



# ements

The Components of the Weekly Gathering

## Community Group Leader's Guide

August 13-20, 2017

## Series Overview

*When you hear the word “church” what do you think of? We all have preconceived notions of what the services should be like and how it should affect us. But are our expectations accurate and healthy? In this series we'll uncover what the New Testament says about singing, communion, prayer, preaching, and baptism. Join us as we evaluate and come to understand our role in the modern day church experience.*

**Icebreaker:** *Is there a part of our weekly worship service that is confusing to you? Is there any part of the service you simply do because you are supposed to and not because it has any meaning to you?*

## Weekly Summary

*True worship is defined by the priority we place on who God is in our lives and where God is on our list of priorities. True worship is a matter of the heart expressed through a lifestyle of holiness. Thus, if your lifestyle does not express the beauty of holiness through an extravagant or exaggerated love for God, and you do not live in extreme or excessive submission to God, then I invite you to make worship a non-negotiable priority in your life. We worship God because he is God. Period. Our extravagant love and extreme submission to the Holy One flows out of the reality that God loved us first. It is highly appropriate to thank God for all the things he has done for us. That said, this study will focus on the **singing** aspect of worship in our weekly church gatherings. We will unlock the reasons behind “why” we sing as part of our worship.*

## Getting Started

**Icebreaker:** *Confession time...what's your go-to song to sing in the shower or in the car when you are alone?*

## Going Deeper

*Read Psalm 96:1-2; Psalm 47:6; Ephesians 5:19; Zephaniah 3:17.*

**1.) Why does God so often tell us not simply to praise him but to *sing* his praises when we meet? Why not just pray and preach? Why sing?**

**2.) We see a brief snapshot in these texts of a theme throughout Scripture of God's people always singing through history. Why do you think that is? Why words and music and not just words alone?**

*On the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus sang hymns with his disciples (e.g. Matthew 26:30). Hebrews 2:12 applies Psalm 22:22 to Jesus when it says, "In the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." And Ephesians 5 tells us that one effect of being "filled with the Spirit" is "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart" (verses 18–19). In other words, we worship a triune God who sings and he wants us to be like him. Read Colossians 3:16.*

**3.) In our American culture we often have battles over the musical part of worship. The melody often means more to us than the words. Is that an appropriate and Scriptural understanding of singing in worship? Based on Colossians, what is the power of the words that we attach to the music we love?**

*Music and the Word aren't meant to be in conflict with each other. God himself wants them together. That's why he tells us in Psalm 147:1: "Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting." God didn't intend that music supersede the Word or that music undermine the Word. He gave us music to serve the Word.*

**5.) If the words mean more than the melodies (or at least not in conflict with), then why do we attach them to songs/music anyway? (Leader note - Let your group stop here and think critically)**

*Music helps us to remember words: "Every culture has songs and rhymes to help children learn the alphabet, numbers, and other lists. Even as adults, we are limited in our ability to memorize series or to hold them in mind unless we use mnemonic devices or patterns — and the most powerful of these devices are rhyme, meter, and song." (Oliver Sacks, "Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain"). More than that, they help us remember the right words. In Deuteronomy 31, God himself used music to help his people remember his words. As Israel was about to enter the Promised Land, God instructed Moses to teach*

*Israel a song so that “when many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring).” Singing can help us remember the right words, too. As New Testament scholar Gordon Fee says, “Show me a church’s songs and I’ll show you their theology.”*

**6.) Are there any songs that we sing that have strong meaning in your life? Explain. Do you ever sing them in times of joy or struggle?**

**7.) Obviously, the biggest reason we sing beyond what we mentioned is to praise a God who has brought us from death to life? Why do you think it is important for us to sing to a God who doesn’t need our praise? Why is it important to thank him for what he has done?**

**8.) In light of this, is emotion okay in worship? In your opinion, should singing our praises during weekly gatherings produce an emotional response sometimes?**

*Along with helping us remember words, singing also connects the words we sing with our hearts. In every culture and age, music is a language of emotion. It expresses, arouses, and speaks to our feelings. Music is capable of moving us in subtle and profound ways — in anticipated and unexpected ways — with or without words. As David played skillfully on his harp, Saul’s troubled spirit was calmed (1 Samuel 16:23) In Matthew 11:17 Jesus referred to music that made people want to dance or mourn. God commands us to sing with thankfulness in our hearts to God (Colossians 3:16). Our hearts should be involved because music is meant to affect us.*

**Application (choose a few of these for your group)**

**9.) We sing songs corporately as the church and not just individually. What is the power behind that? Are there any struggles you have singing corporately?**

**10.) How do you think Christians set aside subjective musical taste to make worship about God and not themselves?**

**11.) There are extremes of emotional expression in worship. Does Scripture put boundaries on this? What guidelines apply?**

**12.) How can you go to the next level in your engagement in the singing part of worship?**