

## Reaching forward #2 – Opening Myself to God Through Worship

[Slide 1] Discipleship 2 Opening Myself to God by Participating in Regular Corporate Worship

[Slide 2] What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? How would I recognize a disciple if I met one? How can I be an active, vibrant disciple? We are describing a disciple by using the acronym *FORWARD*.

[Slide 3] As a part of the Seventh-day Adventist movement, and recognizing our prophetic role in history, a disciple of Jesus Christ is one who is growing in an authentic relationship with God and others.

I will commit to: **REACHING FORWARD**

[Slide 4] Following God through daily the spiritual practices

[Slide 5] Opening myself to God by participating in regular corporate worship

When we talk about worship we are drawn, first, to a precious time of worship. It is described in our fundamental belief, “The Sabbath

[Slide 6] The beneficent Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this

[Slide 7] seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of

[Slide 8] our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. **Joyful** observance of this holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts.”

[Slide 9] The world teaches us that we should place ourselves at the center of our worldview.

[Slide 10] A disciple has a focus that places God at the center of their “world view.” Worldview is defined as:

1. The overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world.
2. A collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group.

We might say, “world outlook”

[Slide 11] Matthew 22:37-39 records Jesus' instruction on how to focus our world view.

37 Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 'This is the first and great commandment. 39 'And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

“Scripture makes it clear that you love God by worshipping Him. The two great acts of God in the Old Testament are His creation of the world and His deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery. Both show God's love and concern for the world and form the reason for all worship. Since God has created and redeemed us, the starting point always is the worship response to God's actions. We must love/worship Him with all our hearts and souls” (Dybdahl pp. 21-22). (In this section, we quote from Jon L. Dybdahl's book, *Satisfying the Longing Hunger of Your Soul*.)

[Slide 12] God's commandments in Exodus 20:1-8 highlight our relationship to our Creator and Redeemer.

*20:1 And God spoke all these words, saying:*

*2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

*3 "You shall have no other gods before Me.*

*4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image...*

*7 "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain...*

*8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

"A close look at those first four commandments reveals that they *all* deal with worship and are the reason for true worship—Yahweh God is the one who has delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery.

All calls to true worship stem from the convicting power of that truth about God's redemption" (Dybdahl, p. 23).

The fourth commandment speaks of keeping the Sabbath holy in order to remember God as Creator and Savior. It sets aside time to remember Him. Love requires opportunities for remembrance so it is the central part of worship. The fourth commandment sets aside and protects a weekly time to love and worship God.

Take a minute with me to remember a particularly precious gift you have been given. What kind of pictures and feelings come to mind. I saw some of you smile to yourselves. Those memories are real and pleasant. Thinking of that gift and the person that gave it may have even motivated you to make a mental note to yourself to call or write to that person to say, "Thank you!" again.

[Slide 13] "When Scripture talks about worship, it uses a wonderfully "rich vocabulary in regards to worship, probably fuller than that concerning any other concept. English stretches to do justice. Words include [click to add] "reverence," "glorify," "honor," "praise" (four different Hebrew words), "magnify," "bow down," "fear," "bless," "extol," "adore," [click to add] "give thanks." -- Human language and concepts find themselves taxed to the limit when the worthiness of God is the subject of expression. (Dybdahl, p. 26). Our praise of God is our, "Thank you!" to Him; He is worthy.

As we respond deeply and personally to our Savior, we can't be apathetic spectators. We become joyful participants in worship. Our feelings become a part of our response to God, even as our brains, thinking processes, respond to His truth. Jesus called for all worshippers to "*worship in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:23). Our hearts and our minds are involved in worship.

[Slide 14] Let's turn together to a picture from Scripture of true worship found in Revelation 5:11-13.

*<sup>11</sup> Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup>saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" <sup>13</sup>And every creature*

*which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!"*

Every time I read this passage, I think of a favorite hymn, "Worthy, Worthy Is the Lamb." I can't wait to sing that song before God's throne with you and a vast multitude of other believers. Won't that be a wonderful, joyful, moving worship time! "Worship is not only the most important activity of believers in the Bible and the core of our response to God—it is even important in heaven" (Dybdahl, p. 28).

The chorus of praise songs bursts forth from *"every creature in heaven and earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them."*

[Slide 15] A tax assessor is said to have come to a home and asked the man of the house to list his possessions. This was his answer:

First, I have everlasting life.

Second, I have a mansion in heaven.

Third, I have peace that passes understanding.

Fourth, I have joy unspeakable.

Fifth, I have divine love that never fails.

Sixth, I have a faithful wife.

Seventh, I have healthy, happy, obedient children.

Eighth, I have loyal friends.

Ninth, I have songs in the night.

Tenth, I have a crown of life.

The assessor closed his book and said, "Sir, you are a very rich man, but your possessions are not subject to tax."

Worship is a central theme in the Bible and for each of God's created children: us! Why is it so important? Why should we worship together each Sabbath? Why do God's creatures worship Him here and in heaven? The answer: Worship shows we understand God's grace and mercy; our most priceless treasure.

"When we earn something, we do not worship the giver. After all, we *deserve* what we have received. When I get my salary, I do not worship the one signing my check, because I've worked for that money.

Rather, worship is so central because it vividly demonstrates a response to something *undeserved*. God's deliverance of us from sin does not have its basis on our goodness. There is no way we deserved the grace that we received and no way that we can repay it. The only response we can make is worship as we acknowledge and clearly realize the tremendous love and grace that we have received. To fail to worship is to misunderstand or ignore grace, the core of Christian belief" (Dybdahl, p. 24).

A man told a story about the time of his son's sixth birthday was approaching. He had mentioned he wouldn't mind a party, and as his son usually was very specific about the kind of presents he liked so the dad asked him what he could get him. Bill expected a well planned reply, such as "I'd like a baseball glove; you can find it at Toys-R-Us, aisle 6, below the batting helmets, or a



Parcheesi board; the games are in alphabetical order in aisle 1; its between the Pac Man and Pay Day.” But his son’s request was a bit different. He said, “Dad, I’d like a ball to play with for my birthday.”

Bill said, “Great, what kind of ball?” “Oh, I don’t know, either a football or a soccer ball.”

“Well, which would you want more?” He said. The son thought about it. Then he said, “If you have some time to play ball with me this year, I’d really like a football so we could throw it back and forth in the back yard. But if you’re gonna be real busy this year, maybe you just better get me a soccer ball, because I can play soccer with the rest of the kids in the neighborhood.”

The dad thought about this and said, “Let me surprise you. How does that sound?”

And the little boy smiled and said, “Oh that would be great Dad. I really love you.”

Then Bill went in and shared this little encounter with his wife and together they agreed, their son was not so much interested in the gift. He was interested in the giver.

Worship comes full and free from our hearts as an offering to our God who is worthy of that worship. The congregation is not the audience for worship—God is!

## [Slide 16] **Practical Steps**

Here are some practical steps to make you and your church’s worship more complete.

**First**, You must spend time reflecting on, or gaining, a new experience of God’s grace, mercy, love, and awesomeness.

When Isaiah met God in the sanctuary as recorded in Isaiah 6:1-8, he fell on his knees, “*Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips... my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts*” (v. 5).

We also see God’s forgiveness and cleansing and divine commissioning. Such a realization about God is not a doctrine or theology, but a whole-person insight that affects all that we are.

[Slide 17] **Second**, we must each, personally and deliberately act and react in response to God. Kneel and thank Him for His goodness.

Sing a song or write a poem as an offering for what He has done for you.

Stand in awe and praise God when you see a beautiful sunrise, or the bright sparkle of a myriad stars.

Lift your hands and offer Him all you are.

Speak your praise out loud. If you don’t feel like you have the right words, uses a favorite Psalm to voice your praise. You will be fulfilling the essence, the core of a believer’s life; to worship our God who is worthy! You will be surprised by His presence and the response will grow and the presence will deepen. Make worship a major part of your personal private devotional time.

[Slide 18] **Third**, let your new experience with God transform your Sabbath morning, corporate worship.

How does this happen?

Pause before entering the church and thank God for a place where His Name can be praised.

Ask Him to move in you and in others during the service.

Enter the place of worship with joy, thanking God for inviting you and for another week of life.

Look at other parishioners as brothers and sisters in worship and thank God for them.  
Kneel briefly as you sit down and then start your worship immediately.  
Participate fully in every part of the service, listening to the prayers and singing the songs from your heart.

Do everything as an offering to God.

You are there not to *get* a blessing, but to *give* a blessing, having come to bless and worship God by joining in a corporate worship time. Not everyone will know what you are doing, but if only a few others will join you in this attitude of joy in worship, it will transform the spirit of the service. The worship service will become different even though outwardly it appears to remain the same.

Here are a few other intentional steps that you can take to make the Sabbath worship time more focused on honoring God.

[Slide 19] Practical worship planning:

1. Plan ahead for every worship service. When we plan for a family reunion or wedding, we consider every detail, preparing weeks ahead of time. Be intentional about the details of the worship service, asking people well in advance to offer a ministry in music or children's story or Scripture reading. The goal is for them to prepare and practice their part so they will be more at ease and more effective as they serve.
2. Choose all the components of the worship service to match the theme of the pastors' sermon. The pastor plans his/her preaching schedule in advance. Ask him/her to share the main Scripture passage he/she will preach from and their theme thought (thesis statement). Then when you ask someone to sing a special song or story, they can choose one that matches. This will make the whole message of the Sabbath morning worship remain in the congregation's hearts and minds more clearly.
3. Involve more members of your congregation in worship leadership. Our youth, and young adults, boys and girls can be mentored to be responsible and careful members of the up front worship team. In this effort you will be mentoring them for leadership and valuing their presence in worship.  
We can also involve the congregation in worship, make the worship more participatory, not only through the singing of hymns, but with responsive Scripture readings, or narrative readings. Those who are artistically talented can be involved in making banners to hang in the front of the sanctuary during a sermon series on one topic. Or members with the artistic talent of song or poetry writing could write a theme song for the series. There are many creative ways to involve even our littlest ones in God-honoring worship.
4. Remove the distractions from worship by doing sound checks for musicians and speakers well before the worship hour. And by making sure all the equipment is in working order before Sabbath.

## [Slide 20] **Conclusion**

God is the audience. He receives our praise/worship.

Do you remember the story of the woman who broke the alabaster box of perfume and anointed Jesus? Jesus “knew that in this act of service she had expressed her gratitude for the forgiveness of her sins... It gladdened His heart with the assurance of her faith and love” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 560).

Our worship is most beautiful as it comes from a heart that knows God, and the wonder of His precious gift of salvation, as a personal experience. Study comes before worship.

Evangelism is a result of worship. As we truly experience a relationship with our Savior, we want to worship Him. We admit our unworthiness and celebrate God’s grace. Then we are compelled to invite others to have that same joyful experience with Him.

Our initial and true response to God’s action and presence is worship. That never ends. The book of Revelation portrays the inhabitants of heaven in worship forever. Many things begin and then end. But worship for true believers never ceases.

[Slide 21] How do we live a life of worship? Let’s read Matthew 22:37-39 again.

37 *Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 "This is the first and great commandment. 39 "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*

[slide 22] Let’s take a few moments to stop and spend some time doing a spiritual practice.

Please take out the first activity sheet Building A Thematic Worship Service. Share this activity together at your table. You will need your Bible and a church hymnal. We have allowed 15 minutes for this activity. Then we will ask you to report to the group by table. Don’t be afraid to be creative.

[slides 23-27] You might have chosen a chorus that has become the theme song for your study time during the discipleship series or have been singing #330 “*Take My Life and Let It Be.*” Close with a benediction.