

## SCRIPTURES FOR 2/12/06 LIFEGROUP LESSON

### **James 4:8a (NLT)**

Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you...

### **Exodus 15:2**

The LORD is my strength and my song;  
he has become my salvation.  
He is my God, and I will praise him,  
my father's God, and I will exalt him.

### **Psalms 62:8**

Trust in him at all times, O people;  
pour out your hearts to him,  
for God is our refuge.

### **Matthew 15:8-9**

“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.”

### **Hebrews 10:19-23**

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

### **Hebrews 12:1-3**

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

### **Hebrews 10:25**

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

### **Romans 12:1-2 (The Message)**

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life - your sleeping, eating,

going-to-work, and walking around life - and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for Him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what He wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

### **James 2:26**

As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

### **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

### **Ephesians 5:1-2, 15-17**

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

### **Ephesians 4:11-16**

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

NOTE TO LEADER: There is a lot of material here. Familiarize yourself with it so you know which stuff you are most comfortable with and what you will cut if you get short on time. Try to keep the lesson/discussion 20-30 minutes in length. Good luck and let me know if you have any questions. - Ed

**NOTE TO LEADERS:** All items in *italics* are for your information and not designed to be read aloud.

**INTRODUCTION:**

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Last week, we discussed God's promise in James 4:8 to draw close and His warning that if we do He will see our imperfections even more clearly. This week, we dug a little deeper looking at that same passage, which reads, "Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you..." as a two-way street, the "Ultimate Worship Formula" as Jeff put it.

**OUR WORSHIP (Draw near to God...)**

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Jeff described five different things that worship is...

**EXALTATION** (*have someone read Exodus 15:2*)  
Miriam-Webster says exalt means "to elevate by praise or in estimation; to glorify". We must exalt His works, His character, and His nature.

What can we do to exalt God today? This week?  
(refer back to definition in necessary)

**EXPRESSION** (*have someone read Psalm 62:8*)  
To truly worship and enjoy God, we must express what is in our hearts toward Him. These expressions can be both PHYSICAL and VERBAL.

What are some PHYSICAL expressions of worship (*clapping, kneeling, lifting hands, etc.*)? VERBAL (*singing, speaking, praying, shouting, etc.*)?

It is natural for us to respond to God in these ways, but not all expressions are acceptable. It seems the only quality our expressions require is authenticity (*have someone read Matthew 15:8-9*).

How can we assure that our expressions are acceptable and authentic?

What do you think Jesus means by, "their teachings are but rules taught by men" and how do you think we can avoid falling into the same trap?

**ENCOUNTER** (*have someone read Hebrews 10:19-23*)  
In light of this promise, it is reasonable to expect to encounter the living God when we come together for worship. The Bible recounts some events where the earth shook or people were blinded, where people removed their shoes or covered their eyes. Many different experiences are described, but we may not always meet Him in such a palpable way. We may not "feel" His presence, but He is there. But the writer of Hebrews describes many things that can hinder our perception of encountering God.

*Have someone read Hebrews 12:1-3.*

What does the writer of Hebrews suggest we do to overcome hindrances to our encounter with God?

Does he ever mention style, volume, venue, or other surface issues as legitimate hindrances?

**EVENT** (*have someone read Hebrews 10:25*)  
The Old Testament is much more concerned with outlining appropriate worship and specific practices, while the New Testament focuses more on attitudes of worshipers and spiritual disciplines. However, as we just read, we are not excused from corporate worship.

What do you get from Sunday worship that you can't get from personal worship time?

**EVERYDAY LIFE** (*read the Message version of Romans 12:1-2 included above*)  
Worship is more than abstract introspection; it must be made manifest in concrete acts that we perform (i.e., our "fruit"). (*have someone read James 2:26*). We must live for Him, and we can worship Him in all we do, not just the "worshipy stuff".

Share a day-to-day activity during which you have trouble imagining yourself worshipping. What would make it easier?

**GOD'S RESPONSE (...and God will draw near to you)**

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Jeff also shared three responses to our worship...

**REVELATION** (*have someone read 2 Tim 3:16-17*)  
God reveals Himself to us through His word, through the preaching of His word, through direct revelation, through His creation, through His presence, through prophecy (special understanding, not fortune telling), through special discernment, and through others, all not so we can boast, but to equip us for the good works He expects of us.

**REMEMBRANCE** God established "ordnances" in order to provide a simple way for us to keep Him in front of us, even when we are feeling distant, to connect with Him even when we don't feel Him.

**REALITY** (*have someone read Ephesians 5:1-2, 15-17*)  
God rewards our service by walking with us and connecting us with others in the body and outside it for provision of support and acts of service. (*Read Ephesians 4:11-16*)

How will you try to encounter God this week?  
What hindrances can you attack?  
What will you expect next Sunday?