

Belong

Where do you go to feel close to God? If you don't have a specific location in mind, what kind of place do you think would help you feel connected to God?

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Faith Share:

Who shared with us today?

What did I learn? What inspired me? What questions do I have?

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Become

What is worship?

Worship has always been an essential element of life with God. Before there were churches, the Hebrew people gathered to pray, sing songs of praise and lament, and share stories of God's faithfulness. The Christians of the early church risked their lives in order to pray, eat together, and encourage one another to keep following the way of Jesus.

Worship is not simply about people getting together; it's about getting together in the presence of God. John Wesley believed gathering together hear the word of God, pray, and share our lives with one another was a means of grace, a way to meet Jesus each week. The need for Christians to gather as a means of stepping into the presence of God has been a central doctrine of the Methodist Church since its beginning. *-adapted from sparkhouse collaborate*

Worship: to declare how much something is worth.

How do we worship?

Worship is a time to center ourselves in God. It is time to be still and be with God. It is time to celebrate and give thanks for all that God has done for us in Jesus. In worship, sometimes we sing, cry, laugh, pray, hug, dance, and sit in silence to listen for God. Worship is a time to reset, finding both comfort and peace in the process. Worship prepares us to go out into the world and participate in our other activities as God’s people.

Is there a “right” way to worship?

There are a variety of ways to worship God. Worship experiences are as diverse as God’s people! Christians around the world worship in very different ways, using different kinds of music, dance, and prayers, in many different languages. Other elements are shared across all these differences: the proclamation of the bible, response to the Word, prayers and thanksgiving, and the sacraments.

What kinds of worship styles have you encountered?

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Worship is not just an event to attend once a week. Worship is a way of life when we live out how much we love and value God in our lives.

You might wonder why we have to go to church to worship God. That’s a fair question. Worshipping alone in the woods or on a mountaintop can be a powerful spiritual experience. But gathering with fellow Christians comes with Jesus’ promise that “where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:20). We can certainly find Jesus in the woods or on a mountain, but we can’t find the support and encouragement of others. We can’t offer our support and encouragement to others. We can’t share our gifts or benefit from the gifts of others.

Worship is a way of life! We are able to worship God anywhere and any time. But worship alone isn’t a replacement for the way God shows up in a community of believers.

-adapted from sparkhouse collaborate

It's a worshipful life

Ideally, worship helps us to live a worshipful life and helps us to discern:

- how to choose to use our time
- how to choose to use our resources
- how to love others in our lives
- how to handle difficult people and challenges
- how to do our work
- how to follow through with our commitments

A Basic Pattern of Worship

We gather in God's name.

We come together, greet each other, there is music and song, prayer, and praise.

We proclaim the Gospel.

The Scriptures are opened to the people through reading of lessons, preaching, witnessing, music, or other arts and media. Interspersed may be psalms, anthems, and hymns.

We respond to God's Word.

We respond through acts of commitment and faith with offerings of concerns, prayers, gifts, and service for the world and for one another.

We give thanks to God and share Communion.

In services with Communion, the actions of Jesus in the Upper Room are reenacted: taking the bread and cup, giving thanks, breaking the bread, and giving the bread and cup. In services without communion, thanks are giving for God's mighty acts in Jesus Christ.

We are sent.

We are sent into ministry with God's blessing to be a blessing to others.

-United Methodist Book of Worship, p15,

John Wesley's directions for singing, written in 1761

"Sing all. Sing lustily and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead or half asleep. Do not bawl so as to be heard above the rest of the congregation but strive to unite your voices together. Sing in time and do not sing too slowly. Above all, sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. So shall your singing be such that the Lord will approve here and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven."

Why do we worship?

Worship is an outward expression of our love of, appreciation for, and faith in God. Through the means of grace poured out in worship, we are made whole and holy and then sent into the world to live a life of service. For John Wesley, worship was absolutely a worthy endeavor all by itself. But he also believed that we can't stop with worship. We need to go out and bless others as well. When we meet God in worship, we are strengthened for the work God has for us in the world. When we meet God in serving others, we are reminded of our deep need for God. These multiple means of grace guide us as we seek to live holy lives. To love God is to grow in love for our neighbor. To love our neighbor is to love God. *-adapted from sparkhouse collaborate*

In the New Testament, these 3 Greek words are translated “worship”:

sebomai = to lift up high, or to exalt,
proskuneo = to bow down,
latreuo = to serve.

Scripture to read

lift up: Psalm 63:1-4

bow down: Psalm 95:6-7

serve: Psalm 100:2, Matthew 25:32-40

How do these three words help you understand worship?

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The Psalms are prayers and songs that have helped people worship God for thousands of years. From the ancient Israelites to the early church, and through today, people have worshiped God through the psalms. The Psalms help us to see that our whole selves are welcome in worship and that we can offer our joys as well as our sorrows and anger before God.

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. *-Romans 12:1 (The Message)*

Spiritual Practice: Gratitude

Giving thanks to God is an important part of worship, not just in church on Sunday, but always. The apostle Paul wrote to the early church at Thessalonica: “Rejoice always.... Give thanks in all circumstances” (I Thessalonians 5:16, 18).” But life wasn’t for the early followers of Jesus. “All circumstances” for Paul included persecution and imprisonment. Life wasn’t easy for early followers of Jesus, and life isn’t always easy for us. We experience pain, loss, suffering, loneliness, and sorrow, and we witness injustice in the world that breaks our hearts.

What do you think it means to “Give thanks in all circumstances”? How might you do this?

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God, I thank you for

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Between now and our next session, practice writing down something you are thankful for every night before bed.



Be cheerful no matter what; pray all the time; thank God no matter what happens. This is the way God wants you who belong to Christ Jesus to live. *– 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (The Message)*

Bless

How were you a blessing this week?

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How were you blessed?

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