

WHAT TO BRING TO WORSHIP | A Reverent Agnosticism | Week 2 | Feb 8 & 9

Hebrews 12:5-11; Romans 11:33-36; Romans 12:1-3

These study guides are designed for individual or group study but highly encouraged to be experienced in community with a small group or other friends on the journey with Jesus.

Context: What is worship really all about? Is it one of the optional activities that we try to work into our schedule? Is it worth the time? What attitudes do we bring in to worship on Sunday that hinders or enhances our worship?

- How would you respond to a friend who asks, “I see you going to church all the time, what do you know about God?”
- Thinking of the key ideas that you shared, where and/or from whom did you learn them?

Who God is NOT: Don McCullough shares from his book, *The Trivialization of God: The Dangerous Illusion of a Manageable Deity* several examples of who God is NOT:

- **The God-of-my-Cause:** The Eternal God becomes reduced in our minds to the God-of-the-Right-to-Life or the God-of-the-Right-to-Die or the God-of-Progressivism or the God-of-Conservatism.
 - **The God-of-my-Understanding:** They connect the dots of Scripture to define theologies (creation; men and women; end times) and denominational orthodoxies as if theirs is the necessary and exclusive home of God.
 - **The God-of-my-Experience:** If you haven’t experienced conversion; baptism; the Holy Spirit; God’s presence, etc. then you haven’t experienced the true God.
 - **The God-of-my-Comfort:** See God as someone who’d never want one of his beloved creatures to experience pain or loss, and who’s greatest aim is to make us happy.
 - **The God-of-my-Success:** if you just follow this plan – he will surely grant you a prosperous, influential, and stress-free life.
- Why do we tend to trivialize God in such ways? How does it relate to control?
 - Has there been a time when one of these seemed defining to you? How about currently, do any seem to sound too familiar?
 - What was the reason for viewing God in this way? Talk about how that view of God has changed for you.

How Big is the Box?: To help hold these trivializations in check, Pastor Dan taught us the idea of Reverent Agnosticism. A “Christian who knows that there is a God -- that this God has met us supremely and with the power of salvation in Jesus Christ -- but who is realistic about her own sinful tendencies when it comes to perceiving God.” Even with a solid understanding of the Christian creeds, precepts and foundations we can try to reduce God - to “my god” - to something we can we can control or manipulate instead of someone we submit to and are transformed by.

- How do you keep growing in your understanding of who God is and how God works in your life, especially when it might run counter to previously held ideas? Talk or journal your reflections on this?
- Have you ever caught yourself trying to “reason” God into what you wanted?

Three Prayers to help keep me encountering and growing in relationship with the true God on Sunday morning:

1. Awaken me to Your Mystery: Read Romans 11:33-36. We will not know ALL but we can pray that God will awaken us to MORE.

- How do you feel about mystery as part of faith? Talk about it.
- What is the absence of mystery? What does that imply?
- How does allowing for mystery enhance our understanding of God?

2. Give me Humility with others: Worship is our activity together. We gather as a community *“with a passion for the applause to heaven,”* as we learned last week. God speaks into our community. We seek to learn what God speaks. Read Romans 12:3. Pastor Dan says, “..in humility...ask for sober judgement to recognize the limitations of your perspective...ask for capacity to remain open to that fresh something about God’s person and plan.”

- Be honest, do you come to church more as a learner or a teacher? How has God spoken to you through others in the past month?
- What have you discovered “new” about God lately?

3. Ignite my desire to explore the expanse of Your Word: “Don’t let what you think you already know about God keep you from continually seeking to grow in your knowledge of the fullness of what God is trying to tell you about himself,” says Pastor Dan. Read Romans 12:2.

- What motivates you to study God’s Word, to grow and to become transformed to be more like Jesus?
- What is the result described in the passage?
- Often times seeing transformation requires that we look back. How are you more like Jesus today than you were six months ago?

Practice of the week: Under the practice of “Reverent Agnosticism”, pray one of the three prayers each morning this week. Come next Sunday, pray all three on the way to church and be ready and open to receive what you might discover new about God.