



## WORSHIP AND WHOLE-LIFE DISCIPLESHIP

Whole-life discipleship is about recognising that the call to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ affects all that we are and all that we do.

This means that we seek to live for Jesus in every place and every situation, whether at home or at work, with friends or acquaintances, online or offline, and everywhere we go. As Paul advises the Colossians, 'whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him' (Col 3:17).

Worship is central to whole-life discipleship because as we draw near to God we are shaped to live the way of Jesus in our everyday lives. Worship helps us to love God and love our neighbour. It changes us so that we can live as witnesses to God's coming kingdom.

This session<sup>1</sup> focuses on how to connect worship to whole life discipleship and is designed to last about an hour. It can be used in a Leaders of Worship and Preachers' Meeting as CLPD<sup>2</sup>, as part of a study day or in any small group or class meeting.

### Outline

1. **Introduction** (10min): explore the challenges that churches face in helping Christians draw links between gathered worship and whole-life discipleship.
2. **Worship and Whole-Life Discipleship** (40min): choose up to four activities from the seven provided. Each activity encourages participants to draw links between discipleship and worship.
3. **Closing** (10min): discuss insights that have emerged through the session, ending with a prayer and a blessing.

Please feel free to adapt this outline, and to introduce other material that is relevant. The primary aim of the session is to help us all to see the connections between worship and the rest of our lives, and enable everyone present to leave with at least one idea they intend to put into practice in their lives and as they lead the worship of the people of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Written by Dr Ed Mackenzie and Dr Tony Moodie of the Evangelism & Growth Team.

<sup>2</sup> Continuing Local Preacher Development.

## 1. INTRODUCTION (10min)

Worship is closely linked with whole-life discipleship. It is as we gather together to praise and worship the God who loves us that we are equipped and empowered to live as disciples, and to reach out in mission to the world. For this reason services often end with a prayer of dismissal which sends worshippers out to serve God in the world.

Sometimes though, those who gather for worship can miss the connections between the Sunday service and their Monday – Friday lives. There can be a real disconnect between gathered worship and daily discipleship. As worship leaders and preachers, we have a key opportunity to help Christians draw links between worship and the call to live like Jesus, every day.

Begin the session with prayer, asking for God's guidance and presence. To introduce the theme, invite participants to suggest reasons why people can find it difficult to connect worship and discipleship.

Jot these down on a flipchart.

Responses might include;

1. A sacred/secular divide in society
2. The idea that worship is for Sundays
3. The challenge of connecting with those outside the church
4. The seeming irrelevance of gathered worship for daily life
5. The difficulty of encountering God in everyday life
6. Sermons that don't address the issues people face

Explain that the focus of the session will be on bridging the gap between worship and whole-life discipleship!



10 mins



Flipchart or  
whiteboard  
& pens

## 2. WORSHIP AND WHOLE-LIFE DISCIPLESHIP (40min)

Choose up to **four** of the following activities to use in the session.

Most of the activities are designed to last ten minutes, although two will need twenty. Feel free to devote a longer time for any of the activities below, which will mean choosing fewer activities for the session. You could also devote a session to just one of the activities, which will mean participants can engage with it in more depth.

If you are working with a larger group, divide it into smaller groups for the activities section. It is also possible to adapt these activities for use within gathered worship.

## 1 Exploring Scripture

Read through the following passages, perhaps printing out and giving a copy of each text to a different person in the group. Discuss how each passage illuminates the relationship between discipleship and worship.

1. Deuteronomy 6:4-9
2. Micah 6:6-8
3. Matthew 28:16-20
4. Acts 2:43-47
5. Romans 12:1-2



10 mins



Bibles

## 2 Preaching to the News

Karl Barth is quoted as saying that preachers should plan their sermons with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. In a similar sentiment, John Stott spoke of the importance of 'double listening', listening both to the word and to the world.

One way of helping disciples make links between their discipleship and their worship is to show through worship how the God we serve speaks into the context we live.

In this activity, look through several copies of recent newspapers and identify issues or themes that members of the church may be concerned or worried about.

Take two or three themes, and discuss how worship – either in preaching or in other elements of a service – can give people wisdom in addressing them.



10 mins



Newspapers

## 3 Interviewing for the Everyday

Whilst interviewing people during a service is a great idea, a powerful alternative is to record a video interview with someone at their place of work and share it as part of the worship service.

You can try this idea out by recording some short interviews within the meeting. Everyone should be encouraged to take part, but no one should feel they have to. Ask each other questions like: "How has faith shaped your work?" or "How God is present with you *within* your work". Everyone's voice is worth hearing, whether they have paid or unpaid employment, a volunteer activity or are a carer for someone.

It is good to give potential participants some notice that they will be engaging with this activity. This will give them time to reflect on their own experiences and stories.



10 mins



Smart  
Phone

Most smart-phones have recording capability, so take turns recording one another sharing the experience of connecting faith and the everyday. Aim to record each person speaking for 2min or so. Chat about the experience when you have finished and who you might interview in such a way within your places of worship. You might choose one of the interviews to share with the larger gathering at the end of the session.

#### 4 The Gathered and Scattered People of God

Sometimes worshippers can separate the gathered church from the 'scattered' (or dispersed) church within the world. This is symptomatic of the sacred-secular divide that exists in our society, and is a barrier that needs to be overcome in order to help worshippers to live as disciples.

On a flipchart, draw two columns – one labelled 'gathered church' and the other 'scattered church'.

In the 'gathered church' column, ask for ideas on all the ways in which people encounter God and support one another within a service of worship. In the 'scattered church' column, ask for ideas on the ways in which people encounter God and support one another throughout the week.

Once you have both lists, see what links you can draw between them. You could, for instance, compare the way in which prayer takes place in the gathered church to how it takes place at home or at work.



10 mins



Flipchart or whiteboard & pens

#### 5 Worship in Daily Life

Gathered worship has a particular order to it, and one way of framing this order is to think of worship as moving through four stages: Gathering, Hearing, Responding, and Sending. *Gathering* is about drawing near to the presence of God, including through prayer, confession and thanksgiving. *Hearing* is about listening to God, especially in the Scriptures. *Responding* is about speaking back to the God who addresses us, primarily through forms of prayer. And *Sending* is about going out into the world as disciples, seeking to live the way of Jesus among those whom we spend our time.

A helpful activity is to think through the ways in which these four elements of gathered worship occur throughout daily life. To reflect on this, create two columns on a flip-chart and write the four elements of worship in the left-hand column. Now take some time to discuss each of the elements of worship and how they also occur within a day or across a week (e.g., in what ways do you 'gather' and draw near to God during a weekday). Jot down your ideas in the right-hand column.



10 mins



Flipchart or whiteboard & pens

If it would be helpful to recap the shape of worship, search for the 'Worship: Foundations' page on the Methodist Church website.

## 6 Lego Explorations

For this activity, you will need to bring along some Lego. At the start of the session, allow each participant to choose a number of Lego pieces from a pile in the middle of the table. Depending on how much Lego you have, you could either limit the number of pieces people can choose (for example, ten pieces each) or allow participants to use as many pieces as they would like.

Using the Lego pieces, encourage members of the group to construct a model depicting the relationship between gathered worship and discipleship (take about ten minutes or so for people to do this). Once they have finished their model, encourage each member of the group to explain it. See what new and fresh ideas emerge!



20 mins



Lego Pieces

## 7 Imagining Discipleship

You will need to prepare a set of images or photos beforehand for this activity, and print them out ready for each group. Aim to have about 15 images per group, which could range from more abstract images to more concrete ones. You could also use existing packs of images for this, such as a box of *Creative Faith Postcards*.<sup>3</sup>

For this activity itself, encourage participants to choose images or photos that illustrate a connection between discipleship and worship. By having a range of different images, you are encouraging participants to think about discipleship and worship in a way that is 'outside the box.' Once each participant has chosen their image, take some time to explore it together as a group.



20 mins



Photos or  
Images

<sup>3</sup> From <http://projectsandworkshops.ruthjoyphotography.com/creative-faith-postcards>.

### 3. CLOSING (10min)

To conclude, invite each person in your groups to identify:

- a) One thing that they can look to as a focus for worship in their Monday-to-Saturday lives, or
- b) One stumbling block or impediment to whole-life discipleship, either within themselves or in their circumstances, which they need to work on.



**10 mins**

Close in prayer with each member of the group praying a brief prayer of confession, thanksgiving or petition relating to what they have named.

End by saying the grace together or have someone pronounce the following blessing.

Go forth into the world in peace.  
Be of good courage.  
Hold fast that which is good.  
Render to no one evil for evil.  
Strengthen the fainthearted.  
Support the weak.  
Help the afflicted.  
Show love to everyone.  
Love and serve the Lord,  
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;  
and the blessing of almighty God,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.  
Amen.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> From <https://acollectionofprayers.com/2016/08/01/go-forth-into-the-world>