



Small Group Notes - 'Encountering God Through Worship'
St Mary's and Sale West
Lent 2026

ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH WORSHIP

The season of Lent is a 40-day period which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. The 40 day period represent 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness before beginning his ministry.

Lent is a time of self-reflection, spiritual renewal, and prayer but that doesn't mean we have to stop worshipping God. In fact, worship is a form of praise, adoration, an expression of reverence for God.

The Greek word for worship is *proskuneō*, meaning 'to encounter God and praise Him', and through this Lent series, our focus will be 'encountering God through worship'. Just like prayer and reflection, worship is a way of life; a posture that directs us away from ourselves and more towards God. We worship Jesus as a wholehearted response of who He is and what He has done for us on the cross.

So, as we prepare to journey towards Holy Week, where we observe the death of Jesus on Good Friday and celebrate His resurrection on Easter Sunday, we will explore some expressions of worship which will enable us to examine ourselves spiritually and it is my prayer for you that through this series, you'll passionately pursue Jesus and His kingdom as we recall His glorious entry to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and journey with Him to the cross.

ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH WORSHIP

Worship as revelation

'Worship must be - Christ centered, Holy Spirit led, a response to the Father, about intimacy and service and always lead to transformation!' (Tim Hughes)

OPEN IN WORSHIP

Begin this week's session in a time of worship with 'What a beautiful name' by Hillsong. To listen to the song click the link below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5L6QIAH3L4&list=RDr5L6QIAH3L4&start_radio=1

INTRODUCTION

God reveals himself to us through creation, scripture, prayer and ultimately through Christ. Worship is therefore our response to the revelation of God.

Just think about the beauty of the sunrise, we've had no part in its rising, we just simply open our blinds to see it. Likewise, when we worship, we 'open the blinds' of our hearts to the beauty of God as he reveals to us who He truly is.

The whole chapter of Ephesians 1 is an outpouring of worship and praise. We are reminded of God's incredible redemption story (vs 3-14). In his prayer, Paul prays for wisdom and revelation that we might know the author of this story (v 17), and that the goodness of the story is revealed to us (v 18), and that we are filled with God's power so that we can play our part in His story (vs 19-23). This chapter is a brilliant example of how God enlightens our hearts and inspires our worship, our prayers and our lives.

READ

Ephesians 1:11-23

DISCUSS

1. In Christ we are 'chosen, predestined, included, marked, sealed, and guaranteed our inheritance' (Eph 1:11-14). Discuss what this means for you and how it shapes your faith in Jesus.
2. God reveals himself to us through scripture, song, sacraments, prayer, the

seasons and so on. Can you think of a specific time using one of these examples (or any other) where God has revealed himself to you recently?

3. Where in your life do you need the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Jesus better?
4. In what ways does the revelation of God, who He is and what His character is like elevate our worship?
5. Where in the world today do you think God is absent or silent and needs to reveal himself?

Some other passages to ponder on

Isaiah 6:1-8 (Isaiah sees God and responds in worship)

Psalms 19:1-4 (Creation reveals God's glory)

Hebrews 1:1-3 (God revealed through His Son, Jesus)

John 1:14 (Christ reveals God's glory in flesh)

Psalms 95:1-7 (sing for joy to the Lord)

PRAY TOGETHER

- During Lent we are encouraging each other to pray, 'Lord, today, who do you want me to connect with, outside the church', and then to respond to God's prompt to connect with those he puts in our path. Take time to reflect on the daily prayer now - How have you done in praying that each day? Who has God called your attention to? What do you notice God doing in them? How can we pray for that person?
- Pray that God would reveal himself to you and that you may know Him. Pray that you would know the goodness and truth of his story and that you would be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to play your part within God's story as the revelation of God shapes your thinking and living.
- Pray for our church, that all involved in leading worship will be inspired and led by God.

ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH WORSHIP

Worship as response

'Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship' (Romans 12:1)

OPEN IN WORSHIP

Begin this week's session in a time of worship with 'Gratitude' by Brandon Lake.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UoHrBNTfzIs&list=RDUoHrBNTfzIs&start_radio=1

INTRODUCTION

When God is revealed to us, we automatically and naturally want to praise him, worship him, thank him, and glorify him.

Think of yourself as a cup that overflows. Whatever is in the cup, fills you and spills up and out. In the same way when our hearts are filled with gratitude for who Jesus is and what he has done for us through his life, death and resurrection, gratitude and thanksgiving spills out from us as a response in worship.

READ

Colossians 3:12-17

DISCUSS

1. Which of these virtues 'compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, forgiveness and love' (Col 3:12-14) are most challenging for you to 'put on'? Why?
2. Practically how can you 'let the peace of Christ rule in your heart and the message of Christ dwell among you' (Col 3:15-16) in your coming week?
3. Why do you think thanksgiving is a powerful act of worship?
4. What do you have to be grateful to God for this week?
5. In what ways are you responding to the message of Christ this Lent, through your self-reflections, in your prayers, in your quiet time? How is God

prompting you to respond?

Some other passages to ponder on

Psalm 95:1-7 (Come with praise; bow in awe)

Luke 17:11-19 (The thankful leper)

Hebrews 12:28-29 (Worship with reverence)

Ephesians 5:19-20 (Singing with gratitude)

PRAY TOGETHER

- Time to reflect on the daily prayer we are encouraging each other to pray, 'Lord, today, who do you want me to connect with, outside the church'. How have you done in praying that each day? Who has God called your attention to? What do you notice God doing in them? How can we pray for that person?

- **Use these verses as the basis of your prayers this week**

Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand (Isaiah 64:8)

I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands (Psalm 63:4)

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well (Psalm 139:14)

ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH WORSHIP

Worship as surrender

'The heart of worship is surrender' (Rick Warren)

OPEN IN WORSHIP

Begin this week's session in a time of worship with 'I Surrender' by Hillsong.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgsqfjRslzA&list=RDjgsqfjRslzA&start_radio=1

INTRODUCTION

When we surrender to God in worship, we yield every aspect of our lives to him acknowledging and confessing that we trust and obey our Lord because he is awesome and holy and he alone is worthy of our praise and worship. Therefore, surrender can be viewed as the deepest expression of worship where we place every aspect of our lives under God's rule.

Imagine you're just learning to drive a car and your instructor gives you the theory of what you should be doing and how you should drive but never lets you sit on the drivers seat or gives you the steering wheel (at least not straight away). Likewise, many of us invite God into our lives, allow him to take charge but refuse or struggle to let Him drive us. Worship as surrender says 'let go, and let God: you lead and I will surrender to you in and through my worship to you'

READ

Genesis 22:1-14

DISCUSS

1. Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:7 says 'we live by faith, not by sight'. What does that look like in your life - living by faith, trusting God when you can't always see how things will work out?
2. Abraham responded to God's voice. How do you respond to God's voice in your everyday life? Do you hear from him? In what way? Perhaps think about joining the next 'hearing from God' session on zoom.
3. What are the areas of your life that stop or challenge you to fully surrender to God?

4. How does surrendering to God prepare us for Holy Week?
5. In Genesis 22:1-14, God tested Abraham to sacrifice of his son, Isaac. What have you surrendered and sacrificed in your walk with God?

Some other passages to ponder on

John 14:15 (Love expressed in obedience)

Micah 6:6-8 (What God truly desires)

Romans 12:1-2 (Offering our whole bodies in surrender)

PRAY TOGETHER

- Time to reflect on the daily prayer we are encouraging each other to pray, 'Lord, today, who do you want me to connect with, outside the church'. How have you done in praying that each day? Who has God called your attention to? What do you notice God doing in them? How can we pray for that person?
- Pray that by God's Word and Spirit, he will continue to shape and transform your hearts to live a life of surrender and worship. Pray that you will listen to God and respond to God's call on your life this week.

ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH WORSHIP

Worship as community

'When we worship together as a community of living Christians, we do not worship alone, we worship with all the company of heaven' (Marianne H. Micks)

OPEN IN WORSHIP

Begin this week's session in a time of worship together, listen to 'Living Hope' by Phil Wickham.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f2FXxDVO6w&list=RD9f2FXxDVO6w&start_radio=1

INTRODUCTION

Worship is personal, but also deeply communal—God forms and shapes us a worshipping people, worshipping communities. When we worship together, praising God, we encourage each other, and are fuelled and propelled to be witnesses to the world.

Imagine you are part of a musical ensemble, and you are performing a masterpiece at the Halle in Manchester. You alone cannot create and make that beautiful piece of music – it's a collaborative effort where every musician has their part to play and only when they play together in unison, something beautiful is created. Likewise, it is God's desire that we worship him as one community: many voices, yet one heart.

READ

1 Peter 2:4–10

DISCUSS

1. The early church in Acts 2:42-47 met together and they 1) broke bread, 2) ate together, 3) enjoyed each other's company and 4) at all times praised God in worship. If you were to rate which of these actions is most important to you on a scale of 1-4, where 1 is the highest and 4 is the lowest, how would you do?
2. Why do you think we need to live our Christian lives in community? Surely we don't need each other – we just need God? Have a chat about this.

3. How does 1 Peter 2:4-10 shape your understanding of church being people, not a building?
4. How does knowing you are 'God's special possession' affect the way you view yourself and live out your faith?
5. To step out in bold faith is risky and can be dangerous, but if we do this together then we have each other's backs (and God's too). How can your faith help you to step out and be courageous this week?

Some other passages to ponder on

Hebrews 10:24-25 (Meet together and encourage one another)

Psalms 135:1-3 (Praise in the assembly)

Acts 2:42-47 (Fellowship together and praise God always)

PRAY TOGETHER

- Time to reflect on the daily prayer we are encouraging each other to pray, 'Lord, today, who do you want me to connect with, outside the church'. How have you done in praying that each day? Who has God called your attention to? What do you notice God doing in them? How can we pray for that person?
- Pray that God will nurture and grow your relationships with each other, and with him. Pray for opportunities to tell the good news of Jesus to those you meet at work, school, in the community.

ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH WORSHIP

Worship as breakthrough

'The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing' (Psalm 23:1)

OPEN IN WORSHIP

Start by worshipping together with 'Battle Belongs' by Phil Wickham.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=johgSkNj3-A&list=RDjohgSkNj3-A&start_radio=1

INTRODUCTION

God delights when we worship him. Worship can be used as a doorway that God uses to lift us up out of the pit. The 'pits' that we face might be fear, anxiety, hopelessness, anger, despair, illness and so on.

Worship reminds us that God is not distant, but is 'close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit' (Psalm 34:18), and he leans in and answers us when we lift our voice to him.

When we worship God we enter into His promises and it creates a space where breakthrough can happen.

Imagine a car that's stuck in mud. Accelerating and spinning the tires won't help – you need traction. Worship is the traction that breaks through and allows God to pull us forward when we can't push ourselves out.

READ

Psalm 40:1-3

DISCUSS

1. Share a testimony about when God has pulled you out of the pit.
2. What are the pits that are holding you back from true worship to God?
3. What would it look for you to worship as 'you wait patiently for the Lord'?
4. Through worship, God moves closer to us instead of being far off. Has this always been the case for you?
5. God rescues and restores his broken world and broken people through his

son, Jesus. Who could you share the good news of Jesus to this week? Why do they need to need to hear that Jesus loves them?

Some other passages to ponder on

Psalm 34 (breaking through fear)

Psalm 51 (breaking through guilt and shame)

Psalm 77 (breaking through doubt and despair)

Psalm 116 (trusting God as breakthrough)

PRAY TOGETHER

- Time to reflect on the daily prayer we are encouraging each other to pray, 'Lord, today, who do you want me to connect with, outside the church'. How have you done in praying that each day? Who has God called your attention to? What do you notice God doing in them? How can we pray for that person?
- We have just spent time thinking about someone who we know that needs to know the good news of Jesus. Lift this person up to God in prayer.
- Pray together the words of Psalm 23

ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH WORSHIP

Worship the King

'Palm Sunday invites us to reflect on the paradox of Jesus' kingship, which is revealed not in power and splendour, but in humility and sacrifice' (Timothy Keller)

OPEN IN WORSHIP

Start by worshipping together with 'Praise is rising' by Paul Baloche.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=johgSkNj3-A&list=RDjohgSkNj3-A&start_radio=1

INTRODUCTION

Palm Sunday marks the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem which is recorded in all four Gospels. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, while the crowds waved palm branches and shouted "Hosanna!" (an exclamation of praise).

In the time of Jesus, palm branches were associated with victory and triumph, and the crowds also laid their cloaks on the ground, as a sign of respect and honour for someone of great importance.

The crowds worshipped and praised the coming king with cheers of joy, yet in a few days, they would turn to deny him, mock him and shout 'crucify him'. It was to be a week that would change the world and as believers, changes and transforms us to worship and glorify King Jesus.

READ

Matthew 21:1-11

DISCUSS

1. How do our expectations of Jesus shape our worship today?
2. Jesus gave his disciples very specific instructions. They didn't question Jesus but carried out his orders in perfect obedience. What sort of things or situations stop you from being obedient to God?
3. What does Palm Sunday teach us about surrender, trust, and true kingship?
4. What is one area of your life where you need Jesus to be king?

5. Think about intentionally inviting someone who doesn't yet know Jesus to our Easter services so that they can encounter the risen Jesus.

Some other passages to ponder on

Zechariah 9:9 (The prophecy fulfilled)

Psalms 118:25-29 (Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes)

PRAY TOGETHER

- Time to reflect on the daily prayer we are encouraging each other to pray, 'Lord, today, who do you want me to connect with, outside the church'. How have you done in praying that each day? Who has God called your attention to? What do you notice God doing in them? How can we pray for that person?
- During Holy Week, pray that God would reveal Himself to you afresh, and that through your devotions independently or with others, you would choose to surrender and live sacrificially as you live out bold faith in Jesus Christ our king.