

DISCIPLESHIP ESSENTIALS

"Wired For Worship"

6/24/12

Verses from New Living Translation unless noted.



As I said, I've been **looking forward** to this message in our series, Discipleship Essentials on worship. There are **two** primary **types** of worship – there is **private** worship and **corporate** worship.

Private worship is when you are **alone** with God and corporate worship is when you **gather** with other believers to worship. **Both** are encouraged in the **Bible** and both are **valid** and **important**. **My** primary private worship is in the **morning** when I do my **personal** Bible Study.

As many of you know I use a method called **SOAP**. SOAP is an **acrostic** for:

S- Scripture – I use the **reading guides** we publish and distribute every **quarter**. I read until I sense **God speaking** to me specifically in a verse or two and then I stop and **journal**.

O- Observation – After writing down the **verse** in my journal I begin to make **observations** about the text: **who** are the characters, **what's** happening, **what's** God saying?

A – Application – Now I look at my **own life** and ways God is **speaking to me**. What does he want me **to learn**? Invariably this turns into a time of **worship** and **praise**.

P – Prayer - The **final step** in the method is to **write out** a prayer to God about what he has taught me. Recently **reviewing** my **journal** I found several entries that pertained to **worship**. The **first** was entered **August 30, 2011**. It is titled

1ST THE FOCUS OF WORSHIP – it is not about me.

S- Revelation 4:11

The verse was Revelation 4:11 that says, **“You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created.”**

O - John was one of the twelve apostles – the **first committed** followers of Jesus. In fact, he was one of **intimate three** – Peter, James and John; part of **Jesus’** discipleship **quad**.

Most of the other disciples have already been **martyred** for **following** Jesus. John was **exiled** to the island of **Patmos** by the **Romans** for his **persistent preaching** of the Good News about Christ.

While **there** he is shown a **vision** by God of things **happening** in heaven and things **to come** on earth. In chapter **four** he **witnesses** worship in heaven. He **describes** what must be the **throne room** of God in amazing **detail**. Then **24 elders** leave their **thrones**, fall **down** before God and offer their **praises** to him.

They lay their **crowns** at his feet and **acknowledge** Him as the One who **created** everything. **Nothing** existed until He **spoke** it into being. He **created** all the magnificent **beauty** and **order** and **balance** of the universe.

Then he created **humankind** and waits to see how **many of us** will **turn** from **ourselves**, **see** and **acknowledge** Him.

A - Too often I look **around**, see the **incredible world** and think it is primarily for **my pleasure**. Like a **kid** in a **candy** store, I run through **attempting** to **satisfy** my every **appetite**.

I give **little thought** to one who **built** the store and **filled it** with pleasurable **delights**. But those who are **Wise**, represented by **elders** in this verse, **recognize** it is **not** primarily about **them**, but about the **One** who **created** it all.

The utterly **amazing** thing is that **if** we **acknowledge Him** and His **rightful place**, he **invites us**, as his **children** to **relish**, **savor** and **enjoy** it with Him.

P – In **worship** I thank my heavenly **Father** for the **priceless** privilege of being His **child**.

Each day should begin with a time of **worship**, **recognizing** our Heavenly Father's **blessing** and giving **thanks** for all he is to us.
A 2nd journal entry

2ND THE GUIDELINES FOR WORSHIP

S – "Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song. Sing his praises in the assembly of the faithful." Psalm 149:1

#1 He encourages singing

Singing in worship is an **expression** of **faith**. Like **baptism**, when done in **public**, it's a declaration of **commitment** and it's also a **proclamation** of **truth**.

Singing **aloud**, we openly **declare** our **love** for, and **commitment** to God. We also **proclaim truths** about his **character** and his **work** in our lives.

Now if you're **not a singer** and you're **afraid** of **offending** those around you with the **sounds** you make, just **open** your mouth anyway and just **mouth** the words. **Everyone** seeing you, **including God** will know that you are **expressing** the **emotions** of your heart.

#2 the psalmist prescribes new songs.

Songs are most often **descriptions** of God's **character** that the **song writer** has observed or **experienced**. They are **stories** of God's **works** among us.

New songs are like serving **fresh bread**; not just **recounting** older **past** encounters with God, but **sharing** our new **experiences** with him; things that are **fresh** every day. That's why we **SOAP** – we write down **new discoveries**. We need **fresh truths** to share and new **experiences** to recount.

Joey's New Song

#3 We worship in the assembly of the faithful.

We all need **encouragement** from each **other**; we're **designed** for **relationships**; we don't **survive** alone; we **strengthen** each other. **Sunday** worship has been the **practice** of the church since the **week** after Jesus **died**.

This was a **radical departure** from **hundreds** of years of Jewish **tradition** – to worship on **Sunday** instead of **Saturday**; to give God the **first** day of the week **instead** of the **last**.

I don't **care** where you are on **Sunday**, find a **group** of believers to **worship** with. In this **day** of **weak** commitment, **lethargic** dedication, **pathetic** Christian devotion and character, we need to again put God first on Sunday. And it's not just an **hour** a **week** that God **commanded**, but a **day** of worship.

#4 We worship with joy

(vs 2-3) **"O Israel, rejoice in your Maker...exult in your King."**

The **psalmist** describes **rejoicing**, exulting, **dancing**, accompanied by **instruments** of all kinds. God **delights** in

uninhibited worship when done in **sincerity** and **genuineness**. And the Bible says God **crowns** it with **salvation**.

Is there something you **need** to be **saved** from, delivered from? A **habit**, a **disease**, a **crisis**, a challenge or **trial** – **worship** is a **path** to God’s special **blessing** – he **crowns** it with **salvation**.

Many of us are still **struggling** with **habits**, **attitudes** and **actions** and we **need** salvation. The psalmist **points out** a connection between **humble**, joyful **uninhibited** worship and deliverance.

I heard a **pastor** when he looked out at his **congregation** on **Sunday** morning, saw the **sour expressions** on their faces, was **convinced** that some must have been **baptized** in **lemon** juice.

#5 It’s our weapon of choice

V.6 The **praise** of God in our **mouths** is like a **sword** in our hand. It **defeats** the enemy and **frees** the captives (**evangelism**).

As we **gather regularly** for worship, prepared with **fresh praises**, and enthusiastic **adoration** and love, **those** who come to **observe** and witness will be **convinced** of the reality of the **One** we serve.

3RD THE WARNING OF WORSHIP

2 Samuel 6:21-22 **“I am willing to act like a fool in order to show my joy in the Lord. Yes, I am willing to look even more foolish than this...”**

King **David danced** before the Lord with **all** his might— **uninhibited exuberance**. David had been **accepted** and **anointed** as king over **all Israel**. He had **captured** the fortress of **Zion** in Jerusalem and made it his **capitol**.

He had **defeated** his arch enemies, the **Philistines** and now he was bringing the **Ark of God** to his **capitol** city. He did this with great **ceremony** and **celebration**.

He appointed a **choir** accompanied by **lyres** and **harps** and **cymbals** and **trumpets**, playing **loudly** and joyfully.

And David **danced wildly** to show his **joy** in the Lord. But **looking down** from her **window** on the crowd and celebration **Michal**, the daughter of **Saul**, David's **wife**, saw David dancing and was filled with **contempt** for him.

Then when David **returned home** Michal **fired** off a **caustic** volley of **contempt**, disgust and **criticism**. For this the Bible says she **remained barren** and childless throughout her **life**.

Worship is often a **personal** expression of **joy** and thankfulness. And **God** is more concerned about our **hearts** than he is our **outward** appearance. **David** was a man **after God's** own heart and when his heart **exploded** in **exuberant** worship, God was far **more pleased** with David's **enthusiasm** than he was with Michal's **disgust** and criticism.

My **prayer** is that **my heart** be so filled with joy and **thanksgiving** that it **bursts** forth in **exuberant** worship and may I **never dare** criticize someone else's worship.

4TH THE BLESSING OF WORSHIP

There is a **fascinating** research study done by **Vicki Medvec**, a professor at **Northwestern University**. She studied **Olympic medalists** and she discovered that **Bronze** medalists were **happier** than **Silver** medalists. Here's why.

Medvec **found** that **Silver** medalists tended to **focus** on how **close** they came to winning **gold** so they **weren't** satisfied with silver.

Bronze medalists tended to **focus** on how **close** they came to **not winning** a medal at all so they were just **happy** to be on the medal **stand** at all.

I think that study reveals a **fascinating facet** of human nature: **your focus** determines your **reality**. How we **feel** isn't determined by **objective circumstances**.

If that was the case, **Silver** Medalists would be **happier** than **Bronze** medalists because they had an **objectively** better **result**. But **how** we feel **isn't** determined by our objective circumstances. How we feel is determined by our **subjective focus**; what we're **thinking** about our circumstances.

Here's **another way** of saying it: your **internal attitudes** are more important than your **external** circumstances.

That's **true**, isn't it? **All** of us **know** people who can **find** something **good** to focus on even in the **worst** of circumstances. And all of us know **people** who can find **something bad** to focus on even in the **best** of circumstances.

* **Consider the worshipper's pre-decision**

We **tend** to see **what** we're **looking for**. Some say there are two **basic types** of people in the world: **complainers** and **worshippers**. **Complainers** can always find something to **complain** about. **Worshippers** can always find something to **praise** God about.

All of us develop **ideas** about **things** and then we look for **evidence** to support our **assumption**, and **ignore** evidence to the contrary.

For **example**, if you decide you **don't like** someone you'll notice everything that is **wrong** with that person. And you'll probably **ignore anything** you could **potentially** like about them.

The **flipside** is true as well. If you're **head-over-heels** in love with someone you **tend** to only notice those **things** you **appreciate** about them. We **see** what we're looking for.

What does that have to do with **worship**? A true **worshipper** makes a **pre-decision** to look for something to **praise** God about even in the **direst** of circumstances.

Acts 16 is exhibit A. In Acts 16, **Paul and Silas** are in a **prison** cell in **Philippi**. I'd encourage you to **read** the entire **chapter** yourself, but let me **set** the **scene**. Paul casts a **demon** out of a **fortune-teller**. Her **master** doesn't like it because she **loses** the ability to **predict** the future so he has Paul and Silas **arrested**.

Acts 16:22 says, **"A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. So he took no chances but put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks."**

I think we **read** a story **like this** and it's almost **tough** to put ourselves in their **shoes**. I've had **bad days** before, but **nothing** like this.

As a **kid**, maybe you read a book titled **Alexander and the Horrible, Terrible, No Good, Very Bad Day**. This is Paul and Silas and the Horrible, Terrible, No Good, Very **Bad Day**.

If I'm Paul or Silas I'm **emotionally** and **physically** and **spiritually** spent. I'm **drained** to the last drop. I've got **nothing** left to give.

Their **backs** are **bleeding** from their beating. They are **black** and **blue** all over. And they had to be **ticked off**, you'd think. And to **top** it off, they land in the **maximum security** cell in stocks!

It just **doesn't get** much **worse** than that. And that's why this

next verse is so **amazing** to me. Acts 16:25 says, "Around **midnight**, Paul and Silas were **complaining** about their circumstances."

That's not what it says. It says, "Around midnight, Paul and Silas were **praying** and **singing hymns** to God, and the **other prisoners** were listening."

Let me **share** something I saw this week at **Lake Tulloch**. Ryan **Dalby**, one of our **24 year** old youth **leaders** had just returned from a run on a **wave runner**. He opened his **backpack** to find that his **plastic bottle** of **sun block** had exploded all over the contents inside.

He was **sitting** on the edge of the dock **cleaning sunblock** off everything in the back pack. It was a **mess**. I came over to offer **encouragement**. He **looked up** and said, "I'm at **Fryathon** – I **refuse** to let **circumstances steal** my joy."

When **I** get into a spiritual or **emotional slump**, it's usually because I've **zoomed** in on a **problem**. I'm **fixating** on something that is **wrong**. I'm **focused** on the **wrong thing**.

Nine times out of ten, the **solution** is zooming **out** so I can get some **perspective**. Sometimes you've got to **zoom out** and look at the **big picture**. That's what the following **college student** did in writing this **letter**:

Dear Mom and Dad,

I have so much to tell you. Because of the fire in my dorm set off by student riots, I experienced temporary lung damage and had to go to the hospital. While I was there, I fell in love with an orderly, and we have moved in together. I dropped out of school when I found out I was pregnant, and he got fired because of

his drinking, so we're going to move to Alaska, where we might get married after the birth of our baby.

Your loving daughter

PS: None of this REALLY happened,.. but I did flunk my chemistry class and I wanted you to keep it in perspective.

*** Consider the worshipper's perspective**

Sometimes you need to **zoom out** and look at the **big picture**. You **fail** a chemistry **exam** and it may **feel** like the end of the world. But it's **not**.

So **how** do we **zoom out**? Let me give it to you in **one word**: **WORSHIP**.

Worshipping is taking our **eyes off** of our **external** circumstances and **focusing** on God. We **stop** focusing on what's **wrong** with us or with our circumstances. We **start** focus on what's **right** with God.

Paul and Silas could have **zoomed in** and **complained** about their circumstances. "God, we **cast** out a **demon** and this is what we **get**? We're on a missionary **journey** and we get **beaten** and thrown in **jail**?"

Instead of "watching our **back**" our backs are **bleeding** from a **beating**! They could have **complained** all night. But they made a **choice** to worship God **in spite** of their **external** circumstances.

Here's what worship does. It **restores** spiritual **equilibrium**. It **helps** you **regain** your perspective. It **enables** you to find

something **right** to praise God about even **when** everything seems to be going **wrong**.

Worship is **zooming out** and **refocusing** on the **big** picture. It's **refocusing** on the fact that two **thousand years** ago, Jesus **died** on the cross to pay the **penalty** for my sin. It's **refocusing** on the fact that **God loves** me **when** I **least** expect it and least **deserve** it.

It's **refocusing** on the fact that God is going to **get me** where God **wants me** to go. It's **refocusing** on the fact that I have **eternity** with God to look **forward** to in a place where there is **no mourning** or sorrow or pain.

Worship is refocusing on the **fundamentals** of our faith. And here is what happens: **God restores** the **joy** of our salvation. We **regain** our spiritual **balance**.

Is it **easy**? Absolutely **not**. Nothing is **more difficult** than praising God when **everything** seems to be going **wrong**. But one of the **purest forms** of worship **is praising** God even when you **don't feel** like it because it shows we're **not** just worshipping God for the **blessings**.

Worship is reframing our circumstances.

* **Consider the worshippers response-ability**

In the book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, **Victor Frankl**, a Holocaust **survivor** writes about his **experiences** in a Nazi concentration **camp**.

Everything was taken from these prisoners. They separated them from most of their family, **stripped** of their **clothing, pictures**, and personal **belongings**. They **even** took away their **names** and gave them **numbers**. Frankl was number **119,104**.

Everything was taken away except **one thing**. Frankl said, "**Everything** can be taken from a man **but** one thing: the **last** of human **freedoms**—to choose one's **attitude** in any given set of

circumstances.”

He was convinced that the most **important choice** you make every day is your **attitude**. Your **internal** attitudes are more **important** than all your **external** circumstances. The **outcome** of your **life** will be determined by your **outlook** of your life.

If you have a **critical** or **complaining** spirit you’ll complain till the day you **die**. Your life will get **worse** and worse because you’ll **accumulate** more and more **negative** experiences.

But **if** you have a **worshipful spirit**, life gets **better** and better. Why? Because you **accumulate** positive **memories**. At the **end** of the day, one way or the other, **your focus** determines your **reality!**

A positive **response-ability** is one dimension of the **Imago Dei** or **image** of God. We have **free choice**. We are response-able. In **other** words, we have the **ability** to choose our **response** in **any** set of circumstances.

Paul and Silas were in **prison**. Their bodies were **chained**. But you **can’t chain** the human spirit. That’s what Victor **Frankl** discovered in the **concentration** camp.

That’s what **Paul** and Silas modeled **two thousand** years ago. Their **bodies** were chained, but their spirits **soared**.

This is one of the **audio tracks** I’d love to hear. I wish we had the **MP3** of Paul and Silas **singing**. There is something so **awesome** about worshipping God at the **top** of your voice without caring how it **sounds**.

I **don’t** know Paul and Silas were **in tune**. But I think they sang with a **conviction** that caused their **fellow prisoners** to listen. They **praised** God at the top of their **voices!** And that choice to **worship** set off a **chain reaction**.

***Consider the worshipper's premeditated cognitive commitments**

Albert **Einstein** said, "You can't **solve** a problem on the **level** it was **created**."

I think **problems created** on a **human** plane are solved on the **supernatural** plane. That's what **happens** when we **worship** God. It **changes** the spiritual **atmosphere**. It charges the spiritual **reality**.

You **can't** plan **Pentecost**. But **if** you pray for **ten days**, Pentecost **might just** happen. I **don't** think **Paul** could have planned this **miraculous** jailbreak.

What **followed** their worship service was an **earthquake**. The **prisoners** were set **free**, but they **didn't** leave! The **jailer** started about to **kill** himself but gets **saved** and his entire family is **baptized** in the middle of the night.

You **can't script** that kind of thing. You **can't plan** miracles. But when you **worship** God in the **worst** of Circumstances you **never know** what is going to happen.

Worship **sets** the **stage** for **miracles**! Worship causes spiritual **earthquakes** that can change the **topography** of your life. Worship is a **shifting** of the **tectonic plates** in your life. It may **not** change your **circumstances**. But it will change your **life**.

Napoleon Hill said, "**Every negative event contains within it the seed of an equal or greater benefit.**"

I **believe** that. **Worship** is the way we stay **positive** in negative circumstances. And it's **not** a **placebo**! It's reality.

Will Hammer at Fryathon

No matter **how bad** things get, as a **follower** of Christ, I have **eternity in heaven** to look forward to! My **pain** is real. But so is **heaven**. The **good news** is that **this reality** is temporary. That reality lasts **forever!**

The **key** is focusing on the **right** reality!

I read a **fascinating statistic** this week. Research indicates that the **average person** talks to himself or herself about **50,000** times a day.

Any **guess** on what **percentage** of self-talk is **negative**? Research indicates that **80%** of self-talk is negative.

We say negative things to ourselves. I'm **not good** enough. I'm not **smart enough**. And, doggone it, people **don't like** me. So here's what happens: we let **what's wrong** with us **keep** us from **worshipping** what's right about God. We're **focused** on the **wrong** reality.

In her book, ***Mindfulness***, Ellen **Langer** says that all of us have "**premeditated** cognitive **commitments**." Translation: we tend to **see** what we're **looking for**.

A **pessimist** will always see something **bad** in a good situation and an **optimist** will always see something **good** in a bad situation.

Paul gives some priceless advice in **Philippians 4:8**. It's a list of eight premeditated cognitive commitments. He says, "**Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.**"

A **worshipper** always finds something to **praise** God for because they're **looking** for something to praise God for. **Worship** is a **premeditated** cognitive **commitment** based on **ultimate**

reality.

*** Consider the worshipper's chains**

Here's a **closing** thought: the **circumstances** you complain about becomes **chains** that **imprison** you. **Worship** is the way **out**.

It was **worship** that **set** Paul and Silas **free** physically. And it's **worship** that will set you **free emotionally** and **spiritually**. Worship sets off a **chain reaction**. The **prison** doors fly open. The **chains** break, **freedom** follows.

Are there **circumstances** that you're allowing to **imprison** you? Have your **complaints** about someone or **something** become **chains**?

Ask the people you **live with**; the people who **know you** best – am I a **negative** or **positive** person? So I spend more time **complaining** or giving **praise**?

Stop focusing on what's **wrong** about you or your **circumstances**. **Start focusing** on what's right about God. Here's an **assignment**. Find something **everyday** to be **grateful** for. It's a **spiritual discipline**.

Psalm 103:2 says, **"Praise the Lord and forget not all his benefits."**

In the **words** of the **hymn**: **"Count** your blessings. Name them one by one. **Count** your many blessings. See what God has **done**." Your **WORSHIP** will determine your **REALITY!**