



In our day, church services can often be thought of as a “show” or an experience. In this, many Christians are increasingly choosing to go without it. The big question is why do Christians gather weekly at worship services? Is there a value to living with this discipline and what are the benefits to doing so?

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## DISCUSSION #1: WE GATHER TO CELEBRATE

In our day, church services can often be thought of as a “show” or an experience. In this, many Christians are increasingly choosing to go without it. The big question is why do Christians gather weekly at worship services? Is there a value to living with this discipline and what are the benefits to doing so?

In this conversation we will unpack how followers of Jesus gather to sing about and celebrate the goodness of God.

### **MY STORY | Starting Place**

Did you grow up going to church? Do you remember WHY you went? If you didn't go to church growing up, did you ever wonder what others did?

### **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

Psalm 150:1-6 and Psalm 95:1-7 together paint a beautiful picture for WHY Christians come together. Read these verses and list out all of the things we do and WHY we do them.

### **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

*How can friends help each other live lives responsively to the goodness of God?*

*What could your friends do to best support you in this? What would you specifically ask them to do?*

### **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Go to a church service this week with focused attention on your desire to celebrate the goodness of God in all that you do.

# DISCUSSION #2: WE BRING OUR WHOLE SELF

In our day, church services can often be thought of as a “show” or an experience. In this, many Christians are increasingly choosing to go without it. The big question is why do Christians gather weekly at worship services? Is there a value to living with this discipline and what are the benefits to doing so?

In our first discussion we unpacked WHY Christians gather. In this discussion we explore the WHAT of our gatherings.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

How do you feel/respond after a worship service when people just critique the music or message?

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:16-18*

In addition to the above verse, 1 Corinthians 14:26 and Acts 2:42 describe the gatherings of the early church. These were not “worship services” as we know in our age, but they are gatherings of Christians seeking to celebrate the goodness of God when they come together. From all three passages, make a list of the activities listed.

What aspects of their gathering focused more on heart and attitude rather than activities in their gathering?

Add on to that list the purpose, or value of each activity. Fill in the blank: How does \_\_\_ allow Christians to celebrate the goodness of God and/or works of Jesus?

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

Do you consider preparing your heart for worship services or small group gatherings?

What does “preparing your heart” look like?

What change would this affect in your experience?

How can you gracefully encourage others in this discipline, especially family members?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Go to a church service this week with focused attention on your own attitude and desire to be fully present to God.

# DISCUSSION #3: CHURCH IS RELATIONAL

In our day, church services can often be thought of as a “show” or an experience. In this, many Christians are increasingly choosing to go without it. The big question is why do Christians gather weekly at worship services? Is there a value to living with this discipline and what are the benefits to doing so?

In addition to celebrating the goodness of God, Christians gather to encourage one another in word and action. We will explore that reality in this discussion.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

What is your general approach to new social settings? Does your approach change over time? How do you change in relating to others as time goes on?

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

Church services are far more than just activity on the stage. Read the following verses and make a list of the relational components of Christians gathering. Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Hebrews 3:13

Where do relational connections happen, or how should they happen?

How can you make yourself more available for this?

In our culture, church services are sometimes seen more and more as a “show,” and less as a relational experience. How could church leadership best support people in this value? \*\*Whatever you come up with, graciously share it in an email or conversation with a pastor at your church. They (we) need to know what you think.

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

Is relational engagement easy or hard for you at church?

How can you best position yourself to know people and be known by others?

How can your closest friends support and encourage you in this?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Go to a church service this week with focused attention on the relational activity. How was it? Were people trying to engage you? Were you making yourself open to others?

# DISCUSSION #4: SERVING AS WORSHIP

In our day, church services can often be thought of as a “show” or an experience. In this, many Christians are increasingly choosing to go without it. The big question is why do Christians gather weekly at worship services? Is there a value to living with this discipline and what are the benefits to doing so?

In this discussion we will unpack how part of our worship gatherings we gather to serve each other in the love of God.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

Have you had a positive experience serving in a volunteer role? Share about it. What benefit did you receive from the time and energy you gave?

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

*For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

*For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 1 Corinthians 12:12-20*

The church is sometimes called the “Body of Christ”, meaning collectively we (the Church) are a physical manifestation of Jesus in the world. In this passage Paul encourages the value EACH member has to the whole.

Have you historically thought of the church as a participatory experience? Has that changed over the years? How?

When at church, we often see people up front with speaking or musical skills (who are usually pretty good). What other skills, or roles, are necessary for a thriving church? Make a list.

Looking at your list, identify how each role can tangibly share the love of God with others.

What could be the personal benefit from serving others in these various roles?

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 10:24-25*

What role is of most interest to you in encouraging and serving others within the church?

If you’re not already serving somewhere, why?

How can your group support you in taking that step?



## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Go to a church service this week with focused attention on the volunteers serving in various roles. How do you see them being filled with joy and purpose by serving others in a tangible way?

# DISCUSSION #5: GOD IS WITH US

In our day, church services can often be thought of as a “show” or an experience. In this, many Christians are increasingly choosing to go without it. The big question is why do Christians gather weekly at worship services? Is there a value to living with this discipline and what are the benefits to doing so?

In this discussion we will unpack how, when we gather, God dwells with us (uniquely different to when we are alone).

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

Share the greatest group experience you have been a part of. It might have been a concert, sporting event, etc... How did you uniquely feel connected to the “strangers” you were there with?

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

In the Old Testament, God (the Spirit) descended and filled the temple several times (Exodus 40, 2 Chronicles 7). In the New Testament, God dwells amongst his people, beginning in Acts 2.

Matthew 18:20 says, *“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”*

What do you think Jesus means by this?

What are some ways you think God reveals Himself uniquely when Christians gather together?

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

How have you experienced the presence of God when you have gathered with other Christians?

How did you, or can you cultivate an awareness of His presence when you gather?

Can we hinder this beautiful opportunity? If so, how?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Go to a church service this week with focused attention on where and how we specifically celebrate the presence of God. Where do you see Him reveal himself to us?

# DISCUSSION #6: LIGHT FOR OTHERS

In this discussion we will learn how baptism celebrates the reality of a new life in Jesus.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

What's something you will never buy used (like underwear)?

Why does that particular thing need to be brand new if you're going to acquire it?

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17*

What parts of your life and worldview experienced a radical, 180-degree change after coming to Christ?  
What parts have experienced more gradual change?

What is brand "new" about the essence of a person who has experienced the one-time act of God (justification) at the moment of saving faith?

What parts of your "old self" are gradually diminishing in their power, over you, over time?

Why is all this change worth celebrating, especially in the public act of baptism?

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. Romans 6:4*

Again, how does the act of baptism by immersion symbolize death and new life?

What is the difference between the physical resurrection of the believer (after death) and the spiritual resurrection of the believer (after the death to self)? How are they alike?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Make a list of all the ways you've changed since experiencing saving faith. What changes took longer than others? Why? What dark habits seem to be hanging around?