

WORSHIP #4 - LIVING IN GOD'S PRESENCE

SUNDAY 10AM 28 JUNE 2026

CITYWEST CHURCH

Solomon was dedicating the temple to the Lord during the annual Festival of Shelters. Priests brought the Ark of the Lord's Covenant into the temple and while that was happening it says many sheep, goats, and cattle were sacrificed by the entire community no one could keep count.

As the ark was brought in, the priests and levites got ready to lead the entire community in worship through song, by having people who were musicians playing all sorts of instruments.

13 The trumpeters and singers performed together in unison to praise and give thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals, and other instruments, they raised their voices and praised the Lord with these words:

“He is good!

His faithful love endures forever!”

At that moment a thick cloud filled the Temple of the Lord. 14 The priests could not continue their service because of the cloud, for the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple of God.

Then Solomon prayed, “O Lord, you have said that you would live in a thick cloud of darkness. 2 Now I have built a glorious Temple for you, a place where you can live forever!”

2 Chronicles 5:13-6:2

1-2 Chronicles - how do we stay in God's promises?

If God is good and his faithful love endures forever, how do we stay there - the answer is gathered worship - to worship together as a united community. Chronicles is written after exile to a people who have lost the temple, lost the kingdom, and lost the land. The question hanging over the book is: How do we remain faithful to God and experience His blessing again?

They were to remain faithful by staying in God's presence. They were shown how to stay in God's presence by worshipping God as a united community. The pattern shown in this story is that when God is worshipped, we become aware of God's presence, God will then reorientate his people to his purposes, and he will live with his people forever.

This is a pattern not just for Israel but for us today too. Let's dive into the pattern.

1. WORSHIP MAKES US AWARE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

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2 Chronicles 5:13

They are embodied worshippers - singing, playing instruments, together they are praising God - and God tangibly shows up as he has done in previous times - like a thick cloud. God tangibly showed up like a thick cloud in the tabernacle, and now God is in the temple as a thick cloud - known because of worship.

The liturgy of gathering and the unison of their worship as a community showed their surrender to the presence of God

They became aware of God because worship is the way God has chosen to reveal his presence.

“To get to know a person, you have to give up distance.”

- John Lennox (on Dairy of a CEO)

We have to be in proximity to know people. You can know about people from a distance, but to know people, you have to get up close.

God was there with them.

But we can't confine God to just a single space. God created creation. God is transcendent. That means he's outside of all creation and must be kept as separate from needing creation.

God is eternal - outside of time. Time does not change God. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God is limitless. There is no bounds to God.

This is what Isaiah says about God:

For this is what the high and exalted One says - he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Isaiah 57:15 NIV

High and holy place - away, separated from creation.

Who's spirits are contrite and humble - close by, in creation.

Worship isn't about weird manifestation or chanting, or wishful thinking, or transactional. I'll only be good if you worship me with this specific song. Or I'll only show up if you chat the same bridge 40 times. They weren't going to get God to move based on wishful thinking - oh yeah God will definitely show up and then not doing anything.

They worshipped and God was present.

Our attention can go in all sorts of different directions. We can be distracted, we can be thinking about our week, we can be thinking about the week to come. Worship sets our attention on God.

2. GOD'S PRESENCE REORIENTATES HIS PEOPLE

14 The priests could not continue their service because of the cloud, for the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple of God.

2 Chronicles 5:14

God's tangible presence has a profound impact on the priests in the temple - they can not continue the service because God is tangibly there.

God becomes active in the room that they are worshipping in. God takes his place as the one who orders what goes on.

Think through what the priests had just done - they would be excitement, wonder, and awe at the temple being dedicated - but then there is the work of preparation - the sacrifices of the countless animals, there was so much activity.

It was the festival of shelters. The main aim of this festival was a week of God's leading, God providing, and God's people learning to rest.

The divine activity that God was up to was to say stop and rest.

God had to reorientate his people back to his kingdom and his rule, and what he had established. God's pretty clear on how he wants things to run.

36 Now whenever the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out on their journey, following it. 37 But if the cloud did not rise, they remained where they were until it lifted. 38 The cloud of the Lord hovered over the Tabernacle during the day, and at night fire glowed inside the cloud so the whole family of Israel could see it. This continued throughout all their journeys.

Exodus 40:36-38 NLT

God says follow me

God's reorientation is for his people to go towards the promised land after having built the tabernacle. God would lead them.

14 Elisha replied, "As surely as the Lord Almighty lives, whom I serve, I wouldn't even bother with you except for my respect for King Jehoshaphat of Judah. 15 Now bring me someone who can play the harp."

While the harp was being played, the power of the Lord came upon Elisha, 16 and he said, "This is what the Lord says: This dry valley will be filled with pools of water! 17 You will see neither wind nor rain, says the Lord, but this valley will be filled with water. You will have plenty for yourselves and your cattle and other animals. 18 But this is only a simple thing for the Lord, for he will make you victorious over the army of Moab! 19 You will conquer the best of their towns, even the fortified ones. You will cut down all their good trees, stop up all their springs, and ruin all their good land with stones."

2 Kings 3:14-19

God says listen

God's reorientation comes after King Jehoshaphat of Judah asked what God thinks the 3 kings should do. The prophecy comes from Elisha when he worships. They get God's picture of what needs to happen

2 One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them." 3 So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.

Acts 13 NLT

God says you are sent

Through worship and gathering together, Paul and Baranbus are commissioned and sent out to take the kingdom into the gentile world.

“We are like a living house. God moves in, not to tidy a room or two, but to rebuild the whole house.”

C.S. Lewis

Worship isn't about stiring God to do what we want him to do for us. Its not about conjuring something up to get God to do something. It's about hearing from God on what God wants us to do - and then going to do it.

Maybe God's saying for you to rest. Maybe God's saying for you to go. Maybe God's reminding you of who you are in Him. Are you open to God's activity? What if the reorientation though is something different to the season you think you are in?

3. THE TEMPLE LIFE

2 Now I have built a glorious Temple for you, a place where you can live forever!”

2 Chronicles 6:2

The temple became the place for God to reside. The temple marked a space and time where God was actively encountered and in this space.

It started in the garden.

Moved to the tabernacle.

Then into the temple.

Then Christ came and dwelled with people. Emmanuel - God with us

And now God lives in you and I.

The story of the bible is not us trying to get to God - it's God moving closer and closer to us.

Worship helps us realise that God is closer than we think - he's here right now.

21 We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. 22 Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

Ephesians 2:21-22 NLT

Our church is the temple where God's spirit lives.

"Liturgies are pedagogies of desire." - we do the things on repeat that we desire because we desire them.

"We are what we love." - We then become those things we do on repeat.

James K.A. Smith

The liturgy of sundays helps form in us a daily love for God and being in God's presence. We learn to become what we love.

19 Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself,

1 Corinthians 6:19 NLT

You don't have to wait till Sunday. But Sunday becomes the training grounds for the rest of your week - a reminder through liturgy that God is present. But also pulls us back into the real reality if we've moved away with the world.

CONNECT GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What is competing for your attention during the week, and how does gathered worship help you give your focus onto God?
2. Has there been a time when God changed your plans or your perspective? What did you learn through that experience?
3. Where might God be inviting you to respond differently this week—to rest, to listen, to take a step of obedience, or to trust Him in a new way?
4. Who is one person or one place where you can intentionally carry God's presence this week through your words, attitude, encouragement, or service?