



SHARED WORSHIP

Read Together

Romans 15:5-13

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

(Romans 15:13)

Learn Together (watch week 1 video lesson)

Paul established various house churches in Rome, made up of Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. In this diversity, each group brought with them their own histories, cultures, values, and perspectives, often coming into conflict with each other.

To help bridge and transcend these differences, Paul leaned into shared worship as a balm over the wounds of differences. We read here in Romans that in unity our differences are not erased. The members of these house churches did not have to conform to a particular pattern of thought or behavior, didn't have to be Jew or Gentile. They simply had to accept and embrace the fact that the essential and defining characteristic of their new identity was now Christ.

Glorifying God, or shared worship, is so important, and it's to be done in community. That doesn't mean you can't worship by yourself, but it means that there's a special dynamic when we come together, placing praising the promises of God above all other priorities. It's in this shared worship that we bring all our gifts and graces, differences and opinions, and allow ourselves to be shaped by the Holy Spirit. Though we each are different, we are all being shaped and sanctified when we share in worship, guided by the Spirit toward something greater. In glorifying God, in being filled with joy and peace in believing in this shared worship, Paul says, no longer will we be discouraged in our differences, but abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pray Together

Today, we pray for our church. We pray for our shared experience, that as it has changed our lives, it will continue to change your world, Lord. We pray for open eyes and open hearts to hear your message of grace. We pray for kindness among all at the table, even when we disagree with each other's theology or opinions. We pray for wisdom and insight to maintain unity without demanding uniformity, to celebrate our diversity instead of making it a cause for division and to claim that diversity as a part of your gracious gift to us.

Grant that we may speak and act and live so that the world may see in us the promise of your will, and so that the world may be challenged to move toward that vision, in and through the Christ, who is our source and our goal.

Amen



SHARED WORSHIP

Reflect Together

In times of chaos and disorder, it can be helpful to remember times of steadiness. Think of a moment in your life when you felt real harmony or unity internally, with your family and with the wider world. What did that feel like? What caused the harmony?

Recall a time when you shared in worship that felt very strange or different from what you were used to. How were you able to still connect to God even through discomfort?

Do you feel that you're more of a Jewish Christian — having a strong established history of the faith and assumptions of how church should look — or are you more of a Gentile Christian — new to the faith or church and still establishing your foundation?

Serve Together

Here at McFarlin, we are thankful for the two unique expressions of worship that occur every Sunday in our Sanctuary and Modern worship services. This week, find time to engage with the worship service *opposite* from the one you typically attend. How do you respond to this different expression of worship? Comparing services from the same week, what similarities and differences do you notice? What are the strengths of having multiple worship services available? What might be some of the challenges in offering two?

NEXT WEEK: SHARED MISSION

