

W A SLICE OF WORSHIP

Let's say you give your 5-year-old nephew a teddy bear for Christmas. He opens the box and his mother stands behind him and says, "Say thank you." The boy parrots back his mother's words.

Do you really feel thanked? Later you peep into this bedroom and you see he's drifted off to sleep with the bear clutched tightly to him as if he may never let go. Now do you feel thanked?

God gives us all teddy bears (in one form or another) every day. How are we encouraging our youth to say thank you? Worship is honoring God for who he is and what he's done. It's not recitation. It's not obligation. It's conversation. Worship can be a cannonball into God's deep end. It's less of *what* and more of *why*.

1 If you follow the same pattern for most of your meetings (game, snack, lesson, prayer, dismissal), change it up without notice. Instead, plan a worship service as a big (and overdue) thank you to God. You could preface the service by asking teenagers to brainstorm all the reasons they're thankful for God's influence in their lives.

2 Give kids new categories for worship by expanding your focus more broadly than just music. What if you gave them each a piece of chalk and had them go out to your church's sidewalk to each write a sentence that starts "God is good because..."? Or what if the group brainstormed something that's hard to do but honoring to God, and then figured out how to do it? Or what if you all wandered outside your church building looking for things in God's creation to thank him for? See who can come up with the longest thank you list.

When you really love someone, worship is just a natural response.

