anything that is made the subject of undue thought and admiration, absorbing the mind, is a god chosen before the Lord. God is a searcher of the heart. He distinguishes between true heart-service and idolatry.”

1. That I May Know Him, p. 12.
2. Ibid.
Knowing the God we serve is a vital part of worship. When we come into His presence through prayer, whether in a church sanctuary, in nature, in the privacy of our homes, or even in the quietness of our thoughts, there are some key elements that will bring us into an attitude of worship:

**Anytime** we approach God, we stand on holy ground.

*Recognize that God is a Spirit* (1 Cor. 15:45). The Bible tells us that God is a Spirit. We cannot reach out and touch Him or see Him as we do one another. We see Him in our mind’s eye and know Him in our hearts. So we worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23; Phil. 3:3). This goes beyond the physical. Worship is more than bowing our heads, getting on our knees, folding our hands, or even singing His praises. It is seeing Him with our spiritual mind, knowing that He is very real, and believing that He is present with us as we approach Him.

*Recognize that God is holy* (Exod. 3:5). I once saw a television program in which a man was talking to God while holding a glass of wine. When he finished, he took a sip of it. I’m sure the writers of that program intended to portray this man’s irreverence. But how often do we come before God without noticing His holiness? While Moses attended his father-in-law’s flock, he came to a bush filled with fire, which was not consumed. God said to him from the midst of the bush, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground!” (See Exodus 3:1–6.) Anytime we approach God, we stand on holy ground. When we recognize that He is holy, we will be humbled and yielding. We will be careful of our choice of words and actions.

*Remember that He is God* (Exod. 32:1–6; Ps. 100:3). Soon after their departure from Egypt, the people of Israel camped near Mount Sinai, and Moses went up into the mountain to talk with God. After he had been gone for some time, the people became fearful that they had been left alone. They seemed to forget the God who delivered them and made instead a god of gold. We, too, are in danger of giving other things the place in our lives that only God should possess. He is the only one deserving our worship and praise. Even in the church, nothing should be given more adoration than God.

**REACT**

How is it possible to talk reverently with God while doing everyday tasks?
What makes us turn away from God? Time and again the phrase “And the Israelites sinned against the Lord” comes up in the Old Testament. I used to think that if I lived then, I would have been more faithful. But as I continue to read the Bible and observe our postmodern world, I realize more and more that all of us have more in common with the Israelites than we like to think.

So what does make us turn from God so often? Here are a few suggestions:

Most of us today . . . are just being religious rather than being in love with God.

• We are not patient enough, and we so quickly forget what God has done for us. We forget that His ways are not our ways and that His thoughts are not our thoughts. Thus, when He takes longer to do something than we think He should, it isn’t because He has forgotten us but because He is God and His time is the best. Also, when He does something for us, instead of being grateful, we often forget about His greatness and start complaining.

• We are easily distracted. A perfect example of this is when somebody comes to church late and, to make matters worse, their clothing is inappropriate. So we spend time contemplating how wrong they are. This happens because we cease to contemplate our loving Savior.

• We are confused about who God is. Most of us today, just like the Israelites, are just being religious rather than being in love with God. We are too busy following the letter of the law instead of the spirit of the law. In so doing we grow tired of God, and we think that He is just waiting to punish us when we slip up.

But oh, how wrong we are! From the beginning to the end of the Bible, we see a God who is loving, kind, patient, long-suffering—good in every way. No other god can take His place! No other god can do what He has done and what He will do!

Isn’t God amazing? Why then do we think we need or want other gods? Our worship should not go to any other but Christ!

From today till forever, my song shall ever be:

Which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.”*

*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, no. 73.

Maureen Gatharia, Banbridge, County Down, Northern Ireland
CONCLUDE
The desire to know God has been a part of the human journey since sin separated us from our Creator. Interestingly, since that day, God also has been on a relentless pursuit of a relationship with the fallen human race. He chose the children of Abraham to receive His special attention and care. He chose them to become their God and they His people in order to spread the message of salvation to the world. Unfortunately, that idea didn’t work out. The Israelites rejected God’s plan; and so God turned to the Gentiles. Do you want to know God? Shut down the noise, walk away from the distractions. He is waiting to reveal Himself to you.

CONSIDER
• Writing a poem describing God. Choose metaphors and similes that show His uniqueness and how you see Him personally.
• Analyzing the Ten Commandments by finding in them the various attributes of God that He wants to reveal to you.
• Reading the promises found in Deuteronomy 31:6, 2; Isaiah 40:31; John 14:27; 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4; and Philippians 4:19. Outline the reasons why God is worthy of our worship.
• Taking a nature walk and observing the imprint of God, The Great I AM, in what you see.
• Evaluating how often your thoughts turn toward God. Compare the results with other things that absorb your mind.
• Dramatizing Revelation 14:6–13. Pay special attention to the worship style of the angels.
• Getting up before dawn and spending time meditating on Isaiah 46:9–11.

CONNECT
The Sabbath and Worship

“O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand” (Ps. 95:6, 7).
I remember singing in Sabbath School, “Sabbath is a happy day . . . happy day. I love every Sabbath.” As a child, I was happy that there were not any chores or homework to do on Sabbath. On Sabbath I wore my best dresses and ate the best food. As I grew older, I realized that Sabbath is a happy day because of the One who redeems me from sin and who created the world for me to inhabit. It is great to tune in to the praise songs and gospel channels when the sun sets on Friday night, but we can have all these benefits and still not truly worship. We have to return to the heart of worship to realize who it’s all about. It’s about Jesus! Read Psalm 95:6, 7.

Keeping the Sabbath . . . goes beyond attending church.

We can make Jesus the center of our worship only when we completely surrender to Him through obedience and by declaring to the world that we are loyal to our Maker. Our worship and Sabbath keeping are symbols of our redemption in Him. Our worship is a sign of our sanctification and a symbol of our allegiance to our Maker. Exodus 31:13 and Ezekiel 20:12 remind us that the Sabbath is a sign between God and His people. He instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation, and He requires that we observe the seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest and of worship. The Sabbath should be a day of delightful communion with Him and with one another.

Keeping the Sabbath, however, goes beyond attending church. It’s about reflecting on our personal relationship with Christ. Too often we use the Sabbath to distinguish Seventh-day Adventists from other denominations and thereby fail to connect the Sabbath with true worship and the reasons why we keep the seventh day holy. Why not show the world the true reason for setting aside 24 hours just for Christ? Perhaps if we show more of the joy of Sabbath observance and the true heart of worship to our neighbors and friends, they also might want to partake of the joy we have found in Christ.

REACT

1. Why do you keep the Sabbath?
2. What changes can you make in your life to truly honor Christ on His holy day?
3. How can you help others become more in tune with the kind of worship expected of the redeemed?

Helyne Frederick, Mt. Rose, Grenada
Read Revelation 14:7 and Psalm 100:3. Our connection with God is rooted in the fact that He made us, but that isn’t the whole of the human story. All of our Bible passages this week remind us of our point of origin: our Creator God, who has supreme authority over us and who alone merits our worship. The verses for today reveal our complete life script: our Source, the path, the biggest threat to us, and our way out.

**The Sabbath**

The Sabbath testifies that we can rest in the God who created us and who continues to sustain us and to care for our whole being.

**Our Source (Exod. 20:11)**

The Sabbath commandment in Exodus takes us back to our very beginning when our Maker labored over the earth and shaped life out of it. “‘In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them’” (Exod. 20:11, NIV). In Genesis, God’s very speech takes form. His words shape reality—and all life emerges from His creative intentions. “Let there be light. . . . Let the waters be gathered together. . . . Let the earth bring forth grass.” We, too, emerge from the mind and heart of God, who takes clay and a rib, shapes them, and forms male and female (Gen. 1:26, 27). We exist because God made us; and because He made us in His image, we are His own.

**The Path (Deut. 5:15)**

We are God’s own, yet He did not leash us to the gates of Eden. If a cosmic time-lapse camera had recorded our history, it would have shown humankind moving from Eden into the deltas and plains of Mesopotamia and East Africa, south into the African subcontinent, east into Asia, and north beyond the Mediterranean (Genesis 10). From the Garden, we exported all of the creativity and power with which God endowed us, but we also exported our guilt, insecurities, fears, and capacity for violence. Arts and sciences flourished alongside murder, destruction, and enslavement—even in our most advanced civilizations.

The Deuteronomy narrative reminds us that though we were borne by the hand of God, we became creative abusers and gifted slaves. “‘Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore
the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day’ ” (Deut. 5:15, NIV). For the Hebrews who heard this narrative, the Sabbath provided freedom from forced labor and the dehumanization that accompanied it. As a weekly symbol, Sabbath reminded them of the Divine Redeemer who cared not just about their ritual purity but also about their physical liberty. “Remember that you were slaves” was not a free pass to rehearse old wounds or hold grudges. Rather, the commandment gave the Hebrews a historical reason to pause, remember their Source and liberation, and keep choosing a path free of physical oppression or spiritual abuse (Isaiah 58; Romans 6).

**Our Biggest Threat—and the Way Out (Isa. 44:6–20; Isaiah 58)**

When Isaiah wrote in chapter 58 about the fast God has chosen for His people, He presented the Sabbath as a witness against oppression and as a blessing for those who respected God and their fellow humans. In Isaiah 44, the prophet also described the biggest threat to liberty, holiness, and good sense: idolatry. Idolatry is more than worshiping something made by human hands or another creature. One cannot worship anything as god without trying to displace God as Creator, and Isaiah sharply criticizes all attempts to do so. Trying to displace God is certainly wrong, but as Isaiah shows, it is also stupid because it is impossible.

God is the first and last. Beside Him there is no other (Isa. 44:6–9). Because He has no competition, and nothing in creation has any other Source, the Almighty cannot be displaced. Isaiah mocks craftsmen who break wood in two pieces, form an idol from one piece, and use the other piece for heat or cooking fuel. It is foolish to worship anything that He or we have made. Neither wood nor metal can compete with God. Only God created, and only God saves. Only He is worthy of worship.

Through healing and teaching, Jesus pointed us to the complete liberty God offers (Matt. 11:28–30). Whatever our circumstances, we are made whole through Him. “ ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls’ ” (verses 28–30, NIV). The Sabbath testifies that we can rest in the God who created us and who continues to sustain us and to care for our whole being. Our God formed us, calls us away from oppression, and challenges us to rest and walk in His care. Our souls are complete, but only in Him.

**REACT**

1. Paul wrote that whomever we yield ourselves to is our master (Rom. 6:16). In what kind of slavery might contemporary Christians find themselves? How does the Sabbath answer these forms of modern slavery?

2. Reread Isaiah 44 and 58. What relationships do you see in these chapters between idolatry and oppression?

Keisha McKenzie, Lubbock, Texas, U.S.A.
Ellen White reminds us that “the Sabbath calls our thoughts to nature, and brings us into communion with the Creator. In the song of the bird, the sighing of the trees, and the music of the sea, we still may hear His voice who talked with Adam in Eden in the cool of the day. And as we behold His power in nature we find comfort, for the word that created all things is that which speaks life to the soul. He ‘who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.’ 2 Cor. 4:6.”

The Sabbath . . . “is the point of truth especially controverted.”

Our God was purposeful when He created this world. After He did so, He set apart a day for us to rest with Him, to enjoy nature, and at the same time to acknowledge His power. Ellen White said of the Sabbath: “So long as the heavens and the earth endure, the Sabbath will continue as a sign of the Creator’s power. And when Eden shall bloom on earth again, God’s holy rest day will be honored by all beneath the sun. ‘From one Sabbath to another’ the inhabitants of the glorified new earth shall go up ‘to worship before Me, saith the Lord.’ Matt. 5:18; Isa. 66:23.”

The Sabbath also is a symbol of our loyalty to Him, “for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. While the observance of the false sabbath in compliance with the law of the state, contrary to the fourth commandment, will be an avowal of allegiance to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God’s law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator. While one class, by accepting the sign of submission to earthly powers, receive the mark of the beast, the other choosing the token of allegiance to divine authority, receive the seal of God.”

**REACT**

How can you express your loyalty to Christ as you worship on Sabbath? What should you be doing to prepare for the day when your allegiance to God will be tested because of your Sabbath keeping?

---

2. Ibid., p. 283.
From Valentine’s Day to Mother’s Day, from the Oscars to the Grammys to the Nobel Peace Prize, we have many ways of expressing our appreciation for important people. The bestowal of some of these honors is based on certain criteria. Therefore, there is generally some controversy when the final decisions are announced. Scripture refers to a number of titles and honors, such as prince, priest, man of valor, and lord. But just as with modern honors, it is not always the worthy who enjoy the privileges they entail.

The true God is One who acts.

In Revelation 14:7, an angel exhorts the world to “‘fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water’” (NIV). This verse gives only one criterion for being worthy of receiving glory and worship: “him who made.” While the Bible does not try to prove the existence of God, it does make a number of juxtapositions between He who is God and who or what is not. One of the main differences between the true God and idols is that the true God is One who acts. For instance, in the context of the Sabbath, we are to remember the Sabbath and, by extension, its Maker, for Jehovah “made,” “rested on,” “blessed,” and “hallowed” that day (Exod. 20:11, NIV). In Deuteronomy 5:15, Israel was told to “remember” because Jehovah “brought” them out from servitude and “commanded” them. On the other hand, we find that far from being active agents who exercise independent, creative power, false gods are merely human artifacts. Read Isaiah 44.

While the decisions as to whom should receive this year’s Oscars for best actor and actress will not significantly influence any of us one way or another, our decision as to whom to give glory and worship has eternal consequences.

**REACT**

1. According to Romans 6:16, what significance do our choices have? Of all the choices we make every day, none is more important than our choice of god(s). Our god(s) may not be made of wood, but all of us have certain things we allow to inappropriately control our lives. What or who are some of these gods for you?

2. According to Matthew 11:28–30, what does God offer in place of your worldly burdens (gods)?

---

Yogeld André, Lubbock, Texas, U.S.A.
Sabbath worship should not be mere ritual. It should reflect our connection and relationship with God. He is our Maker and “greatly to be praised” (Ps. 48:1; 96:4; 145:3). On the days when things are going smoothly and our emotional skies are sunny and bright, worship may consist of praise and thanksgiving. However, on days when the storms of life rain down upon us, worship may involve crying out to the Lord with prayer and supplication. The Lord wants us to talk to Him the same way we talk to our friends. He wants us to tell Him our deepest thoughts, our dire needs, our challenges, our weaknesses, and our joys.

God wants our Sabbath worship in particular to be a meaningful experience. The Sabbath should leave us refreshed and rejuvenated for the new week. Here are some steps to help us worship in such a way.

**Be honest in your worship.** If you’ve had a difficult week, God wants to hear about it. While it’s true He knows everything, He wants us to tell Him all about it. David wrote, “I cry out to God Most High, / to God, who fulfills his purpose for me” (Ps. 57:2, NIV). We can do the same!

**Always include praise and thanksgiving in your worship.** Regardless of what is going on in our lives, just the fact that we have breath and access to our Father is reason enough to praise Him; and what we discover is that in praising Him our spirits are lifted. “’The Lord is my strength and my song; / he has become my salvation. / He is my God, and I will praise him, / my father’s God, and I will exalt him’ ” (Exod. 15:2, NIV).

**Include variety in worship.** We should include not only prayer but inspirational songs and readings. Variety keeps us from being bored on our spiritual journey and helps us to pay attention to what God is trying to tell us through our worship of Him. A short prayer at the beginning asking God to lead the direction of the worship is always a good idea. Let Him guide, and we will always be amazed at what He can do.

**REACT**
1. What is good about ritual in worship? How can ritual hinder one’s worship?
2. How would you describe the ideal worship service for Sabbath?
Leviticus 23:3 refers to Sabbath worship as “‘a day of sacred assembly’” (NIV). For many of us, however, worshiping on Sabbath is merely going to Sabbath School or listening to a sermon, then returning to our individual routines. Within our churches, it is the norm for many church members to greet each other. Additionally, we praise God through music, prayers, and sermons. However, I believe that Sabbath worship extends far beyond these traditions. Consider this: “He [Jesus] went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom” (Luke 4:16, NIV). It is noteworthy that not only was it Jesus’ custom (tradition) to worship in the synagogue on the Sabbath, He also challenged the traditions of the Jewish leaders regarding that very worship. He often pointed toward doing good on the Sabbath. Likewise, we should follow the example of Jesus. Read verses 17–27.

There doesn’t necessarily need to be a fixed routine of Sabbath worship.

As part of their Sabbath worship, it was the custom of the apostles to attend synagogue gatherings and to preach. Acts 13:14–44; 17:2; 18:4 highlight this custom. Specifically, it was Paul’s custom to preach in Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath day. If we look further at the aforementioned examples of worship by Jesus and the apostles, we see that worship was more than just going to the synagogues. It also was about reaching out to the world, healing the sick, taking care of those in need, and spending time in nature to observe God’s creation.

There doesn’t necessarily need to be a fixed routine of Sabbath worship. However, we must be united in a single mission, which is to never lose focus that we are worshiping our Creator and leading others to Him. We need to take the same steps as the apostles did: go out in nature, find a quiet place of prayer (Acts 16:13), and share the good news of Christ on the Sabbath. At times, we are called to let go of the traditions we have created and to follow the examples for Sabbath worship set for us by Jesus and His apostles.

REACT
1. What do you consider to be important aspects of Sabbath worship?
2. What are some of the various forms of Sabbath worship in the Bible?
3. List some creative ways in which you can use the Sabbath as a time to witness.
CONCLUDE

Sabbath worship is meant to be a joyous celebration that acknowledges God’s creation and His redeeming grace. It should be a witness to others and a blessing to every worshiper. Sabbath worship should demonstrate a complete surrender through obedience to God’s Word and recognition of His powerful presence in nature. Worship should reflect the Sabbath as a sign between God and humankind that He has our loyalty. He wants us to communicate our fears and joys to Him and seek ways to make worship meaningful to everyone. Sabbath is also a time to do good. Sabbath worship will continue in heaven and the new earth.

CONSIDER

• Sketching six different faces, including yours (African, American, Caribbean, English, Eskimo, Indian), and imagining that these “people” are the only members of your church. List the things you would do to make Sabbath worship joyful for them.

• Reflecting on the General Conference session in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A. People from every nation spoke of the joy they experienced during the Sabbath and Saturday evening meetings. Use this experience to imagine Sabbath keeping in heaven.

• Meditating on the Sabbath commandment in Exodus 20:8–11 and Genesis 2:1–3. How do these inform our relationship with God through worship?

• Arranging seven similar drinking glasses or test tubes in a row. Number them 1 to 7 and half fill them with drinking water. Add sugar to the seventh one and mix. Rearrange the glasses/test tubes randomly. Describe the contents of the seventh one to the class and ask an individual to find it. Use the experiment to explain the uniqueness of the Sabbath.

• Assuming that the entrance to the dining area for a popular church potluck is only three feet high. All food must be eaten in that room. A visiting group, which believes in God, has a rule in their culture saying it is not respectable to bend to enter a room. If the room represents God’s Sabbath blessing, how would you assist the group in understanding the importance of receiving their part of the blessing?

CONNECT


Albert A. C. Waite, Berkshire, United Kingdom
Rejoicing Before the Lord: The Sanctuary and Worship

“And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion nor inheritance with you” (Deut. 12:12, NASB).
sabbath
JULY 16

Introduction

God’s Visual Aid

Ps. 95:6, 7;
Matt. 15:8, 9; 18:20;
Luke 4:16

God is seeking true worshipers. Every human being will inevitably worship someone or something. Our choice is not whether we will worship but what or whom we will worship. For all the reasons we have to worship God, none is better than His love for us. He loves us so much that He sent His only Son to die in our stead for our sins.

God gave them detailed instructions on how to build the sanctuary.

During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ emphasized the importance of worship, both in His actions and in His teachings (see Matthew 15:8, 9; 18:20; Luke 4:16; John 4:22–24). Whether in the temple, in a synagogue, or on a mountainside, Jesus took time to worship His heavenly Father.

It will be the privilege of the redeemed to worship God throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. We will come from every kindred, nation, tongue, and people, but our worship will blend in a beautiful symphony of praise. “Heaven and earth will unite in praise, as ‘from one Sabbath to another’ (Isa. 66:23) the nations of the saved shall bow in joyful worship to God and the Lamb.”*

Think about how the Israelites must have felt after hundreds of years of being enslaved by the Egyptians. Suddenly they were free to worship the true God—the God of their ancestors. Most likely, many of them at the point of their escape had little or no knowledge of their Savior. So God gave them detailed instructions on how to build the sanctuary whose services and furnishing would teach them about Christ and the plan of salvation. Yet knowing all of this, we cannot begin to understand just how holy the sanctuary was. Every detail, every piece of furniture, every sacrifice and service, even the colors used helped to teach the Israelites about Christ and His salvation. The sanctuary was the Great Teacher’s visual aid for His lesson plan on salvation. This week, we will learn a bit about what the sanctuary can teach us about worship. As you study, think about how what you learn can enhance your own worship.

*The Desire of Ages, p. 770.

Ever Santillan Tandug, Jizan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Music has always played an important role in worship. When God instructed Moses regarding the robes of the sanctuary’s high priest, He instructed that the hem of the priest’s robe should have gold bells on it. While these bells did not play a specific set of notes, their ringing sounds “made the worshipers conscious that [the high priest] was officiating on their behalf in God’s presence, and prompted them to follow him in their thoughts and prayers as he went about the different parts of the priestly ritual. The sound of the bells joined priest and people together in worship. . . . By faith we too may hear the sound from the sanctuary that directs our hearts and minds upward to where Christ sits at the right hand of God to make intercession for us (Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1–3; Heb. 8:1, 2).”

Many years later, psalms were written to be sung in the temple, which continued the sacrificial services and worship of the sanctuary. Psalm 47 is one such psalm. It “is a festal anthem of purest praise to Jehovah, who is exalted as God not only of Israel but of all nations on the earth. . . . As an anthem for public worship Ps. 47 was probably sung antiphonally by two choruses, one singing vs. 1, 2, and 5, 6, alternating with the other singing vs. 3, 4, and 7, 8; both uniting in singing v. 9.”

Today, the heavenly courts are filled with songs of praise. When we worship God through music, we are privileged to join that symphony. “Music forms a part of God’s worship in the courts above, and we should endeavor, in our songs of praise, to approach as nearly as possible to the harmony of the heavenly choirs. . . . Singing, as a part of religious service, is as much an act of worship as is prayer. The heart must feel the spirit of the song, to give it right expression.” Today, the sanctuary reminds us of the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ is interceding on our behalf. Though sacrificial offerings are no longer required, we are to offer songs of praise and thanksgiving to God for His Son Jesus, who sacrificed Himself for our sins.

**REACT**

What is your favorite song, a song that really moves your heart? Sing it now in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord.

---

2. Ibid., vol. 3, p. 746.

Rachel Leer, Aspers, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.
Worship: The Who (Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10)

There is only One who is worthy of worship. When Satan urged Jesus to bow down and worship him, He responded, “‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve’” ’” (Matt. 4:10, NKJV; emphasis added).

Even though Scripture clearly testifies that God alone should be the focus of our worship, there are times when individuals attempt to direct their worship elsewhere. For example, when the apostle John encountered an angelic being, he fell down in worship. He received the following rebuke from the heavenly messenger. “‘See that you do not do that! . . . Worship God!’” (Rev. 19:10, NKJV; emphasis added).

It is our privilege to worship our Creator moment by moment. Every time we lift our hearts and voices to Him in worship, we join with the heavenly beings who worship Him day and night before His throne. Through silent prayers of thanksgiving and praise, we can worship our God anytime, anywhere. In many ways, our private devotions and worship are more important than what we might do as part of the community.

Worship: Where, When, and How (Exod. 25:1–22; 29:38, 39; Exodus 35; Deut. 12:5–7, 12, 18; 16:13–16)

Despite the importance of our private worship, the texts for this section of the Logos teach us that there should be special corporate times for worship. Principles regarding such times are found in God’s directives regarding the sanctuary services and the Hebrew feasts.

In these texts, we learn that holiness means to be “set apart for holy use.” In a real sense, corporate worship can be just that—the setting aside not just of time but also of ourselves for special communion and interaction with God and with one another. It’s our way of saying, “How great You are, God; and how unworthy we are.” It’s our way of acknowledging our total dependence upon Christ’s righteousness as our only means of salvation. The directives God gave regarding sanctuary worship teach us that we should set aside times when we cease from work, from play, from everything else we do in order to pour out ourselves to the One who is the Source of all that we are, the One whose death on the cross has opened the door to heaven for all who will walk through.
**True Worship (1 John 5:3)**

Yet true worship is so much more than merely forms, songs, or a liturgy. True worship is our expression of gratitude for what God is and for what He has done for us through Jesus. Just as John said, “This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments” (1 John 5:3), we also reveal our love for God by worshiping Him. Certainly this was part of what Jesus talked about when He said we would worship the Lord in “spirit and in truth.”

Worship, like anything that is continually repeated, faces the danger of becoming a mechanized routine. Once we cease worshiping God out of sincere love for who He is and what He has done for us, our worship can go in any number of unhealthy directions.

**God Dwelling With Us (Exod. 25:8)**

In Exodus 25:8, God commands Moses to “let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.” With detailed instructions God gave Moses the blueprint to build an earthly shadow of “the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man” (Heb. 8:2, NKJV). Too often we forget that God Himself called His sanctuary into being in order to teach His people about salvation.

“‘The Lord is in His holy temple. / Let all the earth keep silence before Him’” (Hab. 2:20, NKJV). Therefore, one purpose of the sanctuary was to meet with the Lord and bask in His glory. “Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and paused over the threshold of the temple; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord’s glory” (Ezek. 10:4, NKJV). The message that comes from the earthly sanctuary is clear: Jesus became our Sin Bearer, taking upon Himself our sins and being punished for them. This makes Him the only means of salvation and forgiveness for fallen humanity.

Today, Jesus is in the heavenly sanctuary, interceding on our behalf. “Our God is a tender, merciful Father. His service should not be looked upon as a heart-saddening, distressing exercise. It should be a pleasure to worship the Lord and to take part in His work. God would not have His children, for whom so great salvation has been provided, act as if He were a hard, exacting taskmaster. He is their best friend; and when they worship Him, He expects to be with them, to bless and comfort them, filling their hearts with joy and love. The Lord desires His children to take comfort in His service and to find more pleasure than hardship in His work. He desires that those who come to worship Him shall carry away with them precious thoughts of His care and love, that they may be cheered in all employments of daily life, that they may have grace to deal honestly and faithfully in all things.”

*Steps to Christ, p. 103.*
“The incense, ascending with the prayers of Israel, represents the merits and intercession of Christ, His perfect righteousness, which through faith is imputed to His people, and which can alone make the worship of sinful beings acceptable to God. Before the veil of the most holy place was an altar of perpetual intercession, before the holy, an altar of continual atonement. By blood and by incense God was to be approached—symbols pointing to the great Mediator, through whom sinners may approach Jehovah, and through whom alone mercy and salvation can be granted to the repentant, believing soul.

“As the priests morning and evening entered the holy place at the time of incense, the daily sacrifice was ready to be offered upon the altar in the court without. This was a time of intense interest to the worshipers who assembled at the tabernacle. Before entering into the presence of God through the ministration of the priest, they were to engage in earnest searching of heart and confession of sin. They united in silent prayer, with their faces toward the holy place. Thus their petitions ascended with the cloud of incense, while faith laid hold upon the merits of the promised Saviour prefigured by the atoning sacrifice. The hours appointed for the morning and evening sacrifice were regarded as sacred, and they came to be observed as the set time for worship throughout the Jewish nation. And when in later times the Jews were scattered as captives in distant lands, they still at the appointed hour turned their faces toward Jerusalem and offered up their petitions to the God of Israel. In this custom Christians have an example for morning and evening prayer.”

REACT

1. What parts of today’s communion service point to Jesus, our Mediator?
2. Why are mornings and evenings good times to commune with God through prayer?
3. When we pray, we are to ask for forgiveness and for “needed blessings.” Why else should we pray?

*Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 353, 354.
When we worship God, we will experience personal transformation. It is impossible to stand in His presence and remain unchanged. True worship impacts us personally. David declared, “I was glad when they said to me, / ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord’ ” (Ps. 122:1, NKJV). He had discovered that in God’s presence is fullness of joy. We experience joy when we worship God in spirit and in truth. Though there is always the danger of getting carried away with hype and emotionalism (as seen in certain types of church services), there is also a danger of our worship being cold, dead, and lifeless.

*W. H. Auden, “September 1, 1939.”

**Wanting to worship God constitutes genuine worship.**

In the context of war and devastation, the poet W. H. Auden wrote that humans were like children “lost in a haunted wood,” “afraid of the night,” and who “have never been happy or good.” These depressing phrases capture the human situation in general. Fortunately, God wants to lead us out of this morass. Genesis 3:15 teaches us that as soon as there was sin there was a Savior. Through the ages the Savior has revealed His plan of salvation, which offers hope and eternal life for fearful beings who are neither happy nor good. For centuries, the main way through which He revealed Himself was through the earthly sanctuary service, which provides principles for how one should worship God:

**True worship comes from a willing heart (Exod. 25:1, 2).** Going to worship because your dorm, college, or parents require you to is not true worship. Wanting to worship God constitutes genuine worship. We want to worship God when we have a loving relationship with Him.

**Each child of God uses his or her talents in worshiping God (Exod. 35:10–35).** What talents do you have that you could share during your local church’s worship time? How can you use these same talents to make the most of your personal worship time?

**Worship includes the searching of our hearts and the confession of our sins, asking God for His forgiveness (Lev. 4:27–29).** Others can pray for the Holy Spirit to touch our hearts. But only we as individuals can go to God, admit to Him our sins, and ask Him to forgive us. Perhaps after all is said and done, this is the essence of worship—kneeling before our Savior in heartfelt contrition for our innate sin and for the sinful acts we commit, longing as we do so to be healed by His wounds (Isa. 53:5).
Through its sacrificial rituals, the sanctuary provided a means through which God’s covenant people could enter into His divine presence. What were those sacrifices about, which gave them access to God? And how did these sacrifices prefigure what Christ would (and has done) for us?

The sanctuary was God’s way of calling His people into a covenant relationship with Him through worship.

The sanctuary was God’s way of calling His people into a covenant relationship with Him through worship. Through the sanctuary, they could learn about His plan of salvation, and they could participate in His holiness. They also could learn about living by faith and about how to be obedient to Him.

Sin disrupted this covenant relationship. Unless sin was dealt with, His people would be left to bear their own iniquity, and they would never attain eternal life. The Lord, however, through His grace, showed them how they could be forgiven and cleansed from sin. These provisions were at the heart of the sacrificial system of the sanctuary. In bringing a sacrificial lamb to the sanctuary, the Israelite was confessing his belief in God’s promised Savior. In turn, the priest, who stood in God’s stead, made atonement for sin (Lev. 5:5, 6). The exact type of animal or ritual depended upon numerous factors, but this basic idea was always the same.

When one thinks of the sanctuary, it is not unusual to reflect upon the building constructed under the direction of the Lord Himself. However, more important than its extraordinary beauty was the beautiful message God intended to communicate by way of the sanctuary’s services, in particular, the role His only Son, Jesus Christ, would play in the fulfillment of these services.

“Christ Himself was the originator of the Jewish system of worship, in which, by types and symbols, were shadowed forth spiritual and heavenly things. . . .

“A lesson was embodied in every sacrifice, impressed in every ceremony, solemnly preached by the priest in his holy office, and inculcated by God Himself—that through the blood of Christ alone is there forgiveness of sins. . . .

“The whole mind, the whole soul, the whole heart, and the whole strength are purchased by the blood of the Son of God.”*

*God’s Amazing Grace, p. 155.

Glenn Brian Ente, Zambales, Philippines
CONCLUDE

William Temple wrote in *Readings in St. John’s Gospel* the following definition of worship: “Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose—and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and therefore the chief remedy for that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin.”* As we allow the Holy Spirit to work in these areas of our lives, we will experience true worship in every facet of our daily lives. Our bodies will become living sacrifices, and daily we will be renewed in mind and spirit.

CONSIDER

- Composing a song to accompany Psalm 47 or another worship psalm of your choice.
- Journaling about your worship experiences, both privately and corporately. Pay special attention to which experiences are most meaningful for you.
- Photographing and creating a montage of practical ways individuals can show their worship for God.
- Writing a play about a young adult in the camp of Israel taking a lamb to the sanctuary as a sin offering. Be sure to include reasons for the worship rituals and why they were important.
- Constructing a model of the sanctuary and the elements of worship that it contained.
- Researching the components of true worship and planning a worship service organized around them. Seek permission from your local church board for the young adults in your congregation to lead out in the worship service you plan.

CONNECT

*The Great Controversy*, pp. 437, 438; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 491–500.


Happy Are You, O Israel!

“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” (Isa. 5:20, 21, NKJV).
Introduction

Honoring God Through Obedience

A poor young man had given up on life. He could see no hope for his future. Disgrace had been his lot his entire life. What made his wound even deeper was the fact that he owed more people than he could count, and he owed no small amounts.

One day, an affluent farmer rescued this young man and made him solvent. He also gave the young man a furnished house. However, the farmer told him that he was never to go into the room with the door labeled “Obedience.” If he did, there would be a terrible consequence, and he would have to leave the house.

A week later, the farmer returned to discover that the young man had failed the one test he had been given.

The farmer made the young man the steward of the house and then departed for a long journey. However, he did not return when he said he would. In fact, he stayed away long after the date he had given for his return. So it was that the young man decided to open the door labeled “Obedience.” The consequence was that once the door was opened, it could never be locked unless the farmer was there personally. What was so horrible about that?

A week later, the farmer returned to discover that the young man had failed the one test he had been given. Unbeknownst to him, had he passed the test, the young man would have become the farmer’s heir. Instead, he would now be evicted from his home.

Similarly, we as humans are lost and without hope. We face eternal death. God, however, grants us salvation through His Son Jesus Christ. Because of His salvation, He deserves our worship. But because we are tainted by sin, we need guidance on how to worship Him properly. How sad it is when we trample on His holy precepts! If we do keep His precepts, He will make us heirs of His divine kingdom as He has promised. To be able to honor Him through obedience is evidence of the Holy Spirit residing in our hearts. Although obedience may at times seem trivial, it is fundamental to worship. When we are disobedient, we are treating holy things as common. This week we will study certain biblical characters to see what they have to teach us about true worship and due regard for holy things.

Kofi Kermah Wagya, Terrahaute, Indiana, U.S.A.
In Deuteronomy 33, Moses invokes God’s blessings upon Israel, tribe by tribe. He then underscores that “‘happy are you, O Israel! . . . A people saved by the Lord’” (verse 29, NKJV). Indeed, these verses were meant to kindle confidence and hope in the people. If they identified themselves with the Lord, they would reap blessings and joy. The truest form of worship that brings happiness to the worshiper consists of acknowledging God as one’s Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Lord.

Not Just Any Lifestyle (Leviticus 9; 10:1–11; Isa. 5:20, 21)

Because Nadab and Abihu made a sacrifice with ordinary fire that had not been taken from the altar of burnt offering as the Lord had instructed, they died immediately. They lost their lives because they were “wise in their own eyes,” calling good that which was actually evil (see Isaiah 5:20, 21, NIV).

Why couldn’t Nadab and Abihu distinguish that which was evil from that which was good, that which the Lord had commanded them to use? First of all, they “had not in their youth been trained to habits of self-control.”

Their inclinations dominated God’s principles and commands until they could no longer recognize the importance of obeying Him. Second, the command God gave to Aaron and his remaining sons not to drink wine or strong drink before entering the sanctuary (Lev. 10:9) suggests that Nadab and Abihu offered unconsecrated fire because they had become drunk with strong drink beforehand. The wine had impaired their judgment of right and wrong, their ability to differentiate between that which was holy and that which was common.

Thus we learn that how we live our daily lives influences how we worship God. Nadab and Abihu teach us that our days must be occupied with conscious regard to His statutes, irrespective of where we find ourselves. Christians cannot indulge in just any lifestyle. All that they do must glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31).

Obedience or Sacrifice? (1 Samuel 1; 15)

Instead of obeying God, Saul had allowed himself to be consumed by presumption and self-interest. He made a burnt offering when he was instructed not to do so. He also greatly desired that the people of Israel should have confidence in him. He even would have sacrificed his son to...
secure himself as king, if no intervention had been made (1 Samuel 13:14). He was, however, spared by God and given another commission—destroy the Amalekites. Yet even in this, by reserving some animals and sparing Agag, Saul disobeyed God. Although his excuse for doing so might have been reasonable, he still went against God's orders; and God made it clear that Saul's action had upset Him (1 Sam. 15:10, 11). The inspired words of Samuel underscore that obedience to God is as connected to worship as the head is connected to the body (verses 22, 23).

Even today, our loving Father does not “‘delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying’” His voice (verse 22, NIV). Thus, obedience to God and satisfying Him first in all things should be appreciated as a core element of worship. Unconditional obedience should, however, be a response to God's love instead of a response to fear of punishment. Jesus says, “‘If you love Me, keep My commandments’” (John 14:15, NKJV).

Obedience to God in worship is evidence of trusting in Him. As Hannah went away in peace with Eli's blessing, she was no longer distressed. That she trusted God is evident in her worship of Him. She returned home with His blessing, and He honored her with her request for a son, because “‘those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me shall be disdained’” (1 Sam. 2:30, NIV).

**Face It Now or Later (Rev. 20:7-10)**

Our exact duty is unequivocally outlined by King Solomon: “Fear God, and keep his commandments for that is the whole duty of everyone” (Eccles. 12:13, NRSV). A similar statement is found in Revelation 14:7: “‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water’” (NIV). The judgment will separate the wheat from the chaff; but if our worship is not based on obedience to God, if we do not differentiate between that which He has commanded and that which He has not, we will be identified with those who are consumed by the fire of Revelation 20:9. Of those who would be obedient and sincere in worshiping God, it shall be said, “Happy are you, O Israel.”

**REACT**

1. How might your lifestyle be affecting your judgment of what is good and what is bad? As you consider your answer, think about what you watch on TV, the type of friends you have, the Web sites you visit, and so on.

2. What daily resolutions would help you to better worship God in obedience?

3. Think of a time when you called good that which was really evil. What happened as a result? What made you change your mind?

---

In yesterday’s Logos article, we learned about the important connection between obedience and worship. Such a connection strengthens us with many blessings.

“While they were under the divine protection, no people or nation, though aided by all the power of Satan, should be able to prevail against [God’s people]. All the world should wonder at the marvelous work of God in behalf of His people. . . . And the favor of God at this time manifested toward Israel was to be an assurance of His protecting care for His obedient, faithful children in all ages.”¹

“Let no one deceive himself with the belief that a part of God’s commandments are nonessential.”

God’s protection cannot cover us if we are living contrary to His commands. God has given us many promises, but they can be fulfilled only if we are His obedient servants. We cannot truly worship God and disobey His commandments. “But God requires obedience to all His commands. The only way in which it is possible for men to be happy is by rendering obedience to the laws of God’s kingdom.”²

“Great blessings were promised to Israel on condition of obedience to the Lord’s directions.”³ Deuteronomy 28:1–14 lists many of the blessings promised to the children of Israel, all on condition of obedience. In principle, these promises and blessings can be ours today if we obey His commandments. The rest of the chapter lists the curses that will fall on those who are disobedient. “God has pronounced a curse upon those who depart from His commandments, and put no difference between common and holy things. . . .

“Let no one deceive himself with the belief that a part of God’s commandments are nonessential, or that He will accept a substitute for that which He has required.”⁴

**REACT**

What are some of the things the children of Israel did to remain under God’s protection?

---

¹ Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 449.
² Our High Calling, p. 24.
³ Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 535.
⁴ Ibid., p. 360.

Elizabeth A. Adonu, Owings Mills, Maryland, U.S.A.
The book of Leviticus is chiefly about the holiness of God and how, through an obedient relationship with Him, sinful people like ourselves can approach Him in worship (Lev. 20:7, 8).

The book of Deuteronomy, like Leviticus, also contains detailed information concerning worship. During the Levitical period, God gave instruction to Israel’s leaders, and later to the people, on how to worship. However, a study of these two books today demonstrates a fundamental principle of worship to modern Christians—that we worship God according to His instructions (Lev. 9:6, 7, 16).

In Exodus 28:36, God instructed the high priest to engrave on the plate of the crown the words *Holiness to the Lord*. “This engraving gave to the people the highest conception of religion and pointed to its supreme objective (Lev. 11:44, 45; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15, 16). It was a constant reminder that, without this essential [holiness], all the exercises of worship would in God’s sight be mockery (see Isa. 1:11–17). As to the high priest, it instructed him that his ministration was not to become a mere form, but that its objective was the consecration of his own life and the lives of the people.”

As the priests and the people of Israel worshiped according to God’s instructions, it should have become evident to them that submitting to His loving will is the essence of worship. This is what true worship should be based upon. Once our own opinions override what the Bible has clearly revealed, we make the worship of God into something He cannot accept. In Revelation 14:1–13, we see that loving, obedient worship of our Creator God will be the test for God’s people during the time of the end. “Led captive by Satan’s delusions, the world will bow to the beast and its image, and carry out its dictates and decrees. . . . The saints, on the other hand, refuse to comply with its demands. They keep the commandments of God. The special point controverted will be the fourth of the Ten Commandments.”

**REACT**

It is clear that God requires a distinction between holy and common things. List the protocols in today’s church that are holy. In what ways do we treat them as common?

---

The great controversy is fought over whom to worship. Lucifer purposes to be greater than God, who alone is to be worshiped (Isa. 14:13, 14). To worship God properly, we must do so in appropriate ways, with reverence, humility, and obedience to His sacred statutes. Therefore, we need to cultivate certain practices:

**Acknowledge who God is.** True worship acknowledges God as our Creator, Redeemer, Father, Healer, Provider, and Refuge. We need to remember that “there is no one holy like the Lord” (1 Sam. 2:2, NIV; Ps. 95:1–7).

**Honor God.** Whether individually or in a congregation, we must revere God. Because living according to the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:13–16, 22, 23) is a form of worship, we shouldn’t dishonor God by claiming to follow Him, but then living as though we do not have the Spirit. Read how Paul describes such a life in Galatians 5:19–21.

**Be purposeful.** Decide to worship God appropriately (Josh. 24:15; Daniel 3; Rom. 12:2).

---

**God’s love is the greatest motivator of all.**

**Seek God.** It is not enough to be determined to worship in appropriate ways. We must have a living connection with God. Daily prayer, Bible study, and meditating on God’s Word keep us in touch with Him. These activities should be an integral part of our lifestyle (Pss. 55:17; 77:11, 12; 119:11).

**Be motivated.** God’s love is the greatest motivator of all. Because He loves us, we want to follow Him (2 Cor. 5:14).

**Be vigilant.** The distracted athlete rarely wins the prize. How much time you spend in prayer, Bible study, and meditation will determine your level of distraction. Focus on Jesus’ examples of prayer and worship (Heb. 12:2). The avenues of the soul—sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell—can be used quite craftily by Satan, so we must diligently guard these avenues. When we do not, it becomes easy to blur the lines of distinction between that which is holy and that which is not.

**Be penitent.** Ask for forgiveness from a sincere heart. Should you err in worship, do not hesitate to seek the Lord’s forgiveness (1 John 1:9; James 4:6).

If we draw near to God, He will draw near to us (James 4:8). He will bless us if we worship Him appropriately (Isa. 58:13, 14).
For many of us, “Happy Sabbath!” is a regular phrase in our weekly collection of words. Many people respond to this greeting by saying, “Happy Day!” As a young child, however, even the mere mention of the Sabbath gave me a sense of displeasure. This was because of all the tedious work that needed to be done to prepare for this day. Then the Sabbath day itself meant that I couldn’t play soccer. To me, then, the Sabbath was nothing more than a day on which we couldn’t do certain things. So what can we learn from this greeting that will help us better understand the nature of worship?

The Sabbath must be to us a unique day in which we can delight in the Lord.

The Sabbath of the Lord “is a sign of creative and redeeming power; it points to God as the source of life and knowledge; it recalls man’s primeval glory, and thus witnesses to God’s purpose to re-create us in His own image.”* The Lord’s day of worship is a special time for us to share with heavenly hosts the amazing privilege of glorifying our Creator and proclaiming His greatness. It is also a time to come before our Maker to be created anew.

At the center of all Sabbath activities is the hour of worship. In every act of worship there should be a clear depiction of our grateful response to the love our Savior demonstrates for us. In our speech, dress, facial expression, giving, singing, and all other conduct, one thought should motivate us: Does this please God?

The Sabbath must be to us a unique day in which we can delight in the Lord (Isa. 58:14). It is a day to rejoice and be happy because the Lord made it (Gen. 2:2, 3). This day is ours each week, now and forever, if we do what gratifies the Lord of hosts on His holy day.

Happy Sabbath! Happy Day!

**REACT**

1. What activity is at the center of your Sabbath day? Potluck, visiting with friends, Sabbath afternoon activities, or the worship service?
2. What changes in attitude can you make regarding how you worship on the Sabbath?
3. What benefits do you believe these changes will bring to your Christian experience?

*Education, p. 250.*
CONCLUDE
The lesson this week emphasizes the following: obedience to God is an essential requirement of worship; how we live our lives influences how we worship God; the center of Sabbath activities is the worship hour; and in every act of worship there should be a clear depiction of our grateful response to God’s love.

CONSIDER
• Diagramming a worship service that is familiar to you. Do this by making a list, designing a poster, creating a church service printed program, or making a diorama.
• Showing in this diagram where you think God would best be shown. Would you show God floating above the sanctuary or platform? Is God next to or behind the preacher? The choir? The choir director? The special music presenter? The pianist or organist? The person praying? The person calling for the tithes and offering? The children’s storyteller? The deacons? The sound system technician? The person reading the Scripture texts? Is God seated with the congregation? Some of the above? All of the above?
• Showing where God would be shown if the worship service truly focused on Him. (With that emphasis in mind, God would be in the area where the congregation would normally be seated. Worship is not a performance for those seated in the pews. It is a communal expression of thanks and praise to God. God then is the audience.)
• Using this illustration as part of the worship service by choosing congregants to represent the worship elements, asking them where they should stand on the platform to best represent their part of the service, and where God should be shown. It is a memorable activity to see the person representing God move from place to place then, at the direction of the leader of this illustration.
• Reflecting on how a God-focused worship counters some people’s beliefs that they are not good enough at anything to participate in the worship hour. With God as the focus, the pressure is off to “perform.” The results? All people who participate are valued regardless of their talent levels.

CONNECT
“O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth” (Ps. 96:1).
Growing up in a Buddhist family, I learned to worship Buddha at a young age. I chanted and sang prayers. Visiting the village temple on special occasions was another part of worship. Many musical instruments played while many people danced around the temple to show their happiness or gratitude to our god. We never wore shoes on the temple ground, and a big concrete water trough was provided for washing feet.

While meditating on Buddha’s teaching as given by the monks, we sat almost motionless. We never pointed our feet at the monks or the Buddha images. Inviting monks to our home was another part of worship. My parents invited them to our home almost every week of the year. On special occasions, the monks gave us special blessings and requested the good spirits to dwell in our house. Worship was never a “one-man show.”

The Bible recorded similar occasions when God asked Moses and Joshua to remove their sandals because the ground where they stood was holy (Exod. 3:5; Josh. 5:15). The Israelites sang songs, played music, and danced their way to the temple to show their gratitude to God.

While most of us do not dance our way to church, we do all sing in church. Why is it that music has turned into one of the most contentious subjects regarding the way we worship? When we sing, why do we turn our songs, which are meant for God, into commercial-like productions? Why do we criticize each other about what sort of music should be sung in church?

In Exodus 34:14, God infers that He is jealous about His relationship with us. So when we come to worship Him, let us come to build a relationship with Him. Cain sacrificed to God the best of his farm produce, but it was not what God had asked from him. As a result, the fire didn’t consume Cain’s sacrifice. Abel brought what God required for a sacrifice, and God looked with favor upon him and his sacrifice.

So as we gather to worship our God, let us offer our different services to Him according to His will. Let us come with the desire of building a closer relationship with our God. When we sing, let God be praised. When we preach, let God be glorified. When we serve, let God be magnified.
As the name suggests, 1 Chronicles is a historical record. Beginning with a chronological listing of names from Adam to David and his sons, it goes on to give highlights of the events from Saul’s end to David’s death. So why, in a brief summary of David’s life, include a song?

Many cultures have used music, in the past and present, as a form of or as a part of worship. In the early church, music never really used to include instruments. Some 1,200 years passed before the organ was tentatively used. Before then there were many church leaders against the introduction of this instrument, including the great Reformer, Martin Luther. He went so far as to say that the “organ in the worship service is a sign of Baal.”*

One argument against the use of the organ in worship services was the interference and corruption of worship they believed instruments would cause. But as music became more and more intricate and complicated, the introduction of instruments was inevitable. And now, it is hard (and perhaps painful) to think of praise and worship without instrumental accompaniment.

King David was musically minded. He put so many of his words to music, or at least into poetic form: his joy and praise (Psalm 150) and his grief and pain (Psalm 22). He composed many songs of thanksgiving for victories won and a number of heartfelt confessions and pleas for forgiveness—like for the terrible things he did to satisfy his lust for Bathsheba (Ps. 51:1–6, 17). We also know he played at least one instrument—the harp (1 Sam. 16:23) and that he composed songs for voice with instrumental accompaniment, a fact early church leaders seemed to have overlooked in their arguments against music.

Music, by its nature, is emotive. It is meant to inspire some sort of reaction. This is why some early church leaders feared it. They feared worship would become more about feeling good than about praising God—perhaps a fear not entirely unfounded.


Kerry Arbuckle, Cooranbong, Australia
New songs often are written for special events. The psalmist contemplates the idea of new songs in six different chapters. We are told in Psalm 33:3 that God put a new song in David’s mouth. In Psalm 144:9, David promises he will make music and sing a new song to God. The other four new-song mentions in Psalms are invitations to “sing to the Lord a new song!” (Ps. 96:1).

What if you don’t feel like singing?

With the psalmist as our guide as to who and how, the rest of the Bible shows the when, where, and why of the new-song experience. After the Exodus, both Moses and Miriam led worship with new songs to the Lord on the shore of the Red Sea (Exodus 15). Isaiah, after prophesying of Israel’s long-awaited Savior, commissions all who wait to sing “to the Lord a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth” (Isa. 42:10). In Deuteronomy 31:19–23, God teaches a new song to Moses to help the people remember their own folly! In Revelation, we see two new songs being sung to celebrate the worthiness of Jesus (Rev. 5:9; 14:3).

New songs are written and sung by believers when there is something to celebrate or remember. Where does this singing take place? Wherever we are! And why do we sing? Because, according to Jesus, if we fail to proclaim His glory the stones will cry out (Luke 19:37–40).

A Worthy Sound (Psalm 150)

Much has been said about how we bring our worship to God. King David had many such conversations in his day. He wrote Psalm 150 to clarify what God put on his heart. From these inspired words, we learn that it isn’t so much about which instruments are used or where they are played. Instead, the worthiness of our worship is seen in whether we are worshiping or not. Everything that has breath should be praising the Lord!

Switching On the Song (1 Thess. 5:16)

But what if you don’t feel like singing? Scripture gives us three reasons why you should sing: (1) Your sins have been forgiven (Ps. 32:1). David tells us that when he kept silent, his bones wasted away from all his groaning (verse 3). No wonder Paul advises to “rejoice always” (1 Thess. 5:16, NKJV). (2) God is amazing (1 Chron. 16:9). We will be led to singing when we tell others about God’s wonderful acts. His name is glorious and worth seeking (verse 10). (3) God is strong (verse 11). He has done miracles and made
perfect judgments (verse 12). You have been chosen by God (verse 13). He never forgets His covenant (verse 15).

So, “Sing to the Lord, all the earth; / Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day” (verse 23, NKJV).

Finding the Melody (Phil. 4:8)

Many things vie for our attention. It takes a concerted effort to block out the myriad sights and sounds around us in order to focus on matters of holiness. After giving a list of all that was wrong with the world in his day, Paul challenged his readers to think about whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8). Let’s take a look at each of these adjectives:

True. God's Word is as true as life gets! Read and study it every day.

Noble. Connect with a person whom you consider to be godly. By beholding we are changed, so go behold a noble person. Most of all, behold Jesus!

Right. Don’t let people walk on others. Stand up for the underdog and the underfoot.

Pure. Press pause. Test every thought. Lock up the bad and release the good (see 1 Thess. 5:20, 21).

Lovely. There is a truly lovely person you know well. Go tell that person how lovely they are. Nature is often lovely. Spend time in it, or read books about it and contemplate pictures of it.

Admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. When you see these attributes in yourself or others, God is revealing Himself. Recognize Him and rejoice.

Swan Song (Ps. 40:3)

Don’t think that you can put off singing a new song until the Second Coming. Jesus calls each of us to celebrate His awesome majesty as often as He crosses our mind while we are on earth. Perhaps you’re not a musician. Compose something new for God from within your own giftedness as an act of worship: a poem, a blog entry, a Tweet, or a conversation. How about a smile, a friendly hug? Or perhaps a meal, a warm fire, a clean room, a helping hand, or eye contact.

The phrase “a God-shaped hole” implies that within each of us there is a void waiting to be filled by God. As you fill your emptiness with Him, you will find something to sing about. Your new song will emerge.

REACT

1. When was the last time you heard a new song? What was its purpose?
2. When was the last time you tried something new? What was it?
3. Have you ever done something new as a response to God’s presence in your life?
4. What is worship to you?


David Edgren, Melbourne, Australia
As you stand to sing a hymn with the congregation, do you feel all the cares of another long, tiring week melt away as you lift your voice to praise God? No matter how talented (or untalented) the congregation may be, your awareness shifts to something more important: worshiping God. While focusing on things that are good and just and pure, just for a second, there’s a little taste of heaven.

“"The heart must feel the spirit of the song.""

“We should endeavor, in our songs of praise, to approach as nearly as possible to the harmony of the heavenly choirs. The proper training of the voice is an important feature in education, and should not be neglected. Singing, as a part of religious service, is as much an act of worship as is prayer. The heart must feel the spirit of the song, to give it right expression.”¹

From the beginning of the Bible through to the very end, God is praised for His goodness: “As morning broke it revealed to the multitudes of Israel all that remained of their mighty foes—the mail-clad bodies cast upon the shore. From the most terrible peril, one night had brought complete deliverance. . . . Jehovah alone had brought them deliverance, and to him their hearts were turned in gratitude and faith. Their emotion found utterance in songs of praise. The Spirit of God rested upon Moses, and he led the people in a triumphant anthem of thanksgiving, the earliest and one of the most sublime that are known to man.”²

We will praise God in heaven, so we should learn to praise Him while we are on earth: “The days of pain and weeping are forever ended. The King of glory has wiped the tears from all faces; every cause of grief has been removed. Amid the waving of palm branches they pour forth a song of praise, clear, sweet, and harmonious; every voice takes up the strain, until the anthem swells through the vaults of heaven.”³

**REACT**

How is praising God in worship different from singing along with your favorite religious track on your MP3 player?

---

2. Ibid., pp. 287, 288.

Talitha Simmons, Melbourne, Australia
While the world worships “the stars” and God’s created beings quickly laud their own achievements, the Christian life should be an offering of continuous praise to our Savior. But just how should we praise Him in a hostile world? We can do so by recounting how much He means to us. Jesus is our Creator (Gen. 1:1; John 1:3). He is our way of escape from the slavery of sin (John 3:16, 17). He is the Lamb who sanctifies us (Gen. 22:8; John 1:29) and the Good Shepherd, who gives His life for the sheep (John 10:11, 15). Without Him, life would be impossible.

Jesus rejoices over us in song (Zeph. 3:17). When we are living by faith in the Word, we will rejoice in Him through song. How can we make God first in our lives so we can lift our voices to Him?

Teach Christ. Scripture testifies of Jesus (John 5:39), our Daily Bread (John 6:35). Let’s teach the Word diligently (Deut. 8:3), not only to our biological children but also our spiritual children—those whom we are mentoring in Truth.

Talk Christ. At every opportunity, let’s talk not only to Him but of Him, by Him, and for Him, wherever we are—and through every method possible (Deut. 6:1–9).

Reflect Christ. Let’s allow the Holy Spirit to control our thoughts and actions completely (Galatians 5). As we “sing” the Word through our lives, we will be giving God the glory He deserves.

Really sparkle. Shine for Jesus (Exod. 19:5; Isa. 60:1; Dan. 12:3). Since we are His singing stars, let there be nothing in us that displeases Him (Ps. 139:23, 24). Let’s sing from the heart with joyful understanding. Christ is coming to live with us (Zech. 2:10; 1 Cor. 14:15; Rev. 21:3, 4)!

**REACT**

1. Christ is the reason why David’s feelings toward the law were so positive (Psalm 119). Why do you love Jesus? Think of His many kind-nesses. Write a list!

2. In what ways are you willing for your house, dorm room, or apartment to be Christ’s home; your body, His temple; your time, His own?
Throughout the explosion of adoration, homage, joy, and worship from the heavenly beings in Revelation 4 and 5, it is clear that even as the host of worshipers grows for each successive song, the focus of their worship remains centered on God. Their focus is His power and worthiness to receive their praise.

As Christians, it is important to keep our worship focused on God, to approach Him humbly and repentantly, rather than viewing worship as a means of achieving emotional elation. Joy is a vital part of our worship experience, but it should be a joy that comes from a thoughtful relationship with God, rather than from a purely emotional peak. Much of modern worship seems based on emotion. Such worship can easily become self-centered, lacking in repentance and humility.

Amid his guilt and shame, [David] found his true “hiding place.”

When David approached God after his sin with Bathsheba, he put his selfish desires away. Amid his guilt and shame, he found his true “hiding place” (Ps. 32:7), not the hiding place of selfish desires and self-deception. After God instructs and teaches him, he finds again the steadfast love that surrounds those “who trust the Lord” (Ps. 32:10). Then David shouts for joy. No emotion-based worship could ever achieve this.

Also written after David’s sin with Bathsheba, Psalm 51 has long been a “home” for Christians seeking assurance of salvation. The fallen monarch cries out in brokenness and guilt to the Majesty of heaven. David’s adulterous, murderous sin was completely about self-gratification. But this psalm is all about God and is based on a reason-centered understanding of true worship. Restored in the image of God, David finds true deliverance, praise, pleasure, and delight.

As we focus on God, on His power, grace, and love, rather than on ourselves, our worship of Him and the joy we find in that worship will grow and strengthen. Such is the fruit of true worship.

**REACT**

1. How can we use the Bible to guide us into a joy-filled, reason-based worship with God?

2. How can we remain focused on the true reasons for worship in a world that values the hype of emotion-based worship?

Hannah Hogg, Pleasant Hills, New South Wales, Australia
CONCLUDE

It seems inherent in human nature to find an object of adoration, worship, and praise. It’s not a question of if we will praise, but what or whom we will praise. The Bible calls for our highest praise to be directed to God. His Word is filled with examples of people praising Him for who He is and what He’s done. Sometimes people are afraid that heart-felt praise will reduce worship to a purely emotionally driven high. But if the Bible tells everything that has breath to praise the Lord, then let’s spend the rest of our lives considering how to make His praise glorious!

CONSIDER

- Reading through the Psalms and listing everything the psalmists praise or thank God for. (This would take several days!)
- Composing your own “new song,” poem, letter, instrumental piece, or painting that expresses praise to God.
- Changing your Sabbath School class schedule to include a time of praise, either singing or sharing, to precede the lesson study.
- Following the advice to “enter . . . His courts with praise” (Ps. 100:4, NKJV) by reading a psalm each day of the new week, then praising God for each of His attributes or works mentioned in that psalm.
- Writing a psalm of praise as a Sabbath School class or Bible study group. Have each person write one to four lines. Then put them all together and share your psalm during your worship service.
- Dividing a sheet of paper into two columns, one called “Praise” and one called “Thanks.” Each time you have your personal devotions, add a couple more items to each column. Under “Praise” list characteristics of who God is, and under “Thanks” list things He has done. Then praise Him for both His characteristics and His works!
- Finding time when you’re home alone to play your favorite praise music and sing to the Lord from an unfettered heart.

CONNECT


Worship in the Psalms

“How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God” (Ps. 84:1, 2, NIV). 

lesson seven
AUGUST 6–13
Humans communicate their emotions in a variety of ways. Oftentimes, verbalizing is not enough, so we find other ways to express ourselves, such as through the various arts. Some people express themselves through words and writing; others through music or through painting, sculpting, drama, and so on. For me, it’s music. I’m not talented enough to write music, but listening to music can move me in ways nothing else can. And I’m sure I’m not alone. Music can express our joy, sorrow, anger, passion, and just about any emotion in between. Any one of us can probably think of a song that would be appropriate for any mood or occasion. Because music can touch so many of us at such a basic level, we need to be careful what types of music we listen to.

David expressed his innermost thoughts and feelings through music. The book of Psalms is a collection of his thoughts, as well as the thoughts of others, set to music. While we don’t have the actual musical accompaniment for the Psalms, we do have the words. Reading through them, we can see David’s feelings of joy and exhilaration (Psalm 100), sorrow and despair (Psalm 38), anger (Psalm 58), and contrition (Psalm 51). Almost all of these psalms were sung to God. It’s as if He were David’s confidant and best friend, and his own personal therapist. David wasn’t afraid to express everything he was feeling directly to God. Music was the language of David’s soul and an integral part of his own personal worship of God.

Today, music is still an essential part of worship. Whether it’s singing hymns of praise with an entire congregation, writing a song and performing it in the sanctuary of your own living room just for God, or simply meditating on the lyrics of a song during your quiet time with Him, music can function as a language for your soul to communicate with God. Just as David shared with God whatever was on his heart, so we can offer to God our praise, our thanks, our frustrations, our desires, and our requests. This week, as we look at worship in the Psalms, look each day for a psalm that resonates with what you’re feeling. Let that psalm remind you that, just as it was with David, God speaks your language too.

Gary Case, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, U.S.A.
“All Nature Sings” (Pss. 90:1, 2; 100:1–5)

Two activities that quickly turn my thoughts toward God are listening to sacred music and experiencing nature. When I slow down enough to listen to the music in nature, I feel a great sense of reverence toward my Creator. While living in Louisiana, I was often amazed at the rich, varied sounds of nature on a hot summer evening. Within a few minutes of closing my eyes, what had previously sounded like a gentle, background hum became a loud chorus. A late evening thunderstorm would often cue a cacophony of frogs, providing a crescendo that would last well after much of the other music had faded away.

Snowshoeing above the tree line in the mountains of Colorado now provides me with a contrasting musical experience. As the sound of my labored breathing and thumping heartbeat gradually subsides, I am amazed at the ever-changing sounds of the wind, the distant cry of a bird, and from somewhere, the sound of flowing water in what appears to be a frozen world.

Each beautiful “note” of nature’s never-ending song is sounded in praise of the Creator. As the crowning act of His creation and the blessed benefactors of His redemption and love, God longs to hear our “notes” of praise above those of nature. “The Lord desires us to make mention of His goodness and tell of His power. He is honored by the expression of praise and thanksgiving. He says, ‘Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me.’ Ps. 50:23.”

Wealth Without Riches (Psalm 49)

Financial reality for most of us will be somewhat below the bottom spot on the annual Forbes’ list. Yet we convince ourselves that just a little more money will make life much better. So we pursue ever larger salaries and the corner office; and we forget that worldly wealth can be used only in exchange for worldly goods. Garth Brooks reminded us that “you aren’t wealthy until you have something money can’t buy.” No amount of money can buy any of God’s great blessings. Most important, we’ll never be able to afford the price of our salvation. Praise God our financial status on earth is meaningless to Him! When it comes to salvation, all that matters is where our hearts are (Matt. 6:21).

“Heaven, We Have a Problem” (Psalm 73)

When the doctors told us that our daughter was born with a heart
defect that required surgery, we believed the Lord could heal her. But following anointing and prayer, her condition remained unchanged. As we waited for the doctors to complete their preoperative assessment, discouragement overwhelmed me. I couldn’t understand why God had not healed her. I had hoped He would. I knew He could. I felt He should. I was doing everything I knew to be faithful to Him. I trusted His promises. But waiting to hear from the doctors, it seemed like wasted effort. Trying to live right hadn’t kept trouble away.

I was bewildered as much as I was relieved when the doctors told us she seemed to be doing well and any further intervention could wait—we could safely take her home! Had she been healed or not? If her heart was still abnormal, why was she doing so well? The questions and doubts plagued me for weeks.

After a late-night feeding, I lay in my recliner holding my four-month-old daughter, softly humming “God Will Take Care of You.” The song had been a comfort to me many times since childhood, but never had the words touched me as deeply as they did that night. As tears ran down my face, I was ashamed of how little faith I had shown, and I finally believed that God really would take care of her, no matter what.

My daughter still looks perfectly healthy. God continues to shield her from any serious consequences related to her heart defect, but He has not corrected the anatomy. What a wonderful testimony to the love of God that He can sustain us even when our hearts aren’t right!

**Pass It On (Ps. 78:1–8)**

We need to present to people the way in which God has led us in the past and to recount His wondrous works in behalf of His people. “We need to ‘call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.’ ‘For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; but because the Lord loved you. . . . Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.’”

**REACT**

1. How can you modify the pace of your life so you don’t miss opportunities to worship your Creator?
2. What can you do when life seems too dark to sing praises to God?
3. What impact, if any, can our worship have on those around us?

---

3. The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, March 19, 1895.

Dallas Estey, Firestone, Colorado, U.S.A.
One day in Kenya worshipers went to their worship place to find their god missing. Bewildered, they went to the police to file a report. The police were at a loss for words, wondering about a god that couldn’t even help himself. How wonderful that our heavenly Father will always be there whenever we come to worship Him. He still reveals His power in modern times to prove His love and presence. “It is not by inherent power that year by year the earth yields its bounties and continues its march around the sun. The hand of the Infinite One is perpetually at work guiding this planet.

“By His power . . . every leaf appears.”

It is God’s power continually exercised that keeps the earth in position in its rotation. It is God who causes the sun to rise in the heavens. He opens the windows of heaven and gives rain. . . .

“It is by His power that vegetation is caused to flourish, that every leaf appears, every flower blooms, every fruit develops.”

Many people today are distracted from the worship of the one true God like the Israelites who perished in the wilderness. “From Kadesh the children of Israel had turned back into the wilderness; and the period of their desert sojourn being ended, they came, ‘even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh.’ Numbers 20:1.

“Here Miriam died and was buried. From that scene of rejoicing on the shores of the Red Sea, when Israel went forth with song and dance to celebrate Jehovah’s triumph, to the wilderness grave which ended a lifelong wandering—such had been the fate of millions who with high hopes had come forth from Egypt. Sin had dashed from their lips the cup of blessing. . . .

‘For all this they sinned still, and believed not for His wondrous works. . . . When He slew them, then they sought Him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer.’ Psalm 78:32-35. Yet they did not turn to God with a sincere purpose. Though when afflicted by their enemies they sought help from Him who alone could deliver, yet ‘their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His covenant.’

Today, God invites us all to come to Him and worship Him with the whole of our hearts.


Jared Bosire, Mombasa, Kenya
Worship is not merely singing hymns on whose meaning we rarely reflect, or saying prayers that sound like giving instructions to God on what He should do or not do. Worship involves opening up our lives to God and letting Him do what He wills. Thus, worship is a form of surrender.

Deception, duplicity, sophistry, delusion, and hypocrisy are behaviors of human nature in its natural state. Consequently, self-deception is a fundamental problem in human life and the cause of much human suffering. Humans often have false beliefs regarding their motivations, intentions, actions, character, and identity. Fortunately, self-deception can manifest itself even in worship. When this happens, worship becomes a means of self-gratification and self-praise. In Luke 18:9–14, the Pharisee exemplifies this degraded form of worship. He denies that he is a sinner, thus making God a liar (1 John 1:10). He boasts about his good works and proudly looks down upon the publican. To him, worship is an opportunity to demand compensation for good works.

The publican, however, exemplifies genuine worship, which we may refer to as worshiping in spirit and in truth. This involves submission to the truth about our own state as well as the truth about who God is. The publican confesses that he is a sinner who needs a Savior. To him, worship is an opportunity to seek God’s grace and pardon. Worship in spirit and truth is an antidote to self-deception.

Worship in spirit and in truth is clearly demonstrated in the Psalms. In Psalm 139, the author acknowledges the omniscience and omnipresence of God. No one can hide from His presence or escape His reach. The same psalm acknowledges that God is our Creator and Sustainer. He is, therefore, best suited to deal with our intricate needs and problems, including our tendency to self-deception. Worship, in this psalm, involves opening our lives to God’s scrutiny and intervention without reservation. Genuine worship generates humility, nourishes faith, intensifies sensitivity to sin, and strengthens the yearning for repentance and forgiveness. It confirms and sustains one’s membership in the family of God.

---


Francis Wokabi, Ruiru, Kenya
Most cultures are replete with ritual or worship that involves idols or God. Everybody worships God or something! There appears to be a void in every human heart that people try to fill in order to find happiness and meaning in life. The seventeenth century philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal could not have been more correct when he observed that “there is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing.”* Neither God’s creation (however majestic), nor all the education, wealth, art, talent, entertainment, all the entrapments the world offers, can satisfy the deep yearnings of the heart.

The human expression of our love for God is what worship is about.

But what is worship? To gain a better understanding about worship—what is acceptable and what is not acceptable—we need to realize that true worship is our response to God. He takes the initiative to establish fellowship with us by opening our hearts and mind to Him. He begins by reminding us that before we are, He is. Moses sang about God that “before the mountains were born / or you brought forth the earth and the world, / from everlasting to everlasting you are God” (Ps. 90:2, NIV). God did not create us for our own pleasure, but for His purposes (Gen. 1:26).

The human expression of our love for God is what worship is about. Considering that the love relationship with God cannot be measured, cookie-cutter formulas for worshiping God cannot possibly find a place in true worship. Instead, we find that the expressions of worshiping God are diverse. Nonetheless, the Word of God in Psalms identifies a number of common threads that run through that spectrum, giving us the how-to of worship:

1. Worship involves a glad and joyful response to God through singing (Ps. 100:1, 2).
2. Worship incorporates prayer (Ps. 141:2).
3. Worship includes fellowship with God. “But as for me, it is good to be near God” (Ps. 73:28, NIV).
4. Worship includes a healthy dose of thanksgiving (Ps. 54:6).
5. Worship gives us comfort, encouragement, and security. “Lord, you have been our dwelling place / throughout all generations” (Ps. 90:1, NIV).


Lawrence Kiage, Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.
Have you ever felt completely surrounded by circumstances out of your control and unable to see a way out? A few years ago, I found myself in a pit of despair. I was convinced that my circumstances would never change, that I was an utter failure, and that there was absolutely nothing I nor anyone else could do. During that time, was I worshiping? No. Was I reading my Bible or praying? No. What was the point? I had been crushed so many times that I felt I was beyond anyone’s help. I had even begun to forget about God and any possible role He might play in my life.

One of my friends, however, reminded me of a commitment I’d made to write an article for CQ. Could the timing be any worse? With a heavy heart, I began to work on my article. I was forced to read my Bible, and in doing so, I began to spend time with God. Slowly, without my noticing, and completely beyond my own volition, my outlook began to change. My depression started to lift. I came to see that there was more to life than the here and now. God gently reminded me that He had never deserted me and that He was not about to do so now. He reminded me of our many years together and of the miracles He had wrought in my life. He reminded me that He would never, ever, leave me. He renewed my hope and my reason for living.

Was there something special about the Bible verses I was reading? Were they filled with inspiration and hope by themselves? No. But the God who inspired them was. God used my work on that simple article, my broken act of worship, to draw me to Him, to give me hope and peace, and to fill me with His restorative power.

When we read the Psalms, we learn that worship involves trusting God despite our circumstances and praising Him when we are stuck in the caves of despair, when we cannot see a way out but for Him. True worship brings us into communion with God. It changes lives, hearts, and outlooks. It brings peace and hope and allows us to truly rejoice.

**REACT**

1. What does true worship mean to you?
2. Have you ever felt you were beyond God’s help?
3. In what ways do you express your worship toward God?

*Tanya L. Henry, Springfield, Massachusetts, U.S.A.*
CONCLUDE

During Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem He declared that if His disciples stopped praising Him, the stones would cry out (Luke 19:40). Do we feel compelled to worship God? How do we worship Him? Is there a right and wrong way to worship? This week we have studied that there are many good ways to worship God—in music, art, study, prayer, corporately and individually. When it comes to worship, it appears that the only wrong way is the “I-Way.” If our action focuses on us instead of on God, we are sure to go wrong.

CONSIDER

• Reading about Quaker worship. They are known for their silent worship services. Try it out with a small group of your friends. Then discuss the merits of having a time of silence during worship in both a church setting and during private devotionals.
• Listening to various types of Christian music that help you worship in different situations (times of joy, sadness, depression, and so on). This can be useful, because sometimes it depends on our situation what form of worship is most effective.
• Spending time in nature during different times of the day or night. What do you hear at each time? What are the differences? How does what you hear and feel direct your worship of our Creator?
• Watching a hymn on YouTube being “sung” using American Sign Language. How do the movements express worship? (Once at YouTube, key in such phrases ASL hymns; Christian sign language songs.)
• Writing a worship service in one of these formats: high church, low church, classic church, contemporary church. Each of these worship styles speak to us in different ways. What is the goal of your service? What will you emphasize?
• Photographing various types of worship or looking online for such photos. Can you tell just by looking at the photo what kind of worship is happening? What are the differences of each style?

CONNECT

Psalm 150; Luke 19:38–40; Romans 8:25–27.
Steps to Christ, chapters 11 and 13.
The following link describes a Quaker service: http://www.quakerinfo.org/quakerism/worship.html.

Victor F. Brown, Kettering College, Kettering, Ohio, U.S.A.
Conformity, Compromise, and Crisis in Worship

“Solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14, NKJV).
There’s an adage that says, “Birds of the same feather flock together.” But I joke about it by saying, “Birds of the same feather are the same birds.” Such thought comes into play when discerning the character of a person by using as a gauge the people with whom that person is usually identified. The character of a person’s associates, however, may not always be conclusive proof of the character of that person. But it can give you a hint of any common denominators they might share.

The ultimate issue... is...: whom will we worship?

Adolescence is often characterized in part by peer pressure. The peer group pressures individuals to change their values and behavior to conform to the group. Individuals may not have been raised to prize the values and behaviors that the peer group imposes upon them, but they are pressured to follow the group’s ways in order to be accepted. Individuals may be prodded to do things they would not normally do and that are contrary to their beliefs. As a result, they compromise their principles and in the long run lose their personal identities.

We need look no further than the Bible to verify this point. Ancient Israel failed to maintain its identity as God’s chosen people. They worshiped God the way they wanted to rather than the way God instructed them to. To ensure military protection, their kings made political alliances with idol-worshiping nations. Such alliances often took the form of intermarriages and “I’ll scratch your back if you’ll scratch mine” concessions. Slowly, the heathen practices of these heathen nations crept into Israel until most of Israel forsook worshiping the true God who, without fail, had shown to them His abounding love and grace.

The ultimate issue in the cosmic conflict is still exactly as it is portrayed in God’s Word: whom will we worship? Paul enjoins us, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:1, 2, NRSV).

This week we will study how conformity with the world generally entails compromise and, as a consequence, a crisis in worship.
Right from the beginning, in the book of Genesis, the Bible tells us that evil reigns in the hearts of men and women and negatively impacts their worship of God. Evil abounds today also. There is little to no difference between the wickedness we see now and the evil we read about in the first book of the Bible. Many people are too busy working to worship God. They are worldly oriented rather than worship oriented, career oriented rather than care oriented. Most people are so busy making a livelihood that making time for worshiping God doesn’t even enter their minds. Such is even the case with many Christians. They are more focused on acquiring resources and wealth than on worshiping God. Only a few are thinking about heaven because for them money or wealth cannot begin to compete with heaven.

**When we fail to worship God, He ceases to be a part of our lives.**

For many people today, worship is as fundamental to salvation as is a foreign concept. Only a few desire to worship their Creator. Like Cain, some people compromise their worship practices, thinking that God will understand. But as we learned from the story of Cain, He cannot accept such compromises. Sometimes we take God’s love for granted, thinking that belief without obedience is acceptable to Him.

Just as he tempted Eve, Satan tempts us to believe that what he offers us is more promising than what God offers us. Satan wants to persuade us that worshiping God doesn’t really need to be a vital part of life. Such thinking, however, only creates a spiritual crisis. When we fail to worship God, He ceases to be a part of our lives, and we forfeit salvation in Him.

**REACT**

1. How can we understand we need to worship Him daily?
2. What can we do to ensure that we do not stray from the true focus of worship?
3. Think about your daily and weekly schedule. How much time do you spend in prayer or Bible study compared to being on Facebook, shopping, or earning a living or a degree? How can you find balance in your life regarding the matter of worship and earning a living?
4. How can we go throughout the routines of a weekday in an attitude of worship?
Conformity (Gen. 6:5–8; Deut. 12:8; 13:17, 18)

There was so much evil on the earth just before the Flood that God was actually sorry He had created humans. Rather than worship Him, they “worshipped selfish indulgence—eating, drinking, merry-making—and resorted to acts of violence and crime if their desires and passions were interfered with.”¹

However, the greatest of all temptations for the Israelites was the temptation to conform to the pagan nations around them. To conform to such cultures would sooner or later cause them to accept the worship practices of these nations and therefore adulterate their worship of the one true God—Yahweh. That is why God instructed them to destroy the idols and altars of the idolatrous religions that they would find in the land God was giving them. In fact, it was so important for them to continue in their worship of the one true God, that He made it a part of His special law of love. Read Exodus 20:2–6 and Matthew 22:34–40.

Faithfulness to God is necessary for a vibrant Christian life. He alone is worthy of our worship. Our faith in God matters to Him. We are to serve and worship Him only.

Compromising our relationship with God is always a progression to regression!

Compromise (1 Kings 11:1–13; 18)

Compromising is often seen as necessary and positive. For example, Solomon thought it was wise to marry women from the surrounding idol-worshipping nations to ensure good diplomatic ties. However, such marriages were in direct violation of God’s precepts (Deut. 17:17; 1 Kings 11:1, 2). The taking of one wife, then another, and yet another paved the way for the false worship practices of his wives to creep into the religion of the Hebrews (1 Kings 11:4–8). Gradually, Solomon built the road to compromise. “His wives turned his heart after other gods” (1 Kings 11:4, NIV), and the road continued downhill to his own downfall (1 Kings 11:11).

Another example of the dangers of compromise is seen in the life of Ahab, a monarch identified with military strength but was weak in his relationship with God. His small acts of compromise eventually led to the killing of God’s prophets. Jezebel, his wife, was never restrained by the king in her actions to usurp the true worship of God with a counterfeit
worship. Compromising our relationship with God is always a progression to regression! When we compromise our relationship with God, we are putting our trust in worldly things rather than in our Creator.

_Crisis (Jer. 17:5; Mal. 3:16–4:6)_

The Old Testament narrative is replete with examples of disobedience that lead to a crisis. There is a great crisis coming. This crisis will occur because of the contrast between the protagonists and the antagonists, between God’s people and those who choose to disobey God, between those who remain true in their relationship with God and those who are unfaithful to their relationship with Him. Notice that conformity to amalgamated worship led the ancient people of God to compromise, and as a result, crisis was inevitable. So shall it be in the coming crisis.

Whom Adam and Eve would worship was the issue in the Garden of Eden. And because of their choice, whom or what people worship will be the main issue of life until Eden is restored. “At the time of the end, only two groups of people will be in the world: those who fear and worship the true God and those who hate the truth and are worshipers of the dragon and the beast.”

True worship is not merely about whether people worship on the first day of the week, the sixth day of the week, or the seventh day of the week. True worship is about who or what reigns in our hearts, our thoughts, and our actions. Worship in its deepest meaning is a matter of relationship. “Jesus uses the Father-Son relationship of love as an illustration of the kind of relationship His disciples should have with Him. Just as the relationship of Jesus with the Father preceded His obedience to the Father, so should the relationship of the disciples with Jesus precede their obedience to Him. ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments’ (John 14:15).”

**REACT**

1. What was your “progression to regression”? How did Christ become the answer to these problems?
2. Explain how worship is always a matter of relationship.
3. Consider your worship habits. What do they say about whom or what you have a relationship with?
4. After you reread the quote at the end of the Logos, think carefully about your answers to the following questions: Do you keep God’s commandments because you love Him or because you believe you must keep them to be saved? Why is it impossible to really keep God’s commandments if we don’t love Him?

---

1. Ellen G. White Comments, _The SDA Bible Commentary_, vol. 1, p. 1090.
“The lesson for us to learn from the history of this perverted life is the necessity of continual dependence upon the counsels of God; to carefully watch the tendency of our course, and to reform every habit calculated to draw us from God.”¹

“The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God. In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will purify the heart and renew the mind, giving us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us a willing obedience to all His requirements. This is true worship. It is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit.”²

“Christ saw that something must be done. Numerous ceremonies were enjoined upon the people without the proper instruction as to their import. The worshipers offered their sacrifices without understanding that they were typical of the only perfect Sacrifice. And among them, unrecognized and unhonored, stood the One symbolized by all their service. He had given directions in regard to the offerings. He understood their symbolical value, and He saw that they were now perverted and misunderstood. Spiritual worship was fast disappearing. No link bound the priests and rulers to their God. Christ’s work was to establish an altogether different worship.”³

“The Jews were led into error and ruin and to the rejection of the Lord of glory, because they knew not the Scriptures, nor the power of God. A great work is before us, to lead men to take God’s word as the rule of their lives, to make no compromise with tradition and custom, but to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord.”⁴

**REACT**

1. What principles help us to avoid compromise?
2. Based on this Testimony article, what is true worship? How do you react to this?

---

3. Ibid., p. 157.
Many people, even people who call themselves Christians, do not know how to make God their priority. That is why worship is not currently a top-rated activity. Most people are so wrapped up in what the world has to offer that God is not number one in their lives. How can we make God our main concern? How can we open our hearts to Him so that He lives in us and motivates all that we do, particularly our worship of Him? Here are ways we can enhance our worship practices:

1. **Remember who God is.** He is all powerful, all almighty, and all loving. He is our Creator, Redeemer, Mediator, Comforter, and Friend. He gave His life for us so that we could be saved from sin and live with Him for eternity.

2. **Accept that we are sinners.** Along with this acceptance, we always need to be mindful that God can transform us through the power of the Holy Spirit. We have weaknesses that only the indwelling Spirit can replace with the fruit of the Spirit. Read Galatians 5. We are nothing unless we accept God and let Him dwell in our hearts. Let us worship Him with awe, because He always hears us and forgives us when we ask Him to.

3. **Know that life is short.** Because we do not know when we will die, we need to let our lives be ones of constant devotion to God. Worshiping Him is an important way to grow in Him. That is why it is important to put God first in our lives. Many people do not make time to worship God. They say they have too much else to do. They do not understand that seeking God first helps everything else work out.

4. **Do not be deceived by the world.** The world’s values do not conform to what the Lord desires for us. We must not allow what the world values to take our eyes off Jesus (Jer. 17:5). We are only tourists on this planet. Heaven is our home, and worshiping God helps us to arrive there safely.

**REACT**

1. On which one of these four ways to enhance your worship should you spend the most time?
2. Why is worship often not a priority for people who profess Christ as their Savior?
3. What can we do to make worship services meaningful and lasting?
The line that separates truth from evil grows thin when we neglect our worship of God. When we neglect worship, we are more likely to succumb to temptation, because it becomes harder for us to discern what is wrong.

**While technology can surely simplify our lives and conveniently solve some of our problems, it can surely keep us away from worshiping God.**

In this age of technology, students seldom use books or libraries for homework assignments. As long as they have a computer and an Internet connection, why bother to walk to the library when they can do research in a café, fast-food restaurant, or even an airport? The Internet provides excellent sources of information. It is a vast space of interesting ideas and research. In addition, the Internet also helps us to locate long-lost friends; and it keeps us in touch with current associates. As of this writing, there are approximately 174 social networking sites available, excluding dating sites. I have my own share of experiences on these Web sites and the advantages they give me. However, I find that I must ask myself the following questions: How much time do I actually spend on these sites? Are there better ways to use so much time?

The Internet, with all its benefits, can lead us to compromise our faith and worship practices. While technology can surely simplify our lives and conveniently solve some of our problems, it can surely keep us away from worshiping God.

In Deuteronomy 13, Israel is reminded that even family members can lead us to other gods that enslave us, thereby robbing us of a relationship with our Creator. As we enjoy the comforts of this world such as those that technology provides, let us still heed God’s call to seek Him first. As we heed this call, not even the comforts of this world can take us away from Him whom we worship.

**REACT**

1. How can the Internet be used to effectively spread the gospel?
2. Consider the amount of time you spend on the Internet, and why. Are you using it in ways that can lead you to Christ or away from Him?
3. What worship sites can you find on the Web that have potential for enhancing your worship experience?
CONCLUDE
We are constantly distracted, finding it hard to find time for worship. We are tempted to think that worship is not really a necessary part of life. We couldn’t be more wrong. Our relationship with God hinges on our worship of Him. The more we worship Him, the clearer our picture becomes of who He is. The more we worship Him, the better we can discern His plan for our lives. When we honor God’s call to seek Him first, He provides whatever else we need.

CONSIDER
• Looking up verses under “worship” in a Bible concordance to begin a topical Bible study by yourself or with a small group.
• Prayer journaling about worship. Reflect how Matthew 6:33 applies specifically to your life.
• Writing your own psalm about worshiping God. Who is God? Why do you want to worship Him? How can you seek Him first?
• Drawing or painting a representation of what worship means to you. Explain the artwork to a friend.
• Organizing a small-group worship service to have with friends that will place God at the center of their experience.
• Brainstorming ways you can be more involved in the worship services of your local church.
• Comparing your life before and after your conversion experience. How has worship made your life different?

CONNECT
Matthew 6; Revelation 14:6–12.
Jean Sheldon, No Longer Naked and Ashamed (Parker, Colo.: Outskirts Press, 2009), pp. 121–140.
“Trust Not in Deceptive Words”: The Prophets and Worship

“‘Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come—yes, let him foretell what will come’ ” (Isa. 44:7, NIV).
November 18, 1978, is a day many people are more willing to forget than to remember. It was a day when the unimaginable happened. Under the instruction of their leader, Jim Jones, more than 900 members of the Peoples Temple religious group committed mass suicide by drinking a fruit punch laced with the deadly poison cyanide and a sedative. These individuals chose to follow their leader out of the United States of America to Guyana so that they could worship the way they wanted to without being investigated by the United States government. Not long after that, the entire world witnessed what is now known as the Jonestown Massacre.

David Koresh, who proclaimed himself to be the last prophet, is believed to be responsible for the deaths of 75 people (more than 20 being children) during a 50-day siege that began on February 28, 1993. According to surviving followers, Koresh often said that he was the Son of God and claimed to have the gift of prophecy and the power even to raise the dead.

The teachings of Jim Jones and David Koresh clearly went against the Bible, the laws of the land, and human logic. Yet these two men successfully convinced others that they were prophets of God and that following them constituted true worship. These men are but two of many people who claim to preach the truth about God but who are really telling lies about Him. We need to ask several questions regarding such people.

1. How does the Bible define a true prophet?
2. What are the functions of the prophet concerning worship?
3. How can we guard ourselves against deception regarding worship?

This week’s lessons will attempt to answer these questions.
No, Thanks (Isa. 1:11–15)

Have you ever been offered something to which you had to say, “No, thanks”? We say, “No, thanks” when we have no need for the gift that is offered. But suppose you are offered a gift that you know was given insincerely, wouldn’t your response also be “No, thanks”?

This was God’s response to the worship offered to Him by the Israelites during Isaiah’s time. It can be a bit embarrassing to have your gift refused by another person, and having God refuse your gift should be even more heart wrenching. But why would God refuse to accept the worship of His creatures when, throughout the Bible, He calls people to worship Him?

True worship glorifies God, not ourselves.

Quitting Your Worship Charades (Isa. 1:11–15)

In Isaiah 1:13–15, God told His people, “‘Don’t continue bringing me worthless sacrifices! . . . / They have become a heavy weight on me, / and I am tired of carrying it. / When you raise your arms to me in prayer, / I will refuse to look at you. / Even if you say many prayers, / I will not listen to you, / because your hands are full of blood’ ” (NCV). These are stern words coming from a loving and compassionate Father. But He had had enough. His people professed to serve Him, but, instead, they were walking on forbidden paths.

God had chosen the Israelites to be a light to guide the heathen nations to Him. Their religious practices were impressive. However, He said of them, “‘These people come near to me with their mouth / and honor me with their lips, / but their hearts are far from me. / Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men’ ” (Isa. 29:13, NIV). Though they claimed to be sentinels of God, they killed the prophets God sent to lead them back to true worship. Tradition says that Isaiah was sawn asunder, and others were tormented and afflicted.

False Piety (Mic. 6:1–8)

The fundamental issue is not how you worship but why you worship—what motivates you to worship. The Israelites’ worship was seemingly perfect, but God was not pleased, because through their worship, they sought to impress others and to bring glory to themselves. God is not
pleased with form and style that have no substance, no heart worship. God rejected this worship of the religious elite. However, He accepted the humble worship of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other lowly prophets. The Lord is not pleased with our sacrifices if they are presented selfishly. He requires that we walk humbly with Him, act justly, and love mercy. The sacrifices God desires are a broken spirit and a contrite heart (Ps. 51:17). True worship glorifies God, not ourselves.

A Response (Isa. 6:1–8)

Worship is our response to what God has done for us and through us. When Isaiah saw Jehovah in a vision, he was overwhelmed by his own weakness. He exclaimed, “ ‘Woe to me! . . . I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips’ ” (Isa. 6:5, NIV). He responded further by accepting God’s call on his life (verse 8).

If we do not surrender to God’s will, our worship will be no better than that of the Jewish leaders—form without substance. Let us not be deceived by our own religious practices, thinking that we can appease Jehovah with our rituals like the heathens appeased the wrath of their gods. Read 1 Samuel 16:7.

Ministry to Others (Isa. 58:1–10)

Worship is not a feeling. It is a daily abiding in God. Worship is not confined to the building where we meet on Sabbaths. It is the outward manifestation of a soul that is in touch with God. We display the blessings we receive from God by praising Him with our words and deeds. And our deeds should always include ministry to the needy. When we are in tune with Jehovah, we cannot help but ease the suffering of others.

Any act of worship that draws attention to the worshiper is not true worship. Our singing, praying, preaching, and a lifestyle of service should all point to God. Anything that is done to selfishly display our God-given talents and abilities is false worship.

Time for True Worship (Deut. 4:29; 1 Cor. 10:11)

Let us not make the mistake that ancient Israel made when they misunderstood the true nature of worship. We are God’s subjects—created, redeemed, and sustained by Him. This should move us to freely offer Him our sincere worship. If we do not worship Him from our hearts, then we are not truly worshiping Him. May we seek to have a close and consistent relationship with the Lord, so that our worship of Him will be true and not just empty words and deeds.

REACT

1. How can we tell whether our worship is sincere?
2. What are some signs that indicate our worship is becoming deceptive?

Bentley Chambers, St. Catherine, Jamaica, West Indies
"The long reign of Uzziah . . . was characterized by a prosperity greater than that of any other ruler since the death of Solomon, nearly two centuries before. . . .

"This outward prosperity, however, was not accompanied by a corresponding revival of spiritual power. The temple services were continued as in former years, and multitudes assembled to worship the living God; but pride and formality gradually took the place of humility and sincerity. . . .

"Pride and formality gradually took the place of humility and sincerity."

"The sin that resulted so disastrously to Uzziah was one of presumption. In violation of a plain command of Jehovah, that none but the descendants of Aaron should officiate as priests, the king entered the sanctuary ‘to burn incense upon the altar.’ Azariah the high priest and his associates remonstrated, and pleaded with him to turn from his purpose. ‘Thou hast trespassed,’ they urged; ‘neither shall it be for thine honor.’ . . .

"Uzziah was filled with wrath that he, the king, should be thus rebuked. But he was not permitted to profane the sanctuary against the united protest of those in authority. While standing there, in wrathful rebellion, he was suddenly smitten with a divine judgment. Leprosy appeared on his forehead. In dismay he fled, never again to enter the temple courts. Unto the day of his death, some years later, Uzziah remained a leper—a living example of the folly of departing from a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ "

"True faith, which relies wholly upon Christ, will be manifested by obedience to all the requirements of God. From Adam’s day to the present time the great controversy has been concerning obedience to God’s law. In all ages there have been those who claimed a right to the favor of God even while they were disregarding some of His commands. But the Scriptures declare that by works is ‘faith made perfect;’ and that, without the works of obedience, faith ‘is dead.’ "

**REACT**

What does the story of Uzziah teach us about the importance of not worshiping God in ways that are “profane”?

---

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 73.
Isaiah’s prophetic ministry began sometime between 750 and 739 B.C. He lived in an era of crisis, with Judah under the rulership of Azariah (Uzziah). Meanwhile, Assyria wanted to rule the world. Although Judah had grown strong, its material prosperity had brought spiritual decline.

How did Isaiah elevate his thoughts above the world so that he could be one of God’s true worshipers during that time? He was a strong yet normal young man just like any young person today. Yet he lived an active life as a prophet. Isaiah must have been a true worshiper, and his daily walk with God enabled him to build a Christlike character, which prepared him for his experience in the temple. Daily worship can help to impart God’s character to us.

Isaiah went to the temple to worship. (The Hebrew word for temple—hêkal—can be translated as “temple,” “palace,” or “great house.”) There, God revealed Himself to Isaiah in a vision. Isaiah saw God seated upon His throne, exalted and supreme. Profoundly interested in the affairs of earth, He was calling upon His people to repent. Bound by His own righteous character, He must judge those who persisted in their evil ways.

Isaiah saw his imperfections and nothingness in comparison with the “Holy One of Israel.” When the seraphim took the live coal from the altar and laid it on Isaiah’s mouth, Isaiah knew that he wanted to bear God’s message of warning and hope to Israel. He hoped that they, too, might catch a vision of God’s love and holiness and thereby be saved. “The coal from the altar represented the purifying and refining power of divine grace. It signified, as well, a transformation of character. Henceforth the one great desire of Isaiah for his people was that they too might experience the same work of cleansing and transformation.” The prophets saw worship as being obedient to God and fulfilling His will. Isaiah demonstrated this when he said, “‘Here am I! Send me!’” (Isa. 6:8, NKJV).

**REACT**

How does God reveal His glory to us in the twenty-first century?

2. Ibid., p. 127.
“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; / The whole earth is full of His glory!’ ” (Isa. 6:1–3, NKJV).

The heavenly sanctuary teaches us that putting our will above our Creator’s will (as was the case with Lucifer) prevents us from truly worshiping God. Worship that centers on the will of the creature rather than the Creator is a counterfeit worship that obscures the true way of worshiping God.

“The Pharisee and the publican [Luke 18:9–14] represent two great classes into which those whom come to worship God are divided. Their first two representatives are found in the first two children that were born into the world. Cain thought himself righteous, and he came to God with a thank offering only. He made no confession of sin, and acknowledged no need of mercy. But Abel came with the blood that pointed to the Lamb of God. He came as a sinner, confessing himself lost; his only hope was the unmerited love of God. The Lord had respect to his offering, but to Cain and his offering He had not respect. The sense of need, the recognition of our poverty and sin, is the very first condition of acceptance with God. ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ Matt. 5:3.”*

How can we express true worship?
1. The first act of true worship is to confess our sinfulness.
2. Then we must accept God as the only means by which our sins can be forgiven.
3. After that we can make Him the focal point of our worship.

REACT
1. How can you make sure that the worship you give to God is acceptable?
2. Examine your own approach to worship. Are you like Cain or like Abel? The Pharisee or the publican?

*Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 152.
As I contemplate what is happening in our churches today and look back at what happened during Isaiah’s time, I realize that we are making the same mistakes. We still believe that God should bless us just because we go to church. And I cannot even say because we worship, as most of us don’t even know who worship is about and why we do it. Let us not be like the prideful Cain. Rather let us be like Abel and come before God with reverence and humility. We must realize that worship is not based on what we prefer. Worship must be focused on God alone.

In order to truly worship God, we need to be acquainted with Him. This does not just involve knowing who He is. The scribes and Pharisees, Cain, and even Lucifer had that knowledge. We need to know God for ourselves. We need to experience what He can do for us as sinners. By applying His Word directly to our lives, we learn to understand Him. We draw closer to Him in study, by meditating on His Word, and by praying to Him. That is how we can experience His majesty and power and truly worship Him. That is how His character becomes embodied in us. Then, without knowing it, we will gradually become more like Him.

Worship is something that comes from the heart when we realize that God is our Creator, Redeemer, Judge, and Sustainer. We need to look at who we have become in contrast to who He is and who He wants us to be. Let us not allow the same sin that beset the Pharisee and Cain to destroy us. Let us study God’s Word for ourselves and not be deceived about what God really requires of us. Then we will not think that He is obligated to us, or that what we do most of the time is truly worshiping Him. Let us approach the mercy seat with a broken and a contrite heart (Ps. 51:17), willing to learn the ways of our Savior, willing to give ourselves totally to Him, and willing to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

**REACT**

1. Do you think that God accepts what you give to Him as worship? Why or why not?
2. Do you even know what it is that He requires of you, or are you just going along with the crowd?
CONCLUDE
It is so easy to fall into counterfeit worship. We have a natural tendency to value things other than our heavenly Father. It’s no wonder we can be easily swayed by false prophets and false ideas of acceptable worship. There is one way to ensure that our worship comes from the heart and that it is directed to the only One who deserves it. The starting point is His Word. As we spend time learning to know Him in humility and obedience, we will find ourselves engaged in true worship.

CONSIDER
- Interviewing people in your church with the question, What constitutes true worship?
- Role-playing the story of Cain and Abel using modern-day examples of acceptable and unacceptable worship.
- Paraphrasing Isaiah 8:20 to understand what the Bible considers essential in a true prophet. Evaluate what place God’s Word has in genuine worship.
- Diagramming your day. Divide your day into hour blocks and link your activities to the corresponding block throughout the day. Follow the trail to find out what you value most. Analyze what it says about your worship.
- Listening to five Christian songs. Ask yourself what your response is after each song: (1) I admire the musician’s skill and talent. (2) I’m caught up in the melody or beat. (3) I feel inspired and closer to God.
- Reflecting on what it is that you seek when you worship.
- Journaling about ways you can worship from the heart, every day, in all you do.

CONNECT

Sandra Araújo-Delgado, Apison, Tennessee, U.S.A.
“You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes” (Hag. 1:6, NKJV).
Nearly every faith has holy places or objects such as relics; many people believe that they can receive wealth, fertility, or healing just by visiting such a place or touching such a relic. Over time, people tend to forget the god or the event that the place or relic commemorates and remember only the imagined power of the place or the relic. Match the following locations with the faith to which they are important.

1. Bethlehem  a. Catholicism
2. Lourdes    b. Mormonism
3. Mecca      c. Old Testament Judaism
4. Salt Lake City  d. Christianity
5. the temple in Jerusalem  e. Islam
6. the Wailing Wall  f. modern Judaism
7. the Ganges River  g. Hinduism

Imagine the horror devout Jews felt when the temple was destroyed.

Even Seventh-day Adventists today are not immune to this phenomenon. Even many Adventist congregations promote trips to the Holy Land. This is not a bad thing as long as we remember to focus on the power of God rather than just on the wonder of being in the places where His power was manifested in such stunning ways.

The holy place for the Hebrews of old was the temple in Jerusalem. This was the place where God dwelled with His people. All observant Jews would try to be at the temple for the high holy days. In Matthew 24, the disciples even equated the destruction of the temple to the “end of the world.”

Imagine the horror devout Jews felt when the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, for to them, more than just the temple was destroyed. It seemed as if God had taken away His presence and protection. Many even questioned whether God was still in control.

What does this mean to Christians in 2011? What holy places do we have? What idols have we put in the place of God? How do we cling to God when these idols fall? This week we will explore these and other worship issues as we learn about worship from exile to restoration.
“Haggai was the first of the three postexilic Minor Prophets.” (The other two were Zechariah and Malachi.) Haggai may be considered as a link between the old and new temples in Jerusalem.¹

When Cyrus, king of the Persian Empire, conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., “he immediately instituted a policy of conciliation toward the religion of the conquered nation.”² He also allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. Thus it was that Zerubbabel led a small group back home and began to rebuild the temple. God used Cyrus as an instrument to fulfill the plan He had for His people. “ ‘Cyrus, “He is My shepherd, / And he shall perform all My pleasure, / Saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’ / And to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid’ ” ’ (Isa. 44:28, NKJV).

There is no such thing as security apart from God.³

The magnificence of the first temple and its impressive religious services had been a source of pride to Israel before their captivity, but their worship often had been lacking in those qualities that God regards as most essential. “The prophets Haggai and Zechariah were raised up to meet the crisis. In stirring testimonies these appointed messengers revealed to the people the cause of their troubles. The lack of temporal prosperity was the result of a neglect to put God’s interest first, the prophets declared. Had the Israelites honored God, had they shown Him due respect and courtesy, by making the building of His house their first work, they would have invited His presence and blessing.”³

There is no such thing as security apart from God and citizenship in His kingdom. The best cure for worry is to trust in Him. If we do our part faithfully, if we make the kingdom of heaven first in our thoughts and lives, God will take care of us on our walk through life. He will graciously anoint our heads with oil, and our cup of experience will overflow with good things (Ps. 23:5, 6).

**REACT**

1. What are some biblical principles that can help us to enjoy an abundant life?

2. Share with the class an experience in which you saw the hand of God blessing you as a result of following these principles.

---

1. The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1073.
2. Ibid.
3. Prophets and Kings, pp. 573, 574.
Longing for Home (Ps. 137:5, 6)

“If I forget you, O Jerusalem, / Let my right hand forget its skill! / If I do not remember you, / Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth— / If I do not exalt Jerusalem / Above my chief joy” (Ps. 137:5, 6, NKJV).

Psalm 137 captures the longing of the exiled Jews for their homeland. Despite the warnings delivered to them by Moses and other prophets, Israel turned their backs on God by forgetting His commands and by refusing to repent of their evil ways.

[God] had not brought them back so they could glorify themselves. He had brought them back to glorify Him.

However, when they did turn away, God sought to draw them back. But when they turned deaf ears to the warnings of His prophets, He allowed their enemies to capture their lands, destroy their cities, and scatter them throughout the nations.

The greatest blow to the Jewish nation came with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Shock and horror must have filled their souls when they witnessed Babylonian soldiers tearing down walls, setting everything ablaze. The temple, their house of worship, the Lord’s very dwelling, was ruined.

The Promise (Jer. 29:10–14)

But even in their despair and exile, God gave Israel hope. Through the prophet Jeremiah, He told them that although He was sending them into exile, He would not forget them.

After 70 years, they would repent of their ways. They would call on the Lord and He would answer. They would search for Him with their whole heart, and they would find Him. Then He would bring them back to Himself and to the land He had promised them. He would restore everything that was taken, and once again He would meet with them in the temple.

The Jewish people clung to this promise. On this promise, they hung all their hopes, and they looked forward to its fulfillment.

Begging for Restoration (Daniel 9)

Daniel knew that the time for the fulfillment of the prophecy was approaching. When he found the promise given to Jeremiah concerning the restoration of God’s people after the Exile, he confused it with the visions God had been giving him. He was greatly afraid that the Lord had decided
to extend the Exile of His people because of their sins. So Daniel poured out his soul in prayer. In this prayer, he confessed the sins of his nation and begged God not to forget His promise to His people.

The angel Gabriel came in answer to his prayer. He told Daniel that what had been revealed to him was for the end of time and not that time.

**Restoration (Nehemiah 1; 2; Haggai 1)**

When Nehemiah heard about the conditions in Judah, he wept for days. He cried to God to remember His people. He confessed the sins he and Israel had committed, and he pleaded with God to remember that He had promised to restore them.

At the end of his prayer, Nehemiah also requested of God that the king, to whom he was the cupbearer, would grant his request. And so it was. The king not only sent Nehemiah to Judah, he also gave Nehemiah the authority and the supplies he needed to rebuild Jerusalem.

One would think that, after returning to their homeland, the Israelites’ first business after restoring the walls of Jerusalem would have been to rebuild the temple. Instead, they focused their attention on rebuilding their own homes and planting their fields.

Thus, the Lord was forced to send a message to them through the prophet Haggai. What made them think that once God had fulfilled His promise that they could focus all their energies on their own plans? He had not brought them back so they could glorify themselves. He had brought them back to glorify Him. Until they restored the temple, all their other work would be in vain.

Zerubbabel and the people heeded the warning, turned from their ways, and restored the temple as the Lord commanded them.

**Worship: Heart or Stone? (Ezekiel 8; Zech. 1:1–6)**

Today, we have focused on the physical temple in Jerusalem and its importance to God and His people. But was it the temple God was really concerned about the most?

The Lord sent Israel into exile because they had turned from Him and were worshiping idols in the very courts of God’s house. The Lord was upset because they had put other gods in His place. In Zechariah 1:1–6, He told Israel to return to Him so He could return to them. It was because of their evil ways and refusing to repent that He had had to exile them.

The Lord’s concern was not so much where His people worshiped but how. The physical temple was not as important to God as the hearts of His chosen people.

**REACT**

1. What thoughts, behaviors, and plans are keeping you from worshiping God?

2. What do you need God to restore in your own heart so you can truly worship Him?

*Catherine Parris, Salem, West Virginia, U.S.A.*
When Christ went into the wilderness to be tempted, He was led by the Holy Spirit. Thus, He had the strength to overcome Satan.

“When Jesus entered the wilderness, He was shut in by the Father’s glory. Absorbed in communion with God, He was lifted above human weakness. But the glory departed, and He was left to battle with temptation. It was pressing upon Him every moment. His human nature shrank from the conflict that awaited Him. For forty days He fasted and prayed. Weak and emaciated from hunger, worn and haggard with mental agony, ‘His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.’ Isa. 52:14. Now was Satan’s opportunity. Now he supposed that he could overcome Christ.”1

Satan thought that surely under these rough conditions, he could successfully get Christ to worship him. But Christ’s response was, “‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’” (Matt. 4:10, NIV). Christ understood what it meant to worship, how to give allegiance to God in spite of circumstances. He knew that true worship enables one to draw from Scripture in order to rebuke Satan. Thus, even in the wilderness, He could model an example for us.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego also understood the reason for worship. “The three Hebrews were called upon to confess Christ in the face of the burning fiery furnace. They had been commanded by the king to fall down and worship the golden image which he had set up, and threatened that if they would not, they should be cast alive into the fiery furnace, but they answered, ‘We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up’ [Daniel 3:16–18].”2

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were called to demonstrate what it means to give honor and glory to God in spite of being in exile. We, too, can demonstrate a life of worship, so that others may see Christ in us and come to glorify His name.

1. The Desire of Ages, p. 118.
2. The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, May 3, 1892.
From mission defined to mission accomplished, there is one key word—how.

Most of us can readily say where we are. Few of us can say where we are going. Even fewer know how they are going to get there. It is no different when it comes to spiritual matters. Safely traveling any route calls for discipline and execution of a plan. The acronym ARRAY is here used to plot the route from exile to restoration.

We need to upgrade to life in the Spirit.

**Admit.** One of the greatest issues in traveling from exile to restoration is admitting the awful state we are in. We must note that the Bible encourages self-denial, not a state of denial. As Isaiah said of himself, “‘Woe to me!... I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips’ ” (Isa. 6:5, NIV), we, too, need to admit that we are sinners.

**Repent.** After admitting to ourselves our present condition, it behooves us to turn around and to feel remorse for our sins. Read David’s words of repentance in Psalm 51:1–4.

**Recognize our deficiencies.** This is where we, like Paul in Romans chapter 7, “bottom out” and come to terms with reality and the fraility of the flesh (see also Romans 8:12, 13). Too often we spend time furnishing the flesh and comparing who is the better “fleshy” Christian. But this doesn’t work, because there is no such Christian.

**Adjust your agenda.** After recognizing our sinfulness, Paul urges us to appeal for an adjustment. This adjustment comes in the form of a software upgrade. He is saying we are wired with infected software (the flesh), so let’s not spend any more time trying to fix it. Instead we need to upgrade to life in the Spirit (Rom. 8:1–14).

**Yeann for God.** In John 4, we have a masterpiece. Some simply refer to it as the woman at the well. Others call it the discourse at the well. Whatever you call it, be sure you notice the parallels between water and the body and worship and the Spirit.

If, as Christians, we are spiritually dehydrated, it is because we are still in exile. Let us therefore remember that “in him [Christ] we live, and move, and have our being” (Act 17:28). Once we understand that, we can truly worship.
We hear it all the time: “You need to look out for number one.” During the Exile, most of the Israelites looked out only for themselves. Of all the people taken to Babylon, it appears that only Daniel and his three friends really stood out as people of God. Only they asked for another diet than the one from the king’s table; and when the statue was erected on the Plain of Dura, only Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to kneel before it. It seems that most people spent their time saving their own lives and forgetting God.

The same thing seems to have happened when the command came to rebuild the temple. The people built their own houses and completely forgot the real reason for having returned to their land. God addresses their looking-out-for-number-one attitudes by saying that they were failing miserably because they had forgotten Him.

We live in a society that tells us to look out for number one, and most of us do just that, all the while ignoring or minimizing the time we spend thinking about the call of God in our lives. Perhaps the warning He gave to His people during Bible times is applicable to us as well. Maybe the reason we live such an existence isn’t that we’re just not smart enough or that we’re victims of a poor economy, but because we’ve forgotten that building up the house of God should be our first priority.

We also need to remember that God’s house is not just a building. It is also the hearts of people who love and follow Him. Maybe we could say it’s the Haggai equivalent of going into the mountains and getting wood. In our day it would mean spending more time going out of our way and looking for people to introduce to Christ. It would mean helping the poor, the sick, and the homeless. Then when we really have looked out for the real Number One, perhaps the other things also will fall into place. Doesn’t it say somewhere, “‘Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well’ ” (Matt. 6:33, NIV)? Perhaps most of the problems in our lives are due to our forgetting who is truly Number One.

**REACT**

1. What have you been doing to build up God’s house?
2. What things do you need to reprioritize so that you will once again be looking out for Number One?

Jonathan Merlin Burt, Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.
CONCLUDE
Whatever fate throws in our path—family tragedy or a dream house, an elegant place of worship or a bamboo cathedral—the focus of our life should be Jesus. God has someone to guide us through every situation toward our security and citizenship in His kingdom, which He promises. Acknowledging our sins, praying, and having faith in God engenders hope and confidence. Each of us is important to Him.

CONSIDER
- Doing research on the holy places of other religions, such as Mecca, the Wailing Wall, the Holy Land, and the Ganges River. How would you explain to a friend the contribution a visit to any of these places might make to (a) a person’s spiritual development and (b) a person’s desires?
- Memorizing Romans 4:23–25. Once you have, read Psalm 137:5, 6 and ask yourself, Why did the Israelites suffer in exile the way they did? How might we be in a similar situation?
- Explaining to a friend why or why not God is to blame for the following chain of events: Even though his God says, “’You shall not steal’” (Exod. 20:15, NKJV), the breadwinner of a family steals food, goes to prison, and loses his home. His children drop out of school, and his wife leaves him.
- Reflecting on the meaning of being sorry for something you’ve done and the relationship of being sorry to restoration. How many times do we say we’re sorry for the same thing? Apply the real meaning of being sorry to the Israelites’ experience. Ask a peer why it is easier for an individual to say he or she is sorry and move on than it is for a group of people. What should follow after we say we are sorry?
- Finding a way to explain to a non-Adventist friend that God does not leave us in darkness. He always provides us with a way out.
- Listing five points you would use to explain the importance of your Christianity to two religious friends: one who is not an Adventist Christian and the other who worships another god (an idol, money, and so on). Which of the two, if any, would God find it more difficult to work with? Why?
- Patiently put Matthew 6:33 to the test.

CONNECT

Albert A. C. Waite, Berkshire, United Kingdom
“‘But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him’” (John 4:23, NKJV).
Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in the world. Muslims worship Allah five times a day: just before sunrise, then at noon, midnoon, sunset, and evening. They begin these worships by washing their face, their hands up to their elbows, and their feet. They wear specific clothing, recite some verses from the Koran, and engage in ritual motions that include raising their arms above their head, saying, “God is great,” then bowing down on a mat until their foreheads touch the mat itself. After repeating this ritual with each prayer, they finish by kneeling while they recite personal prayers.

They do all this as they face toward the Kaabah, the Muslim holy temple in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Praying toward Mecca is such an important part of the ritual that if somebody does not do so, their worship is not valid and they have to start over again. Recently, there was a discussion among Muslims in Indonesia that their worship so far was not valid because the direction their mosque faced was moved slightly because of an earthquake. As of this writing, a team of experts is studying this problem and will make recommendations to the Department of Religion on how to fix it.¹

Islam is not the only religion in the world that requires its followers to pray in a certain direction. In Daniel 6:10, we found that Daniel was consistently praying three times a day by facing toward Jerusalem, even when threatened with the death penalty by being thrown into the lions’ den. The Jews and Samaritans had different places of worship—the Jews in Jerusalem and the Samaritans on a hill near Sychar (John 4:5, 20).

How do we worship our Lord? Jesus said that we have to worship our “Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23, 24).

We are worshiping our Lord Jesus Christ, not toward a certain direction, nor on a holy mountain or a sacred temple. Our worshiping must not be confined to a certain direction, external forms, or ceremonies. In order to worship our Lord correctly, we must be born of the Holy Spirit, who will purify and renew our hearts and minds. This will give us the capacity and willingness to love and obey our Lord’s requirements.²

¹. Sriwijaya Post, March 24, 2010 (in Indonesian).
². The Desire of Ages, p. 189.
Principles of Worship (Exod. 7:16; Deut. 11:1–16)

Ever since Adam and Eve sinned, God actively calls people to worship and serve Him. Worshiping a God in ways that befit His holiness differentiates His people from the rest of the world. After the Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years, after they had forgotten how to worship God, He called them out so they could once again be His people and worship Him anew (see Exodus 7:16). Moses worked diligently to reintroduce the Israelites to the one true God who alone is worthy to be worshiped. Through him, God lovingly retaught His people to worship Him. Read Deuteronomy 11:1–16. These verses teach us two important principles about worship: (1) “Love is the principle on which all worship and service to God are to be based. Love for God makes the carrying out of His requirements a joy.”1 (2) “An abundance of the things of this life . . . may lead the overconfident person to become faithless toward the great Giver of these gifts.”2

Mary, Jesus’ mother, gives us an excellent example of what it means to worship God “in spirit and in truth.”

Integrity and Faith (Daniel 3)

Hundreds of years later, we find God once again looking for a people who faithfully worshiped Him. The integrity and faith demonstrated by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when they refused to worship the glorious idol built by King Nebuchadnezzar serves as an example to each and every one of us. “Why didn’t these three men just bow to the image and tell God that they didn’t mean it? They had determined never to worship another god, and they courageously took their stand. As a result, they were condemned and led away to be executed. The men did not know whether they would be delivered from the fire; all they knew was they they would not fall down and worship an idol.”3


Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman teaches us that it is “not where, but how, one worships that counts,” that true worshipers are “those whose worship is of the heart, rather than worship consisting essentially of ritual forms conducted at some particular place.” To worship God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23) is to worship Him sincerely, “with the highest faculties of the mind and emotions, applying the principles of truth to the heart.”4
The prophet Micah also teaches us a great deal about worshiping “in spirit and in truth.” In chapter 6, verses 6 and 7, he wonders what he should sacrifice to God. He asks if God will be pleased with thousands of rams, rivers of oil, or his firstborn. But then in verse 8 he says that what God really requires of us is to “do justly, / To love mercy, / And to walk humbly with your God” (NKJV). Being just, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God are also principles of worship done “in spirit and in truth.”

And so we learn that the grandeur of a church building and the expensive equipment inside of it are insufficient to produce a congregation who worship in a spiritual and truthful manner. When our bodies are temples in which the Holy Spirit dwells (Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 3:16), these principles will enable us to worship God as He desires.


Mary, Jesus’ mother, gives us an excellent example of what it means to worship God “in spirit and in truth.” In Luke 1:46–48, we witness her joy at having been chosen by God. Also notice her humility when she references her humble state in verse 48. Here she also refers to herself as God’s servant. In verses 49 and 50, she recognizes God’s power, holiness, and mercy. She continues in the next three verses by drawing contrasts between what humans value and what God values. Verses 54 and 55 close Mary’s “song” “on a note of gratitude for the eternal faithfulness of God to His chosen people.” Joy. Humility. Recognition of God’s character and values. Gratitude. All these help us to truly worship God from the heart—“in spirit and in truth.”

REACT

2. Like Mary, consider your own life and what God has done for you. How will recognizing God’s role in your life help you to better worship “in spirit and in truth”?
3. What other principles of worship can you think of that help us to worship with the right spirit?
4. Does today’s lesson teach that we really don’t ever need to go to a church building to worship? Explain your answer.
5. With today’s lesson in mind, what types of churches should we build, and how should we maintain them? How do the principles of true worship help you to answer this question?

2. Ibid., p. 991.
5. Ibid., p. 686.

Victor Joe Sinaga, Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia
“God calls for sincere heart-worship. The door to light and an intelligent knowledge of the truth is open to every sincere worker for God. In order for worship to be acceptable, it must be offered in faith and hope, and the life must be in harmony with it. God requires the devotion of heart, mind, soul, and strength. Our noblest powers are to be used to do Him homage. Our thoughts are to be conformed to His will; our affections sanctified to His service.”1

“Many who listened to the teachings of Christ said, ‘Never man spake like this man.’ But his words, that comforted, strengthened, and blessed the needy, that were as bread to the hungering soul, were as bitterness to the scribes and Pharisees. In answer to the statement of the woman at Samaria that her father had worshiped in this mountain, but the Jews said that Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship, Christ had said: . . . ‘Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.’”2

“Our meetings . . . should be pervaded with the very atmosphere of heaven. Let there be no long, dry speeches and formal prayers merely for the sake of occupying the time. All should be ready to act their part with promptness, and when their duty is done, the meeting should be closed. Thus the interest will be kept up to the last. This is offering to God acceptable worship. His service should be made interesting and attractive and not be allowed to degenerate into a dry form. We must live for Christ minute by minute, hour by hour, and day by day; then Christ will dwell in us, and when we meet together, His love will be in our hearts, welling up like a spring in the desert, refreshing all, and making those who are ready to perish, eager to drink of the waters of life.”3

2. Sabbath School Worker, December 1, 1894.
3. Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 609.

Maria Soeharto-Manalu, Jakarta, Indonesia
So far this week, we have studied various principles that help God’s people to worship Him “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23). How did these principles play out in Samson’s life? At first, we read that he “grew, and the Lord blessed him” (Judg. 13:24, NKJV). This reminds us of the verse about Jesus in Luke 2:52, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature” (NKJV).

At least three times in Samson’s story we read that the Spirit of the Lord helped him do great things—Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14, 15. And at the end of his life, God answered his last prayer (16:28–30).

Unfortunately, Samson became filled with such great pride in his abilities and strength that he failed to depend on God and the principles of establishing a successful relationship with Him. Thus he forgot that his strength and success were gifts from God and not things to be proud of in his own right. The following quotation explains Samson’s situation as it relates to us today. “God’s providential care had been over Samson, that he might be prepared to accomplish the work which he was called to do. At the very outset of life he was surrounded with favorable conditions for physical strength, intellectual vigor, and moral purity. But under the influence of wicked associates he let go of that hold upon God which is man’s only safeguard, and he was swept away by the tide of evil. Those who in the way of duty are brought into trial may be sure that God will preserve them; but if men willfully place themselves under the power of temptation, they will fall, sooner or later.”

Samson’s life is evidence that pride in our own accomplishments and falling prey to temptation make it impossible for us to worship God “in spirit and in truth.” “God has a plan for every life. Yet such a plan does not preclude free choice. Men must still choose as to whether they will follow the divine blueprint or not. Samson’s experience is an illustration of how a man may completely thwart the high destiny planned for him.”

**REACT**

Why does God give us freedom of choice?

---

1. Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 568.
This week we are studying how to worship our Lord Jesus Christ from a heart full of love for Him. The place of worship had been a subject of contention between the Jews and the Samaritans for a long time. In answer to the Samaritan woman, Jesus said, “‘Believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on the mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father’” (John 4:21, NKJV). He wanted to teach her that it is not necessarily the place or external ceremonies that bring people into communion with God, but rather worship that is given in love for God. To learn how we can worship this way, let us consider the life of Christ.

**Prepare your heart.** Jesus set an excellent example for us by getting up early and praying alone in a quiet place (Mark 1:35). True worship occurs when we prepare our hearts for worship through prayer. Ask for the Holy Spirit to purify your heart, renew your mind, and give you a capacity for knowing and loving God.

**Maintain a worshipful atmosphere.** When Jesus saw the outer court of His temple converted into a place of commerce, He said, “‘Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!’” (John 2:16, NKJV). When our hearts are free from earthly desires, selfish lusts, and anything else that corrupts the soul, we can worship God out of our love for Him. Cultivate a deep awareness of Him and do not allow the things of this world to consume your life. Take time to listen to God. Be silent before Him, so you can hear Him speak to you (Hab. 2:20).

**Make God the sole object of your worship.** In answer to Satan’s temptation, Jesus said, “‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve” ’” (Matt. 4:9, 10, NKJV). Nothing else or no one else other than God should be the object of our worship.

**Breathe deeply of God’s love.** In order to live, we must breathe deeply and continually. Likewise, if we want to worship God from a heart full of love for Him, we must continually live in the atmosphere of His love and grace and study His Word. Read John 15.

**REACT**

On which of these four points do you need to concentrate the most? Vow to do so now, and ask God to help you with your efforts.

Yonata Bastian, Seoul, South Korea
One Sabbath morning, our family devotion was about worship. We discussed how true worship is a learned art, how it is an attitude of the heart that continually acknowledges God and values His character. True worship gives us a new perspective as it takes us out of the realm of sin’s oppression by placing us in the realm of God’s power, wisdom, and love—the realm of eternal truth.¹

Worship is a time to focus completely on our Creator.

Worship is a time for us to focus completely on our Creator, Redeemer, and Shepherd, and to celebrate what He has done for us. Therefore, when we worship, we remember that He created us and redeemed us from sin. Worship also helps us to remember that He continually guides us along our way to heaven. It helps us to be thankful for His remarkable works in our lives. Worship is not about us, it is about God and God alone. The truth as revealed in the Bible leads us to worship God according to His will rather than according to our will.

God’s goodness and grace should motivate us to freely express our love and allegiance to Him. This may mean that those who are more reserved might want to be less reserved in their worship practices, while those who are overly expressive might want to be a bit more reserved so they hear what He has to say to them. Those who are so expressive that they miss the beauty of silence may need to learn from those whose style is more reflective.²

REACT

1. Why should Christians not neglect worshiping God?
2. Why should we focus on God—not ourselves—while we worship?
3. How has God worked for you in remarkable ways? Take time to praise Him for these times when He guided you.
4. What new perspectives about God has worship given you? How did these new perspectives improve your life and your relationship with Him?

CONCLUDE
Glorifying God through worship should be a contemplative act for each Christian. Our worship must be truthful and in the right spirit. Worship is not about our wants, but rather it is about recognizing and proclaiming God’s glory and honor. Our earthly worship should not become routine, dry, or boring. Because we are worshiping the God of the entire universe, our worship should come from the heart. Its focus should be God, not ourselves. By allowing the Holy Spirit access to our lives every day, we are able to come before God on Sabbath and worship in spirit and truth. We bring our offerings, recognize His splendor, and rejoice that He is our God.

CONSIDER
• Choreographing worshipful movements or using American Sign Language to accompany the hymn “How Great Thou Art,” The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, no. 86 or “All Glory, Laud, and Honor,” The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, no. 230.
• Sculpting a worship scene that reflects both earthly and heavenly worship.
• Collecting a variety of quotes and Bible verses about worship. Choose a suitable way to share them with friends. Ideas might include creating a collage, making bookmarks, or designing a blog about worship.
• Comparing worship services from three different time periods and noting what elements of worship are most meaningful to you (for example, the Israelites worshiping in the sanctuary in the wilderness; a camp meeting service in the 1850s; and a present-day church service).
• Painting a picture of how you will worship God in heaven.
• Brainstorming with several friends about how to create meaningful worship experiences in your daily lives.
• Consciously praying five times a day and observing how it affects your daily life.

CONNECT
Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 528.

Deena Bartel-Wagner, Spencerport, New York, U.S.A.
Worship in the Early Church

“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1, NRSV).
In a commentary I read two years ago, I was shocked to learn that the hottest books on the *New York Times* bestseller list were based on the theme that religion is a major source of evil in the world.

Consequently, convinced in my heart that God exists and that He is the Creator of all, I wondered how a sane person, created in the image of God, could sit down, plan, and work out a book that propagates atheism and vilifies religion. The emergence of atheism in the present era justifies the ongoing battle between good and evil, also known as the great controversy.

Radio, television, literature, the Internet—everywhere we look we see evidence that God is under fire.

Radio, television, literature, the Internet—everywhere we look we see evidence that God is under fire. Even in some parts of the world, some of the very buildings that were previously consecrated for the adoration of the Almighty Father are either empty or have become cinemas, theaters, cybercafes, or nightclubs.

As Christians, however, we know that despite this assault on religion, Christ is still the answer for the world today. That is why we must maintain our faith and give Him the adoration He deserves. The big issues we struggle with today are just parts of our proficiency test. As the authors of atheistic books profit from the sale of their titles, we cannot lose sight of the enormous good that religion has done in the areas of generosity, self-sacrifice, and love for humankind.

This week we will study worship in the apostolic age. By the end of our study, we will have discussed the challenges the apostles faced in their struggle to teach the gospel to a variety of audiences. Because the good news message is eternal from its inception, we will learn how we can adapt the worship styles of the apostles to our own situations.
During the apostolic age, the apostles crisscrossed the Middle East while spreading the gospel of Christ amid heavy opposition from the Jews. Today, we need to step back and ask ourselves, How can a person be a Christian today in places such as Pakistan, where conversion to Christianity means that you could possibly die for your faith?

Worship in the apostolic church was centered on the power of the Holy Spirit, who sent the apostles in all the right directions. In some circumstances, the apostles were seized and thrown into prison cells. However, because of their firm faith and solidarity with other brothers and sisters in Christ, God worked miracles through them so that the gospel could flourish.

When we hear that Christian families are praying on the sites of their bulldozed churches in Pakistan, and that they are being socially stigmatized for their faith as well as for being poor, then it becomes apparent that obstacles to worship still persist. However, just as the apostles carried on despite jailing, beatings, and riots so do these people.

As we conduct worship today, we should emulate the examples of Paul and his colleagues in ministry, who stood firm in their faith amid daunting odds. In some circumstances, the price of our faithful worship may be death. However, as Christians, we are looking forward to life eternal. This is the hope we have in worship, that we serve Christ who is an inexhaustible Fountain of living water. In short, the success of the apostles as they carried the gospel to each city they entered convincingly demonstrates the power of God’s saving grace. Just as it did for the citizens of these cities, the good news still has the ability to transform people today.

**REACT**

1. What are the challenges you meet in worship as an individual? How can you overcome these challenges?

2. How is the gospel of Christ perceived in your community? In what ways can you help strengthen Christian solidarity across any divide that might exist?
Mustard Seed Growth (Acts 1:1–11; 2:14–41)

After Christ’s ascension, the disciples braced themselves to face the world without the physical presence of their Leader. Doing so was not going to be easy for them, based on the strong opposition they experienced even when Christ was with them. We can imagine how feeble they must have felt.

However, for the 40 days Christ stayed with them before His ascension, He instructed them regarding how they should conduct their ministry. He promised that He would send them the Holy Spirit, who would help them in every circumstance. “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Act 1:8, NKJV).

The effect of this power was evident, when on one occasion over which Peter presided, about 3,000 people were baptized. Still, it wouldn’t be long before the Sanhedrin would put Peter and John in jail (Acts 4:1–22).

Curious Philosophers (Acts 17:15–34)

In his missionary ventures, Paul targeted the trade towns, capital cities, and Roman colonies. With their cosmopolitan settings, he knew that from these places the gospel message would be carried across the globe.

In Athens, Paul met with the Greek philosophers, who were curious to know more about what he was preaching. Paul’s information concerning the resurrection was received with mixed reactions. Some of the Greek philosophers snubbed it, while others wanted to know more about the subject. In the end, new churches were planted, and congregations began to swell around the eastern Mediterranean.

Challenges in Corinth (Acts 18:1–16)

Corinth was the leading city of Greece. It was a wealthy city known for ship building, architecture, textiles, and ceramics. Unlike Athens, where many people seemed ready to discuss religion with Paul, Corinth was a difficult place in which to plant a Christian congregation. According to Acts 18:6, Paul faced severe opposition from the Jews, and he was forced to give the people up to their own ways. However, in verses 9 and 10, we...
read that the Lord came to Paul in a vision, assuring him of protection and telling him not to be afraid.

Paul’s experience in Corinth teaches us much about ministering under severe opposition. Life in big cities today is not all that different, and this makes Paul’s instructions important to us. If we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us, we shall accomplish the tasks before us “‘not by might nor by power, / but by My Spirit,’” (Zech. 4:6, NKJV).

“The task confronting the messenger of the gospel in the ancient city of Corinth is well set forth in these words: ‘If the Gospel could triumph in Corinth, it can win under any circumstances.’”

Love in Worship (1 Corinthians 13)

Paul affirms that there can be no greater pursuit in the Christian life than seeking to have the love of God find hands, feet, and voice through us. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul invites us to participate in sharing God’s unconditional love not only with the world around us but with the world abroad. We can see how the chapter progresses as it presents the various components of godly love. Verses 1–3 compare love to spiritual gifts, emphasizing that any spiritual gift without love is valueless.

Verses 4–7 describe the workings of godly love, what it does, and what it doesn’t do. Finally, verses 8–13 compare and contrast the temporary nature of other spiritual gifts and the permanence of unconditional love. Paul knew that this kind of love was crucial to his ministry among pagans. In his ventures in the cities of Athens, Corinth, Berea, and elsewhere, he demonstrated obvious love for the believers, which in some cases prompted him to stay with them for as long as three years.

In our ministries today, with our joyous belief in Christ’s second coming, and in our confidence in God’s keeping power, if we lack godly love, we will not reap a harvest. The love described in 1 Corinthians 13 is not theory. Such love is to be applied to the very real situations in our lives today.

REACT

1. Consider your local church. Which aspects of true worship are lacking? What can be done to bring these elements into your congregation?
2. The Holy Spirit played a key role in worship during the apostolic age. How do you see the Holy Spirit working in your church and community?
3. How can we apply Paul’s demonstration of love in our worship?

*Seline Khavetsa, Nairobi, Kenya*
“Shall we not remember this? If the love of God is in our hearts, we shall not think evil, we shall not be easily disturbed, we shall not give loose reign to passion; but we shall show that we are yoked up with Christ, and that the restraining power of his spirit leads us to speak words that he can approve.”

“Critical words and unkind actions are offensive to God.”

“Love’s agencies have wonderful power, for they are divine. The soft answer that ‘turneth away wrath,’ the love that ‘suffereth long, and is kind,’ the charity that ‘covereth a multitude of sins’—would we learn the lesson, with what power for healing would our lives be gifted! How life would be transformed and the earth become a very likeness and of heaven!”

It is evident from the work of the apostles that love should be a key instrument in evangelism and in worship. “In every one Christ’s long-suffering love, His holiness, meekness, mercy, and truth are to be manifested in the world.

“The first disciples went forth preaching the word. They revealed Christ in their lives. . . . These disciples prepared themselves for their work. Before the day of Pentecost they met together, and put away all differences. They were of one accord.”

The solidarity and love among the apostles should form the basis of our ministry and worship today. Bearing in mind that we are pilgrims in this life, we should manifest Christ’s traits of love, starting with our own households. “In many of our homes, there is a hard, combative spirit manifested. Critical words and unkind actions are offensive to God. Dictatorial commands and haughty, overbearing manners are not acceptable to Heaven. . . . The love of Christ must control our hearts, and the peace of God will abide in our homes. Seek God with a broken and contrite spirit, and you will be melted with compassion toward your brethren. You will be prepared to add brotherly kindness, charity, or love. Without charity we will become ‘as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.’ Our highest professions are hollow and insincere; but ‘love is the fulfilling law.’”

3. The Desire of Ages, p. 827.
All of Paul’s letters emphasize godly love. As a crusader for the gospel in the early church, Paul knew that the way we use our spiritual gifts in public must conform to the great law of love as seen in the cross of Calvary. With our sinful nature, however, we sometimes fail to understand and live out this love as we should.

In today’s world, human love proves to be very fickle indeed.

As pilgrims, we are bound for eternal life in God’s presence, where every cloud will pass away in the fullness of divine love. How then can we apply this love in our earthly lives as followers of Christ? How can we reach people for Christ in today’s society where many either have no religion at all or they worship gods other than the one true God? The tips below may be helpful:

Start from within. Is your home a loving place? If it is, then it will be easier to show love to others when we are in public. It is the power of that Christlike love visible in us that will draw others to Christ.

Make your love permanent. As Paul says, spiritual gifts may pass away, but godly love does not. In today’s world, human love proves to be very fickle indeed. Not only that, it is shallow. We “love” clothes. We “love” the latest technological gadget. But clothes wear out. And the latest gadget is discarded as soon as a new one comes on the market. Just as God’s love is permanent, so our love for others should be. “The attribute that Christ appreciates most in man is charity [love] out of a pure heart. This is the fruit borne upon the Christian tree.”

Don’t be rude. One of the important aspects of godly love is that it is not rude. In spreading the gospel, we should act out of love rather than reacting to the rudeness of the society in which we exist. It was their politeness that helped the apostles to deal lovingly with difficult communities.

**How-to**

The Fullness of Divine Love

Mark 5:25–32; 9:17–24; John 1:1–4; 1 Cor. 15:57

**In today’s world, human love proves to be very fickle indeed.**
Reading the story of Fiona Peart and her mission work in Japan left me a changed person. She recounts, “I promised God that I would do what He asked me to do, go where He sent me, and say what He told me to say.”* This is the same attitude the apostles had. We cannot be effective in our evangelism and worship if we do not strive for a similar spirit.

You and I are ambassadors for Christ in this generation.

Our success in worship also depends on our willingness to recognize the styles of worship the apostles used to steer the early congregations. This brings to mind the practicality of sharing the truth as seen in Christ Himself. It is this love for the Savior that binds us together to reach a common goal. Just as the apostles shared the gospel with their world, just as Fiona Peart was committed to going wherever God led her, I also look forward to extending the gospel of Christ to minds and hearts it has not reached. The apostles passed the torch to us. Now it’s our turn to evangelize the world near and far. Just like the days of Paul and his colleagues in ministry, there are still souls who are hungry for God and waiting to receive His gospel.

The apostles presented the truth to all types of people in equal measure. As we studied this week, we can see how worship, if conducted through the love of God, can work wonders for the salvation of all.

Today, our goal is to ensure that we conduct worship in the spirit of the Pentecost when the apostles received the Holy Spirit’s power to take the gospel to the world. You and I are ambassadors for Christ in this generation. Whatever we do must conform to the intentions of God. That is my goal. What about the goals you have?

**REACT**

1. How are you currently involved in active worship? What makes such worship successful?
2. Explain the connection between successful worship and successful evangelism.
3. What are some of the steps you can take as an individual to evangelize the world around you and the world afar? What can your congregation do?
4. How should you react if God answers contrary to your expectations regarding worship and evangelism?

---


*Opinion*

Success in Worship

John 4:24

Andy Mwanzia, Machakos, Kenya
Exploration
Kindred Spirits Awash in the Love of Christ

1 Cor. 13:1

CONCLUDE
Worship in the time of the apostles, those firsthand witnesses to the love and grace of Jesus, was centered on the power of the Holy Spirit. Those Spirit-led Christians faced receptive and skeptical audiences, hardships, and prison. Yet they stood firm in their faith, supported not just by God but also by their brothers and sisters in Christ. They were empowered not only by their time with Christ during His earthly ministry but also by the 40 days He spent with them after His resurrection. They performed miracles, not by might nor by power, but by the Holy Spirit. The driving force was love, as it is to be with us today.

CONSIDER
- Analyzing a worship service familiar to you and considering how each element can be considered an expression of love for God.
- Designing a poster or PowerPoint presentation that draws attention to how love undergirds each element of the worship service in your church.
- Thinking about a time when you were feeling particularly low, yet you chose to participate in your local worship service. What about that service uplifted you?
- Recalling a time when someone in church said or did something to you that was unloving. What was your reaction? Did it affect your worship experience? What, if anything, transpired over time that led to a less hostile interaction between you both?
- Writing a poem or composing a song that has as its theme the power of the Spirit leading Christians to do extraordinary things for God.
- Observing in nature instances where God’s love is seen. Collaborate with your peers to take some of these lessons and incorporate them into the worship service, perhaps as a series of children’s stories.
- Comparing the experience of worship in the early Christian church to that of the early days of the Advent movement, the early days of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the church today.

CONNECT
Worship in the Book of Revelation

“And they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who have been redeemed from the earth” (Rev. 14:3, NRSV).
Introduction

Revelation: The Foundation of Worship

The Old Testament offers insight into the history of the world. It demonstrates the dissonance of sin—the pain of turning away from God’s way. It also reveals the remarkable patience of our Creator and His plan for human-kind’s salvation.

The Gospels present facets of our Savior Jesus Christ, God come to earth. The ultimate sacrifice is made on behalf of His beloved creation. Redeemer God revealed.

[Revelation] has a greater part in our worship than you might think.

Revelation turns our eyes to the future. God triumphs! Sin is banished. God restores order and, finally, life can proceed as He had intended when He created the earth. Because of its message of hope, the book of Revelation should be the foundation of our worship.

Does it strike you, however, that Revelation is the last place to start worship planning? Actually, it has a greater part in our worship than you might think. In the “Scriptural Allusions in Hymns” in The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, there are approximately 245 stanzas and refrains that refer to Revelation. Twenty-two of them draw from Revelation’s very first chapter. The “Scriptural Index of Worship Aids” includes 13 entries based in Revelation. Consider how worship increases in power when we realize that the words are based on chapters in Revelation. The following are just a few examples:

Hymn no. 7, “The Lord in Zion Reigneth,” stanza 1—Revelation 19:6, 7. “Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: ‘Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready’ ” (NIV).

Hymn nos. 190 and 462, “Jesus Loves Me,” stanza 2 and “Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine!” stanza 1—Revelation 1:5. “Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood” (NIV).

Responsive Reading no. 736, “The Glorified Christ”—Revelation 1:17, 18. “‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades’ ” (NIV).
Many people see the book of Revelation as ominous and filled with coded, symbolic predictions of wars and persecution, but certainly not as a source for praise and joyful worship. Biblical scholar David Aune reminds us that it was first read aloud to Christians gathered for worship “in a communal setting.” If you have a Bible that displays the poetry of Revelation in a way other than prose, you will see that it contains at least 20 passages that were probably sung as hymns. And Revelation has much to say about worship.

“This is not fanciful language about invisible, spiritual forces.”

“The liturgical format of the book builds on hymns and prayers that are punctuated by doxologies, alleluias, and amens,” points out Adventist theologian Charles Teel. “The apocalyptic language of the liturgy hurls hearers through space and time as they journey into heavenly and earthly and subterranean spheres, while piecing together fragments of mankind’s cosmic story. Divine and demonic symbols of this great controversy flash larger than life on the screen of universal history. Beasts rampage and nations give obedience. Harlots seduce and populations succumb. Winds blow and the earth shakes. Bowls are poured out and history screams. Woes are flung against space and the universe is hushed. And through it all the vast multitude shouts, Alleluia!”

Teel has organized worship services with university students in which the congregation reads some of the passages in Revelation as responsive readings interspersed with the singing of such hymns such as “The Church Has One Foundation,” “For All the Saints,” and “Worthy, Worthy Is the Lamb.” Such services give one a real sense of the liturgical power of Revelation, and hearing the texts like this opens them up in a way that reading alone cannot.

Celebrating Victory in Jesus (Rev. 19:1–5)

Some people are appalled at all the violence and warfare in Revelation. They ask, “How can the Prince of Peace be pictured with a sword, leading a vast army, burying large numbers of people alive and causing blood to flow up to the horse’s bridle?” Remember, however, that an army can be seen from two perspectives. To the guilty it appears to be terrible, but to the victims of the guilty—the oppressed and the persecuted—it appears
to be a band of rescuers. Do you perceive the army of Christ in Revelation from the view of the oppressed or of the oppressors?

Christians “are implored to honor the Lord of history who conquered the ostentatious wealth and persecuting power of secular culture,” Teel summarizes. “As brutal persecution by the Babylonian beast threatens the body, and subtle cultural and economic seduction by the imperial harlot threatens the soul . . . remnant communities are exhorted to stand against false religion and political systems.” This is not fanciful language about invisible, spiritual forces. “The Babylonian beasts, imperial harlots, and demonic dragons are real. Very real. The forms of these false systems change, of course, but they stalk the faithful of every age. Yet the shout of Alleluia is also real. It proclaims that ultimate reality lies rather with the New Jerusalem than with Babylon.”

The Bottom Line of the Gospel Story (Revelation 21)

In Revelation 21, we come to the end of the story. What is the Bible all about? It is about a God who says that after He has given His life for this planet, after He’s won the war with evil, after He’s reestablished what He wanted in the first place, we will live with God and be His family in a world where there is no more suffering, no more injustice or disease, no more death or despair. The New Jerusalem is a community that is entirely inclusive. It is the home of every tribe and people. It is without poverty for the streets paved in gold; and all the lights and jewels suggest a technological marvel beyond imagination.

“Immortal minds will contemplate with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. . . . Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquisition of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body.”

Revelation teaches Adventists that the focus of their worship should always include a strong sense of hope—tangible, tastable, touchable hope. The message of Revelation is a message of hope. It is God saying, “No matter how discouraging things get, I will overcome!” Christ is victor! His new earth will come to fruition. No truly authentic Adventist worship service—no sermon, no prayer, no song—should be without this sense of hope—the hope revealed through the plan of salvation and once again at the ultimate end of the great, long arch of Christ’s war with evil.

3. Ibid.

Monte Sahlin, Springboro, Ohio, U.S.A.
“Let us follow Jesus as He so meekly rode into Jerusalem, when ‘the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, . . . saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.’”

“Such a glorious hope, such a redemption that Christ has purchased for us by his own blood, shall we hold our peace? Shall we not praise God, even with a loud voice, as did the disciples when Jesus rode into Jerusalem? Is not our prospect far more glorious than theirs was?”

“From the rise and fall of nations as made plain in the books of Daniel and the Revelation, we need to learn how worthless is mere outward and worldly glory.”

“The fifth chapter of Revelation needs to be closely studied. It is of great importance to those who shall act a part in the work of God for these last days.”

“In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear.”

“Many will make the words of the Revelation a spiritualistic mystery, robbing them of their solemn import. God declares that his judgments shall fall with increased dreadfulness upon any one who shall try to change the solemn words written in this book—the Revelation of Jesus Christ.”

**REACT**

How can we refresh worship so that it includes more celebratory elements, and what would they sound like and/or look like?

---


Santhosh Jackson, Laurel, Maryland, U.S.A.
The final book of the Bible presents the bottom line of the gospel. It tells us who Jesus is. In Revelation 1:8, Jesus tells us that He has always been. “I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End” (NKJV). Therefore, there has never been a time when He wasn’t worshiped. Evidence of His infinite existence can be found also in Isaiah 9:6, where He is called the “Everlasting Father” (Isa. 9:6, NKJV). Everlasting means “eternal, endless, ceaseless, or undying.” We worship Him because He is everlasting.

**The gospel of Jesus, of who He really is, permeates Revelation.**

This same verse in Isaiah tells us that Jesus is the “Mighty God” (NKJV). John refers to Him as the Word and goes on to say the “Word was God” (John 1:1, NKJV). The word God in this verse is theos in Greek, meaning “a deity or the supreme Divinity.” We worship Him because He is God.

In John 1:3, we find that “all things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (NKJV). Jesus, the Everlasting Father, the Mighty God, created all things. We worship Him because He is the Creator.

Revelation 1:18 says that Jesus is the One “who lives, and was dead,” and who is “alive forevermore” (NKJV). He demonstrated His love for us because, “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him” (Rom. 6:8, NKJV). We worship Him because He is our Redeemer.

The gospel of Jesus, of who He really is, permeates Revelation. Here we find that Jesus is the subject of worship. He is the God of Revelation. He is Everlasting, Almighty, Creator, and Redeemer. He is the One Revelation 14:7 speaks of when it says, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (NKJV). Jesus should be the focus of our worship. Let us fear Him, give glory to Him, and worship Him!

**REACT**

How do we know that Revelation 14:7 is speaking about Jesus? (See also John 5:22.)

---

There are some incredible anthems that deeply stir our souls. Liturgy and moving words can move us to our knees before the Creator of the universe. Some venues can transform our worship. But sometimes we lose sight of the personal aspect of worship. This perspective makes the difference in whether we are engaged in worship or whether we are merely observers.

God is the focus of worship, not you.

The books of Job and Revelation have similar redemptive themes. In Job 42:1–6, Job begs God to forgive him because he doubted God’s power. Job thought he understood everything, but then he had to admit that while he heard the words, he missed the real meaning. He had put himself in God’s place by second-guessing the Creator. What arrogance for the created to think he could understand the Creator. Job had read the words, but he hadn’t comprehended them. When he did, he was appalled by his audacity.

After reading these verses in the New International Version, you can picture the setting as a courtroom. Imagine looking up into the face of a stern judge towering above you.

“Then Job replied to the Lord:
   “I know that you can do all things; / no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, “Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?”
   “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, / things too wonderful for me to know.
   “You said, “Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, / and you shall answer me.”
   “‘My ears had heard of you, / but now my eyes have seen you. / Therefore I despise myself / and repent in dust and ashes’ ” (emphasis added).

Based on Job’s words, the following steps might lead to a deeper worship experience:

Lose the “me” attitude. God is the focus of worship, not you. Adopt the prayer “Humble me, O Lord.”

Read Revelation again. Focus on what it says about God. The prophecies are not the main event. Rather they point to the main event—Christ’s second coming. Seek a new perspective on the elements of worship such as prayer and praising God with other believers.

Examine the words you use to describe God. Explore the concept of majesty. Define the power of God in terms that resonate with you. Ask what the book of Revelation can teach you about awe.
The largest Christian gathering that I’ve ever heard singing together was at a General Conference session one Sabbath. It was amazing to hear thousands of voices lifted together in praise to God. I intellectually understand that we have millions of members around the world, but my heart was lifted when thousands of those believers raised their voices together. Revelation 19:6 comes alive in that setting, “Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder” (NIV).

Revelation 21:4 has faces and names now.

The following anthem is just one that has soared through a huge, packed stadium, electrifying those present:

We have this hope that burns within our hearts, / Hope in the coming of the Lord.
We have this faith that Christ alone imparts, / Faith in the promise of the His Word.
We believe the time is here, When the nations far and near Shall awake, and shout and sing Hallelujah! Christ is King!
We have this hope that burns within our hearts, / Hope in the coming of the Lord.*

I thought I understood these words. Certainly I could define them and rejoice at the sound of thousands of people loudly proclaiming this hope. But I didn’t emotionally grasp them until the death of my 12-year-old cousin, Mark, and, three years later, in January 2010, the death of his 13-year-old brother, James. They suffered from a neurological condition called Batten disease, which occurs when parents share the same recessive gene.

After watching their health deteriorate and after witnessing the anguish of family and friends, hope took on new meaning. Revelation 21:4 has faces and names now. “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away” (NIV).

I can now “see” and “hear” songs of hope and praise rebounding across the heavens in a way that I never before could. Hope now has a whole new meaning, and I can hardly wait for the new earth! I rejoice that the Creator God has triumphed and will triumph. He is indeed worthy of unceasing praise and worship.

* “We Have This Hope,” The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, no. 214.
CONCLUDE

CONSIDER
• Drawing a picture of Christ as described in Revelation 1:10–16. Using a concordance, find verses that explain the symbolism and label what each part of the description tells us about Him.
• Finding one or more hymns that draw themes from the book of Revelation and meditating on the words.
• Contemplating what it would be like to live in the world described in Revelation 21:1–22:5.
• Drawing or painting a picture of the new earth as described in Revelation 21 and 22.
• Reading the four worship scenes in Revelation (chapters 4, 5, 15, and 19). How do these scenes inspire your worship?
• Choosing passages from Revelation to use as responsive readings with your Sabbath School class or Bible study group.

CONNECT

Worthy Is the Lamb!

Rev. 1:1, 10–16; 5:13, 14; 21:1–22:5

Sonia Huenergardt, Bishop, California, U.S.A.
If you have not received a copy of CQ for Fourth Quarter 2011, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1  **Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles**


**Memory Text:** “When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life’ ” (Acts 11:18, NKJV).

It’s not that hard to understand Saul of Tarsus (also known as the apostle Paul after his conversion), and why he did what he did. As a devout Jew, who was taught all of his life about the importance of the Law and about the soon-coming political redemption of Israel, the idea of the long-awaited Messiah being ignominiously executed like the worst of criminals was just too much for him to tolerate. No wonder, then, he was convinced that the followers of Jesus were being disloyal to the Torah and, thus, hindering God’s plan for Israel. Their claims that the crucified Jesus was the Messiah and that He had risen from the dead were, he believed, rank apostasy. There could be no tolerance for such nonsense or for anyone who refused to give up those notions. Saul was determined to be God’s agent to rid Israel of these beliefs. Hence, he first appears in the pages of Scripture as a violent persecutor of his fellow Jews—those who believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

God, however, had far different plans for Saul, plans that he never could have anticipated for himself; not only was this Jew going to preach Jesus as the Messiah, he was going to do it among the Gentiles!

Lesson 2  **Paul’s Authority and Gospel**

Logos: Galatians 1; 5:12; Phil. 1:1; 2 Pet. 3:15, 16.

**Memory Text:** “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10, NKJV).

Students at a university built a center on their campus where
everyone—regardless of race, gender, social status, or religious beliefs—would be welcome. Imagine if, years later, these students returned to the campus only to discover that other students had redesigned the center. Instead of the large room with plenty of space for socializing—designed to bring a sense of unity to everyone there—the room had been subdivided into many smaller rooms with entrance restrictions based on race, gender, and so forth. The students responsible for the redesign might have argued that their authority to make these changes came from centuries-old established practice.

This is something like the situation that Paul faced when he wrote his letter to the churches in Galatia. His plan that Gentiles could join on the basis of faith alone was being challenged by false teachers who insisted that Gentiles must also be circumcised before they could become members.

This position, Paul saw, was an attack on the essence of the gospel itself; thus, he had to respond. The response is the letter to the Galatians.