



Christians have been gathering for worship since the very beginning. The worship life of the Jewish community from which Christianity was born was rich and full of meaning. This worship focused on God, his character, and the promises he made to his people. It helped shape the identity of the Jewish and early Christian communities. In our modern world, the Christian worship experience continues to be a place of community and identity. When the church gathers to worship God, reflect on his character, praise him for who he is and what he has done, it reflects God's blessing to the world. However, at times we (the Church) have allowed our preferences to overshadow true worship. What does the Bible say about worship? How can true worship guard our identity in Christ and bind us together in unity as followers of Jesus?

ICEBREAKER

- What is your favorite worship song or hymn?
- Describe a time when your preference in worship differed from someone else's. How did you respond?

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How are worship and admiration different?
2. In John 4:19–24 what do you think Jesus meant when he spoke about worshipping in "spirit and truth?" How should this affect our worship today?
3. Read Matthew 4:8–10. How does Satan twist the concept of worship? How do people fall into this trap today? What does Jesus' response tell us about the value of worship in our lives?
4. While worshipping, God invited the community to send Paul and Barnabas on a mission that would change the world—see Acts 13:1–3. What connection is there between worship and hearing from God?

LIVE IT OUT

This week engage in a practice or style of worship that is different from what you normally prefer. Consider how that practice brings people close to God and how it reflects God's character.

CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE JOURNALING

Take some time to journal about your experience of trying a style of worship different than your usual. Reflect on your worship preferences. How can they bless the broader church? When individual preferences are insisted upon, how can they become divisive and hinder unity?

PRAYER

Dear God, we thank you that you invite us to worship in spirit and in truth. Forgive us when we simply admire you rather than worship you. Keep us from worshipping anything but you. Help us to be willing to set aside our preferences in order to praise you and bring unity to the body of Christ. Amen.