

Practising Spiritual Disciplines



WORSHIP

Holiness • Set Apart • Priorities

Some essentials to help you grow in faithful worship:

1. WORSHIP HAS ITS SOURCE IN GOD

As with all of life, worship has its source in God. Sometimes we worship as if it is all up to us, that worship is our invention. But worship is God's gift to his people. It is his provision for us to engage with him individually and as a community. It is his invitation to join in the worship that surrounds his throne.

2. WORSHIP IS A GIFT

Sometimes we forget what an amazing gift it is to worship. God is holy and we are not, so we can only approach him because he has made a way for us to do so in Christ. Jesus takes all of our music, prayers, testimonies and sermons, and cleanses them so that they are acceptable gifts to God. The holiness of God—his "otherness," the awesome mystery and beauty of God—reminds us that we worship him in humble reverence. Even songs of joyful celebration are sung with respect for his profound goodness.

3. "WORSHIP IS A VERB"

As Robert Webber has famously said, "Worship is a verb." Worship is "not done for us or to us but by us." God's way of worship is action-oriented, characterized by four overarching verbs: gathering, hearing, responding and going. These movements remind us of the story of God's redeeming work in Christ.

4. WE GATHER AT GOD'S INVITATION

We gather together in Jesus' name and at God's invitation. We come together to thank him for all he had done for us—his healing, love and faithfulness. We meet to hear God speak in his Word. The reading and proclamation of Scriptures are part of God's worship design. Learning and practising to read and hear are important to the spiritual discipline of worship.

5. SACRED ACTIONS ARE PART OF OUR RESPONSE

What can we do but respond to God's Word read and proclaimed? In the Army we have the mercy seat, a sacred place of grace where we can kneel and pray in covenant renewal. Sometimes other sacred actions are part of a community's response. These actions are symbolic ways to help us grow in faithfulness.

6. GOING FORTH IS IMPORTANT TO WORSHIP

Worship should not end just because the structured service is over. In fact, the last part of the service is about going forth into the world, sometimes known as "sending out." Going forth or being sent is an important part of worship. It affirms that our daily worship lives will be lived justly and humbly in congruence with the God we serve in worship on Sunday.

7. NO CHURCH'S WORSHIP IS PERFECT

It is essential to remember that no church's worship is perfect. We come to God with "broken hallelujahs." Worship, as with the whole of the church's life, is about trusting in Christ. We come together to worship in faith, trusting that Jesus has worshipped perfectly on our behalf.

My Action Plan

→ Imagine that God invites you to his house for dinner and then gives you words of welcome. What does he say? What do you say or do?

→ Remember you do not worship alone. Not only are you a part of your local congregation, but you belong to a global church of believers.

How you live matters.
→ Prepare for worship by thinking about God's invitation to you.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Cut out and keep in your Bible or journal. Allow these verses to mould your idea of Scripture reading.

"Come before him with thankful hearts" (Psalm 95:2 TLB).

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:2-3 NIV).

"Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him. Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness" (1 Chronicles 16:29 NIV).

"With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings...? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams...? Shall I offer the firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:6-8 NIV).