**Recalibrate – Week 4 – Respond**

**Message Big Idea:** Through worship we respond to God.

**Scripture:** James 1:22-25; John 14:27; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ezekiel 47:1-12

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**Introduction: Awkward Responses**

Have you ever told a joke or a story, expecting an uproarious response, only to be met with crickets? Well, as a pastor – let me assure you, I am well acquainted with this feeling. It’s practically a part of the job description. ☺ But it isn’t just here…

I remember a few months into our (Ian) marriage, Katie and I were on a road trip and I dropped what, to this day I am convinced was one of the best, side-splitting jokes ever uttered by human lips. I mean, this joke was solid gold. But to my dismay, when I reached my big punch-line, I looked over to see Katie silently answering emails on her phone, unaffected.

So, I gathered myself.

Cleared my throat.

Sat up straight in my seat.

And began telling the joke again, from the top.

Fifteen seconds in, without looking up from her phone, my wife lovingly stopped me and said, “I heard you the first time. It just wasn’t funny.”

You know, looking back, she was probably right.

But responses are important, aren’t they? In fact, one could argue they’re absolutely key to social interactions. Without responses, we are often left feeling awkward, out of sorts.

**Series Recap**

Today we wrap up our series called, “Recalibrate” – a series all about how worship recalibrates our hearts, our entire lives with God. We need this recalibration. As we go through the crazy twists and turns of our days, we all can drift off course spiritually.

* We lose perspective.
* We forget the truths we know.
* We wander from God.
* We end up in places we never intended to be.
* We need something to recalibrate us and point us in the right direction.
* Worship is that something.

Throughout this series, we’ve been talking about it means to truly worship, not just with our Sunday mornings, but our entire lives.

* We’ve talked about **Remembering**. We learned that worship helps us *remember* who God is and who we are. When we come together we trust God with our distractions, confess where we’ve gone off course, and remember what God has done and continues to do in and through us.
* We’ve talked about **Receiving** - how worship is a posture, not of *taking*, but *receiving* from God. God loves to give good gifts to his children, and he always has something for us to receive when we gather together. It may come through the teaching, a line in a song, a word of encouragement from a friend. Worship opens up our hearts to receive Jesus and his truth for our lives.

Yet worship is incomplete, it’s deficient without a response of some kind. So what does it really mean to *respond* to God in worship?

**Responding in Worship**

To answer the question of what it means to respond to God in worship I think it’s important for us to begin by defining what worship is. If you look in a standard dictionary you’ll find this definition:

*“Adoration or devotion shown toward a person or a principle.”*

Now, all the public speaking books say not to use dictionary definitions in your talk, but I’ve got to tell you… I actually like that definition.

Now devotion is a word that most of us are familiar with:

* Devotion to family
* Devotion to a job
* Devotion to the Bears ☺

Ok, that last one is probably closer to *longsuffering*…

But at some level most of us understand the concept of being devoted to something or someone.

But adoration, on the other hand, isn’t a word we use often in our normal conversations with each other… I guess with the occasional *“I adore dark chocolate”*… and so I think it’s important for us to consider this word, especially when it comes to worshipping God.

The synonyms for the word adoration are rich with meaning:

* Reverence
* Exaltation
* Glorification
* Passion

So you see, this word means so much more than how you *feel* about your dessert. If worship means approaching God with a sense of “adoration”… that means we come to God with the desire and expectation to glorify and exalt him, filled with reverence and passion, with all of our being… everything we are.

Yet oftentimes when I come to this place those words don’t describe how I respond. I’ll be honest, sometimes I’m in this room and my expectation isn’t where it should be. Yes, that happens even to pastors.

I’ve heard worship described as the *“act of pouring oneself out to God.”* And while that concept might seem strange to most of us… I actually think it’s pretty accurate. If you stop and think about it, whether we realize it or not, we’re constantly pouring ourselves out for something. It’s not an “if” but a “when”.

Now this kind of *“pouring out”* probably looks different for each of us and most of the time has nothing to do with God… but every one of us is emptying ourselves for or to something. Sometimes we pour ourselves out for:

* A **person** that we love and cherish and so we’re constantly giving ourselves… pouring ourselves out for that person and the relationship we have.
* Sometimes we pour ourselves out for a **cause** that we care about and are devoted to.
* We pour ourselves out for an **experience** that we’ve been chasing after.
* Maybe we find ourselves, more times than we wish, pouring ourselves out for an **achievement**… either at work or at home.
* Or maybe it’s simply **status** that, time and again, we pour ourselves out to attain.

Listen, worship is not an **“if”**… it’s a **“when.”** We all worship… we all pour ourselves out for something. And as followers of Jesus it’s important for us to work together to direct the focus of our worship on God. You see when we gather as a community, not only do we remember and receive, we also have an opportunity to respond... to pour out our adoration and devotion towards God.

Author Harold Best put it this way:

*“We were created continuously outpouring. Note that I did not say we were created to be continuous outpourers. Nor can I dare imply that we were created to worship. This would suggest that God is an incomplete person whose need for something outside himself (worship) completes his sense of himself. It might not even be safe to say that we were created for worship…*

So, he says we’re not made *to be* worshippers, or even *for* worship. Listen to how he concludes.

*I believe it is strategically important, therefore, to say that we were created continuously outpouring—we were created in that condition, at that instant, imago Dei.*”

Continuously outpouring.

Now “imago Dei” simply means the “image of God.” And what Best is saying here is since God is a loving and giving God, and humankind is made in God’s image, then that means we, too, are meant to be constantly giving… pouring ourselves out in worship to God. You see that is our response to God.

**Respond Experiences**

Rather than just talking about *“responding,”* I think it’s a good idea to actually practice it. Sometimes a conversation about worship, about responding to God, can start to feel ethereal… like it’s out there somewhere… and so I want to make sure we make it super personal today. I’d love for us all to experience this outpouring together.

*(In this section, we’ll work with our Arts Directors to craft an experience for each subsequent point.)*

Most of these experiences should feel familiar to most of us, especially if we’ve been around COMMUNITY for a while.

So I want to begin with the practice of **Praise**. Through praise, we respond by verbally proclaiming praise to God. Typically we do this by singing God’s praises. We praise him for his person, his character, and his power. Even though some of us might not be professional singers, it’s important for us to collectively lift our voices to God and together praise him for who he is.

EXPERIENCE 1

In fact, we’re going to bring out or worship leader and do a little warm-up together. Doesn’t that sound fun? Let’s all stand up together.

* Teaching Pastor leads physical warm-ups
  + (Various stretches)
* Worship Leader leads vocal warm-ups
  + (Include breathing exercises)

And you might think that singing isn’t your “thing” but science is finding that singing, even off-key, together with others is actually a neurological force amplifier. That means that, when we sing aloud *together*, our brains are actually affected! It makes us more receptive to learning and builds connections with those around us. So this act of praise isn’t just good for our soul, it’s good for our bodies and brains as well. So let’s sing together!

*(Sing: Great Are You Lord)*

EXPERIENCE 2

*(Band remains on stage and underscores)*

Next, I’d like us to all respond to God through the practice of **Generosity**. We respond by giving back to God a part of what he’s already blessed us with. This is something that we practice together every week to be faithful to God’s call to be generous people… to live generous lives. So that other people might find their way back to God.

So we’re going to do things a little different today. I’m going to invite all of us to write on this card you were handed when you came in. Write down one thing you know God has been generous toward you with. It could be anything – family, a house, a particular skill. Write it down and when you’re ready, come forward and place it on the stage. We want to fill this stage with the many different ways God has been uniquely generous toward us.

And if you don’t already give via the website COMMUNITY app, this is always your opportunity to be generous toward the Jesus mission with your finances. Like Harold Best says, we’re all outpouring to someone or something, and our generosity is one way for us to pour ourselves out for the one who gave everything to be with us. So, come forward when you’re ready and let’s continue to sing to this good and generous God!

*(Sing: Everything and Nothing Less)*

EXPERIENCE 3

Lastly, I’d love for us to respond to God through the practice of **Gratitude**. This means that we simply express thanks to God for what he’s done in our lives and in our world. Together we worship God and respond to him by articulating all the ways we’re grateful for God’s presence and work in our lives.

One of the ways we do that is by celebrating communion together. Communion is a chance each and every week to pause from the business and hectic pace of life and remember Jesus. It’s a chance for us to focus in on the most important moment in human history: the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior. Jesus’ sacrifice brought us peace with God and brought us in to God’s family.

The bread represents Jesus body that was given for us and the juice represents his blood that was shed to for the sins of the world. In a moment I’m going to invite the ushers to begin passing the elements. As you eat the bread and drink the cup, let this be another moment of worship. Focus on God, pour yourself out to him, thank him for His goodness, and praise him for the amazing grace he’s shown us all.

Ushers, please come forward.

*(Sing: Let It Echo)*

**Conclusion: A Charge**

I hope that was meaningful and that you were able to experience just a taste of what worship can be through those practices. But it’s important for us to realize that those aren’t the only ways to worship God… to pour ourselves out to our Creator. Worship should be part of everything that makes us who we are.

You know sometimes it’s easy for us to begin to think that worship just happens in here. It’s easy to convince ourselves that worship is 1 hour every Sunday morning. The problem is that nothing could be further from the truth! We’re not meant to relegate our “worship” of God to a single time and place each week… instead our lives should be defined by worship.

Remember, “*we were created continuously outpouring…”* that means worship doesn’t just happen in here… we’re also meant to respond God, through worship, “out there.” And when we go “out there” - we pour ourselves out to God, and then we come back together here next week to recalibrate again. That’s the rhythm God built us for.

The Apostle Paul even challenges us to live a life of worship. In his letter to the Colossians he says,

“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

But Paul didn’t stop there. He wasn’t just talking about what we do “in here”…

And *whatever* you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him... (Colossians 3:16-17, 23)

This means that responding to God is a “whole life” kind of thing. With everything we have, in everything we do… we’re called to respond to God with our adoration and devotion, pouring ourselves out to God.

So, to close today, I’m going to teach you three prayer postures we can all take with us this week. I encourage you to begin each day with these.

The first posture is surrender. Hold your hands up like you’re surrending and read with me these words:

I choose to hold up my hands as a symbol of surrender.

My life is not about me,

I surrender to your Lordship

I surrender my preferences, prejudices, and position to you.

My fears, finances, friends, and family to you.

The second posture is generosity. We believe that we’re to live life generously because God is generous with us. So would you put both your hands out, palms up and open and read this with me?

I choose to hold out my hands as symbols of generosity.

What I have is not mine.

I am only a steward of all that you have given me.

I want to mirror the way that you opened your hand to us and lavished your love and life upon us.

In a close fist culture, I want to live an open handed life.

The last posture is mission. We believe that, as we leave here – God has called each of us to live on mission with him, to help more and more people find their way back to God. SO would you put both your hands out like this *(model)* and read this with me?

I choose to hold my hands forward as a symbol of mission.

I want to live for something greater than me.

I want to embrace your kingdom mission.

I want to embrace and welcome your mission to the lost, last, least, and lonely – the poor, powerless, privileged, and persecuted.

Grace and peace, friends. Let’s live on mission together, wherever we may be.