

Reflection Guide

The Way of Love with Bishop Michael Curry: Worship

Putting God at the center

How to Use This Guide

For personal devotion

Listen to the podcast episode one or two times. Next, set aside 20 minutes of quiet time to reflect on the following Scripture and questions. Consider writing your responses to the prompts in a journal. Close your time in prayer.

As a group

Before you meet, ask members to listen to this episode. Open your meeting by sharing the Scripture. Next, you may either listen to the episode again as a group or move on to the Questions for Reflection. As a group, discuss your thoughts about and answers to the questions. Finally, close your time together with the prayer.

Scripture

Take a moment to read this passage (aloud if possible). What words or phrases jump out at you?

Colossians 3:12-17

¹² As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷ 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.

Questions for Reflection

Use these questions for personal reflection, group discussion, or both.

1. When asked about the difference between “worship” and “prayer,” Bishop Curry reflects on these points:

- a. Worship in community “requires me to get out of my comfort zone” and to remember “that it’s not all about me.” We are placed in community, just as Jesus was in community.

- b. Through the practices – the hymns, the preaching, the Scripture, prayer, and the Eucharist – we are reminded together that “behold, there is something greater than all of us.” We are not the center – God is the center. “The whole experience is actually ingeniously designed to de-center myself and re-center my life on God.”

- c. The elements of our Episcopal tradition that seem almost strange or alien – the robes, the incense, the eating bread and drinking wine – “push us beyond the contemporary to more ancient ways of connecting to God.” They remind us that “there is another world” – a world of mystery and holiness.

Which of these three elements most resonates with you as a reason you value worship? Which is the most challenging aspect of worship for you? Where would like further connection or understanding?

2. In their conversation, hosts Sandy and Kyle talk about a variety of worship experiences, discussing how different styles speak to them in different ways. While we do have a framework for our liturgy, there are many ways to express that liturgy through styles of music, dress, language, and surroundings. Take a moment to reflect on a worship service at which you felt incredibly connected to God: What was happening in that service that drew you into God's presence? What were the smells, sounds, or words that opened your heart?
3. One of the essential parts of worship is being in community. Through our baptismal covenant (based on Scripture), we promise, with God's help, to “continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers.” But keeping this promise can be daunting for some – especially if they feel isolated or unsure whether they are welcome. This week, think and pray about whom you might invite to join you in worship. Who might be waiting to be invited into something greater than themselves?

Prayer

Oh God, be present to us as we gather with others before you to worship. Open our hearts and minds to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. Help us give thanks, confess, and offer the brokenness of the world to you. As we break bread, may our eyes be opened to the presence of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit among us, making us into one body, the body of Christ, being sent forth to live the Way of Love. Amen.