

The ABC's of worship

FAMILY SUNDAY

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New Day Church

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Psalm 145

*I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name forever and ever.
Every day I will praise you and extol your name forever and ever.
Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.*

*One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts.
They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your
wonderful works. They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will
proclaim your great deeds.*

They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

*The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.
The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.*

*All you have made will praise you, O LORD; your saints will extol you.
They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might,
so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all
generations.*

*The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.
The LORD upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.*

*The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time.
You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.*

*The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made.
The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.
He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.
The LORD watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.*

*My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD. Let every creature praise his holy name
forever and ever.*

Today we're going to talk about something called worship. You've heard that word a lot around here, haven't you? Every week Derek says something about how we're going to worship God. Let's sing some worship choruses. It's time to worship the Lord.

Have you ever stopped to think about what it means? What DOES it mean? How would you define worship?

Is singing worship?

There's a singing fish that hangs on somebody's wall. Is it worshipping?

Here's an easy definition of worship we can use:

Worship is expressing what we know and love about God. You can express something by singing. You can do it by clapping or dancing or speaking or praying or crying or kneeling or bowing down or raising your hands or playing an instrument. We'll talk about some of those ways in the next few weeks. For now, it's enough to know that when we talk about worship, we mean expressing what we know and love about God. It's what is in our hearts and minds behind what we do that makes it worship.

I was trying to think of a good example of worship apart from church. Apart from worshipping God, people sometimes worship idols, which are like statues that they think are gods. It says in the Bible that we shouldn't worship idols, we should only worship God. But we don't have too many of those in America, at least not that kind. Those are mostly in other countries. But I got to thinking about that word idol and I realized there *is* something that might give us some examples.

Did you ever watch the show American Idol? People compete and the rest of the country votes for who they want to win. It's a singing contest, not a religion. But there are some things like worship that are happening. There's a reason they call the winner an idol, and it's because of how people respond to them. When people really like one of the singers, what do they do? They clap and cheer for them. They call in and vote for them and try to get other people to do the same thing. Sometimes they hold up signs that have the person's name on it.

Let's say everybody thought there was one singer who was really good. They knew he did the best job. But after he got done singing, nobody clapped. Nobody cheered. And nobody voted. All the good thoughts people had wouldn't really matter, would they? Because they didn't express their feelings, they wouldn't have any impact.

When we think God is great, we need to do something – not just think it. It's important to express it. Just like the people with those signs, we lift up God's name. We want him to get the glory and the credit he deserves.

Worship is what we were made for. We're designed to have something in our hearts that wants to respond to God, because he made us. It's a big part of what church is about. But that doesn't mean we're naturally good at it. We need to practice it, to learn more about it and to grow in it. So that's why we're going to spend the next few weeks really talking about it.

The Psalm that I read is an interesting one. It is all about worship. One of the things that makes this Psalm really special is that it is what you would call an alphabet acrostic. It was originally written in a different language, called Hebrew, and each verse starts with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

So today we're talking about the ABC's of worship – The building blocks of worship. If you want to learn to read, you start by learning the alphabet. If you want to learn to worship, you start with some basic building blocks, too.

Let's look at the letter A:

**All of me,
All about God.
Always.**

I need a volunteer with a Bible. I need you to read through Psalm 145 and count how many times David uses the word all. (16)

The Psalm writer lets us know here and elsewhere that he wants his whole being to be about giving praise to God.

Psalm 86:12

I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart.

God wants our whole heart. Not just part of it.

Deuteronomy 6:5

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

The very nature of worship requires that it be wholehearted. You just can't take a half-baked approach to it. Imagine if we rewound this morning and Derek had started things off a little differently...

[DEREK'S HALF-HEARTED SKIT]

It doesn't work, does it? Did you know God knows when people are just worshipping half way, and it makes him want to gag? Listen to what he said to the people of Laodicea:

Revelation 3:15-16

I know you inside and out, and find little to my liking. You're not cold, you're not hot — far better to be either cold or hot! You're stale. You're stagnant. You make me want to vomit.

That's a pretty colorful way to put it. Have you ever taken a drink of water that you expected to be cold and it was warm? Or taken a sip of what you thought was hot chocolate, only it was way too cooled off? It tastes gross.

Yuck. That's not how I want God to feel about my worship. When you think about worship from God's perspective, it makes you realize the importance of worshipping with energy and enthusiasm. Otherwise, there's not much point to it.

David also tells us under the letter A that worship is all about God. He's the only one who should be worshipped, because there isn't anyone greater. Like I read earlier,

Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.
In another place, the Psalm writer wrote

Psalm 86:8

*Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord;
no deeds can compare with yours.*

There's a great story about this in the book of I Samuel. The Philistines had just fought the army of Israel and had beaten them badly. They thought they were pretty cool, and way tougher than Israel. They even stole the ark of the covenant, which was a box with a seat on the top where the glory of the Lord would sit between two angel-like statues. It was where God's presence was, and the Philistines stole it.

They took it back to their country, and they put it in the temple of their god, whose name was Dagon. Dagon was a strange looking idol who for some reason wore a fish on his head. Anyway, this was the Philistines way of saying their god was better than the God of Israel.

So they put the ark in there for the night and went home. When they came back the next morning, Dagon was laying on his face in front of the ark! He had completely fallen over. So, they propped him back up and left again. The next morning, they went in and guess what? The same thing had happened again! Only this time, his head and arms had broken off, so there was no fixing him. God had proved to them that nobody is more powerful than he is. Even their god made out of a rock knew better.

Romans 14:11

*'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me;
every tongue will confess to God.'*

It isn't just with all my heart and all about God; worship is also something for all the time. That's the Always under the letter A.

Let's look at what David says again.

*I will praise your name forever and ever.
Every day I will praise you and extol your name forever and ever.*

That means worship is for more than just on Sundays. But how does that work? How can I have all my heart and mind and soul focused on worshipping God when I have so many other things to do during the day? Maybe I have homework, or basketball practice or cleaning up the house. Am I really supposed to worship God all the time? The writer Paul helps us understand a little better.

Colossians 3:23

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.

Remember what we said worship was? It was expressing what we know and love about God. We can express ourselves in all kinds of ways, and we can turn everything we do into an act of worship if we do it as if we're doing it for God. It gives us a different perspective on things.

Almost 400 years ago, there was a man named Nicholas Herman who worked as a servant for this rich man. Only he wasn't very good. He was clumsy and would keep messing things up. So he decided to go away and join a monastery and become a monk. When you do that, they give you a new name, and they called him Brother Lawrence.

They gave him a job working in the kitchen, which was one of his least favorite things to do. But after a while, he found that he could turn scrubbing pots or peeling potatoes into an act of worship. Here's what he said:

Work time is no different to me than prayer time; and in the noise and clutter of my kitchen, while several people are calling for different things at the same time, I have GOD with me as peacefully as if I were in church having communion.

Next time you're doing chores, think about doing them for God. It will change the way you feel about the work and you'll probably do a better job. We can worship God every day, always.

This brings us to the letter B:

**Bragging about God
Back and forth
Between us.**

Normally, it's not very nice to brag. I don't let my kids brag about things they feel they've done better than each other. But the Bible says it's a good thing to brag about God.

2 Corinthians 10:17

Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.

Just this week, I was talking to somebody who had seen God give him courage when he asked for it. He was excited that God had done that and he bragged about God to me. And you know what? It was an encouragement to me.

That's what the people of God do. They talk about him. It's what we read earlier:

One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts.

Look at that verse: One generation will commend your works to another. Do you know what a generation is? It's an age group. So the grandparents will tell the parents and the parents will tell the kids. And the kids can tell it right back to the parents and the grandparents.

That's one reason why I think it's great to talk about worship on a family Sunday. It's not something that's just for grown ups and it's not just for kids either. Worship is for everybody.

We need to hear from each other what God is doing. The stories are important.

Why?

They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds.

When I hear other people talking about God, it makes me meditate on or think about what he has done. It gives me a reason to go, "Hmm. I wonder what I've seen God do." And that makes me get to know and love him better, which makes me a better worshipper. That verse says that when other people tell of God's power, then I will start talking about it too. I am encouraged by what they say. So when you see something good God has done, share it with somebody else, because they need to hear it.

Since we all need each other for worship, I want to try something. Some of you have a piece of paper taped under your chair. Everybody check to see if you can find one. If there's an empty chair next to you, check under it to make sure we don't have any left over.

Here's what we're going to do: 26 people have a letter of the alphabet. If you have a letter, I want you and the people to either side of you to come up with a word that starts with that letter (or that letter's sound in the case of letters like X) that describes God. For example, if you have the letter A, you might choose the word "Awesome." We'll take a minute to do that, then we'll all go through the alphabet and when we come to your letter, shout out your word.

Worship is about Bragging about God back and forth between us. It's a great way to encourage each other and become better worshippers.

Finally, we come to the letter C.

**Christ's
Compassion for
Creation.**

At the beginning of our Psalm, David is focused primarily on God being great and powerful, like a King. He's in control and he makes things happen.

But at the end, he's looking at something different. Check it out:

*The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.
The LORD upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down...he hears
their cry and saves them.*

God isn't just big and in charge – He cares about us. He sees our problems and he has compassion on us. Compassion is when you see somebody having a hard time and you do something to help them.

It's like the time I saw a family of ducklings crossing the road near my work. All of them but one made it up onto the curb. That last one kept trying over and over again, but he just couldn't get it. It was too high. He was wearing himself out and was never going to make it. It just made me want to do something for him, to pick him up and put him on the curb. That's compassion.

God showed us compassion when he sent Jesus to earth. He saw us struggling to overcome all the bad stuff inside us. He saw that we were never going to be able to climb out of where we were on our own. It was too high of a wall, and we would wear ourselves out trying. And that would mean we would die there, separated from God by this big wall. So he sent Jesus down to die for us and to lift us up to be with him, to get over the barrier.

Romans 5:8

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Of course we can refuse the help. When I wanted to help that duckling, the mama duck didn't want me anywhere around. Even though I was willing and ready, my offer was turned down. We don't have to take God's compassion. We don't have to accept what Jesus did for us.

But if we don't, our worship won't mean much. If we turn our back on God's help, it's pretty hard to be believable when we try to say Good things about him. And he's the only one who can help us. It's like we sang this morning, "I need you Jesus to come to my rescue, where else can I go?"

Christ's compassion goes hand in hand with God's greatness. Worship is tied in with experiencing that compassion for ourselves.

When we do, it gives us the greatest reason of all to praise God.

Psalm 86:12-13

*I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart;
I will glorify your name forever.
For great is your love toward me;
you have delivered me from the depths of the grave.*

There's no greater gift than the gift of life.

So let's review our ABC's. Let's say the As together:

All of me
All about God
Always

Ask yourself, "Am I putting my whole heart into worshipping God? Am I thinking about how I can worship him every day?" Maybe there is something that has become so important to you in your life that it has become like an idol. Are you making worship all about God?

How about the B's?

Bragging on God
Back and forth
Between us

In my conversations with my family and friends, am I pointing out what God is doing when I see it? Am I thinking about the stories other people tell me about God?

And now the C's:

Christ's
Compassion for
Creation

Have I accepted the help God offers? Have I put my trust in him? That's at the heart of worship. It's easy. All you have to do is say, "Lord Jesus, I need you. I believe in you and that you died in my place. Please come into my heart, forgive my sins and take over." Amen.

He'll come into your life and stay with you forever. And that will definitely be worth bragging about.