

Do you have special places where you like to worship God? Do you have any places where it is really hard?

Read John 4:19-26

What do you know about the Jews and the Samaritans? Why didn't they like each other?

Why do you think Jesus tells the woman that God will be worshipped "neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem"? Where will people worship God?

Jesus points out to the woman that "God is spirit". Why is that significant in this discussion?

What do you think it means to worship in spirit and in truth?

What do you think happens if we worship in spirit only or in truth only? Which do you think you are likely to tend towards?

How does Jesus' teaching in this passage inform how we can live our whole life as worship to God?

What have been the most significant things you have learnt while studying worship?

**Leader's Notes**  
**Life of Worship**  
**John 4:19-26**

*Do you have special places where you like to worship God? Do you have any places where it is really hard?*

In this week's study we are going to be seeing how, because of the coming of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are not bound to traditional places or forms of worship. Sometimes we may have places that are special to us, but there is no place that is better or worse for worship. No place that is more or less spiritual, we can worship God in spirit and in truth anywhere we are.

*Read John 4:19-26*

*What do you know about the Jews and the Samaritans? Why didn't they like each other?*

The Jews and the Samaritans did not get on at all. The Samaritans were a people group descended from the northern kingdom of Israel. When many of them were taken into exile by the Assyrians in 729 BC the Assyrians allowed other captured peoples to move to the area of Samaria. There they intermarried with Israelites who were left behind. They became a less "pure" people group and their religion became a less orthodox expression of Judaism. They only believed the first five books of the Jewish scriptures (The Pentateuch) and even those had some significant differences. The Samaritans believed that the most holy site of worship was Mt Gerizim and they had a shrine there for their worship. The Jews saw them as impure heretics who had distorted the true faith and caused them to despise each other.

*Why do you think Jesus tells the woman that God will be worshipped "neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem"? Where will people worship God?*

For both the Jews and the Samaritans their worship was very locationally based. The Samaritans worshipped at Mt Gerizim, the Jews in the temple at Jerusalem. Jesus is saying that a time is coming where worship will no longer be based on location but on something greater.

This time that Jesus is referring to is his death and resurrection. Jesus has already spoken of the temple being torn down and rebuilt in John 2. There he was speaking about his body as the temple - it's tearing down and rebuilding being his death and resurrection. He is saying that God is not found in a place but in him. Jesus' death and resurrection ushers in a new era of worship, where God's Spirit will come and live among God's people. This means that worship is not confined to a place - a mountain or a temple. We worship God the Father, by God the Son through the God the Spirit.

Because of Jesus we are now able to worship God anywhere and everywhere.

*Jesus points out to the woman that "God is spirit". Why is that significant in this discussion?*

Jesus is not giving the woman just a factual statement about God's metaphysical form. Jesus is making an important statement about how we can go about worshipping him. If God is spirit then he is not confined to any one geographic location. He is not confined to space and time. This means that God can be worshipped in any place, by any person, at any time. The temple and the mountain restrict worship, God's nature releases his people in where they worship and how they worship. God transcends our worship boundaries.

*What do you think it means to worship in spirit and in truth?*

Jesus' teaching that true worship is done in spirit and truth is given in opposition to the idea that God must be worshipped in a particular location, by a particular people, in a particular way.

To worship in spirit is about worshipping with the essence of your being. It is worship that flows not from ritual but relationship. It is worship that engages the heart, mind, and body. God has sent his Spirit to live with us and in us. Worshipping in spirit allows our spirit to interact with and be led by the Spirit. Worship in spirit is about the truth that where you are is not nearly as important as who you are. When you trust in Jesus, by his death and resurrection you become a child of God, a part of God's temple. You are made to worship God. Worship flows from your identity and engages all of who you are.

To worship in truth means primarily to worship out of a knowledge of the revealed truth of God in his Son Jesus Christ. Jesus speaks about how the Samaritans worship "what they do not know". As a people who have ignored most of God's revealed word, how can they know God properly? The Jews have been entrusted with God's word, and are the people through whom God's salvation comes. Still they too are only part way there. It is in Jesus, who is the truth, the word made flesh, where we can fully know God. In Jesus' life, death and resurrection, we see God more fully than we have ever seen him before. To worship God in truth means to worship God in accordance with what we have seen of him in his Son and in his word. Worshipping in truth means never letting go of who God is and what he's done as he has chosen to make himself known to us and never straying beyond this knowledge.

*What do you think happens if we worship in spirit only or in truth only? Which do you think you are likely to tend towards?*

Christians can often tend towards worshipping in spirit or in truth. It is important to balance these and let one inform the other.

To worship primarily in spirit will be all about the experience of worship. It will be about engaging with God deeply, feeling him and responding to him. Worshipping only in spirit will cause a person to judge the quality of worship not on its orthodoxy but on whether it moves the worshipper, or engages them at their core. It can be based on feelings first, and respond to the whims and desires of the worshipper without testing them against the revealed truth of Scripture. It can lead to excess in worship and its expressions and has the danger of actively leading people astray when it strays from what is Biblical.

To worship primarily in truth will be worship that is all about the orthodoxy and intellectual integrity of what is practiced. This worship is all head and no heart. It fails to acknowledge that the truth of God must engage the spirit of a person, because he does not save us by changing our thoughts but by giving us new hearts. Truth only worship will not lead to changed lives, because it does not value the engaged being, only the correctness of what is said and sung.

Spend some time discussing how each member might tend towards neglecting spirit or truth. Challenge them on what they can be doing to combat this.

*How does Jesus' teaching in this passage inform how we can live our whole life as worship to God?*

If worship is not confined to a place or a ritual, then we are free to worship God in any place, at any time in any God-honouring way. Our worship is found in our acts of service to God (Romans 12:1), but also in our adoration of God. This means that the way a person worships in one place and one culture is not any more correct than the way another person may worship in a different way, in a different place, in a different culture. As long as they are both worshipping in spirit and truth, their worship is true.

This means that you do not need to be in church to worship God, or in a holy setting. You do not even need to be doing something "Christian". All can be done in response to God and in adoration of God. We can worship him alone, or with others. In our home, our car, at work, at

school, at a party, or anywhere else. At any time we can turn to God in praise and adoration, remembering what he has given us in his Son. At any time we can offer our hearts to God and give all we are to the act of honouring him. What may be an everyday occurrence, can become a sacred experience as we respond to God with our minds, our spirit with his Spirit, our hearts moved by his truth. God is spirit, so his is not restricted, and neither are we.

This does not mean that we can neglect to worship God with his people because we are freed from the restraints of location and ritual, only that we can now worship with God's people in any location, with all sorts of rituals that will help us engage with God in spirit and in truth.

*What have been the most significant things you have learnt while studying worship?*

Use this question as an opportunity to reflect on the worship series. Encourage the group to share how they have been challenged and what changes they have made, or would like to make as a result of seeing what God's word teaches about worship.

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Spend some time in prayer thanking God for the way he allows us the freedom to worship him in different places and in different ways. Spend some time praying that he would fill you with his Spirit so that each person might be able to truly worship God in spirit and in truth.