

The Staircase of Worship

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[0 : 00] Well, thank you, Corey. My name is Chris Davidson. I am the assistant at Cornerstone, which is our church plant in Morningside.

And it is my privilege to be here tonight to look at this Sam together as we think about worship.

Worship is a big topic, so we really just got to dissect this Sam together.

And by the end of this, I want to have a deeper appreciation for worship individually as families, as a community. But also, I want us to see that worship has a mission or aspect that should impact the way we live and the way people see us in our communities, in our workplaces, in our homes.

And it's often good to remind ourselves that of things that we do just every day, all day, we quickly fall into doing things out of habit and forgetting why we do it, what is the core concept of what we do.

And then we do it because we do it because it's been done like that, and then we've forgotten the understanding, the underlying principles of what we do. For instance, you came here tonight, and if you're regular here, you would have expected to see the call of worship that we read.

[1 : 19] And you'll expect certain things throughout this service at benediction at the end. But why do we do these things? Why do these frame our worship?

We can become so comfortable in the order of service, we forget the rich history and the richness of the biblical data that is put throughout it. We become comfortable and can grow cold.

But we must remember that we do these things. We read a call to worship first because God is inviting His people to worship Him. God is always the first to speak and the first to bless. His words in this service are at the beginning and at the end.

And during this service, I hope that we will sing psalms and hymns that lift us up into the heavens, but also that we have time to look inward and to reflect.

So our service has a structure. It has a logical flow to it. It starts with God calling us. It has an element of response from us, His people.

[2 : 28] And it ends with God blessing us so that we can go out and be a blessing to others. Last week, I loved what Corry was saying about worship. He said that in worship we do a lot of verbs.

We proclaim, we bless, we eat, we drink, we sing, we pray, we pour water and we move.

And why is this? Because God has called us to holistic worship. Worship that imprints itself on every aspect of our lives, our actions and our words.

And the core concepts of this holistic worship is to worship in the Spirit and Truth, as Corry said last week for us. And an outward working of this form of worship is that we pay homage. Now that's an old fashioned word.

But in the Bible, what it literally means is to bend over or to cast oneself before another. It shows respect, but it also shows complete surrender to someone else.

[3 : 44] That their will is over you. And as what we do here tonight as Christians, we bring our wills before God and say, let your will be done, O Lord.

But we have joyful service in this when the Lord reveals Himself to us. So tonight we're going to look at Psalm 96 together.

If you have your Bible in front of you, it would be helpful just to keep it open as we look at certain aspects of this Psalm. The Psalmist describes worship here for us as ascribing to the Lord.

And it's right in the middle section of this Psalm. Or in other words, given the Lord what is due to Him. And what is due to the Lord? Well, the Psalmist answers this for us in verse one.

He says all the earth is to be given to the Lord. That's you and me, all the earth. And I've decided to call this sermon a staircase of worship for Sam 96 builds in scope.

[4 : 52] We start off with just ourselves singing to the Lord and then increases and increases as we go up each tread of this staircase until verse 11 and we're in the heavens worshipping God.

And I was to focus on particular three treads or three steps of this ladder this evening. Worship as an individual. Worship as a family.

And then finally, if we have time, worship as a tool for mission. So let us start on the first step of this staircase, which is also coincidentally the hardest step to take because it deals with our own hearts. And that is our own personal worship. Sam 96 opens with the powerful imperative imperative or command for us to sing to the Lord.

Now this song we are to sing is an expression of our love to the Lord. It's an expression of homage devotion reverence and recognizing his great work of salvation.

[6 : 03] CJ Mahaney calls singing Sam's and him's take home theology. That's why we sing it comes. It fills us up and we go away knowing a little bit more about our savior and about our God.

We sing because we recognize Christ has given us the gift of faith. We sing because our hearts are full of this new song to our savior.

We sing because of the marvelous work of Jesus Christ and the amazing truth of the cross.

Therefore, we are to tell of Christ and his salvation day to day as the Samist rights and Sam verse two.

At the heart of Christian worship, at the heart of the Christian life is a love story and incredible love story. The best love story is ever being communicated to humanity or acted out.

And we all love a good love story, don't we? There's a reason why La La Land right now is dominating the box office. The story about a jazz singer and an actress who fall in love.

[7 : 19] There's a reason is the forerunner for the Oscars this year. Because everyone's attracted to a love story. They hope it all works out.

And we have the most beautiful love story communicated to us in Jesus Christ. That's why we sing Sam's and hymns.

Because they communicate this story to us. They remind us of what Christ has done. Yet, our worship can so quickly become cold.

It can become habit. We can become something. It's just wrote something we do. We come here, call to worship, a couple of songs, we sit down, we listen and then we go.

Just little by little, we grow colder and colder until we end up going into a spiritual nosedive. Which can open us up then, friends, to doubt, fears.

[8 : 20] We start questioning our own salvation. We isolate and remove ourselves from our fellow believers. This is why personal worship is so important.

Because it reminds us of biblical truth. That's why we sing Sam's. We're singing a song about the great meta narrative of Christ coming to redeem his people.

I call this Sam a stairway of worship. Because I believe it can shatter our personal coldness. It can rekindle our hearts for worship. It can break our apathy.

And how does it do that, Sam 96? It reorients our souls. It points us to God in His heaven, reign and supreme.

Many of us here have iPhones, I would think. And if you get your iPhone out, you'll notice a compass button. I think it's just because you're lost in the woods one day.

[9 : 20] But if you push that button, what happens? This bar comes up and it tells you to spin round 360 degrees. What the phone is doing there is it's trying to find true north.

It's trying to point you in the right direction. That's what I believe this Sam does. It points us to the true north of our souls. That is God.

It points us to God in His splendor. In His glory, His strength, His beauty. And it calls us to worship Him.

William 10 Paul is one of my favorite quotes, wrote once. 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 well to the purpose of God.

[10 : 21] Holistic worship. We need our souls reoriented. We need to point it to God. We need to understand the truth of the gospel.

Jesus hung on the cross as a curse for the love of us. For you, for me. Christ didn't go to the cross to die for some hypothetical person.

He came with you in mind, with me in mind. His love held him there for us so that we could be redeemed and restored in him.

So oh, sing a new song to the Lord. I hope we would bring this Sam to bear in our own lives and understand the richness of it.

Augustine in his book, *The Confessions*, which is a great wee book to read, wrote, you never go away from us, yet we have difficulty in returning to you.

[11 : 23] Come, Lord, stir us up, call us back to you. Kindle and seize us. Be our fire. Be our sweetness.

Let us love you. Let us run to you. So friends, personal worship is important. It fuels the souls. We look to Christ.

So if you're struggling in your prayer life, if you're struggling reading the New York Bible, if you're seeing this worship as duty rather than a joy, remind yourself of the love of Jesus Christ.

And remind yourself of the truth of Calvary. And this will help you in your worship, whether it is at work, at the gym, in the classroom, or at home.

And this leads us to our second step on the staircase of worship. And that involves the home. That is family worship. And we must recognize one thing here, that if our individual lives are cold, if our individual lives are lacking worship, then there's no way we can bring our families before God.

[12 : 41] So they all knock on to one another. We see in verse 7 that we are not just called to individual worship, but, oh, families of the people are gathered there. We're called as a family to worship together.

Indeed, as a church, we are the family of God, and we worship together. So there's a big disconnect if that doesn't come home with you. John Anger once wrote in a book called *Help to Better Hearts for Better Times*, the more we worship and seek it, the better we will become to worship as a family. The more we worship as a family, the better we will become to worship as a congregation. And the biblical data for family worship is extensive and overwhelming.

In the Old Testament, all the people would gather together for the feasts and worship together in their family units, reminding themselves of the great salvation that Yahweh had done for them.

We have Timothy in the New Testament who had received a good deposit from his grandmother and his mother. Timothy was taught how to worship.

[13 : 57] The greatest treasure a parent can impart is the knowledge of God to their child. And in Psalm 96, the psalmist describes, our God is one who reigns.

This is a psalm that talks about God being on his throne, that the earth is his, that everyone in it is his. And if we come to church on a Sunday and call out to God and Jesus, and then for the rest of the week, don't follow up at home, the danger is our children notice that, they see that.

And then they start to assume that church is just a place that we go to have banter with our friends or to meet people, or then we go out to church lunch with someone. At worst, they see church as a social group.

They don't see it as the place where our faith becomes active in worship. What we need today in our churches all across this land is homes, homes that teach and praise and worship together, that become little congregations in their communities, who let the words of Christ richly dwell among themselves.

Corey Reddart for us in Colossians 3, 16, let the words of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness to the heart of God.

[15 : 39] That's what we need as families. It's really interesting to read these words and then actually not put it into practice. Sam calls us to sing. It's an imperative, it's a command.

So therefore we must worship in our homes. One of the most powerful statements of faith my parents ever displayed to me was not at church, but it was at their home when they would worship together.

There has been a teenager trying to sneak past my parents' bedroom to go out with the lads on the town, and the door would always be slightly open and the light would be just casting out into the hall.

And I would try and creep past, but every night or so I would hear my parents reading the Bible and praying together. Their faith was active, it was real, it was tangible to me.

It made me then question, what do I worship? What am I going out and what am I doing? Why am I doing it? Paul David Tripp in the Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand says, human beings by their very nature are worshipers.

[16:50] Worship is not something we do, it defines who we are. Everybody worships. It's not just a matter of what or whom we serve.

Now we can apply this to our family lives. Every family is a we-worshiping group. What are we worshipping? As a church, we need to apply that as well.

What I find in my work now is, well, I've only been in ministry about nine months or so, but in morning's side, one thing that I've noticed clearly is busyness seems to be the new God of the household.

Everyone's so busy. There's no way that family worship could even take part in a life when we're so busy. I read in the papers as well, it was quite funny.

A teacher asked the child what they were going to be when they grew up, and the child answered, tired. It's clearly in that household, busyness was the God of that household.

[18:02] You have no idea what it is like to take your children, sit them down, and have a moment together, worshipping God. So powerful witness, so powerful an impact to young hearts and young lives.

And why do we need to do this? Well, the psalmist tells us we need to impart worship. We need there's an urgency in this family worship, and it's because of verse 13. The Lord is coming.

He's coming back for his people. We need to be worshipping him now because we'll be worshipping him for all eternity, which will be a joy, but we need to be disciplined with it now while we can.

And sometimes we look at worship as something that drains us, something that is a duty rather than a joy, and that can hinder us in family worship.

But do we get a sense of this in the psalm? Just look at the psalmist. He's excited. He's being filled up. He's in the heavens. He is glad, and he wants the whole earth to rejoice with him.

[19:14] There's no sense of boredom here. There's no sense of being drained. But what there is a real sense of is him being filled up.

His faith being set alight for his God. And this leads us on to our final run tonight, that urgency, but also that enjoyment in God.

And that's worship as a tool for mission. Our last run is worship as a tool for mission because in verse 10 it says, To the nations, the Lord reigns.

All nations everywhere will be pulled before the Lord and will worship him. Not only does the psalmist lift us up into the heavens, the psalmist all opens us out to a big world view.

As we're being filled up and as we are being blessed, we are told to go out and be a blessing to reach out to others.

[20:19] Now again, the same knock on effect, the same run on the ladder applies. If we can't get on step one, there is no way we can get on step three. It's almost impossible.

This all has to start with our own hearts, and personal worship that will filter out into our homes, and then it will filter out into mission. If you're not applying these things to our own hearts, there's no way we can change a community.

There's no way we can impact other people's lives. We can read all the books that we want on evangelism. We can read all the books on mythology.

But if we're not putting into practice what we proclaim, then it's just empty. We need to be filled up first, and we need to take these steps and then see that worship can be used missionally, because in that way our lives are different.

Our world view is different because we have spent time with God. In Psalm 122, we have the people of Israel, and they're journeying to Jerusalem, which was at that time the only place that you could worship God publicly.

[21:34] And what do they say to those around them? They say, let us go to the house of the Lord. As they are journeying, they're calling all those around them, come with me to the house of the Lord.

Now each one of us here tonight, we are all on a spiritual journey. We are moving from this world to the next. We need to say to people, come with us to worship our Lord.

What's the response in Psalm 122? The people say, I was glad when they said unto me, when they said to me, worship is an effective tool for mission, because it infects our whole lives.

It's holistic worship. People notice a difference. They notice how in awe of God we are. They notice the marvelous works that he is doing in our lives.

So we tell of his salvation day to day. But if you're still struggling with how do we use worship in a missional sense, let's just look at this Psalm.

[22 : 42] First we need to notice that there's a lot of imperatives, a lot of commands in this Psalm. We are to sing, sing three times. We are to ascribe. There's 14 in total commands in this short Psalm.

So clearly the Psalmist is telling us that worship is also action. Our worship has actions. I just want to focus on three tonight.

There's a lot more than that, but I want to focus on three. And that is to tell, to bless, to ascribe. So we could use these forms of worship to reach out.

First one is we are to tell. We are to share of the great things God has done as a worshipping community. We are to tell each other our testimonies.

We are to tell those around us how Christ has saved us. Why we see things differently, why we act differently.

[23 : 44] We are to share who we are with people. Now, this is quite hard for some people. Some people worry about sharing their faith.

They worry about telling. They come to someone and they think, I must hit them with all five points of Calvinism just to make sure that their theology is proper and that way they'll get saved.

Just tell your story to people. Tell the marvelous works Christ has done in your life. He is sufficient to save.

And then they start their own journey, their own growing. But your command here tonight is just to tell. Say who you are. Don't worry about it. Share your faith.

And in that you are worshiping God. Because if we think we have to get every doctrine in there in a five minute conversation, it becomes stressful.

[24 : 43] It becomes almost foreign to other people. And this is a handbook he's talking to me very wrote. But if we just say, you know, I was struggling when I was a teenager with a lot of things.

And I was searching. And the beauty of my story is that Christ found me and saved me. Now I worship him with all my being.

It's attractive to those around us. The second thing is we are to bless. Now this is a good one.

Because we so often have a give and take mentality in our minds. As in, oh, I will help out at this food bank and work with these people so that eventually I can tell them about the gospel.

Rather than just going there to be a blessing to those around us. We have an ulterior motive. We are to be a blessing in our workplace. To be good workers, all that we put our hands to, we are to do to the glory of God.

[25 : 49] So we're not supposed to be gossipers or trying to trip people up. We were to work hard and be a blessing to those around us. That is worship. I wonder how many of us would put up our hands if I said, do you see your work as worship?

Or your uni degree that you're studying. Do you see that as worship? But it is friends. Treat it as such and it takes some of the burden off it.

And finally, as a last tool of mission, worship as mission, is ascribing. And this is meaning to give. Give yourself wholly to God.

Because He wants all of you. He doesn't want just the good bits of your life. He wants all of who you are. But also give of your time to those around you.

Give time to your friends. Be a good friend to them. Give time to your family. Give time to your community. This is worship.

[26 : 53] This is what I love about the Sam here. We build and build and build. It builds upon itself. And that's like our lives. We must give of ourselves to others but firstly and immediately to God.

So tonight, just in closing, if we are struggling in ourselves, in our own personal worship, if we know that we don't pray as much as we should or read our Bible as much as we should, be proactive about that.

I would say to you tonight to look around the hall and look and say, who could I meet with to read my Bible and pray with? Who could disciple me and who could I disciple?

Be proactive. Don't wait for it to come to you. That will help you in your personal worship to draw alongside each other. This is why I use the imagery of a staircase because we're all on this journey

and we all should be helping each other up from one run to the other.

So tonight, take a moment at the end of the service and just look around or even speak to me. I would love to meet with you and pray with you and read scripture with you.

[28 : 09] If you're struggling at home with family worship, look for someone who's been there and done that and as they say, got the t-shirt. Look for someone who's older and wiser and talk about how hard it is but can also encourage you and enable you to do that.

And last of all, as we leave here tonight, let us know that as we spend time in worship, we spend time with God, we are being fuelled and blessed to reach out and be a blessing to others.

We are not designed to be consumers, friends. That's not what worship is. It's not all about us. It's about Christ. It's about who He is.

And He came to seek and save the lost and He's called us to have a great part in that, to share our faith with everyone around us. We are part of His mission and that is why worship is missional and that is why worship is so important.

Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we just thank you tonight.

[29 : 27] We declare your glory among the nations. We declare your marvelous works among all the peoples. For you are great and worthy of all praise, O Lord.

We pray, Lord, tonight that you would help us if we are cold and hot, if we see worship as boring, as something that we just do.

We kindle our souls tonight, Lord. Help us draw near to you. Restore us the joy of our salvation. But Lord, do not fill us up to overflowing with no one to communicate to.

Help us communicate your marvelous works, the salvation works that you have done in our lives, to our friends, to those we may sit beside at work in our communities, Lord.

Help us reach out and touch those around us. Lord, we thank you for this, Sam. We thank you how it starts so simply with sing a new song.

[30 : 34] And before we know it, Lord, we're in the heavens with you, singing your hymns, your Psalms. Lord, give us a grand scope of worship over the next few months as we study this in this series.

Help us deepen our understanding of what it means to worship you. And help us go out feeling that we have spent time with our Saviour and our Lord and our God. Amen.