

## SESSION 4

# WORSHIP CONTINUALLY

### ▶ **The Point**

Live your life as an act of worship.

### ▶ **The Passage**

2 Chronicles 15:10-19

### ▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

A common cry in our culture is: "I don't have enough time!" We do live busy lives, but have you ever noticed we find time for what we really want to do? Such as ...

- ▶ ... spending the afternoon leisurely shopping.
- ▶ ... enjoying an evening at the movies.
- ▶ ... going on a much-needed vacation.
- ▶ ... watching TV or surfing the Internet for hours.

Most Americans who "regularly" attend church actually do so only two to three times a month. Unfortunately, even for those who do attend church weekly, the tendency is to limit their worship to just a few hours a week. So, if how we use our time is a statement about what's important to us, what do our schedules say about the importance of worship? We're called to live our lives as an act of worship each day. As we weigh that truth, let's see the role worship played in King Asa's life.

### ▶ **The Setting**

King Asa and the army of Judah had fought and, with the Lord's help, defeated Zerah the Ethiopian. The victory was a result of Asa's reform of the nation's spiritual life. But when Asa returned home he received a divinely inspired lecture from the prophet Azariah. He warned Asa not to forget the source of Judah's blessings and to seek the Lord. So Asa continued his spiritual reform by calling a great assembly together for worship.

## *What does the Bible say?*

**Covenant** (v. 12)—A covenant is a pact, treaty, alliance, or agreement between two or more parties. The making of covenants was a major unifying theme throughout Scripture.

**High places** (v. 17)—Elevated sites on hills or mountains, usually dedicated to the Canaanite god Baal and goddess Asherah, where pagan worship rituals were performed.

### ***2 Chronicles 15:10-19***

**<sup>10</sup> They were gathered at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.**

**<sup>11</sup> They sacrificed to the LORD on that day from the spoil that they had brought 700 oxen and 7,000 sheep.**

**<sup>12</sup> And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul,**

**<sup>13</sup> but that whoever would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman.**

**<sup>14</sup> They swore an oath to the LORD with a loud voice and with shouting and with trumpets and with horns.**

**<sup>15</sup> And all Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and had sought him with their whole desire, and he was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around.**

**<sup>16</sup> Even Maacah, his mother, King Asa removed from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah. Asa cut down her image, crushed it, and burned it at the brook Kidron.**

**<sup>17</sup> But the high places were not taken out of Israel. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was wholly true all his days.**

**<sup>18</sup> And he brought into the house of God the sacred gifts of his father and his own sacred gifts, silver, and gold, and vessels.**

**<sup>19</sup> And there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa.**

# GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

Notes



**DISCUSS:** Question #1 on page 105 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): “What’s something you enjoy doing so much that you lose track of time?” Allow time for each person to respond.

**GUIDE:** Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 106 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of worship by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

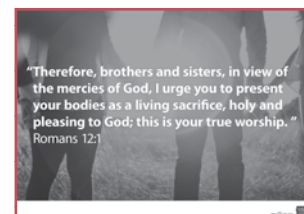
**LEADER PACK:** Display **Pack Item 9**, the “Map of the Divided Kingdom” poster, to explain the geographical context for this study.



**ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL):** In advance, prepare to play a favorite worship song. Invite someone in the group gifted in this area to lead the group in worship to set the atmosphere for this study and most importantly to give praise to God.

**GUIDE:** Call attention to “The Point” on page 106 of the PSG: “Live your life as an act of worship.”

**LEADER PACK:** Display **Pack Item 10**, the “Worship” poster. Read Romans 12:1-2 aloud; then ask group members to explain the impact of these verses personally by putting the verses into their own words and sharing with another group member.



**PRAY:** Transition into the study by asking God to give us a heart hungry for worship. Thank Him for being the God who is worthy of our worship and praise.

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# STUDY THE BIBLE

## Notes

### 2 Chronicles 15:10-12

*<sup>10</sup> They were gathered at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. <sup>11</sup> They sacrificed to the LORD on that day from the spoil that they had brought 700 oxen and 7,000 sheep. <sup>12</sup> And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul.*

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud 2 Chronicles 15:10-12 on page 107 of the PSG.

**GUIDE:** Use the Commentary for the verses on the next page of this Leader Guide to explain the significance of the festival the nation was celebrating.

**RECAP:** In our previous session, King Asa “repaired the altar of the LORD that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the LORD” (15:8). Now Asa brought the people together for a great celebration. This occasion was likely the Feast of Weeks—also referred to as Pentecost—one of the three annual celebrations that required the people to return to Jerusalem.

**DISCUSS: Question #2** on page 107 of the PSG: **“How would you describe what it means to worship God?”**

**RECAP:** Our world today doesn’t fully appreciate the importance of a covenant. No covenant has ever had greater significance than the one God has given us through Jesus Christ. Christ shed His blood to bring us into a relationship with the Father. It is truly an eternal covenant.

The people of Judah were not to enter into this covenant lightly. Their worship and celebration of God required them to commit all they had to Him. They were to seek God “with all their heart and with all their soul” (v. 12)—and not just for one day a week or a few times of year. This was to be the way they lived on a daily basis.

**TRANSITION:** Authentic worship includes both sacrifice and obedience.

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## 2 Chronicles 15:10-12 Commentary

**[Verse 10]** As King Asa demonstrated, authentic worship includes both sacrifice and obedience. On the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign (probably May or June of 895 BC), the king called together all his subjects in Jerusalem for a solemn assembly. This would have been around the time of the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), which was a celebration of the harvest.

**[Verse 11]** An important part of the festival was the sacrifices made by the priests on behalf of the nation. On this occasion they sacrificed seven hundred head of cattle and seven thousand sheep and goats! The livestock were from the plunder they had taken from the Ethiopians and the pagan cities King Asa and his army had occupied during the war.

We know such sacrifices were only symbolic in efficacy. Even King David had said that what the Lord truly desires are not sacrifices and burnt offerings. "For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Ps. 51:16-17). If the heart is not right with God, then no amount of outward religiosity is going to matter. As Christians we understand that only one sacrifice was necessary and effectual for salvation, the sacrificial atonement made by Jesus Christ on the cross. His death accomplished for all time what the temple sacrifices could not (Heb. 10:1-18).

**[Verse 12]** Through his reforms, Asa called his people to humble themselves, repent of their idolatry in worshiping false gods, and return to the Lord (see 2 Chron. 7:14). In this ceremony he, again, led the people to make a covenant that they would all seek Yahweh, the God of their fathers. A **covenant** was a pact, treaty, alliance, or agreement between two or more parties. The agreement may or may not be between equals in authority or power. The making of covenants was a major unifying theme throughout Scripture. The covenants God made expressed His grace to His chosen people.

God's gracious covenants with His people were characteristic of His nature and distinguished Him from the surrounding nations' pagan gods. Unfortunately, particularly in relation to the covenant God made with the Israelites at Sinai, God's people often failed to respond to God's grace in covenantal obedience.

Asa, however, and a few other kings of Judah, did call their people to sincere covenant renewal. (None of the kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel were faithful to the Lord in their reigns.) Asa led his people to enter into a covenant with Yahweh. **They were to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul** (see also Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8:22-61). A person's physical heart was regarded as the seat of his or her emotions, intellect, and will. The soul entailed the totality of a person (personality) including his or her mind, body, and spirit.

The meaning here is quite obvious. The people of Judah, Benjamin, and those of the northern tribes residing with them, were expected to dedicate their entire beings to Yahweh. If they were truly serious about wanting to renew their relationship with the Lord, then nothing less would be expected.



# STUDY THE BIBLE

## Notes

### 2 Chronicles 15:13-15

<sup>13</sup> **But that whoever would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman.** <sup>14</sup> **They swore an oath to the LORD with a loud voice and with shouting and with trumpets and with horns.** <sup>15</sup> **And all Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and had sought him with their whole desire, and he was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around.**

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud 2 Chronicles 15:13-15 on page 107 of the PSG.

**GUIDE:** Use the Commentary for the verses on the next page of this Leader Guide to explain the background for the taking of an oath or vow.

**DISCUSS: Question #3** on page 108 of the PSG: **“How do believers today demonstrate the seriousness of their commitment to Christ?”**

**SUMMARIZE:** Highlight the main points from page 108 of the PSG. The actions of King Asa and the people show us that authentic worship has two requirements.

1. **Worship involves sacrifice.** Worship is more than “sacrificing” an hour or two at church on Sunday.
2. **Worship involves obedience.** Speaking words of worship can be easy, but living them out requires action.

**DO:** Direct group members to complete the activity, “Worship Continually” on page 109 of the PSG to help them.



*Choose one of these common daily activities and answer the question with that activity in mind. [PSG lists: working, family time, driving, eating, leisure activities, other.] Since worship involves seeking the Lord sacrificially, list several ways you might worship Him in the activity you chose.*

**TRANSITION:** Not only does authentic worship include both sacrifice and obedience, but authentic worship focuses on God alone.

#### ALTERNATE QUESTION:

*When have you experienced meaningful worship apart from your church's worship service?*

## 2 Chronicles 15:13-15 Commentary

**[Verse 13]** Ezra wrote that all those who refused or neglected seeking the Lord were to be **put to death**. Capital punishment was part of the legal system of ancient Israel and was divinely instituted. Anyone found worshiping and/or sacrificing to a false god, or speaking evil of the true God, was worthy of death (Ex. 22:20; Lev. 20:1-5; Deut. 13:6-18; 17:2-7). Anyone, young or old, man or woman, who failed to commit themselves to the covenant with Yahweh would have been subject to the death penalty. Although not stated, it is likely such an offender was given a reasonable amount of time to confess and repent of their sin.

**[Verse 14]** Asa and all the people simultaneously swore an **oath to the Lord**. Taking an oath was the critical and central element in this ceremony. Oaths were “statements by which a person promises or guarantees that a vow will be kept or that a statement is, in fact, true. In the OT the name of God was invoked as the One who would guarantee the results or veracity of a statement. Oaths were often accompanied and evidenced by the raising of a hand or hands toward heaven or by placing the hand under the thigh.”<sup>1</sup> Solemn oaths in the Bible were considered binding and, because the name of God was invoked at the taking of oaths, violations were considered as acts of profaning the name of God Himself (Lev. 19:12).

Doubtless the swearing of this oath was done with great solemnity. The Chronicler did not record the actual words the people recited or how long the ceremony took. However, Ezra did say that the people did it shouting in a loud voice while accompanied with trumpets and ram’s horns. In our day marching bands and parades are common on national holidays. In that day, those instruments along with cymbals, harps, and lyres were normally used for national celebrations and religious ceremonies (see 1 Chron. 15:28).

**[Verse 15]** Ezra reported that the people rejoiced as they took their **oath**. He indicated that they had taken it with all their minds and with all their hearts. They had indeed sought after God wholeheartedly, and consequently He was found by them (or “He let them find Him,” see commentary on 2 Chron. 15:2 in session 3)! Now they were going to enjoy another season of **rest** on every side. Once again peace and security would cover the land.



# STUDY THE BIBLE

### Notes

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## 2 Chronicles 15:16-19

***16 Even Maacah, his mother, King Asa removed from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah. Asa cut down her image, crushed it, and burned it at the brook Kidron. 17 But the high places were not taken out of Israel. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was wholly true all his days. 18 And he brought into the house of God the sacred gifts of his father and his own sacred gifts, silver, and gold, and vessels. 19 And there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa.***

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud 2 Chronicles 15:16-19 on page 110 of the PSG.

**RECAP:** Asa would not let anything keep him from acting on his renewed covenant to seek the Lord wholeheartedly. He continued to wipe out all forms of idolatry. His loyalty to God ran deeper than even his loyalty to family. He even removed his own grandmother, Maacah, from her position as queen mother because she had also fallen away from following the Lord. Maacah was in a position of great influence, and her pagan practices were encouraging others to do the same.

**DISCUSS:** Question #4 on page 110 of the PSG: **“What obstacles distract you from worship?”**

**SUMMARIZE:** Highlight the main points from page 111 of the PSG. So how can we make Jesus Christ the top priority of our lives?

- ▶ Identify the distractions.**
- ▶ Understand to whom you belong.**
- ▶ Pursue godly living at all costs.**

**DISCUSS:** Question #5 on page 111 of the PSG: **“How can we improve the rhythm of worship in the life of our group?”**

**GUIDE:** Refer back to “The Point” for this session: **“Live your life as an act of worship.”**

**ALTERNATE QUESTION:**  
*What methods do you use to identify and remove idols in your life?*



## 2 Chronicles 15:16-19 Commentary

**[Verse 16]** As King Asa demonstrated, authentic worship focuses on God alone. Now with the solemn assembly over and the oath taken, Asa still had another, more personal issue to address. The king's grandmother was named **Maacah**. She was King Rehoboam's second and favorite wife and the mother of King Abijah, Asa's father (2 Chron. 11:20-21). Rehoboam had not been a righteous king (12:14). Rehoboam's wife Maacah was still living in Asa's time and had erected in Judah an abominable icon for worship of the Canaanite fertility goddess **Asherah**. It may well have contained vulgar sexual images, as the Chronicler identified the image as **detestable**. Asherah poles could be either living trees or wooden poles (or pillars).

Asa deposed Maacah from her position as **queen mother**. Asa had Maacah's wooden Asherah pole chopped down, crushed into powder, and burned in the Kidron Valley (**the brook Kidron**). The Kidron was a deep ravine running north and south between the east wall of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives (see John 18:1).

**[Verse 17]** Even after the taking of the covenant oath and the removal of Maacah's Asherah pole, Asa's reformation was not totally successful. Some of the **high places** were not removed from the land, as they had been earlier in Asa's reforms (2 Chron. 14:3-5). High places referred to elevated sites such as mountain tops or hills where the Canaanites (and later some of the people of Judah) conducted their idolatrous worship rituals. The pagan altars remained on those elevated shrines in the region, where the Canaanite fertility god and goddess were still being worshipped. Unholy sacrifices were still being made, and obscene rituals were still being conducted in direct defiance of the king's orders.

Nevertheless, Ezra gave the king a great commendation. Despite the incompleteness of the spiritual purges, Asa was wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord all his days. Unfortunately, **all his days** must be qualified, as in his later years Asa faltered in his devotion to Yahweh (2 Chron. 16).

**[Verse 18]** Asa next delivered all the **sacred gifts** of his father Abijah and those of his own into the Jerusalem temple. *Sacred* refers to things or persons separated to or belonging to God. These sacred items were the spoils that the two kings had pillaged in their wars. Abijah's came from his defeat of Jeroboam, the rebellious king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (2 Chron. 13:1-20), and Asa's from his victory over Zerah the Ethiopians and his allies (14:13-15). They consisted of silver and gold along with other valuable objects to be permanently housed in the temple.

**[Verse 19]** All of Asa's efforts at moral and spiritual reform did not go unrewarded. There was **no more war** in Judah until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign. So again the people of Judah experienced an era of peace and prosperity. In all his years, Asa had worked relentlessly to turn his kingdom back to Yahweh and to rid it of the evil influences of the Canaanite religion. He had succeeded to a great extent, though some pockets of paganism remained. His removal of his grandmother as queen mother demonstrated the seriousness of his commitment.

1. Brent R. Kelly, "Oaths" in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* [HIBD], gen. ed. Chad Brand, rev. ed. (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 1174.



5 minutes

# LIVE IT OUT

**GUIDE:** Direct group members to page 112 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the following applications to carry out this week.



## Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

- ▶ **Memorize.** Commit to memory Psalm 105:4: “Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!” Let the challenge of that verse become second nature to you.
- ▶ **Take inventory.** During the coming week, take note of the things that distract you on a daily basis. Beside each item on your list, note practical steps you can take to avoid these distractions.
- ▶ **Share.** Talk with a trusted friend about the things that tend to pull you away from wholehearted worship. Ask this friend to hold you accountable to stay away from away distractions and to covenant with you to pray.

## Wrap It Up

**TRANSITION:** Read or restate the final paragraph from page 112 of the PSG:

Most of us live very busy lives. Too busy. But if we’ll learn to live our lives as an act of worship, we’ll find the right things at the top of our list—and some of the other things falling off the list altogether.

**PRAY:** Conclude by offering praise to the Lord for His goodness and His grace. Ask for help in keeping our eyes upon Him throughout the coming week.



# EXTRA!

Free additional ideas for your group are available at [BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra](http://BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra)