

Session 6: Worship

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea: Worshipping God is not primarily something for us to experience, but an act God has commanded us to joyfully give to him.

Head Change: To know that worship is a command from God, not just a feeling or type of music.

Heart Change: To feel close to God, even when he seems to be silent.

Life Change: To trust that God can continue to help us learn how to worship him throughout our day.

OPEN

**What are some of your most valuable possessions?
What, in particular, makes them valuable to you?**

Most of us own something precious, but an item's value is not always monetary. Rather, value is often rooted in something personal—its story, who it belonged to, or what it represents. We treasure the things that capture our hearts.

So, what does it mean to value God? How should we respond when he captures our hearts?

In this final session, Dr. Pointer looks at the remainder of Exodus, examining the way God calls us to worship him. He wants us to worship—to value, treasure, and praise—him.

READ

Read Exodus 23:14–19; 24:1–11; 40:34–38.

Note: *This series touches on parts of the story of Exodus. If you would like to read the whole book of Exodus, check out our daily reading guide in **Go Deeper Section 3** at the end of this study.*

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Pointer’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

What is worthiness?

What does it mean to worship God?

Show Session 6: *Worship* (11 minutes).

DISCUSS

Today, it is common to think we can worship God in ways that work best for us. But, we have to remember that only God can accurately define how to worship and glorify him. We need to know what he expects of us. **What is your typical habit or mode of worship?**

What importance do you put on the experience of worship? What is the importance of worshipping God in the right way?

Dr. Pointer made the point that throughout these chapters we get to see how the Law and the sacrificial system helped the Israelites relate to God and each other. In God's eyes, we worship him through obedience to him and love toward one another. **What thought have you given—if ever—to the idea that worship involves the way we relate to others?**

What do our actions toward others communicate about our view of God?

Dr. Pointer summarized Exodus 20–40 as a display of what it looks like to worship God. Through a variety of laws, ordinances, and regulations, God laid out exactly how the Israelites were to approach him in worship—whether they were making sacrifices to ask for forgiveness or giving thanks to him. Read Exodus 23:14–19.

One of the first ways the Israelites were to worship God was through the three holy feasts—Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles. **What were some of the reasons God gave for celebrating these festivals?**

What Christian holidays do we observe today? In what ways do our holidays celebrate God and remember what he has done?

Observances like Sunday worship, Christmas, or Easter can seem like just another day in our calendar, but God sees our celebrations as integral parts of worship. **What has it looked like for you to intentionally reflect on the meaning behind Christian holy days and use them as opportunities to worship God?**

In Exodus 21–32, Moses received the laws and ordinances from God on top of Mount Sinai. These chapters are filled with detailed instructions that required diligent attention to obey. Today, our worship can feel less rigorous than Israel's, but it is important to remember that God cares about how he is worshipped and how we live. We still have to be diligent in our service to God. **In what ways could we be more diligent in our worship, service, and behavior so that we might better glorify God?**

God's Word offer us a chance for us to respond to him in loving obedience. Just like the Israelites received the verbal commands of God, we can come to God's written Word with a heart that desires to honor him. **What has it looked like for you to worship God through obedience? What does it look like to obey willingly instead of begrudgingly?**

Note: *For an in-depth study on the Golden Calf and how disobedience turns our hearts from God, go to **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.*

The book of Exodus ends with God's glory covering the tent where he regularly met with his people, also called the tabernacle. His glory filled the tabernacle, making it the holiest place on earth. Read Exodus 40:34–38.

Verses 36–37 explain that when the cloud was lifted, the Israelites would follow God, but when the cloud rested on the tabernacle, they should remain where they were. God gave his people a rhythm of waiting and movement. Rightly responding to God sometimes requires that we wait for him to act. **What has it looked like for you to wait on God? What prayers are you waiting for him to answer?**

Dr. Pointer explained that the glory cloud was not just emotional reassurance or meant for an ecstatic experience. God's presence led the Israelites out of the wilderness toward the Promised Land. **Where do you see evidence of God's glory in your life? How has the glory of God been evident in your seasons of transition?**

Note: *For a guided prayer about worship, go to **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.*

Just as God dwelt among Israel in the tabernacle, the Holy Spirit dwells within us today. Because of God's faithfulness to his word, we have become a royal

priesthood and chosen people—and God deserves all our worship. **What could it look like for you to rest in the truth that God’s glory is with you?**

Throughout the book of Exodus, we’ve seen the constant reminder that God was with the Israelites through the entirety of their journey. He is also with us today, through all of our ups and downs, by the power of the Holy Spirit. When we lose sight of where we’re going, we can trust he will guide us and never leave us. **How will you remind yourself of the gift we have in the Holy Spirit this week?**

LAST WORD

Despite the Israelites’ constant disobedience and complaining, God remained faithful to them. We are not so different from Israel. It doesn’t take long for us to get frustrated with God, to turn to idols for comfort, or to grumble when life doesn’t go our way. But God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. His love will never change.

Take some time to reflect on everything you’ve learned in this series about God’s character. Ask God to help you live your life in a way that reflects your relationship with him—that you’re rescued from the power of sin, chosen for a personal relationship, and part of his kingdom of priests as light in a dark world.

GO DEEPER

This section has two potential functions:

1. It can supplement your small group discussion with topics your group may be interested in. We've highlighted where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide. As the leader, it would be good to familiarize yourself with this section just in case your conversation turns to one of these topics.
2. These sections can also function as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting. Consider using these sections to deepen your group's study of the book of Exodus.

1. Worship of the Golden Calf

While Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving instructions from God, the Israelites were building an idol of a new, invented god in the valley below. Instead of choosing to remember that God miraculously brought them out of slavery in Egypt, they allowed their impatience, fear, and old habits to lure them into idolatry. The actions of the Israelites serve as a warning for all of us: when we don't put our full trust in God, we will turn to things that cannot help us.

Read Exodus 32.

According to verses 1–6, what reasons did the Israelites give for wanting to make new gods? What caused them to revert to idolatry?

How did the Israelites describe their new false gods? What events and characteristics did they attribute to them?

Aaron—Moses's brother—had been by his side during the entirety of God's deliverance from Egypt. He spoke on Moses's behalf and was a key part of delivering the Hebrew people. But in this passage, he leads the people into their idolatry by requesting their gold jewelry and making a golden calf for them. Even though Aaron was a leader alongside Moses, he was still susceptible to the sin he should have been rebuking. **What could we learn from Aaron's actions? Do you think you are capable of turning away from God like Aaron did? Why, or why not?**

Ironically, while God was giving instructions on how he is to be worshipped, his chosen people rebelled and turned their hearts to an idol. Not only that, but Aaron—God’s future High Priest—helped create the golden calf and led the worship of it. No matter where you are in your faith, you can be tempted by idols. **Do feel less or more tempted by sin than earlier in your faith?**

In what ways do you still have to stay vigilant against sin?

While we don’t build idols today, idolatry is still a problem for us. Pastor Tim Keller puts it well, “An idol is anything you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, ‘If I have that, then I’ll feel my life has meaning, then I know I’ll have value, then I’ll feel significant and secure.’” Israel felt insecure at the foot of the mountain and turned to an idol to create a false sense of security and protection. **What are some of the idols we turn to to feel secure, or significant? Where do we seek self-worth and happiness apart from God?**

Aaron shows us that we are all capable of grievous sin, that our sin leads others from God, and that we are prone to creating idols. God wants us to find our significance, security, self-worth, and happiness in him. His laws are meant to lead us to him so that we might rest and be content in him. Read the account of Israel at Mt. Sinai in Deuteronomy 5:22–33. **What does God want from his people (v. 29)? What will be the result of their obedience?**

Memorize Deuteronomy 5:29. God want you to turn your heart to him so that it will go well with you and your children forever. Whenever you are tempted by an idol, remind yourself of God’s heart for you.

2. Lectio Divina: Consecration as Worship

Exodus has shown us God’s faithfulness, our sinfulness, and God’s goodness through his covenant. Exodus 40 marks the establishment of the tabernacle as God leads his people toward the Promised Land. His faithfulness toward Israel can give us hope for today.

Below are the four steps of Lectio Divina, an ancient Christian practice of prayerful Scripture reading, which will

help you pray and think deeply about the end of Exodus. Carve out some time this week to go through this exercise. Take your time with each step. This isn't something to rush through, so make sure you have plenty of time before you start.

Lectio (Read): Remove all distractions and quiet your mind before God. Now read Exodus 40:34–38 three times slowly. If you can, read it out loud to yourself. Let the message hit you. After reading it three times, find something that stands out to you. Re-read it a couple more times and emphasize different words as you read.

Meditatio (Meditate): Think about the phrase that stood out to you the most. What does it mean? What does it say about God? The human condition? How does it contribute to the main idea in Exodus?

Oratio (Pray): Pray through your favorite verse or phrase. Ask God to show you what he's saying through this verse. Take the verse and turn it into a prayer. For example, you could pray, "Thank you, God, for being present with me" or, "Teach me, Holy Spirit, to follow your lead."

Contemplatio (Contemplate): Now that you've read, thought, and prayed through Exodus 40:34–38, finish your time in silence. Ask God to speak to you. Pray he'd show you one practical thing you could apply to your life from this passage. Then listen. Write down what he says and then do it.

3. Weekly Reading Plan

Exodus is a long book, and we won't be able to study every verse of it during each of these sessions. This reading plan will help you familiarize yourself with the entirety of the book so that you can dig more deeply into God's Word. Some weeks will have more reading than others, so feel free to complete the daily readings at a pace that makes the most sense to your group.

Exodus 20–40 has a lot of laws and ordinances that aren't covered in this session. The provided reading plan will take you through the narrative chapters of Exodus. If you would also like to read the Law, include chapters 21–23, 26–30, 35, and 37–39 in your reading.

Day 2: Exodus 31–32

Day 3: Exodus 33–34

Day 4: Exodus 36

Day 5: Exodus 40