

# THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 2: THE PICTURE OF A DISCIPLE  
UNIT 4: A DISCIPLE ENGAGES WITH HIS OR HER  
SURROUNDINGS  
LESSON 39: THE NATURE OF OUR WORSHIP

**What we want students to learn:** That as Believers seeking to live the life of a follower, our worship of God should bring us great joy.

**What we want students to do with what they've learned:** To be mindful of pursuing worship that leads them to honestly rejoice in who God is.

**Scripture Focus:** Psalm 95

**Supporting Scripture:** Psalm 84:1-2, Exodus 17:1-7

**Overview:** In the last lesson, your students learned that God creates us for His glory. Worship is our way of returning to God the glory that is already His. But that doesn't mean that worship should be something that we do out of habit, or robotically. For the Christ-follower, worship brings us great joy. Or at least it should. This lesson will give your students a chance to consider how worship makes them feel, and to move toward a place where they can echo the words of the psalmist, that their worship would be a "joyful noise" to the Lord.

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## TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each **LIFE** lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your **LIFE** lesson 39 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 39, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.

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## BIBLE BACKGROUND

The *Bible Background* is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

## THE DETAILS

- **Author:** God inspired various authors to write a majority of the Psalms in their era, including seventy-three by David, twelve by Asaph, eleven by the Korahites and two by Solomon. Heman, Ethan and Moses each wrote one, while the authorship of fifty other Psalms remain unknown.
- **Time frame:** The Psalms were written during different eras of Israel's history, spanning from 1100 BC (i.e Psalm 29, 68) to 400 BC (i.e. Psalm 119).

**WEEK 39: LESSON PLAN**  
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- **Purpose:** The Psalms are inspired by God to poetically reflect humanity's journey with Him. Each psalm serves a different purpose, such as a personal or communal lament, hymn, song, reflection or declaration. Many of these were set to music and intended to be shared publicly, even when sharing a revealing confession (i.e. Psalm 51).

## THE SETTING

In the Old Testament, the Temple was the center of worship for Israel. This was a gathering place where people were invited to praise within the presence of God. The presiding priest would call the people to worship in the outer courts and make "an invitation to Yahweh's people to sing joyful praise to Yahweh."<sup>1</sup> Psalm 95 starts with the word "come." This underscores that worship is an invitation that we must respond to. Just as the masses from the nation of Israel were invited to worship God, we are invited to worship God today through our relationship with Jesus Christ.

## THE MAIN POINT

God invites us to worship Him. How we respond to that invitation is up to us. Psalm 95 gives us two possible ways to respond. The first response is found in Psalm 95:1-7a. We can choose to worship God for who He is and experience the incredible joy that can come from giving praise to God. We will look at Psalm 84:1-2 to see how passionate worship creates a deeper yearning for God because we discover a joy in worship that is beyond anything this world has to offer. The second response is found in Psalm 95:7b-11. We can choose to respond to the invitation to worship with a hardened heart. When we do this we miss out on the joy that can be found in worship and so much more. Our discipleship journey was meant to be a joyful. How we respond in worship determines so much of the joy that we can experience.

## LESSON PLAN

The *Lesson Plan* contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

## THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To help students understand that worship was never meant to be half-hearted.
- **Set-Up:** Be ready to show the following YouTube clip to your group:
  - o [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDnA3jobv\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDnA3jobv_0)

FIRST, define the word "half-hearted" for your students. A quick Google search comes up with a definition of "without enthusiasm or energy." Ask your students the following question:

- **What are some of the things that we are tempted to be half-hearted in?**
  - o Answers may vary. It could be homework, household chores, or workouts for their sport. The point is to get them thinking of things they tend to be half-hearted in.

NEXT, explain that all of us give a half-hearted effort from time to time, even top athletes. Introduce your students to Jeffrey Julmis, an Olympic athlete. Julmis is a two time Olympian. He represented Haiti in 2012 and 2016. In 2012, he finished 8th overall, which was strong for his first Olympic appearance. Then in the 2016 Olympic games in Rio de Janeiro, Julmis performed well enough to qualify for the semifinals. However, at the semifinals, things did not go well for him.

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THEN, play the following clip from YouTube. Explain that Julmis' first jump led to an epic crash. You can see from the slow motion that Julmis' jump was half-hearted. His jump was not even close to clearing the hurdle that was before him. Say:

- **Maybe his stride was off. Maybe the crowd intimidated him. Maybe he lost focus. Whatever the reason, that half-hearted hop cost him big. Though he would receive a standing ovation for finishing the race, he would miss out on competing for a medal. His half-hearted attempt at the beginning of his race cost him the joy that could have been his.**

FINALLY, explain to students that coming to worship God half-heartedly can rob us of joy as well. Say something similar to the following:

- **Olympic athletes aren't the only ones that suffer from a half-hearted attempt. When it comes to worship, we can all be tempted to be half-hearted as well. A song can be playing and our mouths can be moving, but our mind can be somewhere else. Our Bible can be open and our eyes can be reading, but our hearts can be completely closed. Every Christian can fall into this trap of half-hearted worship. The problem with half-hearted worship is that it robs us of the incredible joy that can come from experiencing God as we praise Him. In today's lesson we will see that worship is an invitation. We have two options in how we respond to that invitation: we can joyfully worship God with all our hearts or we can be hard hearted. As we look at Psalm 95, you will see both of these options in full display. The nature of our worship is meant to be joyful, but that only happens when we worship with our whole hearts. Our hope is that you would chose to worship God with your whole heart and experience joy unlike anything else that this world has to offer.**

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of the lesson.

## THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help students understand that as those seeking to live the life of a follower, our worship of God should bring us great joy.
- **Set Up:** Have the words to a worship song that is popular with your students written on a dry-erase board or poster. Make sure students have a Bible or that they are able to look along with a friend.

FIRST, draw your students' attention to the first word of the Psalm, "come." The psalmist is inviting others to experience worship with God. Explain that as disciples, we are not robots that are pre-programmed to worship God by force without feeling or emotion. We are invited to enter into the presence of God and to worship Him for who He is and what He has done for us. When we see worship as an invitation, we understand that we have to respond to that invitation. Explain that throughout the rest of the Psalm 95, we will see two responses. We can respond to God with whole-hearted joyful worship or hard-heartedness (that leads us to miss out on the joy that only God can bring).

THEN, read or have a student read Psalm 95:1-7a. Say:

- **The kind of worship described in these verses is active and engaged. There is singing, noise, thanksgiving, and calling out the greatness of God. The worship described here is joyful. When disciples of Jesus fully engage in the worship of God they should experience incredible joy.**

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Remind your students of a time when they were fully engaged in worship. It could be a retreat, a camp, or a disciple now weekend. Ask:

- **What was worshipping God at that event like?**
  - Answers will vary. Some may say that they felt close to God. Some may say that God felt more real to them. Others may talk about the joy they felt. The point is to show students that when they are fully engaged in worship, they experience God in a unique and joyful way.

Remind students that if they have experienced God in powerful times of worship, personally or with others, they know that there is nothing else in the world like it. It is something that cannot be duplicated by anything else. Say:

- **The good news is that we can experience God in this kind of worship beyond special events and services. God offers us the opportunity to worship Him with our whole-hearts each day. In this way, disciples can experience on-going, growing joy.**

NEXT, read or have a student read Psalm 84:1-2. Notice how the psalmist describes their passion to enter into God's presence and worship Him. His soul longs for it. His heart and flesh are crying out for it. In short, the psalmist craves to be with God in worship. Ask:

- **Why? What is it about worshipping God that would make the psalmist crave being in God's presence?**
  - Answers will vary. The psalmist has experienced the joy that comes from worshipping God. In the Old Testament, "Israelite worship was not 'quiet' or 'restrained', how could it be?" Since their beliefs were true and they experienced the greatness of God, they had to sing out in worship to God. In doing so, they found joy.

Remind students that the same thing is true today. When disciples worship God, it creates a hunger to continue on in worship. Say:

- **The more that we worship God and come into His presence, the more we experience joy. The more we experience joy, the more we are compelled to enter into His presence with worship. Worship creates a cycle of joy in the life of a disciple. When we experience this cycle of joy in the presence of God, we begin to hunger and thirst for it as disciples. Author and Pastor John Piper put it this way, "People ought to come to worship services to get. They ought to come starved for God. They ought to come saying, 'As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God' (Psalm 42:1). God is profoundly honored when people know that they will die of hunger and thirst unless they have God."<sup>3</sup>**

THEN, read or have a student read Psalm 95:7b-11. There is second option when we are invited to worship God. We can harden our hearts. What does that mean? To explain the idea of "hardening your hearts" a little better, the psalmist references an old story that happened generations earlier – Meribah and Massah.

Read or have a student read Exodus 17:1-7. Explain that the people of Israel were making their way through the wilderness and they were thirsty. They didn't like their circumstances so they started to complain and quarrel with their leader, Moses. They forgot that God was their provider and about the great things that God had done in the past to deliver them. Now all they could say was, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" (v.3) Their circumstances caused them to cease trusting God as their savior and provider. Their hearts became hardened and they ceased to worship God. Generations later as the Psalmist recounts this moment in history, he writes "your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work" (Psalm 95:9). Rather than worship God, they quarreled with Him and His appointed leader, Moses. Say something similar to the following:

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- What keeps you from worshipping God? Is it that you are upset that your life isn't going better? Are you distracted by someone or something else? Are you just plain sleepy? There are always going to be circumstances that you can use as excuses for not worshipping God. Just as the Israelites let their thirst keep them from worshipping God, we can let things creep in and take our praise away from God. The problem is that when we let circumstances turn our attention away from praising God, we miss the joy that comes with worship. When we lose that joy, our walk with God becomes less and less joyful until it becomes just another duty or chore in life.

FINALLY, have the words to a worship song that is popular or well known to your students written on a white board or poster. Read through the words and pause along the way to ask students what phrases in the song mean to them. Encourage them to be vulnerable and open about what the lyrics personally mean to them as they sing them in worship to God. For example, if you were using the song *Oceans* by Hillsong United you would go through the exercise as follows:

*You call me out upon the waters  
The great unknown where feet may fail  
And there I find You in the mystery  
In oceans deep  
My faith will stand*

Question: **Where do you feel God calling you to step out in faith? How is your faith being stretched through this? What has this caused you to learn about God?**

*And I will call upon Your name  
And keep my eyes above the waves  
When oceans rise, my soul will rest in Your embrace  
For I am Yours and You are mine*

Question: **How does knowing that we are God's and we can rest in His embrace impact you with the "waves" you are facing in life?**

FINALLY, continue with enough of the song that students are interacting with you and the rest of the group about how God is working in their life as they sing these worship songs. Then say something similar to the following:

- **When we set our heart's affection and mind's attention on God in worship, we experience God ministering directly into our lives. The overflow of this is joy in our walk with God. If we are distracted and have hard hearts in worship, we miss out in the interactive times that God wants to move in our worship of Him.**

So the next time that you enter into worship, don't come with crossed arms, a closed mouth, and a wandering mind. Lean in and experience the presence of God in worship. Worship Him with a mind and heart that is fully focused and surrendered on God. Surrender any distractions to God and ask Him to draw your attention to Himself in worship. When you do, you will experience the joy that God has for you and see God move in a unique way in your life.

Ask if there are any questions, and if there are none, transition into *The Last Word*.

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## THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To encourage students to choose whole-hearted, joy-filled worship as a disciple.
- **Set-Up:** Be ready to show the following clip from YouTube to your group:
  - o [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TK2\\_ezOBa2A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TK2_ezOBa2A)

FIRST, load the YouTube clip from comedian Tim Hawkins. Use this funny video to help your students understand that whole-hearted, joy-filled worship is less about hand raising, kneeling, or singing really loud. Whole-hearted worship is about giving God our mind's full attention and our heart's full affection. It means laying down your circumstances and distractions before God and not allowing them to rob you of worship. Say:

- **It means taking the words of a worship song and using them to express your heart-felt praise to God, whether the sound of the music is your style or not. We experience joy in worship when we take down all our self-imposed hurdles to worship and pursue God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind (Matthew 22:37).**

NEXT, ask your students to think back to the last time they experienced joy in worship. Usually, this will be at a time when they were whole-hearted in their worship. Then ask your students to think about a recent time in worship where they didn't seem to get much out of it. Usually, this is because students came to worship with less than a whole-hearted attempt. Say:

- **If we want to see God in worship, we need to go after Him with everything that we have got. After all, God promises "You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you, declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 29:13-14a).**

FINALLY, allow time for any closing thoughts or questions from your students.

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at [feedback@youthministry360.com](mailto:feedback@youthministry360.com).