

THE CHURCH AWAKENING AN URGENT CALL FOR RENEWAL STUDY FOUR

Worship: A Commitment . . . Not a War, Part One

Selected Scriptures

Worship is the contemplation of God. It is being absorbed in Him alone who is of supreme worth and, therefore, worthy of praise.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WE spend most of our days in a hurry, frantically juggling tasks and rushing to more activities than our overloaded schedules can bear. Everything we do feels urgent, as if each new task rings a fire alarm demanding us to put out the fire *now!*

What happens when we bring our hectic lifestyles to church? Pastor Chuck Swindoll explains the consequences.

When we substitute the urgent for the important in the church of Jesus Christ, we emphasize work, activity, involvement, doing, producing, impressing, and accomplishing. But it leaves us feeling flat and empty. Exhaustion replaces satisfaction.¹

It's time to stop and reflect. What is truly important in our lives and churches? What is the top priority that so often gets crowded out by the clanging demands of a busy life?

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we'll see Jesus reveal what's most important to a Samaritan woman searching for meaning. She had come to the well to fill her empty pot with water, but then Jesus poured His life into her empty soul. She walked away a changed person.

Jesus revealed to the woman the reason God created us: *worship*. Let's explore worship in all its splendor and make it the central pursuit of our lives and the purpose of our churches.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Perhaps you feel like a casualty on life's fast lane—weary from overwork, burned out from long hours, doing more but satisfied less. As you open the Word, express to the Lord your longing to worship Him as the true and living God and find contentment in Him alone. Let this prayer guide you.

Father, I come to the Word today hungry to be satisfied by Your presence. I come seeking to worship You and adore You and to express how worthy You are of my praise. You have expressed Your love to me through Your Son. He has captured my heart, and I long to follow Him as I learn from His words. In His name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus encountered the woman at the well on His way through Samaria. The Jews despised the half-blood Samaritans, who had established a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. According to the notes in the NET Bible, the grudge between the groups went back centuries:

After the exile the Samaritans put obstacles in the way of the Jewish restoration of Jerusalem, and in the 2nd century B.C. the Samaritans helped the Syrians in their wars against the Jews. In 128 B.C. the Jewish high priest retaliated and burned the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim.²

The conflict between Jews and Samaritans was the original “worship war,” and it raged on and on with little hope of peace. But then, in His conversation with a broken Samaritan woman, Jesus cast a vision of a new way to worship. Jesus was ushering in a messianic era in which all sinful humanity, regardless of cultural differences, can worship God through Him.



Observation: The Irreplaceable Priority

Observation is the first step of *Searching the Scriptures*, in which we look closely at what the passage says before we explore what it means.



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Put yourself into the scene John described in the opening verses of John 4. Feel the heat of the midday sun and the dryness in your parched throat. Picture the ancient well that God had provided to quench the thirst of His people since the days of Jacob. Write down what you observe in *John 4:1–7*.

Use the following chart to record the dialogue between Jesus and the woman along with the subtext. “Subtext” is the unspoken communication between characters based on what they are doing, thinking, or feeling.

For example, when Jesus asked the woman for a drink of water, he communicated more than the question itself (John 4:7). He was reaching across racial and social barriers with an open hand of acceptance and an offer of relationship. John helped his readers grasp the shocking nature of Jesus’ gracious action by commenting that “the woman was surprised” and “Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans” (4:9).

As you summarize the dialogue in the chart, try to fill in the subtext based on John’s commentary and the woman’s reactions.



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Verses	Jesus' Words	The Woman's Reaction	Subtext
<i>John 4:7-9</i>	"Please give me a drink."	"You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?"	The woman communicates suspicion and distrust of Jesus.
<i>4:10-12</i>			
<i>4:13-15</i>			
<i>4:16-20</i>			
<i>4:21-26</i>			



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According to *John 4:28–29*, what did the woman do? She put the living water Jesus offered to her lips and believed in Him as Messiah. What did her actions communicate about how Jesus changed her life?

When we personally connect with God through Christ, we can't keep the worship from bubbling over. Praise is the natural response of "true worshipers" who "worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). Let's take a closer look at what Jesus meant by *worship* and how it sets us free to experience the purpose for which God made us.

God seeks our worship. When we awaken in the morning, God seeks our worship. As we go through the day, God seeks our worship. He wants us to worship as we drive our car, rear our children, and walk alongside our spouses. When we're alone or with others, God wants our worship. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: The Primary Purpose of the Church

For both the Jews and Samaritans, worship depended on the location of the temple—the *place of meeting* between God and humankind. Only at the temple could priests atone for the sins of the nation and the people could come near to God in praise and worship.

Jesus, however, shattered this assumption about worship: "The time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem" (John 4:21).



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To what “time” was Jesus referring? What will happen at this time, and why will the temple no longer matter? You can use commentaries or other Bible study resources to answer interpretive questions, including online sources such as [Constable’s Notes](http://netbible.org) at netbible.org.

What did Jesus mean by stating that “salvation comes through the Jews” (John 4:22)? How would the Jewish Messiah save the world and replace the need for temple sacrifices, according to [Isaiah 53:4–6](#) and [Hebrews 9:24–28](#)?

Because “God is Spirit,” Jesus said, we must worship “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). What did Jesus mean? How does worshipping in spirit and truth free us from needing a certain place of worship, style of worship, or time of worship?

We gather as the body of Christ at church for a unique worship experience, which is a practice that goes back to the first church in Jerusalem. Let’s take a closer look at how these believers worshiped.



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The purpose of the church is to cultivate worshipers. It's a place where we learn about God so that our worship of Him becomes deeper, more meaningful, and understandable. Worship turns our full attention to the only one worthy of it. When you have worshiped, there is something so deeply satisfying and gratifying words cannot describe it.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: A Church That Put Worship First

The first believers “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). [Acts 2:43–47](#) illustrates these four expressions of worship with more specifics. In what ways do these verses describe worship at the center of the early Jerusalem church?

What principle or principles about worship can you draw from the example of the early church?

“Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe.” What was that? I can’t explain it to you. I just know when it’s not there. Our souls need to be nourished. Our hearts need to be lifted up. There needs to be a sense of awe in a worship service. It’s the presence of God.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Application: Making Worship the Main Thing

Our relationship with God is built on worship. When we worship, we see God in His proper place—supreme in authority, higher than all created things, magnificent in wisdom and purity. We also see ourselves in proper perspective—dependent on God for life, grateful to God for His grace, reliant on God for direction.

Worship naturally flows out of our hearts when we focus on God and His splendor. With the psalmist, we lift our voices,

*I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done. (Psalm 9:1)*

Take a moment now to express your praise to the Lord. What marvelous things has He done for you?

Living under the tyranny of the urgent, are you too busy putting out fires to give God a thought? What can you do to cool the heat of urgent things to find spiritual warmth in worship? How can you carry that closeness with God into every segment of your life?



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Jesus said, “The Father is looking for those who will worship him” (John 4:23). May the Father find those whom He is seeking at our churches and throughout the week. May the glory of heaven trickle down and seep into the soil of our lives as we worship the Lord in everything we do.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, in these quiet moments of reflection, may I see Your glory and majesty. May I magnify You as I diminish and deny myself. Occupy me with the most important thing, which is to keep You in my thoughts and to find in You hope and meaning. I seek Your will above all else, and I wait on You for guidance. Fill me with Your joy and sustain me with Your love. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *The Church Awakening: An Urgent Call for Renewal* (New York: Faith Words, 2010), 112.
2. NET Bible, John 4:4, note 8, netbible.org/bible/John+4.

