

Christian Education

Worship in Education

Lesson #7 for November 14, 2020

Scriptures: Daniel 3; Revelation 14:6-12; Psalm 78:1-17; John 4:7-26; 1 Chronicles 16:1-36; Mark 7:1-13.

1. Whether we admit it or not, everyone worships something. Maybe we worship multiple different things. What do we mean by *worship*? *Worship* is an English word which comes from the idea of being “worth it.”

[Middle English *worshipe* worthiness, respect, reverence paid to a divine being, from Old English *weorthscipe* worthiness, respect, from *weorth* worthy, worth + *-scipe* -ship] before 12th century—Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*.* (Eleventh ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc. [Content above in brackets is in the source.]*[§]

2. What we consider to be of the most value in our lives is what we worship. So, what is most valuable in your life? Is it your bank account? Your house? Your God? Your family? Your car?
3. It must have been easy for Adam and Eve to worship God while in the Garden of Eden. Imagine having God come and visit you every evening for a walk and talk! What kind of relationship developed between them?
4. But, today, values have been twisted and distorted by selfishness and sin. An example of how values can be twisted and distorted is found in Mark 7:1-13.

Mark 7:1-13: ¹ Some Pharisees and teachers of the Law who had come from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus. ²They noticed that some of his disciples were eating their food with hands that were ritually unclean—that is, they had not washed them in the way the Pharisees said people should.

³ (For the Pharisees, as well as the rest of the Jews, follow the teaching they received from their ancestors: they do not eat unless they wash their hands in the proper way; ⁴nor do they eat anything that comes from the market unless they wash it first. And they follow many other rules which they have received, such as the proper way to wash cups, pots, copper bowls, and beds.)

⁵ So the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law asked Jesus, “Why is it that your disciples do not follow the teaching handed down by our ancestors, but instead eat with ritually unclean hands?”

⁶ Jesus answered them, “How right Isaiah was when he prophesied about you! You are hypocrites, just as he wrote:

‘These people, says God, honour me with their words,
but their heart is really far away from me.

⁷ It is no use for them to worship me,
because they teach human rules
as though they were God’s laws!’

⁸ “You put aside God’s command and obey human teachings.”

⁹ And Jesus continued, “You have a clever way of rejecting God’s law in order to uphold your own teaching. ¹⁰For Moses commanded, ‘Respect your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever curses his father or his mother is to be put to death.’ ¹¹But you teach that if a person has something he could use to help his father or mother, but says, ‘This is Corban’ (which means, it belongs to God), ¹²he is excused from helping his father or mother. ¹³In this way the teaching you pass on to others cancels out the word of God. And there are many other things like this that you do.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Mark 7:1–13). New York: American Bible Society.

5. In Jeremiah’s day as the city of Jerusalem was about to be destroyed by the Babylonian invaders, people began to think that God would not allow the temple built by Solomon to be destroyed. So, the theme was: “We are safe! This is the LORD’s temple.”

Jeremiah 7:4: “Stop believing those deceitful words, ‘We are safe! This is the LORD’s Temple, this is the LORD’s Temple, this is the LORD’s Temple!’”—*Good News Bible*.*

6. So, what should be the role of explaining *worship* in Christian education? Why do we worship things? It seems that we were designed with a desire to value certain things and, in a sense, to worship them. Among other things, human beings have worshiped other humans, idols, money, buildings, power, and government.
7. Think about many of the ancient governments in which the leader of the government such as the Pharaoh or the Caesar expected to be worshiped as a god! Other nations and peoples worshiped fish and multi-headed gods; others worshiped the sun, the moon, and/or the stars. Do we have any “idols”?

The present age is one of idolatry, as verily as was that in which Elijah lived. No outward shrine may be visible; there may be no image for the eye to rest upon; yet thousands are following after the **gods of this world**—after **riches, fame, pleasure, and the pleasing fables** that permit man to follow the inclinations of the unregenerate heart. **Multitudes have a wrong conception of God and His attributes, and are as truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal.** Many even of those who claim to be Christians have allied themselves with influences that are unalterably opposed to God and His truth. Thus they are led to turn away from the divine and to exalt the human.—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings** 177.1.†

8. **Remember that we become like whatever we worship.**
9. People today would probably not bow down to a statue of a frog. However, they might worship the bull stock market or maybe the bear stock market; and some do bow down to a statue of Mary. People have worshiped money, power, sex, themselves, rock stars, actors, and politicians. Do we worship any of these things? Who dominates our televisions and our cell phones? A famous writer by the name of David Foster Wallace said: “If you worship the wrong thing, it will eat you alive.”
10. Read Daniel 3. Can you imagine being in that situation? Would you have stood up straight and tall while everyone else was bowing down to the golden idol that Nebuchadnezzar had built? While we do not often mention this, it is almost certain that there were a number of other Jews there who did bow down. But, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not bow down. And, as a result, of course, they were thrown into that fire made to be “seven times

hotter.” And then, they were seen walking around in the fire in the company of Jesus Christ. Is God really so particular about how and when and whom we worship? Do not forget that is the issue in both the first and the second commandments. (Exodus 20:3-6)

Revelation 14:6-12: ⁶ Then I saw another angel flying high in the air, with an eternal message of Good News to announce to the peoples of the earth, to every race, tribe, language, and nation. ⁷He said in a loud voice, “Honour God and praise his greatness! For the time has come for him to judge. **Worship him who made heaven, earth, sea, and the springs of water!**”

⁸ A second angel followed the first one, saying, “She has fallen! Great Babylon has fallen! She made all peoples drink her wine—the strong wine of her immoral lust!”

⁹ A third angel followed the first two, saying in a loud voice, “**Whoever worships the beast and its image and receives the mark on their forehead or on their hand** ¹⁰**will themselves drink God’s wine, the wine of his fury, which he has poured at full strength into the cup of his anger! All who do this will be tormented in fire and sulphur before the holy angels and the Lamb.** ¹¹The smoke of the fire that torments them goes up for ever and ever. There is no relief day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, for anyone who has the mark of its name.”

¹² This calls for endurance on the part of God’s people, those who obey God’s commandments and are faithful to Jesus.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

11. It seems clear from these very powerful words which we as Seventh-day Adventists have taken as one of our key texts, that it does matter who we worship. Are we correctly worshipping the true God? Or, are any of us worshipping the beast?
12. David and the other songwriters had some very important things to say about worship. In fact, the Hebrew word for the Psalms was *Tehillîm* which means “songs of praise.” And, certainly, that should be one of the main themes for worshipping the Lord.
13. Read Psalm 78:1-17. Notice that we are to teach our children—the next generation—to uphold and observe His laws and His commandments. We are to teach them to put their trust in God and to keep the covenant which God has made with His children. The children of Israel were supposed to review all the things that God had done for them in rescuing them from Egyptian slavery. Surely, that should have been adequate reason to worship the true God.
14. But, what about the Seventh-day Adventist Church in our day? Are we up to date in our knowledge of how the Lord has led us as a church?

As I see what God has wrought, I am filled with astonishment and with confidence in Christ as Leader. **We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and his teaching in our past history.** We are now a strong people, if we will put our trust in the Lord; for we are handling the mighty truths of the word of God. We have everything to be thankful for. If we walk in the light as it shines upon us from the living oracles of God, we shall have large responsibilities, corresponding to the great light given us of God. We have many duties to perform, because we have been made the depositories of sacred truth to be given to the world in all its beauty and glory. We are debtors to God to use every advantage he has entrusted to us to beautify the truth of holiness of character, and to send the message of warning, and of comfort, of hope and love, to those who are

in the darkness of error and sin.—Ellen G. White, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*,* January 29, 1893, par. 5.† Compare *Life Sketches* 196; *Testimonies to Ministers* 31; *Selected Messages*, book 3, 162.3.

15. If one were to review our church's history by reading the *Testimonies for the Church*, or the *Biography of Ellen White*, or the *Review and Herald* articles, s/he would see what an enormous impact worship of God has had on our church throughout history.
16. So, why do we worship God? What has He done for us? What do we owe to Him? Everything! He created us, He gives us life, and He wants to save us! (Acts 17:25,28)
17. **John 4:7-26:** ⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw some water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink of water." ⁸(His disciples had gone into town to buy food.)

⁹ The woman answered, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan—so how can you ask me for a drink?" (Jews will not use the same cups and bowls that Samaritans use.)

¹⁰ Jesus answered, "If only you knew what God gives and who it is that is asking you for a drink, you would ask him, and he would give you life-giving water."

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you haven't got a bucket, and the well is deep. Where would you get that life-giving water? ¹²It was our ancestor Jacob who gave us this well; he and his sons and his flocks all drank from it. You don't claim to be greater than Jacob, do you?"

¹³ Jesus answered, "All those who drink this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring which will provide him with life-giving water and give him eternal life."

¹⁵ "Sir," the woman said, "give me that water! Then I will never be thirsty again, nor will I have to come here to draw water."

¹⁶ "Go and call your husband," Jesus told her, "and come back."

¹⁷ "I haven't got a husband," she answered.

Jesus replied, "You are right when you say you haven't got a husband. ¹⁸You have been married to five men, and the man you live with now is not really your husband. You have told me the truth."

¹⁹ "I see you are a prophet, sir," the woman said. ²⁰ "My Samaritan ancestors worshipped God on this mountain, but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place where we should worship God."

²¹ Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the time will come when people will not worship the Father either on this mountain or in Jerusalem. ²²You Samaritans do not really know whom you worship; but we Jews know whom we worship, because it is from the Jews that salvation comes. ²³But the time is coming and is already here, when by the power of God's Spirit people will worship the Father as he really is, offering him the true worship that he wants. ²⁴God is Spirit, and only by the power of his Spirit can people worship him as he really is."

²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah will come, and when he

comes, he will tell us everything.”

²⁶ Jesus answered, “I am he, I who am talking with you.”—*Good News Bible*.*

18. This is the story of Jesus making that unusual journey through the middle of Samaritan territory on His way from Jerusalem to Galilee. He sat down beside that well at Sychar and had that conversation with that immoral woman and revealed to her something that He may not even have told His disciples by that time.
19. But, in addition to revealing to her that He was the Messiah, He talked about how we are to worship God “in spirit and in truth.” So, what do we mean when we say that God is *Spirit*? Does that affect how we are to worship Him? Is this talking about omnipresence? Would that mean that in order to worship God correctly, we must get to know Him personally?

The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God. In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will purify the heart and renew the mind, giving us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us a willing obedience to all His requirements. **This is true worship. It is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 189.2.†

20. As we have already noted, people have worshiped many different things down through the generations. In order to worship God “in truth,” we must have a correct knowledge: (1) Of Him, (2) of who He is, (3) of the history of Jesus Christ on this earth, and (4) of how that should impact our lives on a day-by-day basis. So, the correct doctrine or teaching is very important. We do not believe in a God who would burn people in hell for eternity—or at all!
21. To some people, worshiping God in spirit leads to a shallow sentimentalism with a lot of emotion exhibited. By contrast, those who claim to worship God in truth without any Spirit may end up with a formal legalism.
22. The story of “the ark,” or “the ark of the covenant,” or “the covenant box” as some translations call it, is an interesting one. Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phineas, felt that by taking the covenant box with them into war, God would be forced to help them defeat their enemies, the Philistines. The result was that the Philistines fought harder and not only conquered the Israelites but also captured the ark of the covenant and took it back to Philistine territory. They put it in one of their temples; every night, their god fell off its pedestal and, finally, broke! They transferred the ark to different cities; every city that received it, had some kind of serious problem. So, they decided they needed to get rid of the ark. They put it on a new cart that was pulled by two cows which had recently had calves. They said that if this ark was supposed to go back to Israel, so be it. But, if these cows stayed with their calves, they would know it was not true. As we know, the cows went straight to Israel. The first place the cows stopped was in Israelite territory at Beth Shemesh; plagues fell on the people there as well because they tried to look into the covenant box. Later, the people from Kiriath Jearim carried the ark back to their village and treated it respectfully. It stayed with them for more than 20 years. See 1 Samuel 4:1-7:2.
23. When David became king, he decided that he needed the ark back at the capital city of Jerusalem which he had recently conquered. At first, he tried to take it with a military escort on a cart. That was his style! When the cart jolted, Uzzah tried to stabilize the covenant box and was struck dead. Uzzah should have known better! Then, David asked the Levites to study the correct handling of the ark and realized it was not supposed to be carried on a cart but rather was to be carried on the shoulders of human beings. They took it to Jerusalem—this time, following the directions of God. (See Numbers 7:9.)

24. We read what happened in 1 Chronicles 16:1-36. There was great rejoicing. David danced before the Lord to the disgust of one of his wives, Michal, the daughter of Saul. Notice these words taken from that experience.

1 Chronicles 16:25-27: ²⁵ The LORD is great and is to be highly praised;

he is to be honoured more than all the gods.

²⁶ **The gods of all other nations are only idols,**

but the LORD created the heavens.

²⁷ Glory and majesty surround him,

power and joy fill his Temple.—*Good News Bible*.*†

25. No matter what happens to us and in the light of all that God has done for us, it does not really matter unless we grasp the plan of salvation and are saved in the kingdom of God. In 1 Chronicles 16:29, we are told: "Give to the LORD the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!" (NKJV*) What does it mean to say, "The beauty of holiness"?

26. First of all, we should remind ourselves of how ugly and damaging sin is. Consider some of the ways in which people have tried to worship their idols or their gods in the past. They were absolutely repulsive, evil, and terrible to the point that some have even sacrificed their own children. The temples became *defacto* prisons! How do you think God felt about people sacrificing their children? In some places the pagan temples were considered to be a safe place for criminals to hide from authorities.

27. It is interesting to scan through the history of the Old Testament. Every time the children of Israel went to war without consulting God, they experienced a terrible defeat. But, when they followed God's directions in going to battle, they had resounding victories! Shouldn't they have learned a lesson from that after a while?

28. Review Mark 7:1-13. It is quoted in Item #4 above.

29. Even among those who call themselves Christians, how often do we find clever ways to introduce our own ideas into our plans for worship? Think of how many people down through the generations have done that. Today, we find that materialistic naturalism and the ideas of evolution have permeated public schools. Many of those ideas are totally contradicted by Scripture. Unfortunately, many of the ideas when presented alone may seem attractive. But, they are not Christian.

30. So, how do we protect ourselves from these insidious evils? There are certain things we need to recognize.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. [Jeremiah 17:9] Professors of religion are not willing to closely examine themselves to see whether they are in the faith, and it is a fearful fact that many are leaning on a false hope. Some lean upon an old experience they had years ago; but when brought down to this heart-searching time, when all should have a daily experience, they have nothing to relate. They seem to think a profession of the truth will save them. When those sins which God hates are subdued, Jesus will come in and sup with you and you with him. You will then draw divine strength from Jesus, and you will grow up in him, and be able with holy triumph to say, Blessed be God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. **It would be more pleasing to the Lord if lukewarm professors of religion had never named his name. They are a continual**

weight to those who would be faithful followers of Jesus. They are a stumbling-block to unbelievers, and evil angels exult over them, and taunt the angels of God with their crooked course. Such are a curse to the cause at home or abroad. They draw nigh to God with their lips, while their heart is far from him. [Isaiah 29:13]—Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*,* vol. 2, 226.1-227.0.†‡

31. As we have studied in previous lessons, the basic problem with false worship starts in our own “hearts” or minds.
32. Do we need to have our religious life in perfect order before we can come to God? Think about some of the people who we know will be in heaven. A prime example might be the thief on the cross! How much time did he have to study the life of Jesus? (*DA* 749.3) Was he actually crucified for being a thief?
33. Sometimes, we think that if we belong to the “right church” and if we attend fairly regularly our Adventist services, God will not let anything bad happen to us. Right? But, remember:
Jeremiah 7:4: “Stop believing those deceitful words, ‘We are safe! This is the LORD’s Temple, this is the LORD’s Temple, this is the LORD’s Temple!’”—*Good News Bible*.*
34. Often, the issue of worship in our Adventist churches comes down to discussing: (1) Whether or not we should allow drums and/or video projectors; or (2) Who should be in charge of the format of worship? Should it be the youth or the elders, deciding what music and what methods are used in worship?
35. We need to remember that true worship is a life-and-death matter. How can we worship God “in spirit and in truth”?
36. We would probably recognize that all Christians believe that God should be worshiped. But, beyond that basic premise, Christians go in many different directions. How should we worship? When should we worship? Where shall we worship? How often should we worship? These are just some of the issues that have impacted every group.
37. We should recognize that God does not expect every group in every part of the world to worship in exactly the same way. For fear of being discovered and killed, some have to worship as they are, hidden in their homes. Others have beautiful church buildings where they can gather in large groups and worship God. But, we must remember that God has clear plans for how we are to worship Him. We are not free to just worship Him in any way we like. So, what does the Bible tell us about how God wants to be worshiped?
38. Once again, review the story in John 4. Notice three key issues that Jesus pointed out:
 1. The qualifying expression “true worshipers”
 2. The fact that the “Father seeketh” a specific class of worshipers “to worship Him”
 3. The emphatic phrase that those who would worship “must worship” in a particular manner.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 94.
39. It should be clear from these statements that God has not left us free to worship in any way we please. So, why is God so particular? Is it because He wants us to worship Him “in spirit and in truth”?
40. Scan through the book of Leviticus, and notice how detailed God intended for their worship to be. But, while we are thinking through all those issues, do not forget that David was apparently worshipping God correctly by dancing around the ark! (1 Chronicles 15:29) There

is a spontaneous and subjective side to worship that is also pleasing to the Lord. At least David was not struck dead as Uzzah had been!

41. In order to be sure that we are worshiping the God that is presented in Scripture, we must be careful in deciding how to worship God. It is so easy to set up our own version of God which may be quite different from what the Bible presents.

How do societies often come up with their ideas about God? One theory, which draws heavily upon the philosophy of the father of modern sociology, Emile Durkeim, proposes that, first, societies develop a set of traits and values that they believe will ensure their survival. Second, they symbolize their traits and values with an animal. That animal is referred to as a totem, and the totem is the representation of the traits and values of a tribe. We all use totemic language to some degree. **In the West, we say things like “strong as an ox,” “wise as an owl,” or “sly as a fox.”** Stage three occurs when, little by little, the tribe begins to worship the animal that is a symbolic representation of its own traits and values. Now the point becomes clear. **If societies end up worshiping a deity that is simply a collective manifestation of its own traits and values, then religion is nothing more than a tribe of people worshiping itself.** People may think this process applies only to some primitive tribe outside of Western culture, but they should not be so hasty in their conclusions. There may be much truth in the adage often attributed to George Bernard Shaw that “God may have created us in his image, but we have decided to return the favor.” Lucifer in the Garden painted a picture of God as a restrictive, lying (“you shall not surely die”), insecure (threatened at the prospect of man’s elevation) deity (*Gen. 3:1-6*). But we’d say Lucifer was painting a rather accurate picture of himself.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 95.^{†§}

42. It has been suggested—and it certainly must be true—that if the picture of God we have this year has not grown since last year, we are “worshiping a graven image.” Any misrepresentation of the truth about God is a distortion and will impact our worship. Remember that God’s ways are not our ways. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

William Temple is believed to have said that “worship is the submission of all of our nature to God. It is the quickening of the conscience by [H]is holiness; the nourishment of mind with [H]is truth; the purifying of imagination by [H]is beauty; the opening of the heart to [H]is love; the surrender of will to [H]is purpose—all this gathered up in adoration.” How can we live each one of these points day to day?—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 96. [Note that the brackets and the letters in brackets in this paragraph are in the *Bible Study Guide*.][‡]

43. The first time *worship* is mentioned in the Bible was when Abraham told his servants that he and his son were going “yonder” to worship. (Genesis 22:5) Think of the parallels between what Abraham and Isaac did on that occasion and what God has done by sending His Son to demonstrate for us the truth about Himself in order to give us a correct picture of God so that we can worship Him “in spirit and in truth.”

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