

lesson three
OCTOBER 10–OCTOBER 17

Worship and
Dedication

*“Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not
reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver”*

(2 Cor. 9:7, NRSV).



Jer. 10:23;
Col. 3:2

Introduction

Attention: All Shoppers!

Each Sabbath morning while I was a teenager, I had a decision to make. There are 72 Adventist churches within a 30-mile (48-kilometer) radius of my hometown. So the question wasn't whether or not to go to church, but rather, which church to attend.

Don't forget which church has the best potlucks!

With a plethora of churches in the vicinity, sometimes it's difficult not to feel like you're at the mall. Many people spend a lot of time and effort "shopping" for the right church. Which church has the most active youth group? Are the sermons relevant to my life? Does this church's style of music match my own? Does it cater to my needs?

Some break it down even further. They attend one church for Sabbath School, drive to another to listen to an amazing praise team, and yet another to hear a renowned pastor preach the Word of God. And don't forget which church has the best potlucks! At the end of the day, you've been blessed with great music, a powerful sermon, and physical nourishment. But what have you given of yourself?

While there is absolutely nothing wrong with exploring the options to find the right church, we need to remind ourselves what worship is all about. As humans, it's only natural for us to seek out that which meets our needs. But when we worship, the focus is neither on us nor what we can get out of church. Rather, worship is *all* about God.

It's about venerating the only One who is worthy of praise—the Almighty God who takes care of us. When we worship the Lord, we are simply giving back the time and talents He has blessed us with. It's our duty and privilege to use what God has given us to serve Him, honor Him, and praise Him. He has never forgotten us, so we must not forget Him in our worship.

As you study this week's lesson on worship and dedication in Numbers 7 and 8, remind yourself of *who* your focus is on.

With the construction of the tabernacle, God made clear His intent on being actively involved in the development and growth of the Israelites. Although He had conversed with Moses prior to the presence of the tabernacle, perhaps He wanted a meeting place so that He could always be “found” by everyone. He wanted a relationship, not only with Moses, but with all the people of Israel. And this relationship was to be special.

Allegiance and Dedication (Numbers 7)

At the dedication of the altar, each tribal leader brought an offering. Each of the 12 leaders brought the identical gift, which makes Numbers a bit boring to read. To God, however, each gift of worship is special and noted, even if it is nothing more than two mites. Read Mark 12:42–44. God does not require more worship from one

God does not require more worship from one person than He does from another.

person than He does from another. The value of our gifts to God are determined not by the value society places upon them, but upon the degree to which they represent self-sacrifice.

This litany of offerings in Numbers 7 also reminds us of the importance of giving and of signifying in tangible ways our allegiance and dedication to our Creator and Savior.

Sharing the Work (Num. 7:1–10)

After the anointing and consecration of the tabernacle, the leaders of the 12 tribes voluntarily brought oxen and carts to the tabernacle. The families of Gershon, Merari, and Kohath were responsible for transporting the tabernacle (Numbers 4). This was not an easy task, but the oxen and carts would assist in this work.

In the offerings that were brought to the new sanctuary, we learn that all the people participated in some way. This lets us know that it was truly their sanctuary.

Worship Together (Num. 8:5–13, 19)

In Numbers 8:5–13, we read about the dedication of the Levites. In verse 10, the children of Israel were to lay their hands on the heads of the Levites. “This was a representative act. Some commentators think it was perhaps carried out by the princes, transferring to the Levites the obligations of the congregation in connection

with the tabernacle services. The Levites were given to God instead of the first-born; and as the whole family was sanctified through the first-born, so the whole congregation benefited.¹

The Levites were responsible for the sanctuary services. However, this did not mean that the rest of Israel did not need to worship anymore. Rather, it was so that the community of Israel could worship more. One of the principle duties of the Levites was to make atonement for the sins the Israelites committed, thus allowing the people to safely approach the sanctuary (verse 19) to worship God. By setting apart the Levites to work in the sanctuary, God was giving the community of Israel the freedom to worship God without fear or reservation.

The Lamps (Num. 8:1–3)

It seems common knowledge that the lamps would be used for light inside the tabernacle to help the priests do their work inside. Of the furniture in the tabernacle, the lamps are the only ones focused on in this section of Numbers. The instructions given here almost look out of place in the midst of all the offering, dedicating, and sacrificing going on. The importance of light, whether indoors or outdoors, cannot be argued. And God wants to make sure that the Levites will be able to conduct their duties well while in the Holy Place.

In visions shown to John, we see candlesticks around Jesus, and we are told that these candlesticks represent the church (Rev. 1:20). This isn't the first time that the church is compared to candlelight. Jesus also told us that we were to be a light for the world (Matt. 5:14–16). Our worship is to lead others to glorify God. If our lives do not lead others to God, we are like a candle under a bowl. "Christ came to dispel the darkness and to reveal the Father. This same work Christ committed to His disciples. Light shines, not so much that men may see the light, as that they may see other things because of the light. Our lights are to shine, not so that men may be attracted to us, but that they may be attracted to Christ, who is the light of life, and to things worth while (Matt. 6:31–34; John 6:27; cf. Isaiah 55:1, 2)."²

In Exodus 19:6, God told Moses that the people of Israel were called to be a nation of priests. And just as a priest's job is to lead others to worship God, the nation of Israel was to help the nations of the earth approach God in worship. Today, this is our duty also. We are called to worship, but we shouldn't stop there, for true worship is also helping the people around us develop their relationship with God.

REACT

1. How does a nation full of priests make more sense than a plane full of pilots?
2. What priestly duties has God given each of us to do?
3. The Israelites celebrated the sanctuary by bringing offerings. If you knew your thanksgiving offerings went toward celebrations, what occasions would you be thankful for?
4. How can you signify in tangible ways your allegiance and dedication to God?

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 852.

2. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 331.

Testimony
*To Love, Honor, and
Cherish*

Ps. 95:6

“The Lord designed that by a faithful observance of the Sabbath command, Israel should continually be reminded of their accountability to Him as their Creator and their Redeemer. While they should keep the Sabbath in the proper spirit, idolatry could not exist; but should the claims of this precept of the Decalogue be set aside as no longer binding, the Creator would be forgotten and men would worship other gods.”¹ True worship is followed by undivided and unconditional dedication to God. In creating the Sabbath, God had hoped to guarantee an unbreakable covenant. Ideally, we were created to be a people of deep spirituality and indomitable devotion.

Their actions were a prominent indication of where their hearts truly lay.

“The Israelites, in their adoration of the golden calf, professed to be worshiping God. Thus Aaron, when inaugurating the worship of the idol, proclaimed, ‘Tomorrow is a feast unto Jehovah.’ They proposed to worship God, as the Egyptians worshiped Osiris, under the semblance of the image. But God could not accept the service. Though offered in His name, the sun-god, and not Jehovah, was the real object of their adoration.”²

Worship without dedication can clearly deceive. The focal point of worship was lost even among the anointed people of God. The Israelites, with a sense of misguided adoration, spoke with their words and even louder with their actions. Their actions were a prominent indication of where their hearts truly lay.

“The Israelites well knew that their idols were powerless to save or to destroy. They knew that the heathen worship was contrary to reason and sound judgment. But they had gradually departed from God, and had indulged in sin until their moral perceptions were dulled, and they were led astray by Satan.”³

The true actions of loving, honoring, and cherishing time with God are unveiled by the quantity and quality of time spent on “worshiping” our “idols,” or the secular circumstances that consume our lives. Genuine worship directs us to Jesus and away from our own helpless souls. We have so much more to look forward to when our eyes are trained ahead!

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1. *Lift Him Up*, p. 137.
 2. Appendix to *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 760.
 3. *The Signs of the Times*, August 18, 1881.

Exod. 25:22

Evidence

Come to the Mercy Seat

After delivering His people from slavery and leading them to the Promised Land, God introduced Himself more fully to them. Yes, His presence was with them daily in the pillar of cloud and fire (Exod. 13:22). However, now He was ready to instruct them in the ways of worship.

This He did by instructing Moses to tell the Israelites to “make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them” (Exod. 25:8, NKJV). The day would come when God’s chosen people—all those who believe in Him—could come into His presence at any time, at any place. For now, though, a sanctuary was to be built where He could dwell with them.

**Today the mercy seat also can be found
at the side of the bed [or] at the sink full of dishes.**

With explicit details, God instructed Moses on how this sanctuary should be built. Within the sanctuary, placed in the Most Holy Place, was the ark of the testimony. On this ark was placed the mercy seat. The mercy seat was made of pure gold with two gold cherubim placed on either end facing each other—their wings outstretched to cover the mercy seat. This mercy seat was placed on top of the ark of the testimony which contained the Ten Commandments (Exod. 25:17–22). First Samuel 4:4 states that God dwelt between these two cherubim. Furthermore, on the yearly Day of Atonement, the priest entered God’s presence and before the mercy seat made atonement for the sins of the people (Lev. 16:1–22).

Within the ark were the laws of the testimony (Exod. 25:16), a pot of manna (Exod. 16:32–34), and Aaron’s rod (Num. 17:10), all reminders of Israel’s rebellion at some stage in their journey. Today the mercy seat also can be found at the side of the bed, at the sink full of dishes, in a car stuck in traffic, in a church, in a park, anywhere the need is felt to worship God or to ask for forgiveness. God is always near. The blood of the Lamb—Jesus Christ—made that possible.

REACT

1. How can the contents of the mercy seat—reminders of Israel’s rebellion—encourage you regarding God’s willingness to forgive?
2. First Corinthians 3:16 reminds us that we are God’s temple and that His Spirit dwells in us. How can this help us to focus daily on Him?

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How-to When You Want to Give More

Num. 8:21, 22;
Jer. 29:11–13

Learning about the dedication of the tabernacle helps us to understand how much God desires our allegiance and dedication. It also helps us to understand what is required of us to have a relationship with Him and to grasp the significance and importance of committing ourselves to Him. At an earlier time, when the hearts of the Israelites were filled with thankfulness to God, their offerings even exceeded the required amount. They just wanted to keep on giving (Exod. 36:3–7)! The cross of Jesus Christ displays how much God wants to give us. How can we apply these concepts of giving to our lives?

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Take time to understand your purpose. This is not always an easy task, but as we ask God to guide us, prepare us, and use us, He will reveal His purpose for us (Jer. 29:11–13). Spend a few moments each day reaffirming your purpose and goals, not only for that day, but also for life.

Take time to consider your commitment. Is commitment to God a casual, one-time event? Or is it a continuing, dynamic, and growing closeness to Him? As we search for God with all our hearts (Jer. 29:13), our dedication to Him will deepen, our trust for Him will strengthen, and our desire to share His message of hope will grow.

Take time to know God's goodness. If you really love someone, you will want to give more and more. As you take time to consider and to experience what God offers us—abundant life (John 10:10) and eternal life (John 3:16)—your heart will release gifts of thankfulness to Him.

The bottom line is, we must take time for God. As we do, the joy, peace, and confidence we gain from such a close relationship with Him will be ours.

REACT

1. As we consider our level of commitment to God, what role should our emotions play?
2. In what ways can we align our own goals with the overall goals and mission of God's church (Matt. 28:19, 20)?
3. Close, healthy relationships are not formed instantly. How, then, can we ensure that we make adequate time for God?

Col. 1:15, 16

Opinion
Worship: A Way of Life

A friend of mine once worshiped the lead singer in a popular rock band. He dressed the same way as this singer, had the same hairstyle, and even went so far as to add the singer's last name to his own. Why does it seem so easy to be devoted to a human full of flaws, yet difficult to devote ourselves to the One who alone is worthy of such complete devotion?

God gave specific instructions about how He wanted the tabernacle and its worship services to be. These detailed instructions were to impress upon the Israelites, and us, the importance and specialness of worship.

Our worship today . . . must also be personal.

The book of Numbers tells the story of a group of people on a journey, not just to discover God, but to discover themselves as well. The tabernacle gave them a sense of family and of belonging. Through the symbolism of all that was the tabernacle, they could learn to be the type of family God wanted and needed them to be.

Our worship today is not just about coming together to sing praises. It must also be personal. It must acknowledge that every aspect of our lives belongs to God. We should live our lives as a constant response to God and everything He has given us. Our lives will then be a lifestyle of constant worship.

Unfortunately for many of us, we've learned to compartmentalize our lives so that worship falls into one of those compartments, separate from the others. But Colossians 1:16 says, "In him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him" (NRSV). God did not mean for part of life to be secular and another part to be religious. He created all of life to be for Him. We tend to forget that God is the very reason we exist and that He is concerned with every aspect of our lives. We should remember that everything in our lives comes from Him. That is where true worship begins.

REACT

1. Does living a life of constant worship mean that there is no room for "secular" activities? Explain.
2. Should there be a distinction between what is secular and what is religious? Explain.
3. How do we make sure that being in constant worship does not cut out the world around us?

Exploration

Representatives of the King

Ps. 63:1–8;
Psalm 99

CONCLUDE

In the children's fictional story, *The Yellow Star: The Legend of King Christian X of Denmark*, King Christian resists the Nazi regime in their attempts to distinguish Jews from any other inhabitants of Denmark by wearing a star on their clothing, by wearing one himself and thus inspiring the people of his country to do likewise.

How will people know that we belong to Jesus? We have the opportunity to devote our time and talents every day to the King of kings, thus developing our characters to become more like His. As we serve, honor, thank, and obey Him, others may be inspired to learn of the One True God, the Light of the world, and may thus choose to worship Him for eternity. Our worship can be that kind of witness!

CONSIDER

- Viewing pictures of people and items of God's magnificent creation. Take time to thank Him for His many blessings.
- Comparing a healthy plant to a dying or dead plant. Imagine life in a perfect environment.
- Finding a pleasant place outside where you can memorize or recite Psalm 23.
- Composing a musical piece that sounds majestic. Play the music for someone else and see how it inspires him or her.
- Taking a walk or hike and praising God for everything you see and hear that proclaims His goodness.
- Celebrating a friend's birthday or baptism. Ask the individual to share his or her testimony from the past year.
- Documenting the changing of the seasons, noting especially the regeneration of the plant and animal world and the handiwork of God in every detail.

CONNECT

Romans 12:1, 2.

Chris Blake, *Searching for a God to Love*.