

FAITH **UNDER** **CONSTRUCTION**

STUDY GUIDE WITH
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

EPISODE 8:

Why Are They Running: Breaking Down the Black Christian Experience

In this episode of Faith Under Construction, Rasool Berry, Christin Thorpe, and pastor Kellen Brooks discuss the traditions of some African American worship experiences—like running and shouting at church—as well as their origins, healing effects, and stigmas.

1. Berry mentions that Barna has reported that 68 percent of boomers attend church whereas 48 percent of millennials attend. This statistic shows that today there are a lot more people who don't have church experience.
 - a. Why do you think there's been a decline in church attendance over the years? Do you think this decline means that millennials are drawing away from God or drawing away from church practices? Explain.
2. Berry asks: "Are there some things that African Americans as a people experienced in life that are related to how African Americans worship?"
 - a. In what ways do you think culture, history, and lived experience influence how people express themselves in worship? How have your own life experiences shaped the way you worship?
3. The hosts talk about their experience with worshipping in the church. Thorpe mentions she grew up seeing people shout and run in church while Berry went to church later in life and wasn't familiar with expressive worship.
 - a. What has been your experience with worship in the church? How has that shaped the way you relate to others in your church community, and your relationship with God?
4. What makes it easy or difficult for you to invite someone to your church? How does your church's worship style play into that?
5. Read Psalm 150 and 2 Samuel 6:20-22. How do these verses describe worship? How does Psalm 150 highlight the attributes of God? How does 2 Samuel 6 highlight David's expression in worship?
6. Read Romans 8:26. Berry says, "There's this thing where the Bible is acknowledging that sometimes we may not have words."
 - a. What do you think is happening when someone shouts, runs, or cries out in worship? How have you experienced moments where your response to God went beyond words?
7. Brooks names "worship superiority" as the belief that one way of worship is more legitimate than another.
 - a. What biases or discomforts do you have around different styles of worship? How can you begin to hold your preferences without dismissing other expressions?

8. Thorpe asks, “How do you find balance between appreciating culture and staying grounded?”
 - a. How do you personally discern between authentic expression and something that feels performative? How has that shaped the way you engage in worship?
9. Thorpe asks, “How do you cultivate your own worship life outside of the church?”

Share one way you can express worship, devotion, or love for God this week.
As a group, consider how you can encourage one another to follow through.

Closing Prayer:

Take a few moments to pray together. As you pray, consider lifting up:

- That the church would be a safe place for honest and authentic worship
- That people would experience deeper relationships with God and with one another
- That churches would cultivate environments of trust, healing, and belonging
- That God would renew and revive the way we worship—personally and collectively

Invite a few people to pray out loud or spend time in quiet reflection before closing.