

Worship in times of Crisis

Starter

What do you spend most of your time doing?

What does the word worship mean to you? If you had to define it in one sentence what would it say?

Context

Today, we want to focus on King Jehoshaphat. He was the king of Judah. Jehoshaphat was 35 when he reigned. He succeeded king Asa and reigned for 25 years from 873 to 848 BC. You can read up about his reign in 1 Kings 22, but in 2 Chronicles 17–22 you can read a bit more detail about his life.

The background to the story is that an alliance of nations decides to march against Judah. King Jehoshaphat is under all sorts of pressure, in fact you could say that this was a national disaster! The nation was under attack and King Jehoshaphat had no control over it

Do you feel the same when you think of the situation we are facing today?

Write down your fears and worries. What would your main worry be?

Let's pick up the story from 2 Chronicles 20: 1-21 you can click on the link below

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+20%3A1-21&version=NIV>

NB: A great tool that I have developed over the years is to print out the passage or write in your bibles and do the following:

- Underline - what surprises you
- Circle - what God may be saying to you
- Question mark - what you don't understand

Questions

1. What was the problem? V2
2. How did Jehoshaphat respond? V3
3. Have you ever done this before? Why was this King Jehoshaphat response?
4. What are your thoughts on fasting?

The bible doesn't say that we as Christians have to fast. It is not a command, but at the same time it does talk about how good fasting is for the Christian.

We see often in the bible that people fasted for different reasons. We also see that fasting and prayer are linked together. This is because the purpose of fasting is to take our eyes off the things of this world and solely focus on God. When was the last time we did this? If you have a moment today, take a candle and light it. For the next two minutes just focus on God. Perhaps read Psalm 46:10 to help you. This will enable us to get a new perspective on God.

Many people will give up food when they fast as this was a great way of to concentrate on God, but it doesn't have to just be food; we can give up anything. Anytime we give something up temporarily to focus exclusively on God, on knowing Him and knowing His will, it can be considered fasting. (1 Corinthians 7:1-5)

Jesus teaches us about fasting. For example, in Matthew 6:16–18, Jesus says,

“When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

So, several things stand out in that passage. Firstly, Jesus says, “When you fast” — not “If you fast.” That is what I mean when I say it seems that he expects that his followers will be fasting.

Next, he tells us that we should do it in secret. In this passage Jesus insists that our fasting should not be done for the sake of impressing other people. The Father can see what is being done behind closed doors. This is a great challenge for us all.

Finally, we see that fasting leads to worship.

5. What comes to mind when you think of the word worship?

I think today, when we think of the word worship, we are transported to Sunday mornings, with Jim leading us in a Christian song. Or maybe you have made your way to a Christian festival like Spring Harvest or New Wine where the band are on stage and leading you in worship. In many ways you would be right as part of worship is through sung praise. However, worship of God is actually in everything we do. If we understood the difference between praise and worship, we could have a new understanding and depth of how we can honour God. Throughout the bible we often read the phrase “praise the Lord”. We are told that angels said it, the people of the earth said it, even the rocks cry out (Luke 19:40). We are called to worship God to praise him and we can do that in many different formats.

6. How do you worship god? Is it just through song?

7. How did Jehoshaphat worship God? What key words/ phrases did he say?

Sometimes, in times of difficulty when we can't control what is happening our natural instinct is to turn to God. I think this is what Jehoshaphat is doing.

8. Read the end of verse 20, what does it say? I often pray this.

God didn't leave him hanging, he chose to answer him. Spend some time reading the next part of the story

9. How does God respond?

10. What are the key phrases said in this passage?

When we worship, God reminds us who He is. He renews our perspective and helps us put things in the right order. We need to remember that God is bigger than our worries. I love what Jesus says in Matthew 6:25-33. He urges us not to worry but to seek him first. What Jesus did on the cross was to give us a hope. Our time on this earth is short, in fact our worries are limited. We may live in a time of uncertainty, but Jesus gives us a certainty that we will be with him for ever.

So, I encourage you today to spend some time worshipping God and seeking his wisdom in every situation you face.