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UNIT ONE

WORSHIP
TOGETHER

In Spirit and Truth

Written by: **JEFF NORRIS****UNIT ASSIGNMENTS** Find your assignments here: PERIMETER.org/r2-1**CONTINUE**

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- 21 Days of Personal Worship*

COMPLETE

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- Begin memorizing the books of the New Testament (
- see Learning the Books of The Bible on page 417*
-)

PRAYER

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- Create a
- prayer list*
- of people to whom you would like to make the gospel known

TRUTH

▶ BY MEMORY

“But the hour is coming, and now is here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

JOHN 4:23-24 (ESV)

▶ IN BIBLE

The word culture comes from the Latin “cultus” which means care or value. Collins dictionary defines it as, “a particular society or civilization, especially considered in relation to its beliefs, way of life, or art.” To say that a group has a culture is to say that there is some kind of shared common ground, usually relating to values, beliefs, and way of life. There are innumerable cultures at play in our world – some are tied to institutions while others are tied to geographical region, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and more. In fact, many of us belong, at least in part, to multiple cultural groups.

For this study, we want to consider a critical question: What is the culture of the church? Or, to ask it another way: What common ground should the church find together? The Word of God leads us to answer that question with one word: *worship*.

Christians around the world and throughout the ages have spoken in different languages, met in different spaces, and even on different days of the week. But the common element that unites all Christians is the consistent practice of gathering to worship God.

The Westminster Divines describe worship as the purpose of our existence, both personally and corporately, we are to, “glorify God and enjoy him forever.” To glorify God and enjoy him forever is what it means to worship him. We are to ascribe to him the glory he is due, and in doing, we are to enjoy living all of life in his presence and under his Lordship; worshipping him as the one true God who exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Practically speaking, how are we to worship him with our lives? Jesus provides us with answers...

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For your convenience, you can use the **IN BIBLE** passages in your personal worship. Remember to follow the **PRAISE** outline and the **5 Targets of Prayer**, asking God to open your spiritual eyes and make you a doer of His word.

PRAY FIRST : **READ THE TEXT** : **ASK QUESTIONS** : **INTERPRET IN CONTEXT** : **SUMMARIZE APPLICATIONS** : **ENGAGE WITH GOD**

1. GOD'S HONOR : **2. GOD'S KINGDOM** : **3. GOD'S PROVISION** : **4. GOD'S FORGIVENESS** : **5. GOD'S POWER**

JOHN 2:13-21 – Jesus startles and confuses the Jews as he cleanses the temple.

What was happening in the temple (the place of worship) that upset Jesus? Why was Jesus angry?

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How does Jesus reorient the worship practices of the temple and focus them on him? Why did the Jews misunderstand what he was saying?

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If Jesus was upset about worship becoming more about a place than a person, what would he say to our modern churches? What would he think of the way you evaluate churches or your personal practice of worship?

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JOHN 4:16-26 – In this well-known passage, Jesus violated cultural norms by engaging a Samaritan woman in conversation. As they spoke to one another, he taught her (and us) about true worship.

What do you think Jesus meant when he said, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth"?

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How does Jesus reorient the notion of a place of worship for the Samaritan woman?

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JOHN 14:6; 16-17; 26 – JOHN 15:26 – JOHN 16:7-15

How does Jesus describe himself in John 14:6? How is the Spirit described in John 16:13?

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According to John 14:17, where does the Spirit dwell?

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According to John 15:26 and John 16:14, who is the Holy Spirit continually pointing to, bearing witness to, and glorifying in his ministry?

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As you study these verses, what do you begin to learn about what it means to worship in spirit and truth?

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► TO SUMMARIZE

Given what we have studied and considered in these passages, perhaps a working definition of what it means to worship in spirit and truth is as follows:

TO WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH IS TO BE LED, EMPOWERED, AND STRENGTHENED BY THE INDWELLING SPIRIT OF TRUTH WHO NEVER CEASES TO GLORIFY AND BEAR WITNESS TO JESUS, WHO IS TRUTH.

All of the Christian life is to be one of worship, filled and fueled by the Holy Spirit, centered on the glory of Jesus.

In his cleansing of the temple and conversation with the Samaritan woman Jesus was taking the historic worship of Israel and centering it upon himself. Their worship practices, through the centuries, pointed to Jesus.

As Jesus drove the people out of the temple with a whip of cords, he was cleansing it of self-absorption, consumerism, idolatry, and commerce. In so doing, he reestablished what the purpose and focus of the temple ought to have been all along. He was to be the end of all their endless sacrifices, becoming the once and for all final Lamb that was slain for the sins of the people. He and his cross were the ultimate temple: the place where mercy and justice, wrath and forgiveness all converge to demonstrate to Israel and the world the immeasurable grace and love of the Father. This is why Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He wasn't talking about the physical temple building. He

was talking about himself, the real and risen Savior. As Bruce Milne states it, "Here he states clearly that the destroying and raising of his body will in fact lead to the replacing of the temple worship by a new spirit and truth worship, based on his sacrifice and living presence."¹

As Jesus conversed with the Samaritan woman, he further emphasized the shift away from a geographical location of worship to the object and heart of worship. Some quick history...

The Samaritans considered the only scripture to be the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Therefore, they did not give loyalty to David's decision to build a temple for the lord in Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 17:1-15). Further, there was a history of animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans dating back to the conquest of Israel in 722 BC. Thus, the Samaritans had

built a temple for worship on the southern slope of Mount Gerizim in Samaria rather than worshipping with the Jews at the temple in Jerusalem. That temple was destroyed in 128 BC, but the Samaritans continued to offer their worship (a mixture of Jewish/pagan observances) on the summit of Mount Gerizim.

With that context in mind, the Samaritan woman's statement to Jesus makes more sense: "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain (likely gesturing toward Mount Gerizim), but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." As Jesus was discerning her heart and drawing her unto himself, she was wrestling with the nature of worship. How and where is she supposed to worship? Jesus alleviates her distress by moving her attention away from the location of worship to the heart of worship as it is focused on the Triune God. His answer, as paraphrased by William Hendriksen, is essentially:

¹ B. Milne, *The Message of John*, *The Bible Speaks Today*, (InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 88.

The hour is coming when neither exclusively in this mountain nor exclusively in Jerusalem will you worship the one and only Father through Jesus Christ...worshipping in spirit and truth can only mean a. rendering such homage to God that the entire heart enters into the act, and b. doing this in full harmony with the truth of God as revealed in his Word.²

In doing this, Jesus is not minimizing the importance of corporate worship. He is shifting the focus of worship away from the physical rituals of Israel's worship to the spiritual nature of true worship.

We begin to understand a little more about the nature of true worship through these passages. Namely, that as God is a spirit, our worship is spiritual in nature, made possible only through the finished work of the Son, as we are united with him by the spirit of truth.

As Jesus taught his disciples in John 14, 15, and 16, the true worship of God the Father is unwaveringly Christ-centered and Spirit-fueled.

² W. Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: John*, (Baker Book House, 1953), p. 166-167.

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If a friend were to challenge you on the nature and source of truth, how might you engage them in conversation in light of what you've studied and learned in this lesson?

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Read Genesis 3:4. Satan deceived Adam and Eve with a lie. The consequence of this lie was humanity's loss of freedom. How does Jesus, as the truth, reverse the curse of Satan's lies in the garden of Eden? How does he reverse the curse of Satan's lies in you?

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ACCOUNTABILITY

Before your Journey Group meeting, use the questions below to examine your life in light of the truth you explored this week.

Is your worship primary ritualistic? Like the Samaritans and the Jews, has it become more about routine and obligation rather than a spiritual act of worship from the heart? If yes, in what ways?

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What will it look like for you to grow more in a lifestyle of worshipping in spirit and truth?

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Is there any part of your heart or life that you haven't been willing to surrender to the control of the Holy Spirit?

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Confess ways in which your preferences have been the focus of your worship and not Jesus and his glory. Perhaps these preferences are ones that make you feel intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually superior to others who worship Jesus.

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How will your personal worship and your corporate worship be affected by what you studied this week?

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MISSION

▶ PRAYING

During the Gospel Living series, you explored the what, why, how, and where of missional living:

- **What is it?** Sharing in Jesus' mission to make the gospel known to all people
- **Why participate in it?** The love of God displayed in the gospel compels and empowers
- **How is it manifested?** By sharing in word and demonstrating by deeds
- **Where does it impact the world?** Across the street, track, and ocean

Now let's think about *who* missional living impacts. Who are the people that Christians make the gospel known to? They are those who are not believers, and those who may have other physical, economic, or spiritual needs. Sometimes Christians refer to these as *the least* and *the lost*. You may find the least and the lost across the street where you live, work, and play, or across the track in your community, or across the ocean.

One significant element of missional living is growing in the grace commitment of missional praying for the least and lost. And this is best done by specifically praying for individuals or groups rather than generally for all the least and lost. As you develop the grace commitment of praying regularly for specific people, God will begin leading you into opportunities to make the gospel known to them through word and deed.

Creating a short list of people to pray for is the first step in developing a regular habit of praying for specific people. Who will you put on your list? Ask yourself these questions:

- **Who are the people (individuals or groups) that I am concerned about?**
- **Who are the people that respect my influence?** (e.g. friends, children, spouse, neighbors and colleagues)
- **What are the needs in my community?** (refer to the list of needs you created in Unit 3 of Gospel Living)

Your Mission assignment this week is to create a list of people for whom you will regularly pray throughout this year of *The Journey*. You will want to pray specifically for each person or group on your list, but your general focus should be that God would meet their needs and give you opportunities to make the gospel known to them through word and deed. Create your prayer list on the next page following the example provided. Then begin praying daily for these people and be prepared to discuss your prayer list at your next Journey Group meeting.

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EXAMPLE:

Name: *Tony*

Relationship: *Friend, neighbor, and occasional tennis partner*

Situation/Need: *Tony grew up in church but isn't a believer as far as I know. He is successful in his profession, but is divorced and sometimes feels bitter about it.*

Prayer Goal: *I want God to use me to help Tony see that hope and purpose are found in Christ alone and don't depend on his marital situation or professional success.*

PRAYER LIST

Person/Group:
Relationship:
Situation/Need:

Prayer Goal:

Person/Group:
Relationship:
Situation/Need:

Prayer Goal:

Person/Group:
Relationship:
Situation/Need:

Prayer Goal:

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SUPPLICATION

*"If one turns away his ear from hearing the law,
even his prayer is an abomination."*

PROVERBS 28:9 (ESV)

*"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
and his ears are open to their prayer."*

1 PETER 3:12A (ESV)

*"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything
by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving,
let your requests be made known to God. And
the peace of God which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and mind through Christ Jesus."*

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 (ESV)

How might you be missing out on some of God's blessings in your life when the Sabbath is ignored? Think and pray about observing the Sabbath each week.

My prayer request regarding the truth for this week:

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My prayer request regarding a situation in my life:

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My prayer request regarding living a missional life:

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Prayer requests from others in my group:

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“You have created us for Yourself, and our heart cannot be stilled until it finds rest in You.”

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