**Recalibrate – Week 4 – Respond**

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

**Scripture:** Romans 12:1, Psalm 150:1-6, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, Psalm 136:1, Colossians 3:16-17

**NOTE**: Everyone receives a slip of paper as they come in that says, “God, thank you for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

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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 doesn’t just happen here on stage…

I remember a few months into our 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 the 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 relational interactions. Without responses, we are 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 toward 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 need something to recalibrate us and point us in the right direction. Worship is that something.

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

* We’ve talked about (Remember) **Remembering**. We learned that worship helps us *remember* who God is and who we are.
* We’ve talked about (*add* - Receive) **Receiving** - how worship is a posture, not of *taking*, but of *receiving* from God. God loves to give good gifts to his children, and he always has something for us to receive when we worship.

Yet worship is incomplete, it’s deficient without (*add* - Respond) a response of some kind. As we remember who God is and who we are…as we receive the good things he has for us…how will we respond? What does it really mean to *respond* to God in worship?

**Defining “Worship”**

Before we dive into specific ways we can respond, let me remind us of the definition of worship we talked about in week 1 of this series:

**Worship: Giving your whole self to God.** *(repeat)*

Worship is giving our whole selves, our inner life and our outer life, to God. The Apostle Paul reminds us of this idea of giving ourselves to God when he says:

**“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. -Romans 12:1-2**

We offer our bodies…our mind, our spirit, our will, our hands, our feet, our mouths, our heart…our whole selves to God as a way to express our devotion to him.

I’ve also heard worship described this way: ***“Worship is the act of pouring oneself out.”*** Whether we realize it or not, we’re constantly pouring ourselves out for something. This *“pouring out”* isn’t an “if” thing, it’s a “when” thing. Every human being pours themselves out. Everybody worships.

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.
* Sometimes we pour ourselves out for a **cause** devoting our time, energy, and resources toward it.
* Maybe we pour ourselves out for an **experience** that we’re chasing after.
* It could be that we’re pouring ourselves out for an **achievement**…either at work or at home.
* Or maybe it’s a **status** that we pour ourselves out to attain.

Every human being pours themselves out. Everybody worships.

However, when a person makes the decision to be a follower of Jesus, it means directing this outpouring to God. He becomes the focus of our devotion. He becomes the center of our lives. We give our whole selves to him.

Yet, if I’m honest, I can easily drift away off course. As I go through my life, I get distracted. I lose perspective. I wander from God. I start “pouring myself” into all kinds of other things. Maybe you can relate?

*(Slide with Remember, Receive, Respond)* During this series, we’ve learned that worship helps us remember who God is and who we are, that through worship we receive good gifts from God; yet worship is incomplete, it’s deficient without a response of some kind. So what does it mean to *respond* to God in worship?

**Respond Experiences**

Well, rather than just talking about *“responding,”* we thought it would be better this morning to simply practice it…to learn by experiencing it. Sometimes a conversation about worship can start to feel ethereal… like it’s out there somewhere… and so I want to make sure we make it personal today. I’d love for us all to experience this outpouring together through several experiences.

If you’ve been coming to COMMUNITY for a while, most of these experiences will feel familiar to you. If you’re new, don’t worry, they will be easy to understand.

**Experience #1 - Praise**

So let’s begin with the practice of **Praise**. Through praise, we respond by verbally proclaiming praise to God for who he is. In Psalm 150, the psalmist declares: *(add)*

**“Praise the Lord.**

**Praise God in his sanctuary;**

 **praise him in his mighty heavens.**

**Praise him for his acts of power;**

 **praise him for his surpassing greatness.**

**Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,**

 **praise him with the harp and lyre,**

**praise him with timbrel and dancing,**

 **praise him with the strings and pipe,**

**praise him with the clash of cymbals,**

 **praise him with resounding cymbals.**

**Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.**

**Praise the Lord.” –Psalm 150:1-6**

As this Psalm suggests, around here we typically respond to God with music…by singing his praises. We praise him for his goodness, his character, and his power. And hey, if you’re more of the dancing type, the psalmist is giving you permission for that too.

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. Now, you might think that singing isn’t your “thing,” but I want you to consider this. Science is finding that singing with others, even off-key, is actually what scientists call a “**neurological force amplifier**.” What that means is 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 a way we respond to God, it’s actually good for our brains!

Singing praises to God is one way we respond to him in worship. So I’m going to ask our worship leader and the band to join us out here and invite all of you to stand up so that we can experience responding with praise.

**Praise Experience (Led by Worship Leader)**

* **Warm Up/Preparation (Have fun)**
* **Song: Great are You Lord**

*(Band stays in place. Vamps throughout.)*

**Experience #2 - Generosity**

Another way we respond to God is through the practice of **Generosity**, something we call “Giving Back to God.” We respond by giving back to God a part of what he’s blessed us with. In 2 Corinthians 9 the Apostle Paul writes: *(add)*

**“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” -2 Corinthians 9:6-7**

God loves a cheerful giver. Understand, God doesn’t love our response of generosity because he somehow *needs* our money. God loves a cheerful giver because when we give generously, we reflect his generous nature.

Author Harold Best, writing about worship as a continuous outpouring, says:

**“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*…*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.” –Harold Best**

“Imago Dei” means “image of God.” What Best is saying here is since God is a loving and generous God, and humankind is made in God’s image, then that means we, too, are meant to be constantly giving, continually outpouring ourselves. Like a parent who beams with pride when they see their child imitating the best parts of their character, God loves a cheerful giver because when we respond with generosity we are living out who he created us to be.

That’s why Giving Back to God is something we practice together every week…to create an opportunity for each one of us to respond to God with generosity.

So we’re going to do that now, but we’re going to do things a little different today.

When you came in today, you received this slip of paper that says, “God, thank you for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” We want to begin this time of generosity by recounting a specific way God has been generous to us. So write down one thing you recognize as a generous gift from God. 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.

*(Another option: If you don’t want people to come forward for GBTG, give some time for them to fill out the slip of paper and then collect the papers and offerings in the offering buckets or bring forward for communion moment.)*

If you don’t already give online through the website or COMMUNITY app, this is also your opportunity to be generous toward the Jesus mission with your finances. As you come forward with your slip of paper, we have buckets here up front where you can give back to God.

Like Harold Best says, we’re all constantly outpouring to someone or something, and our generosity is one way for us to pour ourselves out for the one who gave everything for us. So, come forward when you’re ready and let’s continue to sing to this good and generous God!

**Generosity Experience**

* **Song: Everything and Nothing Less**

*(TP can grab a few of these notes off the stage or from the buckets to use in the next section.)*

**Experience #3 - Gratitude**

One more way I’d love for us to respond to God in this moment is through the practice of **Gratitude**. The psalmist declares:

**“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.**

**His love endures forever.” –Psalm 136:1**

While praise is a response to God for who he is; gratitude is expressing thanks to God for what he’s done in our lives and in our world.

There is so much to be grateful for! A few things we just named… *(read a few notes).* Together we respond to God by articulating all the ways we’re grateful for his 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 hectic pace of life and express gratitude to 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, and I’d like for us to try something together. After you receive the bread and drink the cup, as you pass the tray to the person next to you, say to them, **“The body and blood of Christ given for you.”** *(Note: Ushers need to be instructed to start this by saying these words to the first person in each row.)* Let’s remember what Jesus did for us on the cross.

And as you receive the elements, let this also be a time of response. Focus on God, pour yourself out to him, thank him for his goodness, and express gratitude for the amazing grace he’s shown us all.

The body and blood of Christ given for you. Ushers, please come forward as we celebrate Communion together.

**Gratitude Experience (Communion)**

* **Song: Let It Echo**

**Conclusion: Posture Prayer**

I hope that was meaningful and that you were able to experience just a taste of what responding to God through worship can look like. 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.

Sometimes it’s easy for us to think that worship just happens in here. It’s easy to convince ourselves that worship is one 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 are meant to 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 “in 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”… *(add)*

**“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**

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 whole selves, pouring ourselves out to him.

So, to close today, I want us to end this service with the Posture Prayer we’ve been using throughout this series *(If you havent’ been using this, introduce it at this time)*. I encourage you to begin each day with these three simple postures.

The first posture is *(include prayer below on slide)* **Surrender**. Hold your hands up like you’re surrendering and pray outloud 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 pray 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 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 and pray 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.