



## On your marks

Worship is an often misrepresented concept. It is far more than just a period of singing songs as part of a service in church. It is a whole-life response to God, at all times and in all places. The following session outline explores this with a variety of activities that aim to help the group think big about this small word.

After Pentecost we read that the first Christians met together and that their worship happened not just in the temple but in their homes; and that it involved not just praising but sharing (Acts 2:43-47). This material explores some of the many ways in which we are called to respond to God with our worship.

## Get set

You will need: large versions of the letters of the word WORSHIP (you can simply print these in a large type face); some large sheets of paper and coloured pens; copies of some of the quotes about worship and key Bible verses; and some space!

## Go!

1. Start with some words from the last chapter of the letter to the Hebrews. This chapter is full of practical advice for Christians, including a word about the *offering of worship*.

Read Hebrews 13:15-16.

Worship isn't only about what comes out of our mouths but also what we do with our lives!

Worship is a bigger Bible word than we realise... than we have perhaps allowed it to become.

Set out the letters of the word **W O R S H I P**.

It involves:

**W** - Working at home, at school, in the office, at the shops and in the garden

**O** - Offering help and care to others

**R** - Rejoicing

**S** - Sharing

**H** - Having fun and enjoying God's world

**I** - Involving yourself in the pain and the brokenness of the world

**P** - Praying

What other types of worship might these letters stand for?



## **Worship is a 24/7 response to God.**

Read Romans 12:1.

2. Teach the following question (from a leader) and answer (from the group) chorus and ask them to suggest some actions that go with the words they say:

When do we worship? **All the time!**

When is God God? **All the time!**

When does God love us? **All the time!**

When do we worship? **All the time!**

3. Here are a few things that some famous Christians have said about worship. Print these off (or just read them out) and ask the group which ones they like the best.

'The highest form of worship is the worship of unselfish Christian service.' Billy Graham

'Let us sing a new song not with our lips but with our lives.' Saint Augustine

'(To worship is to)... bring your whole life under the ordering of the Spirit of Christ.' George Fox

'True worship - really spiritual worship - is the offering of our body and all that one does every day with it, to God.' William Barclay

And here are some verses from the Bible. What new things do these say about worship?

'(These gifts) belong to you and we have only given back what is already yours' 1 Chronicles 29:14 (CEV).

'Bow down and worship the Lord our Creator! The Lord is our God, and we are his people, the sheep he takes care of in his own pasture' Psalm 95:6-7.

'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him' Matthew 4:10.

'I will always praise the Lord. With all my heart, I will praise the Lord' Psalm 34:1.

4. So **what** is worship like?

Start your group discussing this by asking them to imagine God in different ways.

For example:

If God is like *a father*, worship is like... *a family party*.



It's joyful and tearful. We love to be together and see how everyone's changed over the year. It's good to catch up on news and remember that our family loves us whatever we're like. But it can also be difficult to cope with some people from time to time!

Try some more of these 'God images' to get them talking about what worship is like:

- If God is like a king, worship is like...
- If God is like my best friend, worship is like...
- If God is like bread, worship is like...
- If God is like a good shepherd, worship is like...
- If God is like a guide on a journey, worship is like...
- If God is like a captain, worship is like...
- If God is like a vine, worship is like...
- If God is like a healer, worship is like...
- If God is like a light, worship is like...
- If God is like a refiner's fire, worship is like...

Which of these images does the group find most helpful in understanding worship?

5. So **wh**endo we worship?

- Worship is a whole-week word

(George Herbert wrote: 'Seven whole days. not one in seven, I will praise thee.')

So, Monday is Worship Day...Tuesday is Worship Day... and so on.

- Worship is an all-season word

Challenge the group to come up with seasonal/weather words to go with each letter of the word WORSHIP.

For example:

- W** - Windy
- O** - Overcast
- R** - Rainy
- S** - Sunny
- H** - Heat wave
- I** - In-between /Iffy
- P** - Perishing cold

Look up Habakkuk 3:17-19. What is this prophet advising us about worship? What does that mean for us?



- Worship is an all-creation word

Use a globe as a visual aid and also encourage the group produce sound effects and movements based on words from the Psalms 96 and 98, Isaiah 44, Psalm 114 and Matthew 21 about how all creation worships.

**W** - Waves roar and lift up their voice

**O** - Ocean depths shout

**R** - Rainforests (trees) clap

**S** - Stones shout

**H** - Hills skip

**I** - Immoveable mountains sing

**P** - Pastures and fields exult/leap

Look up Psalm 19:1-4. How might we listen to the sounds of creation worshipping God?

- Worship is an around-the-clock word

Use a clock face with the letters of WORSHIP being used instead of numbers (twice, with the 'W' at the top and the spelling it down either side to a 'P' at the bottom).

Although any time can be worship time, worship does need special moments to help us not forget: at home (alone and with the family); at work; at church services; together or on retreat; on camps or pilgrimage.

Look up Psalm 95:6-7. How can we worship God in the 'when' of the everyday?

Work in groups if possible with some large sheets of paper.

What does worship mean in the following 'when' moments of our lives? Write down key words or draw pictures to show what worship might involve at these times:

- *Over breakfast*
- *Travelling to school or work*
- *Working with the computer*
- *Partying*
- *During lessons/at school or college*
- *Shopping*
- *Walking the dog*
- *Doing the garden*
- *Doing the housework*
- *Going out for a meal/to a film/to see friends*
- *On holiday*
- *Relaxing*
- *And so on!*



Share your ideas with each other.

This could lead to prayer for yourselves and each other involved in these activities.

6. WORSHIP is a big word - all about all of me responding to all of God all of the time.

So, **how** should we worship? Try some new word links to the letters of WORSHIP.

It is done with...

**W**onder

**O**penness

**R**everence

**S**ervice with

**H**alleluiahs and **H**osannas

**I**ntimately and

**P**ublicly

Here is a famous definition of worship by William Temple, who was Archbishop of Canterbury during the Second World War, and it comes from his book *Readings in St John's Gospel*, published in 1945.

'Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of the conscience by his holiness; the nourishment of the mind with his truth; the purification of the imagination by his beauty; the opening of the heart to his love; the surrender of the will to his purpose - and all this gathered up in adoration, which is the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and therefore the chief remedy to that self-centredness which is our original sin.'

7. End the session by reading the amazing picture of worship that comes in the last book of the Bible. Here everyone is caught up in worship because they are focused on Jesus:

Revelation 7:9-12