

Instructions:

Group leaders, take some time before your gathering to look over these questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pick 3-5 questions to discuss that pertain to your group's unique style and needs.



Series: Connections, the Pathways to God

Life is busy, full, uncertain, and stressful. Some seasons are so overwhelming that we are left feeling tired, fragmented, disconnected, with little energy left to give toward our own spiritual lives. In these wild times, how can we breathe deeply and feel rejuvenated? How can we become more aware of the presence of God that is, supposedly, always with us? Join us as we revisit practices that help us remain connected to God and to one another; the tried-and-true practices of the faith that keep us tethered and grounded during chaotic times.

Message description

Worship is a powerful means of grace. It is one of the main ways we can feel spiritually connected to God and to a community of faith. In worship, we are surrounded by the sounds of the saints as we join in the song of all of creation to sing praises to God our Creator. We offer praises of thanksgiving as we remember the goodness and faithfulness of God. But more than anything, worship draws us outside of ourselves and transforms us as we offer all that we have back to God. This is our true and proper worship.

Key Scriptures

1 Chronicles 16:23-34; Romans 12

Special Events coming up:

- October 17, Prayer Walk at Beckley Creek park at 12pm
- October 24, phone a friend throughout the week!
- October 30, REVAPALOOZA live music, chili cook-off, pumpkin painting, and games! 3-5pm
- October 31, All Saints Celebration at 10am

Additional sources for independent study:

- *The Five Marks of a Methodist* by Steve Harper
- *Sacred Rhythms* by Ruth Haley Barton
- *The Common Rule* by Justin Earley
- *Overflow* by Lovett Weems and Tom Berlin
- <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/how-to-foster-spiritual-disciplines-in-the-church>
- John Wesley sermon on "The Means of Grace" - <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-16-the-means-of-grace/>

Questions Related to This Week's Message:

1. What did you appreciate about the outdoor worship service on Sunday?
2. How did you experience God differently in worship on Sunday?
3. Why do you think communal worship practice is so important?
4. What do we mean when we say worship is a "means of grace"? How have you experienced worship to be a means of experiencing God's grace in the past or in this season?

Going Deeper:

On Chronicles and Romans

Re-read 1 Chronicles 16 and watch the following video for background info on the books of 1-2 Chronicles:

<https://www.bible.com/videos/25462-1-2-chronicles>

1. What role did worship play for the people of Israel?
2. According to the video, why was Chronicles written? Or what were the two messages of hope for the future highlighted in Chronicles?
3. How did gathering the people together for worship and appointing ministers and leaders prepare the people for what was to come? Or asked another way, how is worship formative?
4. Today, we as followers of Jesus Christ are awaiting the return of the Messianic King and for his reign to be fully recognized. How does regular worship practice today form us in the hope for our coming Lord?
5. Consider Romans 12:1-21 as an answer to how worship forms us. When we begin with true and proper worship of offering our whole lives to God (vv1-2), what happens next?

On Worship

Read the following article for a theological understanding on the basic pattern of worship in the UMC:

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/book-of-worship/the-basic-pattern-of-worship>

Gathering, Proclamation and Response, Thanksgiving and Communion, Sending Forth.

Consider the 4-fold order of worship above. Within each fold is the basic pattern of WORD and RESPONSE; we hear the word proclaimed through song, scripture, teaching, or prayer and then we respond. Worship is not a spectator sport but involves participation as a community with God. Our participation is responding to the gospel that has been proclaimed and to all that God has done for us.

1. Where do you see opportunities for response to God within our current worship service?
2. Where would you like to see more opportunities to respond?

The following is an opinion piece written by a United Methodist director of worship, Jonathan Aigner:

<https://um-insight.net/perspectives/worship-is-about-meaning%2C-not-preference/>

1. What struck you about his take on the meaning of worship? Do you agree or disagree with him?
2. According to Jonathan, how is worship formative for a community?
3. How does this article challenge your personal understanding or experience of worship?

Family-Related Questions:

- Consider asking your kids what they enjoy about worship.
- Do you see how worship is formative for your children?
- Where or how do you desire to see your kids more involved in our worshipping community?