

Worship the God Who Made Us



SABBATH—AUGUST 3

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Psalm 115:1–8; Deuteronomy 10:17–22; Isaiah 1:10–17; Isaiah 58; Mark 12:38–40.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Here is the way I want you to fast [eat no food for a time]. Set [make] free those who are held by chains without any [for no] reason. Untie the ropes that hold people as slaves. Set free those who are crushed [hurt by people in power]. Break every evil chain. Share your food with hungry people. Provide homeless people with a place to stay. Give naked people clothes to wear. Provide for the needs of your own family’ ” (Isaiah 58:6, 7, NIV).

WHAT DO YOU SEE when you read the books by the Old Testament prophets? Prophets were God's special messengers. When you read their books, you see that the prophets cared a lot about the poor. They got very mad about the evil things that people from other lands did to the poor (read Amos 1 and 2). But they felt even more upset when God's own people did the same bad things to the poor and needy. God gave His people many blessings and gifts. So, God's people knew they should be kind to the poor. But that did not always happen. The prophets had a lot to say about that.

It is interesting to see that God's prophets also had a lot to say about worship. When they talked about worship, they often talked about being fair and kind to the poor. As we will see, true worship is not something that happens only in church. True worship is about our showing other people that God cares for them.



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WORSHIPING FALSE GODS AND NOT BEING FAIR TO PEOPLE (Psalm 115:1–8)

God led His people out of Egypt. Then He met with them at Mount Sinai. There, God gave His people the Ten Commandments. The first two commandments are about not worshiping other gods and not making statues of false gods (read Exodus 20:2–6). The people promised God that they will obey everything He tells them. They promised to live as His people (read Exodus 24:1–13).

Then Moses went up the mountain to meet with God. He was gone for almost six weeks. The people started to wonder what happened to Moses. Did he die on the mountain? So, the people told Aaron to make them a god from gold. Aaron made them a golden cow to worship. The people killed animals and offered them as gifts to their new “god.” After that, the people “sat down to eat and drink. Then they got up and had a wild party” (Exodus 32:6, ERV). Both the Lord and Moses were very angry at how fast the people turned away from God to worship the false god made from gold. Moses asked God to forgive the people. Moses’ prayer saved Israel from being destroyed (read Exodus 32:30–34).

That was not the only time Israel worshiped false gods. The history of Israel shows us that God’s people worshiped false gods again and again. Some of the kings of Israel and Judah led God’s people to do very evil things. So, God sent His special messengers, or prophets, to tell His people to come back to Him. During these times, the prophets also asked God’s people to take care of the poor, the needy, and the helpless too.



Moses’ prayer saves Israel from being destroyed (read Exodus 32:30–34).

Read Psalm 115:1–8. What important lesson does this psalm teach us?

As humans, we become the same as the thing or person we worship. So, it is only natural that God’s people stopped caring about other people when they turn away from Him. They stopped caring about being fair too. When God’s people chose to worship other gods, the people changed their minds and feelings about a lot of other things. One of those things included how they cared about other people. What happens when God’s people stay loyal to the Lord? Then they will share His love for people in need.

How do we become the same as what we worship?

A REASON TO WORSHIP (Deuteronomy 10:17–22)

The Bible tells God’s people to worship Him. The Bible also tells us the reasons why we should worship Him. We should worship Him because He is God and has done wonderful things for us. He is kind, loving, and fair. He shows mercy to His people. The Cross shows us God’s love. When we think about all the good things God does, we always will have a reason to worship and praise God.

Read Deuteronomy 10:17–22; Psalm 101:1; Psalm 146:5–10; Isaiah 5:16; and Isaiah 61:11. What reasons do these verses give us for worshiping and praising God?

These reasons are not new. God’s people knew about them. Israel had many powerful worship experiences after God freed them from Egypt. The people crossed the Red Sea. Then Moses and Miriam led the people in singing praises to God. They praised God for everything He did to save them (read Exodus 15).

God is a God of mercy. He is fair. He wanted His people to remember these things about Him. So, God’s people told wonderful stories about Him again and again. We can read about a time in Deuteronomy 10:17–22 when God’s people worshiped Him. They told each other all the wonderful things God did.

As we said, God is fair. It is a part of who He is. “ ‘The truth is that God does no wrong. God All-Powerful is always fair’ ” (Job 34:12, ERV). God cares about what is good and right. That is a reason to worship and praise Him.

We can see God’s love for what is good and right. We see His love in the way that He takes care of people who are poor and helpless. God’s mercy is more than a word or an idea. It is real. The Bible shows us that God “ ‘hears the cry of the needy [people in need]’ ” (Job 34:28, ICB). God wants to make right the things that are wrong on this earth. When will this fully happen? When God judges everyone on this earth and then makes everything new.

God’s people in Old Testament times had many reasons to praise the Lord. We have more reasons than they do. What reasons does the Cross give us to praise God?



Moses and Miriam led the people in singing praises to God.

PEOPLE WHO USE RELIGION TO HURT OTHER PEOPLE (Isaiah 1:10–17)



“ ‘The poor cannot pay their loans, so we will buy them as slaves. We will buy those helpless people for the price of a pair of sandals’ ” (Amos 8:6, ERV).

There were times in the Old Testament when God’s people turned away from false gods. They came back to God. But their worship was not exactly what God wanted it to be. The people mixed their worship of God with the religions of the people around them. So, their worship was not true. It was not enough to turn them away from doing evil in their everyday lives. The people worked very hard to be religious. But their praise music did not hide the cries of the poor and the helpless.

Amos showed the people in his day the evil that was in their hearts. He said to them, “ ‘You who trample [step] on helpless people. You are trying to destroy the poor of this country’ ” (Amos 8:4, ERV). Amos saw that his people wanted to get done with worship. They wanted to get back to making money. They made money by cheating other people and doing things that were not right. These people said, “ ‘The poor cannot pay their loans, so we will buy them as slaves. We will buy those helpless people for the price of a pair of sandals. Oh, and we can sell the wheat that was spilled [has no value or worth] on the floor’ ” (Amos 8:6, ERV).

Read Isaiah 1:10–17; Amos 5:21–24; and Micah 6:6–8. What did the Lord say to these religious people about the way they worshiped?

God uses His prophets, or special messengers, to talk to His people. God makes fun of their worship. Why? Because as we learned, His people did not take care of the poor. People were in need all around. But God’s people did nothing to help anyone. In Amos 5:21–24, God says He “hates” His people’s festivals. He hates the way they worship Him. He says their religious meetings “stink [smell very bad]” to Him. He does not enjoy them. God says His people’s offerings and music have no value. Micah asks, “ ‘Will the LORD be pleased with a thousand rams or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Should I offer him my first child to pay for my wrongs?’ ” (Micah 6:7, ERV). Of course not! Micah only says shocking things to get the people’s attention. In the end, God really wanted His people to “ ‘be fair to other people. Love kindness [being kind] and loyalty, and humbly obey your God’ ” (Micah 6:8, ERV).

A WAY TO WORSHIP (Isaiah 58)

God's special messengers teach that there is a special connection between worship and being fair. They also teach us that our taking care of people who are in need is an important part of worship. Isaiah 58 shows us this truth.

Read Isaiah 58. How does this chapter show us what went wrong between God and His people?

Who are the people that Isaiah talks to in this chapter? They are religious. They want to worship God. But their worship is not working. So, God says they should change their worship. They should try a different way of serving God. God wants His people to worship Him by “free[ing] the people you have put in prison unfairly. Undo [take away] their chains. Free those [people] to whom you are unfair. Free them from their hard [unfair] labor [work]’ ” (Isaiah 58:6, ICB). God also wanted His people to feed the hungry and help people in need of clothes and homes. These are the ways God wants His people to worship Him.

These are not the only ways. But God says that these kind acts please Him more than the way that His people worshiped Him. What do these kind acts teach us about worship? They teach us that worship is not about taking care of ourselves. Worship is about taking care of other people. We worship God by helping other people. Then we bless everyone around us. “Religion must free men from the power of sin. Religion changes hearts. It gets rid of feelings of hate. It helps us to be fair. It causes us to love freedom and peace.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 4, page 306, adapted.

In Isaiah 58:8–12, God promises to bless His people when they worship in this way. So, God's people should care more about other people. Then God will work with them. He will heal them. He will make their lives new. Isaiah 58 also shows us a connection between worship and keeping the Sabbath. Isaiah 58 shows the strong connection between keeping the Sabbath and working for God too. Ellen G. White wrote about these verses: “God wants Sabbath keepers to show mercy to people. He wants us to take care of them.”—*Welfare [the help we give to people in need] Ministry [work done for God]*, page 121, adapted.



We worship God by helping other people.

MERCY AND LOYALTY (Mark 12:38–40)

Some of the leaders in Jesus' day got upset at Jesus for eating with "sinners." Jesus answered them by saying the words from Hosea. Jesus told the leaders to go back to their religious books and learn what God really meant when He said, " 'I don't [do not] want animal sacrifices [offerings; gifts]; I want you to show kindness [being kind] to people' " (Matthew 9:13, ERV, from Hosea 6:6).

As we will see, Jesus showed that He cared for other people. He served people His whole life. His miracles and His picture stories showed this powerful truth. Jesus taught that serving other people was the best way to show our faith and loyalty to God. The religious leaders in Jesus' days were no different than the religious leaders in Isaiah's day. They believed that their works and worship saved them. At the same time, they cheated the poor and used them. They did not care about the needy. Their worship was a lie. That made Jesus angry. He did not hide how much He hated their selfish hearts and evil ways.



Jesus says to the religious leaders, " 'You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces' " (Matthew 23:13, NlrV).

Read Mark 12:38–40. In these verses, Jesus warns: " 'Be careful of the teachers of the law. . . . They cheat widows and take their homes' " (Mark 12:38, ERV). Why do you think Jesus talks about that? Also, what does Jesus mean when He says, " 'God will punish them very much' " (Mark 12:40, ERV)?

Jesus preaches a powerful sermon in Matthew 23. He talks about religious leaders and teachers. He says that their religion does not make them better people. They do not help the poor and the needy. These religious leaders and teachers show they do not care about helping anyone. Jesus says to them, " 'You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces' " (Matthew 23:13, NlrV).

Jesus warns them, " 'It will be bad for you teachers of the law and you Pharisees [Jewish religious leaders]! You are hypocrites [people who pretend to be someone they are not]! You give God a tenth [1/10] of the food you get, even your mint, dill, and cumin [a spice]. But you don't [do not] obey the really important teachings of the law—being fair, showing mercy, and being faithful [obedient]' " (Matthew 23:23, ERV). Jesus also said that the religious leaders and teachers were not wrong to give God 10%. But they also should help the poor.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Isaiah 58—A Divine Prescription,” pages 29–34, in *Welfare Ministry*; “Woes on the Pharisees,” pages 610–620, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“I have been shown that I must tell our people to read Isaiah chapter 58. Read this chapter carefully. It is about the work we must do for God. This work for God will cause the churches to have new life. We must share the Good News. We also must use our offerings to do it. When you meet people who need help, then help them. When you find hungry people, feed them. When you do this work, you do the same work Jesus did while He was on this earth. Jesus’ work was holy. He did good to other people. Let our people everywhere feel encouraged to do their part in Jesus’ work.”—Ellen G. White, *Welfare [the help we give to people in need] Ministry [work done for God]*, page 29, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Have you ever thought that being fair and showing mercy to people are acts of worship? How do you think this thought can change the way you take care of other people? How do you think it can change the way you worship?
- ② Jesus accused the religious leaders of not remembering to “obey the really important teachings of the law—being fair, showing mercy, and being faithful [obedient]” (Matthew 23:23, ERV). What can we do to make sure we always remember to be fair and show mercy to the people in our lives, our homes, our churches, and our communities? Can you remember a time when you put things that were not important first in your life?
- ③ Why is it wrong to say we believe we should do something but then not do it? That is the same as putting on a “false face,” right? Why is it wrong to make people think we are better than we really are?
- ④ God cares deeply for the poor and needy. How does God’s love for them change your heart?



“When you find hungry people, feed them.”