

Week 19: A Heart of Worship

Hook



Main Point: Godly people prioritize worship as the most important thing.

The DeLorean has come to be known as one of the worst cars of all time; *Time* magazine ranked it in the bottom 50.¹ The DMC DeLorean was the passion project of John DeLorean, who had a vision for a car that stood out. Due to the unique design, the car was costly, contributing to its failure as it debuted during a worldwide economic recession in the 1980s. The vehicle was sluggish, weighing 2,866 pounds with only a 132 hp motor. John DeLorean thwarted vehicle improvement because a larger engine would require the car to take a different shape and look, which was outside DeLorean's concept. This focus on appearance resulted in the car's suffering in the areas that matter most, performance and accessibility. Only 9,000 DMC DeLoreans were ever produced. The DeLorean Motor Company went under shortly after it began.²

Q: Why is it tempting to focus on appearance rather than substance?

Q: Does the Bible say anything about the outward expression vs. internal motives?

RECAP: This is a new period of David's life (lessons 18–22) when David was finally made king over all of Israel after 20 to 30 years of waiting. Last week, we saw him finally become king, and inquire of the Lord at every step along the way. This week, we'll see that the first thing David does, once he has defeated the Philistines, is try to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. The first thing David does to establish his kingdom is worship. This is what made David a man after God's own heart. With all the mistakes he made and sins he committed, David had a heart for worship, and he prioritized worship as the most important thing, the foundational thing.

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Book (*Note: 1 Chronicles 13:1–14:7 is parallel to this passage.*)

Main Point: Godly people prioritize worship as the most important thing.

2 Samuel 6:1–8; Exodus 25:10–16 [Read]

Talking Point 1: Godly people revere God as holy.

Q: According to Exodus, how was the ark of the covenant supposed to be moved?

What was different about the way these priests moved it?

The ark of the covenant was a large wooden chest overlaid with pure gold (3.75' long x 2.25' wide x 2.25' high). Inside were the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, Aaron's staff, and a golden urn of manna (Hebrews 9:4). Two golden cherubim stood on either end of the "mercy seat" (the lid), facing each other with their wings spread over it. The ark was the only piece of furniture in the Holy of Holies. There God's Spirit dwelled with His people above the mercy seat between the cherubim (Exodus 25:10–22). This was a physical model, a "copy" or "shadow" of what is in heaven – God on His throne, between actual cherubim (Ezekiel 1:26; 10:1; Hebrews 8:5). Sometimes, as a title, God is called "the Lord of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim" (v. 2), referring to His Lordship over all the universe and His great power as Lord Almighty (Psalm 80:1; 99:1; Isaiah 37:16).³

When the people were in the wilderness (recorded in the book of Numbers) and during the conquest (recorded in the book of Joshua), they treated the ark as if God were physically on it. The priests carried the ark ahead of the people both to guide them and to carry God's presence with them into battle. But they were supposed to keep their distance, not go near it (Joshua 3:4). Every time the ark set out, Moses would say, "Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you" (Numbers 10:35). When they disobeyed God and lost the battle at Ai, Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown before the ark as if before God Himself (Joshua 7:6). When the priests carrying the ark stepped foot in the Jordan, it was at that moment that the river parted (Joshua 3:13). The ark was very present in their movements during their time in the wilderness and the conquest, but when we get to the book of Judges, the ark is only mentioned once. It didn't go in and out with them; it stayed in the tabernacle at Bethel and then Shiloh (Judges 20:26–28). It was still considered the physical location of the presence of the Lord, but instead of bringing it out with them, they went into the tabernacle to inquire of Him.

The ark of the covenant is not mentioned again until 1 Samuel 4, when it was captured by the Philistines. It was captured because Israel brought it into battle with them again for the first time in generations, but they were just treating it like a good luck charm. The priests at the time, the sons of Eli, weren't following God. In an earlier lesson, we learned that the sons of Eli were cursed by the Lord for doing all kinds of evil. Because

they used the ark like a good luck charm, the Lord caused them to lose the battle, the ark to be captured, and the sons of Eli to die.

But God didn't want the Philistine army to think that capturing the ark meant they had beaten Him, so He supernaturally attacked them. They put the ark in their god Dagon's temple, and God made the idol of Dagon fall before it with his head and hands broken off (1 Samuel 5:1–5), and He afflicted the people with tumors (1 Samuel 5:6–10). They finally sent the ark back to Israel, with a gift of five golden tumors and rats (1 Samuel 5:10–6:12).

When they returned the ark to the Levite city of Beth-Shemesh, the people rejoiced, but 70 of them who looked inside the ark died. So they sent the ark to Kiriath-jearim, where they consecrated Eleazar to guard it, and it remained there for 20 years (1 Samuel 6:13–7:2). Saul never tried to bring it to his city or create a temple for it (1 Chronicles 13:3), perhaps out of fear of what had happened to those who had mistreated the ark, which would fit his tendency to operate out of fear. But David made it his first order of business once he became king and established his own city of Jerusalem, because he made worship of Yahweh alone his highest priority as a king after God's own heart.⁴

David gathered all the able-bodied men as if he were creating an army, but instead of fighting, they worshipped with songs, instruments and dance. They put the ark on a new cart, the same way the Philistines had moved it. This was a respectful way to move a holy item in their culture. But God had commanded them to carry the ark by the poles, which always stayed on so that they only ever touched the poles, not the ark itself. They were already disobeying God and disrespecting the ark, but then, as the cart bounced around the hill, Uzzah reached out to stop it from falling, and God struck him dead. This story may seem harsh to us; he was just trying to stop the cart from falling! But in all these stories, the Lord was showing them not to treat the ark lightly, because to do so was to treat God Himself lightly. The ark was to be revered as the location of God's holy presence on earth, just as if they were before God Himself. Also, Uzzah's name means both "strength" and "ox" (the animal they used to move the cart). They were trying to do something in their own strength, their own way, instead of doing it as God had commanded them. Their intentions were good, but the way to follow God is to do things the way He tells us, not the way we think is best.⁵

God is holy and is to be revered. He is not to be used as a magic charm to get what we want. God is to be worshipped, which is when we surrender to Him everything we think, do, or say. Because we don't have a physical ark or temple anymore, we can easily forget to take God's holiness as seriously as they did in the Old Testament. Because Jesus tore the veil between us and the holy of holies (Mark 15:37–38) and we can enter His presence with confidence now (Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 10:19), we can easily treat God too casually. Even though He is our Abba Father, with whom we can have an intimate relationship, we still need to revere Him as Holy Lord. That's why the Lord's Prayer starts with both "Our Father" and "hallowed be your name" (Matthew 6:9). When we come before the Lord in worship and prayer, we are coming before the One

who dwells between the cherubim on the throne in heaven – the Lord Almighty, ruler over all things in heaven and earth.

Q: Why is it sometimes hard to remember to revere God as holy?

Q: Since we don't have an ark, how do we show reverence for God today?

2 Samuel 6:9–15 and Psalm 132 [Read]

Talking Point 2: Worship is central to the lives of godly people and godly communities.

Q: According to Psalms, why did David want to bring the ark to Jerusalem?

The text tells us that David was afraid of the Lord after what happened to Uzzah. This was not the healthy kind of fear, a reverence of God as holy. He was afraid of what might happen to him if he brought the ark to Jerusalem. Some scholars argue that his fear was a positive, an act of humility and reverence for God's holy presence. David realized that no human, including himself, could ever stand before a holy God based on his own righteousness (Psalm 76:7; 130:3).⁶ But instead of responding with worship and reverence, David responded with fear and sent the ark to the house of Obed-edom, the Gittite (meaning he was from Gath, where Goliath was from and where David had served as vassal to Achish).⁷

Earlier, when the Philistines had the ark, it was sent to Gath and all their people got tumors. But God blessed Obed-edom, showing David that the ark wouldn't hurt him if he revered it the way he was supposed to. The ark wasn't a danger to those who approached it with reverence; it was a blessing. The same is true for God Himself. God will bless those who approach Him in worship and humility with "every spiritual blessing ... far more abundantly than all we ask or think" (Ephesians 1:3; 3:20). We are called to "fear" God, meaning to revere Him as holy, but we do not need to be *afraid* of Him. Understanding this difference helps us understand what it means to worship, which is what we are made to do.

David brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem with worship by dancing, shouting, instruments and singing. He did falter in his faith, but he eventually fulfilled his mission to bring the ark to Jerusalem, to give God's presence a place to dwell in his capital city. This is yet another contrast between David and Saul, even though Saul was now gone. Saul had never even tried to retrieve the ark, but David vowed to find a "dwelling place" for the Lord in Israel (Psalm 132:2-5). In the ancient world, it was typical for a king to build a temple for his people's god in their capital city, which David offered to do in the next chapter. Saul never did that, but David did, because even with all his faults, worship was central for him. David had experienced the Lord being his refuge and strength during his 20 to 30 years of waiting. Now he was bringing God's presence to live among His people, just as God had promised the people coming out of Egypt who then went through their own time of waiting and journeying through the wilderness.

This put worship of the Lord front and center in David's reign. Chronicles goes into more detail about how David offered a psalm of thanksgiving and established priests, worship leaders, and musicians to serve regularly before the ark in the tabernacle (1 Chronicles 16), but even here, we see David's heart for worship by the way he danced "with all his might" before the Lord. By wearing a linen ephod and bringing the ark to Jerusalem, David was acting as both king and priest, which was exactly what God wanted in a king – someone to point the people to God instead of himself.⁸

Q: What is worship?

Q: What are the benefits of making worship of God central in your life? How might it affect different areas of your life?

2 Samuel 6:16–23 [Read]

Talking Point 3: Godly people are unashamed to worship, no matter what others think.

Q: Why was Michal disgusted with David? How did David respond to her?

Though David's dancing is described as joyful worship in the story, Michal found it vulgar and dishonorable. This doesn't necessarily mean that he "flashed" anyone while leaping and dancing in his linen ephod; just the fact that he was wearing only an ephod and not a king's robes would have been dishonorable to Michal, who had grown up in the palace. But the linen ephod was the sacred clothing worn by the priests when they performed their ministry before the Lord, without all the pomp and circumstance of the robes and jewelry of their full regalia (Leviticus 16:4; 23). What Michal saw as humiliating, David did as an act of humility in worship.

In Michal's defense, her whole family had died, and she had been taken from her current husband to rejoin David after almost a decade of being apart. She had loved David when they were young, but he had acquired other wives during that time. She may have been jealous. But the fact remains that she didn't understand the heart of worship. She only saw what she considered "inappropriate" behavior for a king. David reminded her that God had chosen him, not her father or any of her family. He admitted to being "undignified" and "humiliated" in his own eyes. This is what worship is – humbling ourselves before the Lord, realizing our place before Him. He is God and we are not. This is especially important for the king. In much of the ancient world, kings acted like their own gods and even called themselves gods, but in God's kingdom, His kings were only His representatives (Deuteronomy 17:14–20). God was the true king of Israel. This was something Saul never understood, but David did.

We don't have to dance around in a linen ephod or do something equally humiliating in our culture to truly worship God. But we do have to worship God in humility, seeing ourselves in right relationship to Him. And when it comes to glorifying God with our lives, we shouldn't worry about what the world sees as "undignified" or "dishonorable," whether that's what we do in a worship service or what we do every day when we live

our lives as a “living sacrifice” to God as our “spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1–2). It doesn’t matter what the world thinks of us, only what God thinks (Galatians 1:10). No matter what others say, like David, we will say, “I will celebrate before the Lord” (v. 21) – the Lord who has rescued me and lifted me up and blessed me, the Lord who has been my refuge and strength in times of trouble. Even if I am abased in the eyes of my friends and family and everyone else (v. 22), I will glorify His name! Those who know the Lord will not despise us for it; they will respect us (v. 22).

Q: Describe a time when someone looked down on you or made fun of you for your faith. What was your response?

Q: In what ways are you glorifying God with your day-to-day life? How do you need to grow and change so that *everything* you do glorifies God?

Week 19: A Heart of Worship

Took

Main Point: Godly people prioritize worship as the most important thing.

Horeshoe Falls (the largest of the three waterfalls that collectively form “Niagara Falls”) is 180 feet high and drops 6 million cubic feet of water over the crestline every minute at 35 miles per hour; that’s about one million bathtubs worth of water.⁹ Such power generates a powerful noise, the falls clock in at 96 decibels.¹⁰ For reference, a normal conversation produces about 50 decibels and a jackhammer registers at 100 decibels.¹¹

The closer you get to the falls, the more difficult it becomes to hear anything else. How much more should the glory of God almighty drown out the opinions of others? Pursue Jesus this week in worship, through your thoughts and deeds. Commit to meditate on His Word and watch as the judgment of others becomes less and less significant. You be concerned with the voice of the Master.

CHALLENGES

THINK: Why is worship so central to the Christian life? How does everything else we do flow from our worship? How can we be sure we are worshipping God with enough reverence for His holiness? Does it matter what we do in worship or is it only our attitude toward God in worship that matters? Why or why not? What does it look like to worship God with our whole lives, not just on Sunday mornings?

PRAY for God to give you a heart for worship. Ask Him to humble you and give you the right attitude toward Him as the holy Lord. Pray for a spirit that is unashamed of worshipping and serving God. Pray for the boldness to praise God with your whole life, no matter what other people think of you.

ACT: Worship. People worshipped before the ark in a lot of different ways – singing, dancing, shouting, instruments. The Bible also talks about our whole lives being an act of worship when we live in a way that glorifies God. This week, choose one thing you can do to worship God, something different than you are used to doing in church. It may be dancing like David or sharing your testimony with someone, meditating or painting a picture. It could be anything. Ask God to lead you in what He would have to you do and then do it!

NEXT TIME in *The Life of David*: Next week we’ll see more of David’s heart for worship as he offers to build a temple for the Lord. But instead, God says He will build a house

for David and reveals the Davidic Covenant that points ahead to Christ as the future “son of David” who will bring in the new covenant as Messiah.

¹ <https://time.com/history/automobiles>. April 25, 2017.

² Callum Jones, “<https://motor-vision.co.uk/latest-news/what-made-the-delorean-a-bad-car/>” (2020)

³ *The ESV Study Bible has a very helpful illustration of the ark as well as a chart and map of the movement of the ark in 1–2 Samuel under the notes on 1 Samuel 4. ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

⁴ Robert D. Bergen, *1–2 Samuel, The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 1996).

⁵ James Orr and John L. Nuelsen, “Uzzah,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994).

⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel, Interpretation: A Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990).

⁷ James Orr and John L. Nuelsen, “Gittite,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994).

⁸ Robert Alter, *The David Story: Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999).

⁹ <https://niagarafalls.ca/living/about-niagara-falls/facts.aspx>

¹⁰ <https://www.soundprint.co/location/niagara-falls-american-side-niagara-falls-ny-771700>

¹¹ <https://www.chem.purdue.edu/chemsafety/Training/PPETrain/dblevels.htm>