

Spring 2021 Family Discipleship Kit:

Praise the Lord!

Let's Learn How to Adore God

Adoration can be Awkward

The popular "ACTS" model for prayer guides us in four key postures for our prayer life:

Adoration: Praising and honoring God

Confession: Agreeing with God about your sin, and declaring your dependence on his grace.

Thanksgiving: Telling God what you're happy he has done for you and given to you.

Supplication: Asking God for the things you want and need

All four of these elements can be a challenge for different reasons, but the Adoration portion can seem especially difficult. Psalm 33 reminds us that it is fitting for us, who love God, to praise him. But sometimes it doesn't *feel* fitting.

One of the reasons Adoration can feel awkward is because we don't "adore" many things on a regular basis...at least not verbally. Two people in the early stages of falling in love might write gushing love letters to each other, full of adoration-type statements. But that adoration comes out of intense emotion that doesn't usually last, and our prayer life doesn't always have the intensity of a love letter. Sometimes worship can feel full of emotion, but sometimes (most of the time!) it feels mundane and "everyday". If you feel pressure to manufacture passionate emotions in order to adore God, praying can feel fake and manipulative.

Perhaps the biggest roadblock to Adoration is we simply don't know what to say. We know we are supposed to praise, glorify, worship, and adore God... and we *want* to... but how? What kind of words actually adore God?

Maybe you find yourself trying to find more and more synonyms for great: "God you are awesome! God you are amazing! God you are so...wonderful!" As true as these statements are, they aren't very specific. If the adjectives we are using about God are all generic, they don't have any meaning to us.

When our experience of adoration is limited to empty words spoken under the weight of guilt that you aren't "feeling it", it's no wonder it feels like a chore.

REFLECT:

- Do you find adoring God awkward? Why or why not?
- Do you find it easy to "adore" other things or people? What does that look like?
- Which reason described above resonates with you as the biggest road block to adoring God?

Worshipping in Spirit and in Truth

In John 4, Jesus explained to the woman at the well that God desired to be worshipped “in spirit and in truth”. If we want to get better at adoring God in prayer, than it has to be in spirit and truth as well.

To worship “in spirit” means that we worship with our whole selves. We can’t hate God inwardly and worship God outwardly. **Our adoration must come from our actual affections, our actual belief.**

This is something we cannot do on our own. We need Jesus to transform our minds and hearts so that we will change from the inside out. As we grow in our understanding of the gospel, God will prune our hearts so that we bear the fruit of true, authentic adoration.

The second part – “worshipping in truth” – is the focus of this Family Discipleship Kit. In order to worship God in truth, we must ground all of our worship in an accurate picture of who God is. To worship God by saying things that aren’t true (or words that are meaningless) is like worshipping a graven image of our design. Scripture instructs us instead to worship with accurate descriptions of and declarations about our majestic God.

This is why Adoration can be so difficult: adoring God requires theological knowledge. Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication rely more heavily on your own experience and current circumstances. We don’t need to do a lot of preparation to figure out what we want or need. Even a non-religious person or small child can list things that they are thankful for, or things they regret.

But adoration challenges you to draw upon what you know to be true about God...and that takes Bible study. If you want to worship God in spirit and in truth, than you have to know what the truth is. If you want to ascribe praise to God, you have to know him.

I said earlier that this Family Discipleship Kit was more focused more on worshipping “in truth” than “in spirit” but the more we focus on the truth the more the spirit follows. Consider Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1:17-21:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

REFLECT:

- What would it look like if someone worshipped “in spirit” but not “in truth”?
- What would it look like if someone worshipped “in truth” but not “in spirit”?
- Where do you think you need to grow more, worshipping “in spirit” or worshipping “in truth”?

Practicing Adoration

In this Family Discipleship Kit, we are challenging families to strengthen the muscle of adoration. Here's how it will work:

Read

Look up and read a verse from the enclosed list *or* choose your own Bible passage. This exercise can be done on any portion of the Bible!

Discuss

As a family, discuss what the verse tells us about God. Ask one another, **“What does this verse teach us about who God is or what God is like?”** Your goal will be to make a declarative statement of adoration that describes God in a true way.

As you discuss, challenge one another to focus more on God's nature, *not* what he has done or given. When we praise God for what he has done for us, that is thanksgiving. We want to focus on adoration, which is praising God for *who He is*. Additionally, Adoration tends to be in *present or future tense* and is universally true, while Thanksgiving tends to be in *past tense* and is specific to your own experience. Here are some examples:

Adoration	Thanksgiving
God, you are our provider.	God, thank you for providing a job for me.
God, you will always be with me.	God, I praise you because you were with me during my hospital stay.
God, you will never break your promise.	God, I praise you because you sent your son, Jesus.
God, I praise you because you always do what is just.	God, I praise you because you gave me justice.
God, you do not need anything.	God, I am so glad that you do not need anything from me.

Obviously, all statements above (regardless of column) are excellent things to meditate on and pray. Thanksgiving *certainly* has an essential, primary, and needed place in our prayer life. This study just seeks to build up that Adoration muscle.

Pray

Pray together as a family, using the verse as inspiration for your adoration.

Record

Write your statement of adoration on the “God, We Praise You Because” poster, accompanied by the scripture reference that led you to make that statement. How many different statements of adoration can you come up with? Can you fill up the whole poster with praise? You can do more than one for a particular verse, but try not to repeat a specific statement more than once!

An Example

Does it sound intimidating? Let's look at a familiar verse as an example:

"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing." Psalm 23:1

What do we learn about God from this verse? How can this verse lead us to adore him?

God is our shepherd (Don't let the obvious ones get missed!)

God is our provider (or, he gives us everything we need)

God takes care of us (What is a shepherd? Someone who takes care of sheep. God must take care of us.)

God knows us (If God gives me everything I need, he must know everything I need.)

What does a prayer that adores God in this way sound like? Maybe something like this:

Dear Heavenly Father,

You are our shepherd. You provide everything we need. You take care us. You know us.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Yes, it's that easy! Adoring God really is just saying true things about him. You don't need to gush or be poetic (unless you want to).

More Examples:



Verse	Statements of Adoration
He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. (Psalm 23:2-3)	<p>God, you are gentle with us.</p> <p>God, you know what I feel.</p> <p>God, you know me on a soul level.</p> <p>God, you know the right path.</p> <p>God, you know how to lead me.</p>
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)	<p>God, you have purpose for me in dark valleys.</p> <p>God, you are more powerful than evil.</p> <p>God, you are always with us.</p> <p>God, you know how to comfort me.</p> <p>God, you know what I'm going through.</p>

The Goal

The hope would be that after we challenge ourselves to find adoration in scripture on a regular basis, three things will happen.

First, we will get better at adoring God in prayer. We won't feel as awkward or tongue-tied, because we will know what we want to say, and that what we say is true.

Second, as we shift our Bible study attention to what we can learn about God, we will start to get better at aligning our focus on the true object of the Bible (God), rather than our natural inclination (ourselves). In so doing, we will understand the Bible better.

Third, I pray that as we seek to adore God we will in fact know him better. As with all our discipleship kits, our goal is *not* to just make families better at doing homework, or to go through the motions of what we think a Christian family should look like. Our goal is that families would know God more in a real and authentic way.

"Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together." Psalm 34:3

Verses for “Adoration Inspiration”

You don't have to read all of these, and you don't have to do them in order. You can even choose your own (different) scripture to use! These are just suggestions.

- Exodus 15:11
- Numbers 23:19
- Deuteronomy 4:31
- Deuteronomy 31:6
- 1 Samuel 2:2
- 1 Samuel 15:29
- 2 Samuel 22:31
- Nehemiah 9:30-31
- Numbers 23:19
- Job 9:10
- Psalm 8:3-4
- Psalm 23
- Psalm 33
- Psalm 50:6-13
- Psalm 86:15
- Psalm 90:1-4
- Psalm 102:25-27
- Psalm 103
- Psalm 115:2-7
- Psalm 139
- Psalm 145:20
- Psalm 147:5
- Proverbs 15:3
- Proverbs 19:21
- Isaiah 9:6
- Isaiah 40:28-31
- Isaiah 45:7
- Isaiah 46:10
- Isaiah 55:8
- Isaiah 61:88
- Jeremiah 1:5
- Jeremiah 10:12
- Jeremiah 23:23-24
- Jeremiah 31:3
- Jeremiah 32:27
- Lamentations 3:22-39
- Daniel 2:20-23
- Micah 7:18
- Malachi 3:6
- Matthew 10:29
- Matthew 19:26
- Matthew 28:19-20
- John 3:16
- John 5:26
- Acts 17:23-25
- Romans 1:20
- Romans 5:8
- Romans 11:33-36
- Romans 12:19
- Ephesians 1:4
- Ephesians 2:4-10
- Philippians 2:5-11
- Colossians 1:15-20
- 1 Timothy 1:17
- Titus 3:4-5
- Hebrews 1:1-4
- Hebrews 4:13-15
- James 1:17
- 1 John 1:9
- 1 John 4:7-8
- Revelation 1:8
- Revelation 4:8-11