

STUDY GUIDE

WORSHIPER

HOW TO WORSHIP WITH YOUR WHOLE LIFE



BASED ON THE MOVIE

Hillsong

LET HOPE RISE

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Worshiper: How to Worship with Your Whole Life Study Guide

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HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS GUIDE

Welcome to the *Worshiper: How to Worship with Your Whole Life Study Guide*, based on the film *Hillsong: Let Hope Rise*. If you have been to a church that sings modern worship music, you have most likely sung songs by the band Hillsong UNITED. Based at Hillsong Church in Sydney, Australia, the band has led millions of people around the world in worship. Their progressive worship music has topped music charts. The band has won many awards and been featured in major media coverage around the world. The recognition is nice, but as they like to say, “This isn’t about us.” What matters most to them is much higher.

“I believe God created music for the sole purpose of worshipping Him, to connect people, the human heart, our souls with heaven,” says Joel Houston, the band’s leader. “We’re doing all this so one person somewhere who I might never meet gets to experience God in a new way and in a true way.”

Joel and his bandmates love music. God has gifted them musically, and they are using those gifts to orient their own lives and others’ lives back to God. They know the power of music can reach our souls and connect us with God’s presence, but music is only one part of worship. Worship itself is expressing love, respect, reverence, and devotion, and we can worship with our whole lives. In fact, we are called to reflect love, honor, and glory back to our Creator in everything we do.

This five-week study will take you deeper into the ways of a worshiper and help you explore practical ways to worship through the ins and outs of daily life. Rooted in the film *Hillsong: Let Hope Rise*, you’ll see how the band of worship leaders does that beyond the music and through the music. It’s all about connecting with God in worship and being continually transformed by the process.

This study is primarily designed to be used by small groups or Sunday school classes. After all, there is power in worshipping together. But it can also be used by individuals for personal study and reflection.

Each of the five chapters in this book helps readers explore the purpose and power of, as well as the benefits of, plugging into God’s rhythms of worship. Each lesson includes these elements:

KEY SCRIPTURE

A primary Bible passage sets the tone and theme of that weekly lesson.

VIDEO CLIP

A short clip from the film *Hillsong: Let Hope Rise* will share part of the band members’ stories and offer a glimpse of worship in their everyday lives.

STUDY

This is your chance to dig deeper into the theme, sometimes with additional Scriptures, hopefully always with encouragement and inspiration. This section explores the deeper context and meaning, points to the Bible and draws out its guidance, raises questions, and sets the stage for discussion and application. You’ll find it most helpful to read this part of the lesson before your small group meeting. As you do, mark up the text; write in the margins. Jot your own questions or ideas to follow up on in your own life and when you meet with your group.

APPLY

These suggested action steps are meant to generate discussion and offer suggested application. But they are only a beginning. Start with these ideas, and modify them as you follow God's guidance. And by all means, add your own steps to live out each particular area of worship. Each person's circumstances will be different. You might have the best idea yet.

DISCUSS

These thoughtful questions are central to the small group study. This is the time where members personalize the material and application points. And discussing responses offers greater breadth and depth of application for all. Just remember to speak and listen respectfully to all members in your group even if you don't necessarily agree with someone else's perspective.

SING

There is power in song, especially when sung together. Each week includes the lyrics of one Hillsong UNITED song. There's a good chance most of your group will already know these popular tunes. You can either sing them a cappella or sing along to the recorded versions. Your group might even want to close out your time together by singing several worship choruses.

We hope you will come away from this study with a deeper love for God and a broader understanding of worship. To be a follower of Jesus is to be a worshiper. Even in areas of life we might not immediately connect with worship, we can direct our focus and love to God, connect deeply with Him, and be transformed as we make worship a way of life.

WEEK 1

WORSHIP THROUGH FAITH



KEY SCRIPTURE

“Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.”
—Hebrews 11:1, *NLT*

VIDEO CLIP

Watch the clip for week 1, “Worship Through Faith,” where Taya Smith shares her story of stepping out in faith.

STUDY

Taya Smith sat at a crossroads. You just heard her story. She was down to \$200 and not sure what to do. But she did know where to turn—or Who to turn to. “All I said to [God] is that I wanted to sing and that I wanted Him to use me,” she says. As for that next step, Taya would have to exercise her faith.

Have you ever been at a similar crossroads? Have you ever wondered which way to go? What to do? Have you ever asked God to use you—or wondered if He really could? You’re not alone.

We humans are notoriously shortsighted, but we sure wish we could see and know the future. Our intentions are usually good. We want to serve God. We want to follow His will. We want to know what He wants us to do. But His ways of working that out are usually different from ours.

Often, we want Him to write a message in the sky or reveal a treasure map of sorts: *Go this way. Turn right at age twenty-three. Meet your spouse here. Head straight toward this city for a job offer that will lead you to a fulfilling career. Ask this person to mentor and disciple you. Have kids. Plug into this church. Take that mission trip. Volunteer in the other ministry. Stand strong and say no when your boss asks you*

to compromise, even when it costs you your job. Accept this position even for less pay; it will end up paying more and being far more satisfying than you can guess. Don't worry when that serious illness strikes your family; I'll heal your daughter/grandfather/spouse and use your story to encourage many other people. Love your kid when he rebels; he'll turn back to Me, and I'll use him in powerful ways. Spend more time with your family. You'll die at age eighty-eight, so build your spiritual and family legacy now. Then you and I will spend eternity together, and everything else will make complete sense.

That sounds like it would be nice, but would it really be? Would we rest in the knowledge of how life will play out? Would we happily follow the script? Or would we end up trying to change the plans because we don't like them? Would we become bitter because we didn't get to choose? One thing is for certain: If God gave us a vision of the future, we wouldn't have any reason to use faith.

Someday we won't need faith. It's a vital thing here in this life, but it only belongs here on this earth. In heaven, when God has completed His final work, we won't need faith anymore. Everything will be clear. Nothing will separate us from God and our full trust and knowledge of Him.

But for now, faith is “the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see” (Hebrews 11:1, NLT).

Faith is belief and action. Sometimes it glows like an ember; other times it roars like an inferno. God knows that the more we use it and fan its flames, the stronger it burns, filling us with hope and confidence—sometimes for a particular outcome in this life, always for the truth that our good God is taking care of us even when life isn't working out quite like we expected or prefer.

Choosing that kind of trust—choosing faith—is part of the

way we worship God. We tend to think of worship as singing to God. It is, but it's more. Worship is the act of showing our devotion to God. It's opening ourselves to Him, connecting with Him, and letting Him shape us through the experience. Singing can do that powerfully but so can the process of putting our faith into practice.

When we seek God, pursue His counsel through people who are wise in His ways, and step out as best we can into the unknown, we show that we are willing to trust Him. We acknowledge that He is much bigger than we are. We demonstrate with our lives that we really are willing to follow Him. We show that we are willing to seek His face, not just His advice. We open ourselves up to encounter who He is, not just what He can give us.

And God uses that worship process to strengthen our faith and shape our character, to make us more of who He created us to be.

God has been working that way for centuries to shape His followers. The Bible is filled with examples.

PETER

Peter is a great example. The leap-and-then-look disciple was usually quick to voice his best intentions and leap into action. In Matthew 14, he was not only the first to step out of the fishing boat into a wind-tossed sea, he was the only one to get out of the boat when Jesus called. All the disciples were afraid when they saw Jesus strolling toward them over the waves. They thought He was a ghost. When Jesus spoke, maybe others believed it was Him, but only Peter believed it enough to do something about it. Only Peter stepped over the wooden railing when Jesus said, “Come” (Matthew 14:29).

We don't know how many steps Peter took on top of the water. The Bible doesn't say how far he made it—or how quickly the different thoughts and emotions flashed through his brain. But we know that one second, wide-eyed Peter stared at his

Lord and moved, defying gravity and all the laws of physics, but the next second he plunged into a chaotic sea when he looked around at all the reasons he shouldn't and couldn't be walking on water.

Sometimes the Bible is a little like e-mail: We don't quite get the tone and nuance of the original spoken word. It might be tempting to take Jesus's words to Peter as chastising: "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31). But maybe they were delivered with more compassion and understanding, the kind a hopeful parent shows to a young child learning to ride a bike. Of course, that mom or dad wants to see the child succeed and ride happily down the street, but a parent knows there will come some crashes along the way. And a loving mom or dad will be there to scoop up that child with comfort and care. That's exactly what Jesus did. Immediately, Jesus reached out and caught Peter and carried him to safety.

Peter gave his best shot at faith. Fear got in his way. Still Jesus was there to catch him.

A FATHER

A father described in Mark 9 shows us another excellent example of the process of worshiping through faith. This man was at the end of his rope, desperate to find help for his son. The man described his son as possessed by a spirit that would throw the boy to the ground or into the fire or water, where he would seize and foam at the mouth. The affliction had plagued the boy his whole life. We don't know how many years it had been, but imagine the worry and fatigue those parents must have felt, every day watching and waiting on edge, wondering when and where they would have to spring into action to save their son's life. Maybe we would have recognized the illness as some form of epilepsy. They had no such medical knowledge. The only thing they and their family and community could attribute this awful condition to was an evil spirit. They must have

felt shame. They would have questioned why. They certainly felt helpless. They would have been desperate. So the father came to Jesus for help.

It must have taken all the hope he could muster. He had heard the stories about Jesus's miracles. This man, the Messiah, had healed others—maybe He could heal their son. Was it too much to ask? Perhaps it seemed that way when Jesus's disciples failed to heal the boy.

"If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us," the father pleaded (Mark 9:22).

If? asked Jesus.

"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes." Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:23–24).

What a beautiful proclamation! This man had endured years of disappointment and shame. He had been bent low by the burden of helplessness. He wanted to believe. Maybe all he had was a tiny speck of hope deep within him, and that's what he brought to Jesus, crying out for help.

Uncertainty and rationality tried to get in the father's way. But the man stepped out on a limb of hope, not knowing what would happen. And Jesus caught him. He healed his son. That boy, that father, that family would never be the same.

HALL OF FAMERS

Hebrews 11 gives a whole list of people commended for their faith. Some aren't surprising; others are. One thing is for certain: None of those members of the Hall of Faith were perfect, and neither was their faith.

Take Abraham, for example. Abraham journeyed into the unknown but botched attempts to bring about God's promise through his own plans. Remember lying about his wife, Sarah,

in Egypt and trying to bring about the promised child with Hagar? Abraham let impatience get in the way of his faith.

The fact that even the greats of the faith struggled and fell short is encouraging for the rest of us who struggle and doubt and want to believe but have trouble getting out of the boat or taking that uncertain step. Sometimes faith is trying to believe. It's reaching for and clinging to hope. Jesus meets us where we are—in our best effort, even if it's feeble.

When we take a step of faith, when we grab hold of belief and let it propel us into motion and action, we lift up God. We reflect glory to Him. We show our love and devotion to Him. We worship.

A BOY

Sometimes it doesn't take much. Maybe that was the case for the boy in the crowd in John 6 with some fish and bread. When the disciples asked, the boy trusted that Jesus and His followers would do good. Maybe the boy hoped for some kind of miracle. Maybe he just did what the grown-ups asked. Whatever was going through his mind, the boy offered what he had, small as it was. Jesus took his meager snack and made a large-scale miracle out of it.

Sounds like us a lot of the time—unsure what to do, feeling we have nothing but a simple prayer and the heart's desire for God to use us. Thankfully God meets us in just those situations and circumstances. We won't receive a full life plan, but we can receive the hope to take the next step and to faithfully lift up God. That's the faith of a worshiper.

APPLY

How can we worship through faith?

SEEK

In light of all the examples of faith in Hebrews 11, the next chapter urges us to follow their example. How? By “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith” (Hebrews 12:2). The principle is the same as driving a car or riding a bike—where you look is where you'll go. To deepen our understanding and trust of God, we have to focus on Him. What circumstances or uncertainty are we faced with? Turn toward Jesus. Dig into His Word. Ask for the counsel of people who are wise in His ways.

ACT

Second Corinthians 5:7 says, “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (ESV). Walking takes place step by step. As we align our focus and our lives with God's Word, we also need to take the next step before us. And in our forward motion, He meets us, and we can continue to reflect glory to Him along the way. What's your next step?

CHOOSE TO BELIEVE

Sometimes faith is easy. Sometimes faith is hard. Often, it requires a conscious choice to believe what we cannot see, what defies our feelings or circumstances. Sometimes it's crying out like the father in Mark, “Help me overcome my unbelief!” That kind of choice realigns our vision and purpose. It leads us to less of ourselves and more of God.

DISCUSS

Which of the Bible characters we've read about do you identify with most?

How are you tempted to finish this sentence? I'm just a _____ . How do you think God wants to use you anyway?

What struggles do people have with faith?

What step of faith is God leading you toward?

How has your faith been tested? What was the result?

SING

Worship and sing together. Stream the following song or Google the lyric video.

“BROKEN VESSELS (AMAZING GRACE)”

All these pieces

Broken and scattered

In mercy gathered

Mended and whole

Empty handed

But not forsaken

I've been set free

I've been set free

Amazing grace

How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me

I once was lost

But now I'm found

Was blind but now I see

Oh I can see it now

Oh I can see the love in Your eyes

Laying Yourself down

Raising up the broken to life

You take our failure

You take our weakness

You set Your treasure

In jars of clay

So take this heart, Lord

I'll be Your vessel

The world to see

Your love in me

[repeat chorus]