

# One BRMC Small Group Study

## Worship in Spirit and in Truth

### Leader's Guide

Please note that this study guide accompanies the pulpit sermon on 11 October 2020. The suggestions below are not model answers but to help guide your study.

Scripture Passage:

John 4:23-24

#### **Context:**

On Laity Sunday (formerly known as "Laymen's Day"), Methodist churches in Singapore recognise the work and mission of all laity in the church and in their personal lives. Laity Sunday offers an occasion for lay people of all ages to pause and consider again their own unique call to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It recognises the value and participation of the laity in all aspects of worship and service; a concept that was modelled perfectly by Jesus when he washed his disciples' feet and when he engaged with the Samaritan woman at the well.

The message on Laity Sunday extols the importance of knowing God and presents a vision for BRMC to be a place where people in their uniqueness would fit in and find their spiritual family.

As we enter into this study, may we join in celebrating the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives so that we can worship our God in the Spirit and in truth.

#### Introductory

1. In the scripture passage (John 4:23-24), who does Jesus say are the kind of worshippers that the Father seeks?
  - Jesus says that "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks."
  - Worshipers who worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth.
2. Read John 4:19-21. In this conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, why is the location or place of worship an issue of concern? How does Jesus steer the conversation out of this controversy?
  - From John 4, it is clear that Samaritans did not associate with Jews (verse 9) or even share their dishes (footnote "a" in the NIV).
  - There is acrimony or hatred between Jews and Samaritans because the Jews perceive the Samaritans as a people of mixed origin, part Jew and part Gentile. They are "composed of the peoples brought by the conqueror from Babylon and

elsewhere to take the places of the expatriated Israelites and those who were left in the land (722 BC)".<sup>1</sup>

- The location of worship became a significant issue:
  - "... when the Samaritans asked permission to share in building the temple under Zerubbabel, they claimed, apparently with a good conscience, to serve God and to sacrifice to Him as the Jews did (Ezr 4:1 ff). Whatever justification there was for this claim, their proffered friendship was turned to deadly hostility by the blunt refusal of their request. The old enmity between north and south no doubt intensified the quarrel, and the antagonism of Jew and Samaritan, in its bitterness, was destined to pass into a proverb. The Samaritans set themselves, with great temporary success, to frustrate the work in which they were not permitted to share (Ezr 4:4 ff: Ne 4:7 ff. etc.)."<sup>2</sup>
- The Samaritans would appear, from the conversation, to feel excluded from the exclusive requirement to worship in Jerusalem, and relied on their Israelite heritage to claim a place of worship of their own.
- **Jesus, therefore, takes the conversation out of the location or place of worship to focus on the essence of worship.**
- As the preacher shared, worship should not be hampered by location. The focus should not be on the venue but on the worship.

## Reflection

3. What is the essence of worshipping the Father to you? What does it mean for you to "worship" God?
  - An introductory question to tie with Q2 could be: "are you still really concerned about the location or venue of worship, longing for that place, or are you longing to worship with others ... and if so, what is the essence of worship?"
  - In this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have not been able to meet weekly at BRMC on the hill. Most of us (certainly during the Circuit Breaker) have been worshipping alone or only with family at home, possibly while watching the OneBRMC service online or a stream from some other church or organisation. Yet there are others who gather online to worship together via Zoom. They intentionally form communities to observe a dedicated time and habit (or discipline), to interact and participate in worship as a community.
  - This is an opportunity to explore with members what it means to worship and to worship as a community. It is an opportunity to explore the reason why we gather to attend a worship service each week.
  - As the preacher shared, engaging one another in love and service is one reason for gathering as a community, similar to gathering to study the Bible and to pray as a community. Gathering as a community to worship is an important aspect of worshipping the Father, certainly because we are all His children.
  - Strong's definition for "proskuneō", translated as worship is: "to fawn or crouch to, that is, (literally or figuratively) *prostrate* oneself in homage (*do reverence to, adore*)".
  - An important aspect of fawning, prostrating in homage, to revere or adore, is to first ascribe worth (incredible value).

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<sup>1</sup> W Ewing, "Samaritans", International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Online, <https://www.internationalstandardbible.com/S/samaritans.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

- As the preacher emphasised, God is worth everything we have or could ever have.
  - It leads to the next question on worshipping in the Spirit and in truth...
4. Can you identify yourself as someone who worships God in the Spirit and in truth? What does it mean to worship in the Spirit and in truth?
- Jesus says that "God is spirit and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." (V24)
  - This is an opportunity to explore what it means to worship in the Spirit and in truth. The NASB translates verse 23 as: "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers."
  - In this context, it would mean worshipping the Father in His entirety – His nature, power, will, purpose; and our entirety – with all that we are and have.
  - John Wesley in his commentary on verse 23 shared: "The true worshippers shall worship the Father - Not here or there only, but at all times and in all places."
  - A.T. Robertson, a renowned scholar of the Greek New Testament shared:
    - "This is what matters, not where, but how (in reality, in the spirit of man, the highest part of man, and so in truth). All this is according to the Holy Spirit (Rom\_8:5) who is the Spirit of truth (Joh\_16:13). Here Jesus has said the final word on worship, one needed today."<sup>3</sup>

## Application

5. What steps or disciplines can you adopt individually and as a group to be the worshipper that the Father seeks? What steps can we take to grow to worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth?
- To worship and to ascribe worth, we need to spend time with God and to worship in truth is to worship Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life.
  - Some suggestions that the preacher made are:
    - Spend time with God, Monday to Sunday, 24/7, or as much as we are able;
    - Read God's word;
    - Worship together even for the online OneBRMC service;
    - What we put into His tithe and our offering;
    - Time and talent to serve in the local church (**including serving on the Covid Crew**);
    - To love others like how Jesus loved the Samaritan woman.
  - The preacher also added:
    - "to worship God in the Spirit and in Truth is to know God and ascribe Him the right worth, gathering everything within you with the help of the Holy Spirit, not being constrained by circumstances, pointing yourself and others to Christ. Worship is not a one-time expression. To be a true worshiper is to worship continuously wherever you are." (Darren Huang, sermon on 11 Oct 2020)
  - Do you watch the OneBRMC online service with others, whether within your household or with other households? Would you, as an individual, like to join a OneBRMC worship together "watch party" where several BRMC members view the service together via Zoom? Would you, as a small group, like to organise such a "watch party"

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<sup>3</sup> Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/robertsons-word-pictures/john/john-4-23.htm>

of your own? If so, please do contact us at [gilbert.lok@brmc.org.sg](mailto:gilbert.lok@brmc.org.sg) and we can advise you on the next steps.

- As the church begins to gradually and safely reopen for physical gatherings, do you plan to sign up for some of these on-site services? As you know, additional manpower is required in running these services due to health and safety requirements. Would you consider volunteering on the Covid crew for the on-site service that you plan to attend? In this way, you would both be attending the service, and also helping the church to reopen safely and smoothly. If you would like to volunteer, please register to join the Covid Crew: [www.brmc.org/covid-19-crew](http://www.brmc.org/covid-19-crew)



- Perhaps your members could commit to one or two action points and you may check in on how they are progressing when you meet next week.

## Prayer

6. Write out a prayer for yourself based on what you have heard and learned from this session.

(a) What is in your heart for yourself?

- Perhaps you may want to bring a struggle to Christ today.

“Father in heaven, I come to Your cross today to release this burden of \_\_\_\_\_ that I am struggling with. Father, I trust that through the power of the cross, I have victory over this struggle. May You fill me with Your peace that surpasses all understanding and Your reassurance that with Your power from Your love, I can overcome any struggle.  
In Jesus’ name. Amen”

(b) What is in your heart for others?

- Perhaps you feel led to respond to serve with your talents or to serve outside your comfort zone.

“Heavenly Father, I thank you for this calling that You have placed in my heart. Through the power of Your Holy Spirit, may You reveal Your will to me clearly and fully. I pray for an open door and the courage to step out in faith to serve Your purpose and plans for me and for others. As I serve, may my service be an outpouring of Your love and for Your glory.  
In Jesus’ name. Amen.”