



SESSION TWO



Worship Works Wonders

Key Verses

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of
the heavenly host praising God and saying:
“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

Luke 2:13–14 NKJV

LEADER PLANNING

Materials Needed:

- Copies of this lesson plan (1 per facilitator)
- Student Handouts and pens (1 per student)
- Read a Story Script (1 copy)

Preparation:

- **Set the Stage:** Assign the reading of the Letter to Mothers, adapted from *Because of Bethlehem*, to a person other than yourself, if you prefer
- **Read a Story:** Assign the reading part to a male student ahead of time.
- **Christmas Practice:** Assign an adult leader to read (with enthusiasm) the lines in Psalm 103 designated “leader”

SESSION TWO OUTLINE

Set the Stage: Letter to Mothers (5 minutes)

Setting: Large Group

Preparation: Assign the reading to a person other than yourself, if you prefer

Read a Story: Max's Bike (5 minutes)

Setting: Large Group for reading, Small Group for discussion

Materials: Read a Story Script (1 copy)

Preparation: Assign the reading part to a male student ahead of time.

Tell Your Story: We All Worship Something (8 minutes)

Setting: Pairs

Materials: Student Handouts and pens (1 per student)

Study God's Story: How to Worship (20 minutes)

Setting: Small Group

Materials: Bibles and Student Handouts

Christmas Practice: Worship Like the Angels (10 minutes)

Setting: Large Group

Materials: Student Handouts

Preparation: Assign an adult leader to read the lines designated "leader."

Christmas Challenge: Be more vocal about God

Christmas Focus: Read *Because of Bethlehem*, chapters 4–6

Christmas Carol: "Angels We Have Heard on High" (2 minutes)

Setting: Large Group

Materials: Student Handouts



SET THE STAGE: LETTER TO MOTHERS (5 MINUTES)

Preparation:

- Assign the reading of the Letter to Mothers, adapted from *Because of Bethlehem*, to a person other than yourself, if you prefer
- As students enter, distribute Session Two Student Handouts.

Today we are talking about worship. Sometimes we get worship wrong, especially around Christmas. Some of us might have a bit of an issue with being obsessed with a gift we have our heart set on getting, and since God is the only one we should worship, that could be a serious problem. We'll talk about that in a minute. But first, let's read a letter on behalf of all the males in the room who have trouble getting anything they really want at Christmas.

Dear Mothers,

We know you mean well. But enough is enough. Having shared our pain with one another, we sons hereby step out of our messy bedrooms and end our silent suffering. This year as you shop for our Christmas gifts, please don't buy us what we need.

We know we need to smell better and look nicer. We know you like us in warm pajamas and new underwear. But we do not know what to say when we open these gifts. How can you fake enthusiasm over socks? How can you look happy holding Speed Stick deodorant? We've lied long enough. As you look at any potential gift, ask yourself these questions: Does it swing, bounce, shuffle, cast, or roll? Can you find a trigger, grip, rip cord, or stick shift? Does it have propellers and a remote control? If it does, buy it.

When considering an item of boy's clothing, ask yourself, is it brown and green and rain resistant? You can't lose with any garment that is. To weed out the clothing fails, we offer these two questions. Does it make him look cute? Does it make him look like a hunk? If the clothing makes him look cute, drop it immediately. If it makes him look like a hunk, buy two.

In closing we extend this offer. If you will get us what we want, we will do the same for you. There's a group deal on Christmas portraits at Sears. We are getting our picture taken, in red sweaters.

No need to thank us,
Your sons¹

How many of you wish you could explain what you want to your mom like that? *If appropriate, share a story of a Christmas gift "fail" in your life, then introduce today's story.*

1 Adapted from Max Lucado, *Because of Bethlehem* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 59.

READ A STORY: MAX'S BIKE (5 MINUTES)

Materials Needed:

- Read a Story Script (1 copy)

Preparation:

- Assign the reading part to a male student ahead of time.

Sometimes it is just as important to be real about what we don't want as about what we want. Then there are those of us in the room (*ahem*) who have mastered the art of campaigning for what we want, so there's no missing the message! We are going to hear Max Lucado's story from his boyhood about a wish that became an obsession, and how that worked out for him.

Sometime during late summer of the year I turned eight, I had grown tired of my standard-issue, plain-Jane bike, and I had begun to plot how I could convince Santa to upgrade my two-wheeler. I had my eye on a fire-engine red Schwinn with a banana seat and monkey handlebars. Late that fall, I started writing letters to Santa, letting him know that a new bike would make me the happiest and most appreciative boy in town. And every time I wrote a new letter, I underlined, with red crayon, the words *Schwinn*, *banana seat*, and *monkey handlebars*, just to make sure Santa got it right.

Well, that morning finally arrived, and much to my delight, I found that all my "reminders" to the North Pole had paid off! There it was, under the tree, glistening and beckoning me to hop on and blast off. It was the coolest thing ever. I have to say, I didn't just love that bike, I worshiped it.

Over the next few months, I rode that bike everywhere, every day, all day! It went everywhere I did. In fact, I was so obsessed with it that if my parents would have let me, I probably would have slept next to it, just so I could dream about riding it all night.

But then one day, tragedy struck! I was trying to pull off some amazing trick, like popping a big wheelie, and I ran the front tire hard into a curb. The frame was bent beyond repair. I had been counting on that bike to carry me, to deliver me, to entertain me, to fulfill me—for years to come!

I thought that bike was the be-all, end-all to everything, but after the accident, it was nothing and no good to anyone. It let me down. I was heartbroken. I learned a hard lesson from that experience. I learned that everyone worships someone or something. Eight years old or eighty—doesn't matter. We all worship something.²

2 Adapted from Max Lucado, *Because of Bethlehem/He Chose the Nails: A DVD Study*, session 2, (2016; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson), DVD.

We all worship something. Anytime we trust an object or activity to give us life and meaning, we worship it. The things we set our hearts on typically aren't bad things but good things that have the potential to become the most important things and take the place only God should have in your heart. When we worship substitutes for God, we are satisfied at first, but we end up brokenhearted. You get a chance right now to think about what's most important to you, so you can figure out what you really worship.



TELL YOUR STORY: WE ALL WORSHIP SOMETHING (8 MINUTES)

Materials Needed:

- Student Handouts and pens

*Have students pair up with someone next to them. Read aloud the instructions for the **My Top 5 Worksheet** exercise. Give students 2 to 3 minutes to rank their top 5 things that are important to them or make them feel good about themselves, then have them share their results with their partner. Allow 2 minutes for ranking, 4 minutes for discussion, and 2 minutes for your wrap-up.*

<p>MY TOP 5 WORKSHEET</p> <p>Listed below are 10 types of good things that give us enjoyment or make us feel good about ourselves. Rank your top 5 things that you can't live without. Assign a 1 to the most important thing, a 2 to the next most important thing, down to a 5 for the 5th most important thing. Share your results with your partner.</p>	<p>_____ Grades</p> <p>_____ Friends</p> <p>_____ Family</p> <p>_____ Team (sports, dance, choir, band)</p> <p>_____ Hobby</p> <p>_____ Church (meetings at church or youth group)</p> <p>_____ God (personal Bible study, spiritual growth)</p> <p>_____ My looks</p> <p>_____ My stuff (clothes, games, devices, bedroom)</p> <p>_____ Health (what I eat, working out)</p> <p>_____ Other _____</p>
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It's interesting when we think about our Top 5 to realize that what we would hope is our most important thing in life might not actually be the most important. Did anyone find themselves giving a 1 to something you thought you were supposed to put as number one, instead of what is truly your most important thing?

Leader, you may want to share your own results from the Top 5 Worksheet, and if possible, give a personal example of the difficulty of ranking these areas accurately.



STUDY GOD'S STORY: HOW TO WORSHIP (20 MINUTES)

Materials Needed:

- Bibles
- Student Handouts

At this time, if your group is larger than 10 students, break up into discussion groups of 4 to 6, with an adult facilitator or student leader.

*Start by discussing **Read a Story and Tell Your Story**.*

- Eight-year-old Max plotted to get a red Schwinn bicycle. What would you say was your “bike” equivalent—something you obsessed about and desired with all your heart?
- Max imagined that the bike would not only change his life but that it would also change *him*—he would become “supremely happy and appreciative.” How did you imagine life would be different if you had what you wanted most? In what ways, if any, did you expect it to change not just your life but *you*?
- Share one of the categories you checked on your **My Top 5 Worksheet**. What makes this area of life especially significant or important to you right now? In what ways is it a good gift from God—something that makes you happy or makes you feel good about yourself or brings you comfort?
- Max said he had been counting on his bike to “carry me, to deliver me, to entertain me, to fulfill me,” but it let him down. In what ways, if any, have you experienced this in connection with the good gift you just described? How has it failed to make you truly happy or keep you safe or make you feel good about yourself?

- What made Max's attitude toward his bike "worship"? When you worship something, you are counting on it to change your life and fulfill you. What happens when you worship a thing compared to when you worship God?

*Now shift gears and move the discussion to **Study God's Story**.*

In the Christmas story, there are several times when worship takes place: when Mary visits Elizabeth, when the shepherds visit Jesus, and when the wise men bring gifts to Jesus. We are going to look at the most spectacular example of worship in the Christmas story, which was when the angels announced Jesus' birth. The angels demonstrate 3 characteristics of worship.

Have the students look up the Key Verses, Luke 2:13–14, in their Bibles. Choose one student to read the verses out loud to the group. The scripture is provided on the Student Handout in case the students don't have Bibles.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

"Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

Luke 2:13–14 NKJV

- The angels were not quiet with their worship. Their worship was **VOCAL**. Think about what you say about people you love or food you love. When you really love something, what kinds of things do you say? Do you think it's possible to love God in your heart and not speak it out loud? What can you do to be more vocal in your worship of God?
- The angels worshiped with a multitude of other angels. Their worship was in **COMMUNITY**. Why do you think it's important to worship God with other people? Look up Hebrews 10:24–25 to find some reasons for worshipping in public that can't happen in private. Explain these verses in your own words.
- The angels made a big deal out of their worship. Their worship was **VISIBLE**. Think about your body language when you are excited about something. How do your hands, your face, your posture help you express your feelings? In what ways can you express your worship of God visibly?

Think back to last week's session, "Prepare Him Room." We completed a chart that rated how well we are making room for Jesus in 5 areas: serving others, our schedules, our emotions, our material desires, and our spiritual lives.

- Can anyone share a change they made last week to give more space in their life to Christ? Were you more aware of ways you make room or fail to make room for Christ in your everyday choices?
- Did anyone find something meaningful in their reading of *Because of Bethlehem* they'd like to share with the group?



CHRISTMAS PRACTICE: WORSHIP LIKE THE ANGELS (10 MINUTES)

Materials Needed:

- Student Handouts

Preparation:

- Assign an adult leader to read (with enthusiasm) the lines in Psalm 103 designated "leader."

Gather the discussion groups together, and have the entire large group stand in a circle.

NOTE: Try to get your whole group in one circle, even if you have limited space, so they can experience the sensation of worshiping in community. Encourage students to read their lines loudly, with enthusiasm. A key part of the Christmas Practice section is the prayer time. Be sure to allow enough time for corporate prayer.

For our Christmas Practice, we are going practice a different way of worshiping God than we're used to—in other words, we are not going to sing worship songs. We are going to do the three things the angels did:

1. We will be **VOCAL**. We are reading from Psalm 103 out loud, and with enthusiasm!
2. We are in **COMMUNITY**. We are standing in this circle to emphasize that we have come together to offer our praise to God.
3. We will be **VISIBLE**. As we read, allow your movements to express what your heart is feeling. If you read a phrase you like, raise a hand, sway in rhythm to the words, lift your eyes to heaven, or respond in any other way that expresses your heart for God.

As we read Psalm 103 from our Student Handouts together, be looking for phrases that stand out to you, and be aware of how this practice makes you feel about God.

Excerpts from Psalm 103

Leader: All that I am, praise the Lord.
Everything in me, praise his holy name.

Group: My whole being, praise the Lord.
Do not forget all his kindness.
The Lord forgives me for all my sins.
He heals all my diseases. . . .
He satisfies me with good things
He makes me young again, like the eagle.

Leader: The Lord does what is right and fair
for all who are wronged by others. . . .

Group: The Lord shows mercy and is kind.
He does not become angry quickly, and he has great love. . . .
He has not punished us as our sins should be punished.
He has not repaid us for the evil we have done. . . .
He has taken our sins away from us
as far as the east is from west.

Leader: The Lord has mercy on those who fear him,
as a father has mercy on his children.

Group: He knows how we are made.
He remembers that we are dust.
Human life is like grass.
We grow like a flower in the field.
After the wind blows, the flower is gone.
There is no sign of where it was.

Leader: But the Lord's love for those who fear him
continues forever and ever.

All: And his goodness continues to their grandchildren
and to those who keep his agreement
and who remember to obey his orders.

While the group is still standing in a circle, ask the following questions to help students internalize the meaning of the psalm and the purpose of worship.

- What words or phrases from the psalm stood out to you? Share the reasons for your response.
- What, if anything, shifted in your heart as you read the psalm together? For example, did you start feeling more peaceful, or cared for by God, or connected to him, or thankful?

PRAY TOGETHER: *Ask a few students to say their favorite phrase from Psalm 103 as a prayer of worship. For instance, "Lord, everything I am praises you."*

CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE: This week, let's practice being more vocal about God. Try to bring up God or Jesus in your conversation, as you would if you had a new friend you were excited to tell someone about. As we speak words of praise about him, we are worshiping him. Next week, come prepared to share what you experienced when you talked about Jesus.

CHRISTMAS FOCUS: We are challenging all our students to join with the rest of the church and read *Because of Bethlehem* this month. This week's readings will help us see God differently and worship him in a more meaningful way. Please read chapters 4–6.



CHRISTMAS CAROL: "ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH" (2 MINUTES)

Materials Needed:

- Student Handouts

Close your time together by singing a Christmas carol about the angels and shepherds worshiping Jesus. Have the students imagine what it would have been like to experience the angels' worship that night. Stay in a circle and join hands as you sing.

"ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH"

Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plain
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strain

—Chorus—

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be?
Which inspire your heavenly songs?
Chorus

Come to Bethlehem and see
Christ whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee,
Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.
Chorus

See Him in a manger laid,
Jesus, Lord of heaven and earth;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
With us sing our Savior's birth.
Chorus

SPECIAL NOTE TO LEADER: *Be sure to allow time prior to Lesson Three to collect and prepare the items needed for the Rest Stops in the Christmas Practice prayer station activity.*