



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION: What's the first word that comes to mind when you hear the word "worship?"

Worship is meant to engage our whole person. We tend to misunderstand what worship really is in our culture and in some cases use worship in the wrong way. We can either use it too generically, to generically mean everything we do in church, or too specifically, to only mean singing. There are different ways and methods God desires worship, all leading us to see that the gospel inspires uninhibited worship performed with our whole person. Today we're going to look at how God called Jacob back to the place he worshipped God previously and use it as a moment to renew his commitment to God.

Read back through the passage before going through the questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What is your biggest takeaway? How was your experience with the Life Tool's this past week?**
2. **Why do you think we often view worship as something we do at specific times rather than an aspect of our being?**

When thinking of worship, you might naturally think of a Sunday morning service, joining together as a church body and singing praises to God. It is easy to think of worship as something we do at specific times during the week. However, the reality is that we all worship throughout the entire week. We were made to worship God, but because of the Fall, we tend to worship things others than Him. We worship the things that hold the most value in our lives. The Bible makes it clear over and over again that God is the only One worthy of our worship.

3. **Why did God ask Jacob to return to Bethel?**

Regardless of how many times we have failed God, He calls us back to Himself. The God who graciously takes the initiative in establishing our relationship with Himself is the same God who continues to call us to a deeper relationship with Himself. It happened to Jacob in Genesis 35.

Years earlier, Jacob encountered God at Bethel (Gen. 28:10-22). At Bethel, Jacob experienced a sense of God's presence and His purpose for Jacob's life. The events recorded in chapter 34 indicate that Jacob and his family were in danger of moving away from God's purpose for their lives. God directed Jacob to return to Bethel to renew his commitment to God. The first step toward spiritual renewal is to respond to the initiative of God, who calls us to a deeper relationship with Himself. The commentators quote below continues to explain this truth:

It was a call to a religious pilgrimage, as the special use of "go up" suggests. The pilgrimage was to culminate in the building of an altar at Bethel, which was a long-standing site of Canaanite worship, and by doing so to declare the name of the true God. The intent was to drive a stake into the heartland of Canaanite worship.¹

Our Creator's call to Jacob, coming as it does right near the end of his story in Genesis, leads us to view Jacob as the new Abraham. Just as Jacob's grandfather was called to offer up a sacrifice (Gen. 22:1-19) near the end of his life, so too is Jacob commanded to go up, fulfill his vows, and worship at Bethel (35:1). Once more we see God's good pleasure to bring His sinful people back to Himself even if they have spent years in the spiritual wilderness. Today He continues to embrace His prodigal sons and daughters, calling them to return again in faith and repentance (Luke 15:11-32).

4. To prepare his family for an encounter with God, what three things did Jacob tell them to do (v. 2)? Why were they asked to do those three things?

They needed to get rid of foreign gods, purify themselves, and change their clothes. A change of clothes, like a change of name (see v. 10). This answer was laid out further with the commentators quote below:

The purification was effected by ritually washing their bodies, much as was done later by Israel at Sinai (cf. Exodus 19:10-15). Jacob's command to change clothes (unique in the Old Testament) dramatically symbolized the transition from one state to another.

¹ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 420.

Indeed, the symbolism may have been universally understood in the ancient world, because that is what Pharaoh had Joseph do when he entered his service (cf. 41:14).²

a. Where else in scripture do we see this type of imagery from Genesis 35:2?

This symbolized a new beginning (see Eph. 4:22-24). Times of spiritual renewal are necessary because sinful actions and habits can work their way into our lives. We need to get rid of anything that stands between God and us. The commentators quote below explains the other scripture reference well:

And here Jacob's command to Israel to change clothes likely is where Paul derived the metaphor for the changed life, exhorting believers "to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life ... and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24). From Shechem, Jacob and his people would pilgrimage to Bethel as a new people.³

5. What might get in the way of worshipping God in your life?

Much like Jacob and his family, it's our sin and worshipping other idols that get in the way of worshipping the One True God. It's easy to not think that we have any idols because we don't have anything like what Jacobs family had but our idols just look different. Idols can be anything that becomes more important and valuable than God. This quote from the devotional below help illustrate this truth:

"Whom do you love above all else? Is it a child or a spouse? Maybe it is not a person but a job or a hobby? We must never think ourselves immune to the temptation to love something else more than our Savior. If we are not willing to sacrifice all else, we cannot be Jesus' disciple (Luke 14:33). He must be our greatest love, hope, and desire. Can others see that you love Him above all else? All of us should be known by our love for and service to Christ."

Encourage your group to be honest with this question and help them understand what idols can look like in our day an age.

6. What can you do to help your family experience a deeper relationship with God?

² R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 420–421.

³ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 421.

In this passage Jacob gave us all a good example of how we can help our family experience a deeper relationship with God. This example is explained well from the Ligonier devotional:

“First, Jacob orders his family to put away their foreign deities (v. 2) — always the first step for anyone who wants to serve the one, true God. Abraham abandoned the idols of his fathers ([Josh. 24:2–3](#)), and the first commandments given to Israel after leaving Egypt involved putting away all “rival” gods ([Ex. 20:1–6](#)). Moreover, Jacob’s injunction in [Genesis 35:2](#) showed God’s people that casting off idolatry was the prerequisite for covenant renewal ([Josh. 24:1–15](#)). Today, new covenant believers renew their dedication to the Lord daily by abandoning the idol of self ([1 John 5:21](#)). Whenever we sin, we place our desires in the place of God’s law, and thus we make ourselves lawgivers. But in turning from sin, we admit that we are not sovereign and recognize that only our Creator sits on the throne.”

The other practical way that can help your family experience a deeper relationship with God is making sure Family Worship is a priority for your family. We encourage all our families to stop by our Next Step areas for resources that can help with Family Worship.

7. What spiritual disciplines are you lacking in your life right now to help cultivate a more intimate relationship with God?

As we have talked about the different ways we can worship and ways we can help our family experience a deeper relationship with God, what are those specific spiritual disciplines that you need to grow in? Is it prayer? Reading more scripture? Singing songs of praise to God?

Whatever that spiritual discipline, encourage the group to make next steps to create habits to grow in those spiritual disciplines to increase their worship and relationship with God. **We encourage you to check out the additional resources from this leader guide as well as the resources at the Next Steps area.**

Conclusion

Worship is giving glory to God for His worth in the name of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit according to truth. We praise God who gave to the church both His Son and the Spirit, for in giving these two persons He had nothing left to give. In response to Christ's sacrifice, we become living sacrifices as we behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ who is the new temple and draws all nations to Himself (Isa. 2:2-3). This is our delight as Christians.

Close in prayer by praying for group members to hear and respond in faith and obedience to God's call to a deeper relationship with Himself. Pray that they would experience a renewed and deepened sense of God's purpose for their lives and His presence with them.



FURTHER STUDY

Devotionals-

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/jacobs-true-calling>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/purified-household>

Article –

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/worship>

Videos –

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-worship>