



WINTER 2015-16
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LEADER GUIDE INCLUDED



**WORSHIP—MORE THAN
A CHURCH SERVICE**

Worship is a lifestyle, not just
an event.



PEACE I GIVE YOU

Inner peace is only possible
through Jesus.



MY SOUL IS A WITNESS

My life with Jesus is worth
talking about.





Staying Fit ... Spiritually

We talk a lot about the importance of staying physically fit, but what about the health of your spirit? Connect, Grow, Serve, Go is a call to evaluate your present spiritual condition and discover ways to improve your spiritual health. Packed into each biblical concept—Connect, Grow, Serve, Go—is a simple way you can move forward, not remain stagnant. Best of all, these tools will stand the test of time—no “fad” diets here. They will help you become spiritually healthy, and stay that way.



WITH AN OPEN HEART
MARK 12:29-31



IN BODY, MIND, & SPIRIT
ROMANS 12:2



WITH WILLING HANDS
1 PETER 4:10-11



WITH READY FEET
MATTHEW 28:19-20

Connect urges you to worship, pray, fellowship, and relate to others in positive relationships at work, at home, and in other settings. Spiritual fitness results when you connect with God, with others, and with your church family.

Grow refers to learning and understanding more about God and His expectations of His people, which comes through Bible study. You grow by applying that knowledge to your everyday living.

Serve describes the work you do inside your church. Your church is full of ministry and service opportunities. You serve by using your spiritual gifts, skills, and passions to glorify God. All of us must work together for the church to function as God intended.

Go moves you outside the church and into the community and the world. Evangelism and missions are ways to go into your community and the world in the name of Jesus Christ. It might be uncomfortable at first, but you will experience first-hand the difference Christ can make through you.

Connect, Grow, Serve, Go must impact YOU, the individual, before it can permeate your circle of friends, your Bible study group, and then the church as a whole. But balance is the key! We must be actively participating in all four areas if we want to be spiritually healthy. All Go and no Connect with God or other believers results in powerless activity and wears you out. A steady diet of Grow without the action of Serve or Go leads to unhealthy spiritual obesity and laziness. We need a balanced spiritual diet to remain fit and able to serve God in the ways He has gifted us.

The *YOU* lessons will help you Connect , Grow , Serve , and Go . Look for these icons throughout this issue. They will help you check and maintain your spiritual health.

CONTENTS

IN EVERY ISSUE

2	How to Become a Christian	8	Suggested Resources	160	Glossary of Key Words
3	Staying Fit Spiritually	9	YOU Church Story	162	Meet the Writers
6	A Word from the Editor	99	Scripture Memory Cards		Coming Next Quarter
7	A Word from the General Editor	101	How to Use Leader Pages		

FEATURES

23 AWESTRUCK

Worship at Its Best
by John Faison Sr.



57 CHRIST'S PEACE WILL SEE US THROUGH

by Cherise Bopape



85 THE IMPACT OF A WILLING WITNESS

by Larry D. Perkins



118 ATTRACTING NEW GROUP MEMBERS

by Ken Braddy



140 7 EASY WAYS TO BECOME A BETTER LISTENER

by Bill Patterson



140 TO BE OR NOT TO BE, THAT IS THE QUESTION!

by Dr. Mark M. Croston Sr.



UNIT 1 WORSHIP—MORE THAN A CHURCH SERVICE



11 **Worship Is a Win-Win**
John 4:10-14, 19-24
Leader Pages (pp. 102–105)



25 **Glory to God in the Highest**
Luke 1:46-48; 2:8-14, 16, 20
Leader Pages (pp. 110–113)



17 **Worship Redefined**
Mark 7:1-2, 5-9, 13
Leader Pages (pp. 106–109)



31 **All of Me**
Psalm 95:1-7a
Leader Pages (pp. 114–117)



UNIT 2 PEACE I GIVE YOU



39 **Peace in My Own Heart**
John 14:1-6, 27-29
Leader Pages (pp. 120–123)



59 **Peace When There Is No Peace**
Philippians 1:12-21
Leader Pages (pp. 132–135)



45 **When Differences Divide**
1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 4:6-7, 11-13
Leader Pages (pp. 124–127)



65 **Peace in My World**
Micah 4:1-5
Leader Pages (pp. 136–139)



51 **Can't We All Get Along?**
Colossians 3:8-17
Leader Pages (pp. 128–131)



UNIT 3 MY SOUL IS A WITNESS



73 **Reality Check**
Ephesians 2:1-10
Leader Pages (pp. 142–145)



87 **Now That's What I'm Talking About**
Titus 3:3-11
Leader Pages (pp. 150–153)



79 **Fact Check**
Acts 2:22-24; Romans 10:9-13
Leader Pages (pp. 146–149)



93 **This Is How We Do It**
Acts 8:26-37
Leader Pages (pp. 156–159)

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR...



“Time flies by when you’re having fun!” Growing up, when I said that phrase, I really meant it. My siblings and I, along with all the other kids on Myrtle Street, spent more time outdoors playing made-up games than we did inside watching TV or “cuttin’ up.” And when we were summoned indoors for dinner just around the time the streetlights came on, I’d say the same.

Now that I’m all grown up, I still use that phrase, but it has a much different meaning. It typically means I’ve been so caught up in checking things off my to-do lists, rippin’ and runnin’ from one event to another, or doing one more unexpected thing, that I’ve hardly taken time for me. But as Christmas and year-end approach, I’ve decided to check myself and slow my role! I’m choosing to focus on some One much more important. I hope you will too!

This quarter’s lessons challenge us to step up our worship; to be catalysts for peace in our families, communities, and world; and to be bold in sharing our faith with others. I pray you will focus on these things that really matter most to God.

Peace and blessings,

Beverly

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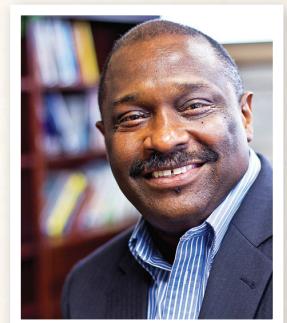
God is worthy of our worship and our witness! Worship and witness are big parts of the discussion in this issue of YOU. True worship ought to strengthen our witness, and that is just what we need these days. The new research suggests “Americans whose Christianity was nominal—in name only—are casting aside the name [Christian]. They are now aligning publicly with what they’ve actually not believed all along.”¹ This age needs Christians that call on the name of Jesus not only in worship in the sanctuary but in the streets. Can I get a witness!

In addition to this study, here is training that can help. Make your plans now to join us at the **Black Church Leadership and Family Conference**, July 11-15, 2016, at LifeWay Ridgecrest Conference Center in North Carolina. In addition to great classes and worship, we will offer another YOU Writer’s Conference. You must be preregistered for the Black Church Leadership and Family Conference and accepted for the YOU Writer’s Conference in order to participate. The first step toward being accepted for this year’s Writer’s Conference is to send an e-mail expressing your interest to YOU@Lifeway.com. The YOU Writer’s Conference deadline is April 30, 2016. If you are a writer or hope to be, this is your chance! It could be your calling not just to use YOU, but to speak into it. You never know where God will lead YOU!

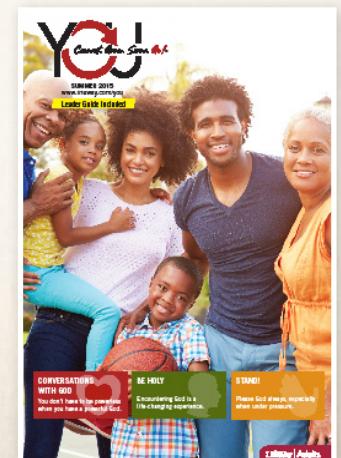
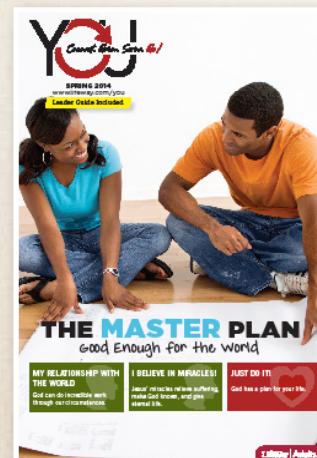
Dr. Mark A. Croston Sr.
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1. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/may/nominals-to-nones-3-key-takeaways-from-pews-religious-lands.html>

A WORD FROM THE GENERAL EDITOR **MARK CROSTON**

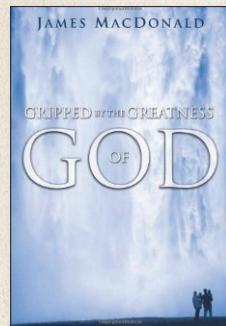


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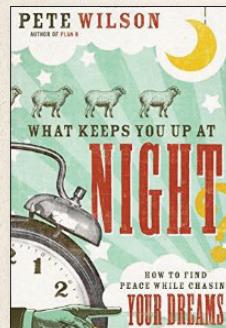
SUGGESTED DISCIPLE-MAKING RESOURCES

Here's a list of resources you can use to deepen your understanding of the units of study this quarter. These resources complement the lessons for this quarter and can be used for small-group study, midweek study, or personal Bible study.



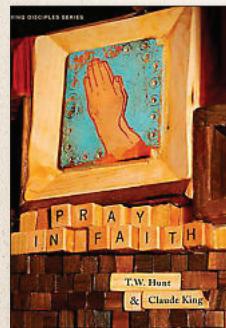
GRIPPED BY THE GREATNESS OF GOD (FOR UNIT 1)

Gripped by the Greatness of God by James MacDonald is an eight-session Bible study that uses selected passages from Isaiah and seeks to reveal the sovereignty, holiness, grace, and glory of God. Awed by His greatness, as participants come to recognize each of the matchless attributes that characterize God, they will also be led, naturally, to a renewed heart of worship.



WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT? HOW TO FIND PEACE WHILE CHASING YOUR DREAMS (FOR UNIT 2)

Uncertainty is paralyzing. And today's world—with all its expectations, responsibilities, and shortcomings—has created an environment ripe for the kind of uncertainty that has shackled an entire generation. *What Keeps You Up at Night?* by Pete Wilson is a six-session small-group Bible study that helps participants activate faith and trust in God that will propel them forward through fear and anxiety to peace, faithfulness, and trust. Get a proper understanding of the nature of fear. Learn to move forward despite doubts, questions, and fears as you step toward in your purpose-driven adventure with God.



GROWING DISCIPLES SERIES: WITNESS TO THE WORLD (FOR UNIT 3)

Growing Disciples Series: Witness to the World by Oscar Thompson and Carolyn Ritzmann helps you begin identifying the people in your circles of concern who need to know Jesus. As you pray, build healthy relationships, show God's love by meeting needs, and introduce Jesus Christ, you will begin to experience the power, fruitfulness, and joy of being a witness for Christ. This study is great for small-group settings in homes, churches, or community centers. The leader guide is included in this six-session study.

Visit www.lifeway.com or call 1-800-458-2772 for more information or to purchase any of these products.

YOU CHURCH STORY

Unity Baptist Church
District Heights, Maryland



Adult Sunday School Class
Unity Baptist Church, District Heights, Maryland

Unity Baptist Church is a multicultural congregation that believes in studying God's Word. Over the years Unity has tried several other teaching materials, but YOU fulfilled the teaching needs of our diverse congregation. The state of our Sunday School has improved considerably as a result of using this curriculum. Attendance is up, and people are much more attentive to what is being taught as a result of the cultural connections made throughout YOU. Seeing this diversity is heartwarming.

The curriculum is also easy to use and study, informative and relevant to the times in which we currently live. It's laid out in a way that reaches all audiences from a babe in Christ to the seasoned saint. It allows everyone involved in the study the ability and opportunity to find answers to tough life questions, gain spiritual strength, and fellowship and participate in real-life conversations through current and applicable lessons.

Through YOU our Sunday School class has grown numerically and spiritually and become more active and vibrant as a community of believers who connect, grow, serve, and go.

Reverend Dr. Tracy Gavins, Christian Education Director
Revered Robert Beard, Senior Pastor

We'd love to hear how your church or small group navigated the challenges of switching to YOU, the blessings and benefits your church or small group experienced since switching to YOU, and why you would encourage other churches or small groups to give YOU a try. Please limit your response to 150 words or less. Feel free to provide a photo (jpeg) of a class or group using YOU. Send responses to: beverly.sonnier@lifeway.com.



Unit 1

Worship—More Than a Church Service

UNIT 1, LESSON 1

The leader pages for this lesson are found on pages 102–105.

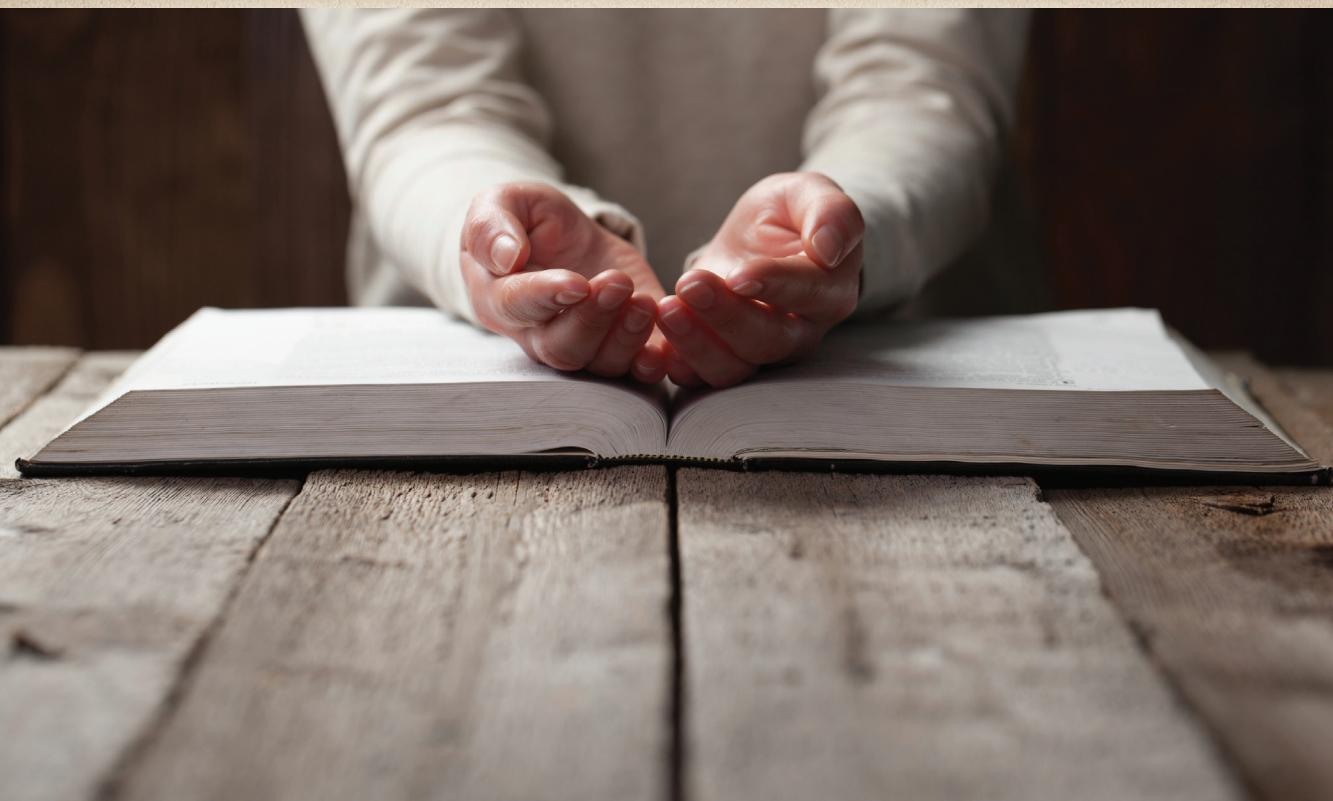
Worship Is a Win-Win

Background Passage: John 4:1-42

Lesson Passages: John 4:10-14,19-24

The Question: Why would I want to worship God?

The Point: Only God is worthy of worship.



KEY WORDS

a Living water: A fresh spring of water. The opposite is collected water, as in a cistern. Equated to God as the Source of life.

b Well: Jacob's Well, near the Samaritan city of Sychar. Jesus stopped as He traveled from Judea to Galilee.

c Our father Jacob: The descendants of Jacob's 12 sons became the nation of Israel.

d Prophet: A prophet was one who spoke for God. Jesus' insight into the woman's background led her to believe only one connected with God could know so much about her life.

e Samaritans: People of mixed Gentile-Jewish ancestry who lived between Galilee and Judea and were hated by the Jews.

For more information about key words (*), visit the glossary on pages 160–161.

MEMORY VERSE

John 4:23

But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship Him.

LESSON PASSAGES

JOHN 4:10-14,19-24

¹⁰ Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would ask Him, and He would give you **a living water**."

¹¹ "Sir," said the woman, "You don't even have a bucket, and the **b well** is deep. So where do you get this 'living water'?" ¹² You aren't greater than **c our father Jacob**, are you? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock."

¹³ Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. ¹⁴ But whomever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again—ever! In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up within him for * **eternal life**."

.....

¹⁹ "Sir," the woman replied, "I see that you are a **d prophet**. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, yet you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem."

²¹ Jesus told her, "Believe Me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You **e Samaritans** worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But an hour is coming, and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father * **in spirit and truth**. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship Him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

A Bible Study on Worship

Pistachios. They are so interesting to me. They are expensive, hard-shelled nuts with soft insides where the consumable nut resides. In order to eat the pistachio, you have to break the shell, throw the shell away, and then you can eat the nut. I believe this is where many of us are when it comes to worship, still trying to figure out how to get to the heart of it.

We enter into our worship arenas with hard shells. Shells hardened by our past, jobs, relationships, and so much more. Inside of us is the place God seeks to reside—in our hearts—yet too often we keep God away.

This four-week unit on worship is designed to examine:

- Why we have not let God in
- How we can allow God to consume us
- What happens when God holds us
- The life that happens when we allow God to lead us

Worship is not as complicated as we sometimes make it seem. The simplicity of personal activity will allow God to consume us from the inside out. Invite God to break your heart from the world's so you can worship into His love for you.



Why would I want to worship God?



UNIT 1
LESSON 1

It is championship weekend for college football. The winning team is going to return home to a street blocked off full of people cheering their names. Believe it or not, the losing team will too. Fan bases will celebrate that both were in the championship game. Worship is not an opportunity for us to celebrate wins or losses but for us to realize the privilege that we are in God's game. Every opportunity is a win-win when we worship. No matter the outcome, are you willing to worship at any time?

Focal Passage Outline

GOD FILLS THE EMPTINESS IN YOUR LIFE

(John 4:10-14)

GOD DESIRES YOUR WORSHIP

(John 4:19-24)

GOD FILLS THE EMPTINESS IN YOUR LIFE JOHN 4:10-14

At this time Jesus is on the "winning" team. He and His disciples have continued to spread the gospel by baptizing more and more people, even more than John the Baptist (v. 1). This fact upset the Pharisees. To avoid controversy with them, Jesus and His disciples left Jerusalem of Judea, heading north to Galilee through Samaria (John 4:1-4). This was a route most Jews avoided because of the animosity that existed with the Samaritans. They would take an indirect route instead, adding many miles to their journey. But Jesus felt a need to go through Samaria for a special Samaritan evangelism project.

Jesus shares His care for engagement with personal and spiritual baptism with this unnamed Samaritan woman. His arrival at the well interrupted her tradition of daily coming to the pool for water. Some think she avoided the other women who came in groups in the morning and evening because she was a social outcast.

When you come to church, who or what do you overlook in order to stay the same? Why? What might change if you looked?

Read John 4:10-11. Jesus initiated contact with the Samaritan woman by asking for a drink of water. His request does not seem out of place since He had been traveling and was no doubt thirsty. However, He surprised the woman. She was a Samaritan, and He was a Jew. Since Samaritans did not observe the dietary or cleanliness regulations of the Jews, taking food or water from one was even more offensive than talking to one. Jesus responded by telling her that if she knew the gift of God and His own identity, then she would ask Him for living water. The woman didn't understand.

How did the woman show her confusion (v. 11)?

The woman focused on the physical aspects of Jesus' response. The well was deep, and He had nothing to use for drawing water. So why should she ask Him to draw water for her? Also, there was no other source of spring water nearby. If He could not draw water from this well, then where would He get it?

Read John 4:12-14. Jesus was not talking about ordinary water. In fact, Jesus said that the person who drinks His water will never get thirsty again! Jesus described a substance from which one drink could satisfy a person forever. When we give life to our emptiness, it can block God's opportunity to fill us with more of Him.

Why do you think Jesus chose to offer living water to this woman, a female social outcast, rather than a male social leader?

The good news Jesus gives us is that when we make the choice to get connected with Him, to worship Him fully, He connects us with fresh, nonstagnant water—life-giving water. God gives eternal life! It is a gift no amount of money or personal stuff can provide to satisfy our emptiness.

Jesus used a simple activity, like asking for a drink, to engage the woman in a life-changing discussion. What does this tell you about the way God works? How will you respond to this awareness?



Diggin' Deeper



Emptiness

At some point in life just about everyone feels a sense of emptiness, where we lack meaning or purpose. And we often attempt to fill the void with activities, relationships, or other things that can't give fulfillment.

Emptiness means "to lack meaning or sincerity or to have no value or purpose." When we exist in emptiness, we block Jesus from moving us toward greater worship. The Samaritan woman is similar to many of us and to other spiritual figures. The good news is that Jesus always knows how to find us and fill us up. **Read the passages below and write down how God filled up the individuals.**

- Jonah 4:1-11
- 1 Kings 19:3-18



Did you know?

Jesus was not often alone in the Gospels. He was alone in the desert for 40 days (Matt. 4), in the garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14), and when He went off to be alone to pray on numerous occasions. The encounter with the Samaritan woman, talking with someone outside His group of disciples and sharing such intense information, is incredible!

See what these verses have to say about being alone with Jesus.

- **Matthew 11:28-30**
- **Revelation 1:9-10**

How do these verses challenge you to be alone with God? What does alone time with God allow God to do for you?

**GOD DESIRES YOUR WORSHIP
JOHN 4:19-24**

Remember cheering that team? Imagine you are the star on the winning team getting off the plane after the championship. As you march up to the podium to address the crowd, what would you like them to call you?

Read John 4:19-24. After describing living water, Jesus took the conversation with the woman to a deeper level as He probed into the woman's personal life. She responds by calling Jesus two different terms. First, "Sir." Second, "Prophet." The first was a term of respect; the second, a statement of his connection to God.

How do you view Jesus? As the Son of God? As a Prophet? Why?

Perhaps the woman asked Jesus a religious question to move the discussion away from this personal topic. Jesus in turn, pointed out that the location of worship was not what mattered. The Jews had an elaborate temple and system of worship. The Samaritans, even without a temple, gathered at a given location. This does not mean it is wrong to meet at church and worship as a corporate body. However, it is important to avoid substituting a trip to a place for an individual encounter with God.

Location doesn't matter when people truly worship God. Nor are tradition and personal history the driving forces behind what God desires when we worship. God wants us to worship Him, not in a certain place but in a certain way.

According to John 4:24, how are we to worship God?

God desires to have us fully present when we worship. If it means acknowledging tradition and history, great! But our eyes must be fixed on Jesus when we worship.

What clouds your vision when you worship?

Jesus confronted the tension between the Samaritans and the Jews by explaining that worship is larger than what one can describe. Worship is giving everything back to God while stretching ourselves

to see God. Just as we desire all of God when He blesses us, God desires all of us when we worship Him.

Why is it so easy for us to hold back from God when we worship?

Jesus shows us that our worship unto God requires two very simple, attainable qualities:

1. We acknowledge who God is, even if we don't understand.

Jesus tells the woman that we must worship God in spirit and truth. Worshiping God in spirit requires our faith to be activated to worship what is unseen to gain what is seen. Worshiping in truth acknowledges the lives we live and how living life with God will enable us to gain an understanding of the truth of God's Word.

2. We accept our realities.

The woman possessed the capability to give God great worship, yet stopped because of self-imposed limitations. Jesus shares with her that God desires worshipers who yearn to worship in spite of the realities they live in. God can always alter our realities when we accept the truth of His Word (Gal. 2:20).

SO WHAT? How does this apply to me?

This lesson illustrates that in the ordinary course of life, life-changing conversations can take place. The Samaritan woman is a "poster child" for emptiness. God wants us to worship Him alone, and it is a privilege that grows out of our relationship with Him. These lessons will help you apply this lesson to your life.

- *Since we know we are empty, how have you usually filled your empty places?*
- *What would happen if you responded to God with your truth instead of your lies?*

Live It!

God wants to know you so much that He will go out of His way to talk to you. Take that to heart! God's desire is not for you to live with a complacent attitude. He wants you to notice and feel that you need more of God in your life.

Apply these points to your life this week. Pray that God will give you the strength to yield your will and become honest about your control issues. Listen to God regarding the lesson and how much God loves you. Memorize the Key Verse (John 4:23) and rest in the fact that God wants you to have eternal life with and through Him.



- *After studying this lesson, what will you do to get your worship to match God's blessings?*

UNIT 1, LESSON 2

Worship Redefined

Background Passage: Mark 7:1-16

Lesson Passages: Mark 7:1-2,5-9,13

The Question: When is worship not worship?

The Point: Just because you call it worship doesn't make it worship.

LESSON PASSAGES

MARK 7:1-2,5-9,13

¹ The **a** Pharisees and some of the * scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Him. ² They observed that some of His disciples were eating their bread with **b** unclean—that is, unwashed—hands.

.....

⁵ Then the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, “Why don't Your disciples live according to the **c** tradition of the elders, instead of eating bread with ritually unclean hands?”

⁶ He answered them, “Isaiah prophesied correctly about you **d** hypocrites, as it is written:

**These people honor Me with their lips,
but their * heart is far from Me.**

⁷ **They worship me in vain,
teaching as doctrines the commands of men.**

⁸ Disregarding the command of God, you keep the tradition of men.” ⁹ He also said to them, “You completely invalidate God's command to maintain your tradition!

.....

¹³ You revoke God's word by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many other similar things.”

KEY WORDS

a **Pharisees:** A group of Jewish religious leaders who very strictly obeyed both God's laws and their own rules about God's laws.

b **Unclean ... hands:** Referred to purity, being ceremonially clean. The Pharisees questioned Jesus' disciples about this “tradition” that was added to the Old Testament laws.

c **Tradition of the elders:** An addition to the Scriptures, not part of God's actual law. See “unclean ... hands.”

d **Hypocrites:** Pretenders. Jesus often called the Pharisees hypocrites because of the conflict between their external actions and internal attitudes (Matt. 7:1-5).

For more information about key words (*), visit the glossary on pages 160–161.

MEMORY VERSE

John 4:24

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

1. How Long Can You Last?

John 4:13-14

Without water humans can live only a few days. Water quenches thirst, removes toxins, aids food digestion and transports nutrients to every cell. The Samaritan woman came to the well as was her daily routine. This particular day she met Jesus, Giver of living water. He would quench her empty love, starved soul, and satisfy her every need forever. Meet Him daily in worship and be satisfied never to thirst again.

Jesus, Lover of my soul, thank You for this life-giving water.

2. Whatever You Like

John 4:23-24

When asked what she liked, the intended bride of an African prince from a popular movie responded, “Whatever you like.” Jesus' desire is to be worshiped by those He chose as His bride. As believers, we are loved by Jesus, and His desire is that those He loves truly love Him back. Let us worship Him daily in spirit and in truth. That's what He likes!

*Son of the living God, receive my worship.
I delight to give You what You desire.*

DAILY READINGS

3. Don't do it!

Exodus 20:3-6

The tendency of modern-day culture is to esteem people as objects to be revered. “Icon” is a label affixed to celebrities, political leaders, experts, and others with extraordinary talent, acumen, skill, and even notorious behavior. God carved in stone by His own finger, Don't do that for “I . . . am a jealous God.” Jesus Himself was tempted by Satan to worship another god. He didn't, so be careful that you don't either.

Sovereign God, I will have no other gods before You.

4. Victory Shower

John 4:10-14

Notice how the championship team celebrates their victory. They take the thirst-quenching liquid from a huge bucket they drank from and pour all of it on their coach! We can enjoy the living water from the well of Jesus' love that fills our empty and longing hearts. As we celebrate the victory of eternal life, we lavishly pour that same love upon Him as “showers of blessings.”

Conquering King, from the depths of my satisfied soul, I give You all my worship.

STEP 1 REVIEW THE PREVIOUS UNIT

Building constantly on what you teach is important to the spiritual health of your class. Take time to review and apply the truths of the previous lessons at the beginning of class as part of Look Back, page 102. Identify some connections from the final lesson of YOU Fall 2015 (Unit 3, Lesson 5, “Leaving a Godly Legacy”) and the unit you are beginning on worship.

STEP 2 PREPARE YOUR SETTING.

Have you ever been comfortable in a dirty smelly room? Your teaching space is vital to ensuring the focus is on the lesson. The atmosphere you create needs to be attractive and present a warm and welcoming environment. If items from the previous lesson are visible, discard them so they do not distract from the atmosphere you are trying to set.

STEP 3 CONFRONT YOUR EMPTINESS.

This week’s lesson focuses on dealing with emptiness and seeing God in all places. Since you can’t tell people to go where you haven’t been, take some quiet time before class to think through some critical questions in your life. Identify the stories you do not want to bring up, but also identify the stories you wish to share as part of your testimony.

STEP 4 CENTER THE CLASS.

Challenge the class to be alone with God before the session starts. Center them on Psalm 139:23-24 or the Scripture God has revealed to you in your spirit. Explain how important it is at the beginning to set an intention for what we are learning and to listen to the silent voice of God in the loud moments of class discussion.



Welcome members and guests. Briefly review last week’s Bible study, “Leaving a Godly Legacy.” Share The Question, “What role do I have in moving my family forward?” and The Point, “Despite the past, you can get your family going in the right direction.” Allow time for learners to share how the lesson impacted their actions toward family members last week. Prepare learners for the new unit of study by giving an overview of the four lessons that make up Unit 1: “Worship—More Than a Church Service.”

YOU OBJECT LESSON



Hold up a cell phone charger. **Ask:** *What is this?* **Then ask:** *In 1988, what was the purpose of this item?* (They will probably say it didn’t exist or it had no purpose.) **Ask:** *Today, what is the purpose of this cord?* Record the responses, which will deal with plugging in, charging, etc. **If it is not mentioned, ask:** *What happens if you don’t have this cord for a day?* Explain that without a charger cord we have dead phones, causing us to lose connection to our jobs, friends, loved ones. **Say:** *What was at one time pointless in 1988, we can’t seem to live without today.* **Ask:** *Why do we overlook our charger cord until we need it?* Discuss responses. Explain that today’s lesson focuses on how important it is to worship God at every stage of life and how God knows us even when we forget Him. **Say:** *Every moment we need to carry our cord [Jesus] because He will keep us connected in the world.*

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the session, write the following question on the board: What are your favorite sports teams? As the learners arrive, have them begin the conversation by discussing who their favorite teams are. Encourage learners to share how they have cheered, attended games, why they love their team, etc.

Encourage learners to then talk about what makes sports so popular in general by asking (to include everyone): *Why do you think winning is so important in sports?* Direct a volunteer to read the lesson introduction on page 12. Point out that winning is not a bad thing, but it’s also not the only thing. Emphasize that while everyone wants to win and no one wants to lose, our relationship with God is consistent—no matter what. **Say:** *For us to always win, Jesus needs to move our loss to gain.*

Explain that today’s lesson reveals how Jesus led a Samaritan woman to look to Him to fill up the losses in her life with a major win.

DIG INTO THE TEXT

GOD FILLS THE EMPTINESS IN YOUR LIFE
JOHN 4:10-14

- **Open the session by asking:** *In what situations do people experience emptiness in life? How do they attempt to fill their lives?* (Examples: possessions, people, drugs, activities, work, etc.)
- **Invite learners to read John 4:1-14 silently. Ask:** *Based on the verses you just read and what you already know, name some of the empty places in the Samaritan woman’s life.* (Examples: She has had five husbands; she came to the well for water at a time when she would encounter few people; she knew little about Jesus; she knew a lot about tradition but little about Jesus, etc.) Share responses. Emphasize that the Samaritan woman overlooked Jesus but knew Jesus’ tradition. **Ask:** *How do you “size up” people you don’t know based on their physical appearance?*
- **Invite a learner to read the second paragraph under “God Fills the Emptiness in Your Life” on page 12 that begins “Jesus shares His care for engagement.” Ask:** *How did Jesus show that He noticed her?* (Answers: Get me water; He kept talking; He extended His stay at the well.)
- **Enlist a volunteer to read John 4:10-14 aloud.** Encourage learners to listen to how Jesus described water (living water, water that will never make one thirsty again, eternal life). **One at a time, ask these questions for discussion:** *What do you think it meant to the woman, a Samaritan, that Jesus initiated a conversation with her? Based on the woman’s questions, what did she understand about living water? Why do you think the woman referred to Jacob and his provision?*
- Use information from the learner pages and Leader Commentary (p. 105) to explain the distinction Jesus drew between water from Jacob’s well and the water He could provide (living water). Then read the fourth paragraph (p. 13) that starts, “The good news Jesus gives us.”
- Lead the group in discussing the third question (p. 13): “Jesus used a simple activity, like asking for a drink, to engage the woman in a life-changing discussion. What does this tell you about the way God works? How will you respond to this awareness?”

GOD DESIRES YOUR WORSHIP

JOHN 4:19-24

- Invite learners to share aloud some of their nicknames (i.e., Junior, J.R. Mookie, Sweetness, etc.) **Ask:** *What do those names mean to you? Why do you respond to names that aren't your real [given] name?* Explain that the woman called Jesus both “Sir” and “Prophet.” Both were terms of respect, but Jesus needed to show her the importance of His works, not His name.
- Direct learners to respond to the first question on page 14 under “God Desires Your Worship,” which asks, “How do you view Jesus? As the Son of God? As a Prophet? Why?” Encourage learners to understand the importance of how they describe God in worship.
- **Enlist a volunteer to read John 4:19-24. Discuss:** *How does Jesus’ response communicate the priority of worship? How did Jesus remove the emphasis from the place of worship to the intent of worship?*
- Direct learners’ attention to the Key Words Glossary (pp. 160–161) to explain worship in **spirit and truth**. **Ask:** *Why is it imperative to confront God in complete sincerity? Why is truth an essential part of worship?*
- Invite a volunteer to read the final three paragraphs on page 15 under “God Desires Your Worship,” that begins “Jesus shows us.” Encourage learners to acknowledge who God is in their worship and to worship Him alone. **Say:** *God is worthy of our worship.*

SO WHAT? HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?

- Like the Samaritan woman we all have needs. Some we can meet ourselves—at least temporarily—with things of the world. However, these are all quick fixes. Only God can truly fill the emptiness in our lives. And because God is bigger than any empty place, this lesson starts a unit of study to help us open our eyes fully.
- *Reflect on Jesus as the Source of living water. What difference does Jesus’ flow of life-giving water make in the way you worship?*
 - *To what extent do you depend on God to fill the emptiness in your life?*
 - *Now that you have read and discussed the Scripture passage, how would you answer The Question: “Why would I want to worship God?”*
 - *When have you chosen to worship God in the face of your past? How have you been able to use that experience to help and encourage others?*

CLOSE THE SESSION

*Why would you want to worship God? Just think about all He’s done for you and continues to do! Let Him know how grateful you feel. Is something keeping you from worshipping God? **Say:** If you are empty, invite God to enter into your heart today and fill the empty places with true worship and praise. Remind learners that worship means showing honor, reverence, or worth to God. It is the proper response by those who have experienced His life-changing presence. Call out each learner by name as you close in prayer. To avoid omitting anyone present, jot down names.*

Worship is a Win-Win

Lesson Passage: John 4:10-14,19-24

The Question: Why would I want to worship God?

The Point: Only God is worthy of worship.

This commentary is designed to help you engage deeply in the question, “Why would I want to worship God?” and drive home this one truth: Only God is worthy of worship.

FOCUS ON THESE POINTS

God Fills the Emptiness in Your Life (John 4:10-14)

Johannine literature sought to share the humanity of Jesus Christ, evidenced in showing the fatigue of Jesus Christ sitting at Jacob’s well. Jesus encounters an unnamed, poor, working-class Samaritan woman with questionable character.

Few people exemplify emptiness and loneliness more than this woman. She came alone to the well in the midday heat. Women usually came to the well in groups in the morning and early evening, the best time to do such hard labor. Most scholars think she was a social outcast.

Jesus surprised the woman with His request. Note that Jesus showed no interest in explaining His opinion of the rift between the Jews and Samaritans. Instead, Jesus told her that if she knew the gift of God and His own identity, she would ask for living water. He informed her that if she knew who had asked her for a drink, she would have responded to Him differently. The woman did not understand Jesus because she did not recognize Jesus’ use of *living water* as symbolic.

We see her character in Jesus’ later response (vv. 16-18) and that she was willing to engage with a stranger—Jesus. Jesus leverages this conversation to bring the woman to a full revelation of both herself and God. The free gift of God is not relegated to social or religious placement. The free gift of God is given freely to those who ask.

Jesus drew a clear distinction between water from Jacob’s well and the water He could provide. Jacob’s well provided water to him, his entire family, and their flocks. It continued to supply water for hundreds of years. The water given by Jacob’s well satisfied the thirst of generations in the vicinity of Schechem, but

the living water offered by Jesus meets the needs of all humanity for all time. Those who drink living water will never get thirsty again. This living water represented how God can fill the emptiness in life. The woman may not have understood Jesus completely, but she knew He was not talking about ordinary water.

God Desires Your Worship (John 4:19-24)

Jesus then proceeded to probe into the woman’s personal life in order to engage her further in conversation. Perhaps in an effort to divert the discussion from this personal topic, the woman asked a religious question. While the Jews had centered worship in the temple in Jerusalem, the Samaritans worshiped at Mount Gerizim.

Jesus raised the woman’s awareness of the future by telling her that in time they will no longer worship God on this mountain or in Jerusalem, delocalizing God from human-imposed boundaries (v. 21). Jesus educates her beyond her Samaritan eyes. “Salvation is from the Jews” means the Messiah will come from God’s historic people (Rom. 1:16; 11:18). Jesus refuses to allow her to stay ignorant to His presence.

Jesus’ response took worship to another level. He pointed out that the location of worship was not what mattered. This is not to say it is wrong to meet at church and worship corporately. However, it is important to avoid substituting a trip to a place for an individual encounter with God.

The woman’s response became an opportunity for Jesus to share with her what worship really is. Those who truly worship God must do so in spirit and truth. Because God is Spirit, He is not confined to any particular place of worship. When people confront God in complete sincerity (spirit) and absolute reality (truth), they can worship God. The interaction between this woman and Jesus affirms the truth that God wants us to worship Him. He is interested in worship alone—not where we do so. And true worship changes people. When we worship God as He desires, He fills our lives and enables us in ways we never dreamed possible.



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