

# FOLLOW CURRICULUM

## LESSON SIX

### Worshipping God Authentically

#### INTRODUCTION (5-10 minutes)

*Each person read a paragraph*

Today we're going to discuss the 6<sup>TH</sup> mark of a follower of Jesus. A follower of Jesus worships God authentically. Worship is a word that is constantly tossed around in the church; unfortunately, we often miss its biblical meaning. Many consider worship nothing more than singing praise songs or hymns, or perhaps just what happens on a Sunday morning (e.g. giving, preaching, fellowship, etc.). Few, however, heed Paul's command: "Therefore I urge you brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (Romans 12:1).

In the Old Testament, sacrifices and offerings were crucial for the nation of Israel. Grain and drink offerings were given as a display of thanksgiving (i.e. worship) for God's provision. But there were also sacrifices of atonement – the killing of animals – which showed the Jewish people the consequences of their sin and the price (death) required as a covering for that sin. Those sacrifices were a representation of what Jesus Christ would ultimately accomplish by His own sacrifice on the cross.

So what does it mean that our "spiritual service of worship" is to present ourselves as *living sacrifices*? It says that our worship is not our death, but rather our life – in the way that we conduct ourselves daily. Worship is not Sunday morning (though the corporate worship gathering is valuable and worthwhile); worship is how we live our lives in light of who Christ is and what He has done for us (hence why Paul says that he urges this action 'by the mercies of God'). As Francis Chan put it: "People who are obsessed with God have an intimate relationship with Him. They are nourished by God's Word throughout the day because they know that forty minutes on Sunday is not enough to sustain them." Worship can and should be a constant state of existence for the believer.

In John 4, Jesus explained that "...an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). By this, Jesus shares the importance of both theology and emotion in worship. When we truly understand the gospel, we cannot help but respond from the heart in praise and gratitude. Truth is found in the Word of God; but there is also an element of personal honesty involved in worship. We cannot claim to be authentic in our worship if we try to put on a mask and hide our true condition. Chan says that "People who are obsessed are raw with God; they do not attempt to mask the ugliness of their sins or their failures." God is more than capable of meeting us where we are, if only we will be vulnerable enough to confess that before Him and (at times) before others.

Finally, true worship naturally results in a life "on mission." Joseph Carroll asks: "have you ever noticed...that Paul never urges Christians to witness nor has he anything to say about foreign missions?...What is Paul always doing? He is consistently bringing you to Christ and leaving you with Christ." In essence, if we worship in an authentic way (in spirit and in truth; corporately on Sundays and individually throughout the week), our relationship with Christ inevitably produces the desire to share Him with the lost world around us. Worship fuels mission.

Today's lesson is a glimpse at the apostles' first experience of authentic corporate worship. There's more to the story than we might expect, so let's get started!

### **BIBLE CONVERSATION (50-55 minutes)**

*Read John 20:19-24*

- 1) Set the Stage: What events occurred just before this passage? When is this event taking place? Who specifically is in this room?
- 2) Given the context of the event, why were the disciples "in fear of the Jews"? What emotions were they likely experiencing at this time? Have you ever found yourself in a time of fear and trial? What might it look like to partake of fellowship in moments of need as the disciples did?
- 3) Why would Jesus' opening words to the disciples be "Peace be with you?" How did that meet the need that the disciples had in that moment? Similarly, what would it look like for us to come before God in an honest fashion, full of needs, and worship Him with our vulnerability (rather than trying to wear a mask)? Why would God want us to share our weaknesses and needs with Him if He already knows them?
- 4) In verse 20, why would Jesus show the disciples His hands and side? What is the reaction of the disciples when they recognize Jesus for who He truly is? How is this a demonstration of worship in spirit and truth? At a more personal level, what are some ways in which we have the opportunity to see the truth of who Christ is, and what Spirit-filled emotions result from such encounters?
- 5) In verse 21, Jesus sends the disciples out "just as the Father sent Me." How was Jesus sent? What was His mission or purpose? How is that purpose now transferred to the lives of His disciples (including us)? How is a weekly corporate gathering a catapult for the mission that lies ahead in our everyday lives?
- 6) Why is it important that Jesus offers a promise of the Holy Spirit's coming in verse 23? What role does He play in our mission to make disciples?

### **PRAYER (10 minutes)**

- 1) Praise God for something you learned or learned afresh during this lesson.
- 2) Ask for the filling of the Holy Spirit in your life, your group and in our church.
- 3) Pray for someone who needs to hear and believe the good news of Jesus.