



## **The Church - The Community of Worship**

### **Key idea:**

Worship is the assembly of the local church where God speaks to us through His Word, meets and strengthens us in the sacraments, and we respond as a community in spoken and sung prayers.

### **Key text:**

Acts 2:42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

### **Catechism Question 71:**

Are Christians only called to be part of the universal Church?

No, all Christians are called to be part of local churches where they are led and cared for by elders, worship God, learn the Scripture, receive the sacraments, pray together, serve one another, and carry out the Great Commission together.

### **Key points:**

1. A local church is a community of believers who regularly gathers to hear from and worship God.
2. The Word of God is the foundation of the worship of a local church.
3. The sacraments of water baptism and the Lord's Supper are a critical part of worship.
4. God speaks to the gathered believers through His Word, and they respond to Him in spoken and sung prayer, recounting His truth, confessing their sin, and giving themselves to Him.
5. Worship is a communal expression of the church that strengthens our bonds with God and one another.

## Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. When the local church gathers for worship, who is the proper focus - God, believers, or unbelievers? How much effort should a local church expend to make its worship appealing to unbelievers?
3. In what sense is worship a "dialogue" between God and His people? How does God speak to us when we gather? How do we respond and speak back to Him? Why is it important that worship includes both God speaking to us and us responding and speaking back to Him?
4. Why must God's written Word be the foundation of our worship gatherings? In what ways should a local church weave the Word of God into its entire pattern of worship?
5. What difference does it make if I think of water baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments (special symbols that convey God's grace when received in faith) rather than as ordinances (ritual remembrances of Christ's work)? If they are sacraments, who is the main agent - God or me? If they are ordinances, who is the main actor? Which view leads to a more tangible experience in worship?
6. Have I usually thought of the songs we sing as prayers? How does this change my perception of why we sing as part of our worship?
7. Have I thought of the songs we sing as a means of me instructing others who are present in the worship gathering? How do we teach one another through our songs? What does this tell me about the proper lyrical content of the songs we sing?
8. How does worship strengthen the sense of community in the local church?
9. How can I better prepare for our times of corporate worship? What specific step will I take this week to make sure I am prepared to hear from and respond to God when we gather?
10. Who will I call or see to encourage this week? Who can I point to Jesus and encourage to gather with the Church for worship this coming Sunday?