



Worship With All You've Got

What it takes to fully engage in worship

You can use this Bible Study on your own or as part of a group. Go to <http://todayschristianwomanstore.com/biblestudies.html> to download **free** resources on how to lead a life-changing Bible study and tips for getting the most out of participating in small group experience.

Scripture Focus: 1 Chronicles 28:9; Psalm 24:1–6; 32:1–5; 34:1–3; Romans 12:1–2; 1 Timothy 4:7–15

Article: “Engage Both Heart and Mind in Worship” by John Ortberg & Pam Howell, LEADERSHIP JOURNAL

Ever come to a much-needed time of worship, then found yourself drained and distracted? So worn out from your jam-packed schedule and the many demands on your life that you weren't able to fully engage—even though you wanted to? Can we really offer God our full attention in worship when we're battling emotional, physical, and maybe even spiritual exhaustion from all of our commitments? In “Engage Both Heart and Mind in Worship,” John Ortberg and Pam Howell provide perspective on how we can best prepare for meaningful worship at church and at home.

This Today's Christian Woman Bible Study will help you deepen your faith as you dig into Scripture, reflect on the truth of God's Word, and take action steps to revitalize your worship. You can use this Today's Christian Woman Bible Study on your own as part of your personal spiritual growth, or you can use it in a group setting as you discuss God's Word with a community of friends and grow in faith together.

Connect

Option: If you'd like, begin your study with this interactive experience.

Have fun together with a goofy, light-hearted humming game. Each participant should write down the titles of a few favorite worship songs, hymns, or kids Sunday school songs on scraps of paper. Collect the papers in a bowl, form two teams, and take turns competing Charades-style—but with humming instead of actions. Participants should draw song titles and hum the tunes as team members quickly guess as many as they can in 60 seconds. Enjoy a little friendly competition as you hum—and laugh!—together.

to take note of life-changing truths. Other times we're so exhausted that we daydream our way through the church service, struggling against the temptation to nap during the sermon.

Maybe often we leave the church services still feeling empty, but it's not because there was nothing there for us—it's because we weren't prepared to invest anything of ourselves.

Whether it's at church on a Sunday morning or at home with the iPod blasting, worship doesn't happen *to* us. It happens *in* us. And it begins with intentional preparation of the spirit, mind, and body.

Get Ready

Before the study, read the article “Engage Both Heart and Mind in Worship” (included at the end of this study). Or, if you'd prefer, begin your meeting by reading the article aloud as a group.



Open Up

When you go to church, how prepared are you—*really*—to worship?

Sometimes we arrive just minutes before the band or organ strikes the first note, slipping into our seats preoccupied and rushed, thirsty for something to hydrate our parched souls. Other times we're still battling anger and frustration from our children bickering in the car all the way to church. Sometimes we lean forward, pen in hand, energized to sing and eager

- >> What stands out to you most from the article “Engage Both Heart and Mind in Worship”? Why?
- >> What is your typical weekend like? Do you feel more relaxed or hurried on Sunday mornings? What is the rest of your weekend leading up to Sunday morning like?
- >> Be honest: Have you ever wished you could just stay home on a Sunday and skip church? Why did you feel that way? What did you wish you could do instead?

Seek

Before launching into your time of Scripture exploration, pause as a group to pray. Express your desire to seek out God’s truth in his Word and to seek guidance from the Holy Spirit during your discussion.

Discover

Worship begins with spiritual preparation.

Imagine that you eat only one meal per week, and you are invited to a grand buffet with everything that makes your mouth water. You arrive starving; a waiter hands you a plate and beckons you to fill it. Now, imagine that you have just stuffed yourself on that buffet, but as you walk away patting your belly, you realize that you won’t be eating for another seven days. “That was good,” you say, “but it wasn’t enough.”

One hour on Sunday isn’t a buffet that is supposed to keep us spiritually fueled for the other 167 hours in the week. If we think that’s the intent, we’re placing the spotlight on us instead of on adoring God. And when we arrive starving, it’s difficult to focus on anything but our needs. Just as David declared God’s glory all day long (**Psalm 71:8**), we can spiritually prepare our hearts for worship by meditating on God’s goodness, love, and mercy throughout the week. Then, Sundays become an overflow of the rest of the week rather than a feeding frenzy.

Read **Psalm 34:1–3**.

- >> What do you think it means to praise God “at all times” and to worship him “constantly”? Describe what this can look like in a person’s life.

- >> What do you most like to do as a way of worshiping God on your own? Singing in the car? Walking in nature? Speaking words of gratitude? Worship can take many forms—share what comes most naturally to you.

Read **Psalm 24:1–6** and **32:1–5**.

- >> In addition to practicing personal worship, another key aspect of preparing spiritually for worship is having a pure heart. What do these passages reveal about the importance of purity in our hearts when we worship?
- >> When have un-confessed sin, a bad attitude, bitterness toward someone else, or other heart struggles held you back from true worship? How did you overcome your struggle?

Worship deepens with mental preparation.

In several New Testament books, Paul compared the Christian life to a race, and worship is a vital part of that race. An athlete who wants to do well prepares mentally for her game and focuses on her purpose. Although worship isn't an athletic competition, it *is* an opportunity to bring our best and fulfill our purpose of bringing glory to God.

John Ortberg and Pam Howell encourage worshipers to engage their minds through conscious effort, rather than just waiting for something to grab their attention. Investing the mind in worship is independent of whether or not we *feel* like worshiping. We can invest our intellect in praise and deliberately surrender our will to God's. Mind preparation is more than just intellectual will. Ortberg and Howell propose that the "single most important aspect of balanced worship . . . is making sure our hearts and minds are fully engaged and devoted." This means that worship is emotional, spiritual, and intellectual all at the same time.

Read **1 Timothy 4:7–15**. Consider how Paul's counsel to Timothy can speak to your own engagement, effort, and devotion in spiritual matters.

- >> If you were to give your complete attention (v.15) and devote yourself wholly to worship, what actions might you take?

Read **1 Chronicles 28:9**.

- >> What are some things that distract you from worshiping and serving God “with your whole heart and a willing mind”? Consider both Sunday morning worship and personal habits of worship during the week.
- >> Why do you think Ortberg and Howell think it is so important for worship to be balanced—involving both heart and mind? What happens if a Christian neglects the mental aspect of worship? Or if one neglects the heart in worship?

Worship awakens with physical preparation.

After a busy week of work, parenting, housekeeping, or other responsibilities, we can *long* for the weekend. Finally . . . a chance to have some fun! In fact, we may play so hard on the weekend that we end up exhausted by Sunday morning. Maybe we stayed up late watching television or socializing with friends and family because we don't have work the next day. Sadly, we may end up coming to church with bags under our eyes and a colossal mug of espresso, hoping we'll make it through the service without snoring!

Relationships, relaxation, family time, and fun are all important—but a tired mind and a sluggish body aren't as capable of vibrant worship. If we're honest with ourselves, we know that being physically wiped out won't aid us in bringing ourselves wholeheartedly to God in worship.

Since our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (**1 Corinthians 6:19**), we need to honor God with our bodies—and with our choices about our health and physical well being. The same principle also applies to our personal times of worship during the week; our health and nutrition (or lack thereof) can have a significant effect on our energy, focus, and ability to prioritize time in our life to worship God.

Optional Activity

Before your meeting, contact your church office to find out as much as you can about the upcoming worship service. Ask about the main Scripture passage, the sermon theme, and the songs that will be sung. If your church prints the order of service in the bulletin each week, try to get a copy.

As a group, prepare yourselves to engage more deeply with the Scripture this coming Sunday. First, read the planned Scripture aloud together. Discuss it and identify the main points of the passage. Then, using the order of service listed in your bulletin, pray together over each aspect of the upcoming worship service. If time permits, sing one of the worship songs together.

Read **Romans 12:1–2**.

- >> How does this passage describe our bodies? And how does this apply to worship? Summarize the main ideas in your own words.
- >> Romans 12:1 provides a powerful reason to give ourselves wholeheartedly to God: “in view of God’s mercy” (NIV) or, as the NLT renders it, “because of all he has done for you.” How does this focus on salvation—on the Cross, on the tremendous grace of God—motivate you in your stewardship of your physical body? How does it motivate you to view your body as a “living and holy sacrifice”?
- >> Practically speaking, what can you do to prepare yourself physically for Sunday-morning worship? Or for your personal times of worship? Brainstorm specifics habits, ideas, and choices.

Change

Some people are spiritually ready for Sunday worship, but their bodies are too exhausted to cooperate. Others are extremely organized and they show up on time with everyone clean and pressed, but their hearts are empty. Still others are rested and spiritually passionate, but when push comes to shove, they’re unable to really engage their minds because of distractions, persistent worries, or a lack of mental discipline. And some are rested and ready . . . because they’ve intentionally prepared.

The same can be true of our own personal times of worship with God: We may bring the best of intentions, but if we don’t intentionally prepare ourselves, we can’t engage as fully as we want . . . and *need*.

- >> Which area is the most difficult for you to prepare and engage in worship: spiritual, mental, or physical? Why?
- >> In light of all you’ve read and discussed, what’s one attitude, action, or pattern in your life that you sense God is leading you to change?

Take Action

Choose one of the following steps you’ll do after the study to apply God’s Word to your life.

- ▣ Select one of the passages you read during this study and commit it to memory. Make a daily habit of meditating on that passage from Scripture, inviting God to impress his truth upon your heart.

- ▶ Think of some ways that you can incorporate worship and study into your daily activities based on what you have available to you. (Be sure to consider Christian radio, CDs, podcasts, Bible apps, Internet resources, Christian books, nature, journaling, and more!) Make a list, then choose at least one and plan how you are going to use it this week.
- ▶ Think of one to three specific choices you'll make this upcoming week to prepare yourself physically for worship with your church family. Include practical ideas, such as getting more sleep, setting out your clothes (and your kids' clothes) ahead of time, and so on. Share your commitment with a friend and ask her to pray for you! With your friend, ask God to help you cultivate a pattern of Sunday morning worship that is balanced in spirit, mind, and body.

Commit

As a group, close in prayer by speaking words of worship and praise. Take turns speaking single sentences that praise God for his character and for his provision. Speak short prayers of gratitude, thanksgiving, and celebration. State scriptural and theological truths about who God is and why you love him. Enjoy your time of worship together!



Explore More

Want to dig deeper into this topic? Check out these articles and online resources.

- >> **Cultivating a Life of Worship** from TodaysChristianWoman.com
- >> **Experiencing God with Hillsong United** from TodaysChristianWoman.com
- >> **Eyes Wide Open to God** from ChristianBibleStudies.com
- >> **Fear and Friendship: Two Sides of Worship** from ChristianBibleStudies.com
- >> **Kari Jobe on Worship and Women's Ministry** from TodaysChristianWoman.com
- >> **Worship Encounter** from TodaysChristianWoman.com

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Engage Both Heart and Mind in Worship

How to prepare for worship

By John Ortberg and Pam Howell



There's an old joke among Meyers-Briggs users. Question: What happens when a passionate, hyper-expressive, exquisitely emotional feeler meets a logical, hyper-rational, Mr. Spock-type thinker?

Answer: They get married.

Too often deep thinking and profound feeling never meet in the one place they are most needed: in worship. How can we worship in ways that both engage the mind and touch the heart?

Some churches specialize in generating emotion. The platform people are experts at moving worshipers to laughter or tears. Attenders gradually learn to evaluate the service in terms of the emotion they feel.

In time, however, the law of diminishing returns sets in. Prayers are offered in highly emotive style and bathed in background music. Stories have to get more dramatic, songs more sentimental, preaching more histrionic, to keep people having intense emotional experiences.

Such worship is often shallow, sometimes artificial, and rarely reflective. Little attention is given to worshipping with the mind. It produces people who have little depth or rootedness. They may develop a "zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2). They become worship junkies, searching for whichever church can supply the best rush.

This is Scarecrow worship: it would be better if it only had a brain.

On the other hand, some churches focus keenly on cognitive correctness. They recite great creeds, distribute reams of exegetical information, craft careful prayers ahead of time. And yet the heart and spirit are not seized with the wonder and passion that characterize those in Scripture who must fall on their faces when they encounter the living God. No one is ever so moved that she actually moves.

This is tragic because, as Dallas Willard writes, “to handle the things of God without worship is always to falsify them.”

Those who attend such services may be competent to spot theological error, but the unspoken truth is they're also a little bored. Their worship is dry—it does not connect with their deepest hurts and desires. Rarely does it generate awe or healing, and never raucous joy.

This is Tin Man worship: if it only had a heart.

Some attempts to bring head and heart together have led not to the glimmering Emerald City, but to the Wicked Witch's forbidding dungeon guarded by drones. At times we've gotten it backwards, managing to combine in a single service the thoughtfulness usually associated with chandelier-swinging Pentecostals with the emotional expression of Scottish Presbyterians.

There must be a better way. How can we pursue worship that links well-ordered minds to overflowing hearts?

Yellow Brick Makers

People have the tendency to approach worship as consumers. The focus is on their experience, sitting back with arms folded and saying to those leading worship, “Wow me. Do something to grab my attention, catch my interest.” They assume worship is like watching a movie; it's something to critique afterward.

Can you imagine the Israelites, freshly delivered from slavery, before a mountain that trembles violently with the presence of God (**Exodus 19**), muttering: “We're leaving because we're not singing the songs we like. Like that tambourine song, how come they don't do that tambourine song anymore?”

“I don't like it when Moses leads worship; Aaron's better.”

“This is too formal—all that smoke and mystery. I like casual worship.”

“It was okay, except for Miriam's dance—too wild, not enough reverence. And I don't like the tambourine.”

No, Scripture doesn't read like that. The people were filled with awe and wonder and trembling and hope and fear, because there in the middle of nowhere, before this bunch of ex-slaves, was God.

Getting a Head Start

In our day—when the beauty of liturgical traditions, the freedom of charismatic expression, and the intellectual rigor of the Reformation are being cross-fertilized—we have a wonderful opportunity to pursue worship that balances intellect and passion.

We must address the issue head-on, so we often challenge our congregation:

1. Prepare yourself to worship. Football players prepare for the big game. Sales people prepare for a big pitch. And worshipers should prepare to worship, both mind and heart. We frequently tell our worship attenders that they should prepare at home and even in the car en route to the service.

2. Invest yourself fully in each moment we're together, regardless of how you feel. Too often in worship people experience what psychologists speak of as mindlessness. They go on autopilot. Worshipers need to be taught not to wait for something to grab their attention. They need to say to God, "I'm fully present—listening, praising, confessing, responding—every moment of worship. I offer myself fully to you."

3. Learn to make the most of the service. Some people need to be encouraged to become freer in their expressiveness. It can be like when someone hits a home run. The stadium erupts with celebration: hugs, high fives, roars of joy, blowing kisses, arms raised in triumph.

Some worshipers need to say something like this: "I'm not going to raise my hands way up like that in church. After all we're not celebrating a home run. But since we are celebrating that Jesus died for my sins, saved me from hell, overcame my guilt, was raised from the dead, and will share his triumph with me through eternity, maybe I'll at least put my hands in my lap with palms up."

On the other hand, some may become so expressive that they create a distraction. They need clear, gentle (sometimes not-so-gentle) reminders to balance their desire for expressiveness with what will help the body of Christ.

The single most important aspect of balanced worship, though, is making sure our hearts and minds are fully engaged and devoted. When this happens, moments will come when worshipers feel and understand God in ways no one could have planned.

—John Ortberg is a pastor and author. Pam Howell served as Director of New Community of Willow Creek Church. This was adapted from the article "Can You Engage Both Heart and Mind?" which first appeared in LEADERSHIP JOURNAL in April 1999.

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