

# RTM

reaching/teaching/ministering curriculum

## September 7, 2008 Worship that Is Worth It Isaiah 6:1-8

### MINISTERING HELPS

#### Group Prayer

Remind your group that we don't just need to pray for the sick and people's problems. We also need to be passionately praying for those who are not believers. Ask members to share first names or initials of those they know who are lost. Write these on the board and have a special time of prayer for them.

#### Stay Connected

If you have any members or prospects who are absent today, make sure each name is assigned to someone in the class who will contact them this week. Make sure they know about what you are planning for the 28<sup>th</sup> of September.

### REACHING HELPS

September 28<sup>th</sup> is COME AND BRING SOMEONE SUNDAY! In preparation for this day, we need EVERY CLASS to invite EVERY MEMBER and EVERY PROSPECT to be here on that date. A day like this can go a long way to reclaim members who have fallen away and connect prospects who haven't joined yet.

Could your class have a special breakfast, lunch or unique Bible study time that day?

Will your class make sure that EVERY member and prospect gets a personal invitation?

Let's do our best to claim and reclaim everyone who needs to be in a BFG on September 28<sup>th</sup>.

### TEACHING HELPS

Today, Pastor Chad begins a new sermon series called VITAL SIGNS. It is designed to help us take a look at spiritual areas of our lives that need to be healthy if we want to be all we can be for Jesus Christ.

Today, we take a look at the VITAL SIGN of worship.

Today's lesson will take a look at five things that ought to happen any time we are really worshiping. Worship takes place in a multitude of places. It might be at church, at home doing our daily Bible reading, or just communicating with God during the day. The place doesn't matter, what takes place matters much.

Let's see what impact worship should be having on us through today's Bible study.

## ***Worship that is Worth It*** ***Isaiah 6:1-8***

Worship is a topic that many have great opinions about, but few know what it is really about.

Jesus encountered this with a woman He met at a well in Samaria (John 4). She wanted to make worship about “where” it was done. Today, many want to make it about not only the place, but also the style of music, the style of preaching, or the emotional response that is stimulated through a worship encounter.

While each of these issues is connected to various aspects of some parts of worship, to become obsessed with any of these “bit parts” can cause us to miss what worship is truly supposed to be about. This is what was happening to the woman at the well, and it is what is happening to many today as well.

David Edwards has written a book, Worship 365; and in this book, he dares to delve into what worship is supposed to be about, based on what the Bible says. The following excerpt helps us to get a sense of what real worship is all about...

*During my college years, I was fortunate enough to attend a university in the city where my grandmother lived. I spent many weekends at her house, willingly partaking of her southern home cooking over the cafeteria food on the other side of town.*

*On one such weekend I lay awake in her guestroom, unable to fall asleep. I could hear a faint voice, mixed with the sound of crying, echoing down the hallway from her bedroom. As I got up to make sure she was OK, I could see down the hallway into her bedroom. She was kneeling beside her bed, Bible open in front of her, hands open toward heaven, worshipping the Lord.*

*I quietly slipped back into my room, not wanting to disturb this holy sight. I lay in my bed and stared up at the ceiling, remembering myself as the five year old boy, listening to my mother’s time with the Lord. God’s presence seemed so near, almost tangible. I felt so blessed and thankful for my spiritual heritage, as well as the privilege of observing my parents and grandparents worship the Almighty (cf. 2 Timothy 1:5-7).*

*Perhaps these glimpses of my past give you an idea where I am coming from.... God’s holy presence, that glory that shows up wherever He is honored, worshipped, loved, and welcomed, is needed today more than ever. Thus, the purpose of this book is to look into this holy subject, worship, within the contemporary church of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we use the word **worship**, what do we mean? Is worship just an activity that we involve ourselves in a couple of times a week, or is it also a biblical principle for everyday life? Why would the Holy Spirit want to empower believers to worship? Is worship a time and space event or not? With these thoughts in mind, God’s Word as our foundation,*

### **Teaching Points**

#### **Introduction...**

1. Ask members, “Can you tell me about a great worship experience you have had?” Ask them to describe the who, what, when and where of it. “Why was it special?” Be listening to see if they connect their experiences to a Worship Service or to personal worship (just between them and God). After several responses, if there were few or no personal worship responses, make sure to expand their paradigm of worship to include times of worship that are not at church, such as daily quiet time, a small group off campus, or other time of connecting with God. You may want to read the excerpt from Dave Edwards in the commentary about how he saw his grandmother worshipping to illustrate.
2. There are some strong opinions related to the topic of worship in the church today. Ask members to list some of the things that people argue about when it comes to corporate worship or personal worship.
3. Let members know that today’s lesson will point out five things that should be a part of every worship experience. At the end of our time today, we will compare these five things to the list of things people have strong opinions about to see what we can discover.

*and His Holy Spirit as our guide to all “truth and righteousness,” let us look into a subject that touches the very heart of God.*

*—Dave M Edwards, Worship 365.*

As you can easily tell, none of this was related to a Sunday morning. The real question for those of us who know the Lord is, “How’s our worship the other 167 hours of the week?”

William Temple, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, said, “To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.” Probably no other biblical passage exemplifies this better than Isaiah’s worship encounter found in Isaiah 6:1-8. In this passage, we can find the classic worship pattern- a Scriptural pattern that can be followed today. Let’s take a look at the five distinct stages within Isaiah’s worship encounter.

### ***Stage One- We Recognize God’s Awesome Glory, Holiness, and Power (v1-4)***

<sup>1</sup> *In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.* <sup>2</sup> *Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.* <sup>3</sup> *And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”* <sup>4</sup> *At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.* **Isaiah 6:1-4 (NIV)**

Though he doesn’t do it until chapter 6, Isaiah here tells of his call to ministry. The association with the death of King Uzziah places the event around 740 BC.

Isaiah’s call began with a vision of God. Three things struck Isaiah about God: He was **seated on a throne**, He was **high and exalted**, and **the train of His robe filled the temple**. In the most holy place of the temple in Jerusalem, God’s glory was evident between the two cherubim on the atonement cover over the Ark of

#### **1. Stage One- Recognize Who God Is... (v. 1-4)**

1. Have someone read Isaiah 6:1-8. Explain to members that this is Isaiah’s testimony of how he was called into ministry for the Lord. His unique call came from a vision that God gave him.

2. Explain that verses 1-4 give us Isaiah’s description of what he saw initially in this vision. What is it that he describes that we don’t see everyday on planet earth?

3. Explain that while we can get distracted by the throne, the robe, the seraphs and their flying around, it is important to realize that the main character of the vision is the LORD!

How is it easy to read a Bible passage and get distracted by the events or other characters in the passage and forget that the main character of every passage is God?

4. What was the thing the seraphs said over and over about God? (He was HOLY... explain that saying it three times meant that He was COMPLETELY HOLY (see commentary). Talk as a group about what it means that God is HOLY, HOLY, HOLY. (You might even want to sing the great hymn HOLY, HOLY, HOLY as a class and really focus on the words.

How does thinking about God being HOLY, HOLY, HOLY make you feel about God? When is the last time you really just basked in the HOLINESS of God? When we do this, we are adoring the Lord. Stage one of any worship experience whether corporate or personal should always be just focusing on who God is... truly adoring Him not for what He has done (that is thanks), but for who He is.

5. Why is this important? If you start with a focus on whom you are, what will probably be the direction of your worship? If you start with a focus on whom God is, what will probably be the direction of your worship? Discuss this as a group.

Help members to understand that the purpose of all worship is for us to conform to God, not for God to conform to us.

6. What might stage one look like corporately in worship? What might it look like in individual times of worship?

the Covenant. Therefore some Israelites may have erroneously thought that God was fairly small. However, Solomon, in his dedicatory prayer for the new temple, had stated that no temple could contain God and that in fact even the heavens could not contain Him (1 Kings 8:27). Therefore Isaiah did not see God on the Ark of the Covenant, but on a throne. Almost 150 years later, Ezekiel had a similar experience. He envisioned God being borne along on a great chariot throne by living creatures called cherubim (Ezek. 1). To Isaiah, the throne emphasized that **the Lord** is indeed the true King of Israel.

## Holy, Holy, Holy

*Text: Reginald Heber*

*Music: John B. Dykes*

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.  
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty,  
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,  
casting down their golden crowns around the  
glassy sea;  
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,  
which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,  
though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not  
see,  
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,  
perfect in power, in love and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth and  
sky and sea.  
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty,  
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

God's being "high and exalted" symbolized His position before the nation. The people were wanting God to work on their behalf (Isa. 5:19), but He *was* doing so, as evidenced by His lofty position among them. The Lord's long robe speaks of His royalty and majesty.

**Seraphs**, angelic beings that were **above** the Lord, are referred to in the Scriptures only here. "Seraphs" is from *śārap*, which means "to burn," possibly suggesting that they were ardent in their zeal for the Lord. Covering **their faces** with **two wings** indicates their humility before God.

In **calling to one another** the seraphs, whose number is not given, were proclaiming that **the LORD Almighty is holy**. The threefold repetition of the word **holy** suggests supreme or complete holiness. Repeating a word three times for emphasis is common in the Old Testament (e.g., Jer. 22:29; Ezek. 21:27). The seraphs also proclaimed that **His glory** fills the **earth** (cf. Num. 14:21) much as His robe filled the temple. As the seraphs cried out, Isaiah saw **the temple** shake and then it **was filled with smoke** (Isa. 6:4). The **thresholds** (cf. Amos 9:1) were large foundation stones on which **the doorposts** stood. The shaking (cf. Ex. 19:18) suggested the awesome presence and power of God.

Isaiah shows us the first stage of worship in these first four verses. In his encounter with God, Isaiah began by focusing on who God was. It didn't take him long to realize the awesome glory

of God, His perfect holiness and His incredible power. Many worshippers begin their worship experiences with God focused on themselves. They don't take time to center themselves on the Lord, because they are too self-centered. When we begin our worship focused on ourselves, it will be an unsuccessful effort in trying to conform God into our perspective and needs. When we take time to begin our worship focused on the Lord, remembering His attributes such as His holiness, His glory and His power, then we will be more apt to allow ourselves to be conformed to God's perspective and will.

## ***Stage Two- We Recognize Our Own Sinful Condition (v5)***

<sup>5</sup> *"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."* **Isaiah 6:5 (NIV)**

This vision of God's majesty, holiness, and glory made Isaiah realize that he was a sinner. This same response is seen in the responses of Job, [Job 42:5-6](#); Peter, [Luke 5:8](#); and the Apostle John, [Rev. 1:17](#). Isaiah had pronounced woes (threats of judgment) on the nation ([Isa. 5:8-23](#)), but now by saying **Woe to me!** (cf. [24:16](#)), he realized *he* was subject to judgment. This was because he was unclean. When seen next to the purity of God's holiness, the impurity of human sin is all the more evident. The prophet's **unclean lips** probably symbolized his attitudes and actions as well as his words, for a person's words reflect his thinking and relate to his actions. Interestingly, Isaiah identified with his people who also were sinful (**a people of unclean lips**).

The second stage of true worship is actually a correct response to stage one. Comparing ourselves to God, what else can we see (if we are willing to be honest) but attitudes, actions and desires that don't match up to His. We have the choice to pretend that we have it together, or we can do what Isaiah did and cry out to God. He knew in his current state he was lacking the holiness that he had just seen in God, and so Isaiah confesses his sin to God. He confesses that he is tainted by sin and that he lives with others who also are making choices that are not pleasing to God.

True worship includes confessing our sinful thoughts, actions and attitudes to the Lord. He already knows our sin, so pretending it is not there is foolish. It is also foolish not to let the only One who can remove our sin do so. Jesus died to take away the sin that keeps us from a relationship with God, and He also died to take away the sin that would break our fellowship with God. Calling out to Christ for salvation establishes an eternal relationship that cannot be broken ([John 10:27-29](#)). But fellowship can be broken between God and one of His children ([1 John 1:5-10](#)) if we choose to sin. Confession restores our fellowship with God and allows us to be fully connected to our Heavenly Father. To ignore or forget this part of worship can actually derail the entire worship experience we long for.

## ***Stage Three- We Humble Ourselves and Let God Forgive and Restore Us (v. 6-7)***

<sup>6</sup> *Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. <sup>7</sup> With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."* **Isaiah 6:6-7 (NIV)**

### **2. Stage Two- Recognize we are Sinners... (v. 5)**

1. In verse 5, we see that being overwhelmed with God's holiness caused a response for Isaiah. What was that response? (he realized that he was a sinner and he was conforming to the sinful people around him)
2. What are some of the dangers for Christians if they don't recognize their sin?
3. What is the difference between Isaiah saying "God forgive me of all my sins" and Isaiah being specific about the sin that being confronted with a Holy God brought? Help members understand that when we are specific, God can go to specific work; whereas if we generalize our sin, we will probably not be open to God's specific work in our lives.
4. What might stage two look like corporately in worship? What might it look like in individual times of worship?

Realizing his impurity, Isaiah was cleansed by God, through the intermediary work of **one of the seraphs**. It is fitting that a seraph (perhaps meaning a “burning one”) **touched** Isaiah’s **lips** with a hot **coal... from the altar**, either the altar of burnt offering, on which a fire was always burning (Lev. 6:12), or the altar of incense where incense was burned each morning and evening (Ex. 30:1, 7-8). This symbolic action signified the removal of the prophet’s **guilt** and his **sin**. Of course this is what the entire nation needed. The Judahites needed to respond as Isaiah did, acknowledging their need of cleansing from sin. But unlike the prophet, most members of the nation refused to admit they had a spiritual need. Though they, through the priests, burned sacrifices at the temple, their lives needed the purifying action of God’s “fire” of cleansing.

Stage three is also the correct response we should have to really making the most of stage two. It is one thing to admit our sin, it is another to humble ourselves and let the Lord do His work to remove it.

You and I will probably not have a vision every time we have an opportunity of worship, and along with that we will probably not be ministered to by seraphs. But all these things symbolize much more common ways that the Lord may do this same work. We know that the “essential element” that allows us to be cleansed from our sin is Jesus’ death on the cross (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 10:11-12) symbolized here by the hot coal. But think about what happened to Isaiah. His problem was his mouth, and God touched his mouth with a hot coal. Symbolically, there is no pain with that, but physically if you were touched by a hot coal; it would burn a little, to say the least.

As we humble ourselves before God and let God forgive us, it might “burn a little.” For example, if we had an issue where our anger exploded at work, and we said some things that were hurtful and not Christ-like, thinking about the pain we caused might hurt a little. Realizing that with the forgiveness from Christ, we have an obligation to make it right with the one we offended (Matthew 5:24), the thought of that and the act of that might “burn a little.” Even the Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 19:21) understood that it “burns a little” if you really want to be forgiven and restored, for Jesus asked him to sell all He had and then start following Him.

We like the idea of being forgiven, but not the idea of it “burning a little.” Yet, true worship is an experience with God where forgiveness is always connected to restoration and that usually “burns a little.”

## ***Stage Four- God Reveals to Us What He Wants Us To Do (v. 8a)***

<sup>8</sup> *Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" **Isaiah 6:8a (NIV)***

The rest of this chapter deals with the message Isaiah was to preach to Judah. Significantly, he was not called to service until he had been cleansed. After hearing the seraph’s words (vv. 3, 7), he then **heard the Lord’s voice**.

### **2. Stage Three- Humble yourself for Forgiveness and Restoration... (v. 6-7)**

1. What did the seraph do in verses 6-7? What did this symbolize? How does God really take away our guilt and sin according to the Bible?
2. What would be the real physical result of a live coal touching your lips? Do we tend to run from pain or run to it?

Why is it hard to humble ourselves before the Lord? How is humility painful? How is truly seeking forgiveness sometimes painful?

3. Help members to understand that many people don’t really get to this part of worship because it is painful sometimes. But it is essential if we are going to be all we can be for the Lord.
4. What might stage three look like corporately in worship? What might it look like in individual times of worship?

God asked, **Whom shall I send? And who will go for Us?** The word “Us” in reference to God hints at the Trinity (cf. “Us” in Gen. 1:26; 11:7). This doctrine, though not explicit in the Old Testament, is implicit for God is the same God in both Testaments.

The question “Who will go?” does not mean God did not know or that He only *hoped* someone would respond. He asked the question to give Isaiah, now cleansed, an opportunity for service. The prophet knew that the entire nation needed the same kind of awareness of God and cleansing of sin he had received.

Every worship experience gives God the opportunity to speak to us about what He wants us to do. For Isaiah, this was a call to serve Him as a prophet, declaring the will of the Lord to the people. While worship does provide God the opportunity to direct us in the BIG things like vocation, who to marry, what job to take, etc..., most of the time His next steps are more practical and simple. As we mentioned earlier, it could be to rectify a wrong. It could be to do a kind deed for someone as it was for Phillip, when he asked the Ethiopian if he knew what he was reading (Acts 8:26). It might be something we need to correct, such as a sinful action, or something we need to add, such as teach children in Bible Fellowship on Sunday mornings.

Again, we need to notice that WHAT God wanted Isaiah to do came AFTER he had been made right with God. We should not think that any worship we do will result in God’s direction if we are not willing to focus on God, let Him show us our sin, and allow Him to forgive us and cleanse us.

### ***Stage Five- We Declare to God We Will Do His Will (v. 8b)***

*And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" Isaiah 6:8b (NIV)*

Stage five, like stage three, is a response to what God has done in the previous step. It is one thing to KNOW what God wants, but quite another to DO it. James made that clear when he wrote...

<sup>22</sup> *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22 (NIV)*

As was mentioned before, most of our worship encounters with God will be practical and simple. It is important to DO the practical and simple things

### **2. Stage Four- God Reveals What He wants from us... (v. 8a)**

1. What was the question God asked in verse 8? Do you think that God didn’t know who to send, so He was asking around? Why did God ask like this? How does God do the same thing today?
2. What are BIG things that we want to know God’s direction for in life? What are the LITTLE things that we have to choose about, that maybe we should want to know God’s will about but aren’t usually begging God for answers for? Do sometimes the little things add up to big things? What does that say to us?
3. Point out that WHAT God wanted came after Isaiah had let God forgive him. What does this say to us?
4. What might stage four look like corporately in worship? What might it look like in individual times of worship?

### **2. Stage Five- We say YES to God’s desires (v. 8b)**

1. Did Isaiah argue with what God wanted? How does that compare to Moses when God was telling him what HE wanted him to do in Exodus 3? Why do we argue with God about what He wants us to do?
2. Why would it be a waste to only complete 4/5 of worship and not say yes to God in stage 5? Does it happen? Is there something God has told you to do that you are holding out on?
3. How did daily work in school ready you for the big test questions? How does saying yes to God in the little things ready us for saying yes when He calls us to do something BIG?
4. What might stage four look like corporately in worship? What might it look like in individual times of worship?

God asks. We should not think that we will give a wholehearted YES to God in a BIG assignment, if we have continually said no to the practical and simple things. Jesus said it like this...

<sup>24</sup> "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you--and even more. <sup>25</sup> Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him." **Mark 4:24-25 (NIV)**

## ***Conclusion***

Worship is a tremendous opportunity to connect with God. It can happen at church in a Worship Service or in a BFG class. It can happen at home during personal devotions (quiet time) or a family devotion. It can happen on a lunch break at work, or at the park watching the kids play.

Maybe if we put more emphasis on what worship is accomplishing in us, rather than on where we do it or elements of it such as music, we would not only stop the arguments about worship but we would also be connecting with God the way He desires. As Jesus said to the Woman at the Well...

<sup>23</sup> *Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."* **John 4:23-24 (NIV)**

The time has now come for true worshipers. Is our worship worth it?

## ***References and Quotes...***

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Worship 365, David M. Edwards. Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN: 2006

### **Points for Application...**

1. How dedicated are you to corporate worship?  
How dedicated are you to individual worship?
2. How might we need to change how we do corporate worship related to the five stages?  
How might we need to change the way we do individual worship related to the five stages?