**SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE: WORSHIP**

What is Worship?

**Worship Defined:** In some ways worship defies definition, it can only be experienced. But we need to give it a definition. Our English word for “Worship” comes from the Anglo‑Saxon word “Weorthscipe”, ie. worth ship. It’s a recognition of, and a response to the worth of God.

The words used in the Bible for worship reveal the meaning of worship:

**(1) Hebrew words:**

*(a) Shachah* ‑ to bow down, Prostrate;

*(b) Abodah* ‑ to serve a superior.

**(2) Greek words:**

*(a) Proskuneo* ‑ to come forward to kiss the hand, as an act of adoration.

*(b) Leitourgia* ‑ to serve.

Worship is both an attitude of the heart and actions of service.

Ralph Martin shows this dual emphasis:

“Worship is the dramatic celebration of God in his supreme worth in such a manner that His worthiness becomes the norm and inspiration of human living. (Ralph Martin).

Someone else has said:

“Worship is becoming aware of God’s presence and responding to His presence with verbal or active expressions of love and devotion.”

**Read Isaiah 6:1‑8**

Isaiah is transported into the presence of God. Here we see that worship is: *(1) Revelation* (v1‑4) ‑ God reveals Himself and Isaiah became aware of God’s presence. *(2) Response* (v5‑8) ‑ Isaiah responds to the presence of God.

Two types of Worship:

1. Personal Worship
2. Corporate Worship

What do you think personal worship involves?

**Personal Worship:**

Does the reality of God Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth, living in you, set you on fire? Why or Why not?

It is because we are unaware of God’s presence. Why are we unaware of his presence?

This could be because:

**(1) God is invisible** ‑ We don’t usually perceive God with our 5 senses.

**(2) God is crowded out** ‑ Hectic and busy lives make us neglect Him.

**(3) We do not discipline ourselves to think of God.**

What is the solution to the lack of awareness?

Lies in tuning into the presence of God. Learn to be aware of God’s presence, learn to relate to the God who is always with us then worship will become a life‑style.

David, the Psalmist learnt to practise the presence of God. We read these words of David in Psalms 16:8, “I have set the LORD always before me.” It says literally, “I keep the Lord continuously in prominence”. He had a spontaneous relationship with God because he was continually aware of the presence of God.

We need to practise the presence of God. How?

(a) Remind yourself of the reality of God’s presence.

(b) Decide to talk to God continuously.

(c) When you forget God is with you ‑ confess and continue with Him.

(d) Do everything ‑ even common tasks ‑ for the Lord (Colossians 3:17,23).

(e) Take control of your senses let them direct your mind to God.

(f) Make it your aim to experience God at all times.

**Corporate Worship:** a Danish philosopher, compared worship to a dramatic production. In worship, it often seems as though the worship leader is the actor and God is the prompter, whispering in his ear, telling him what to do next. The congregation listens and applauds at the end if they like the way worship is led or they throw things by grumbling or complaining if they don’t. He said that’s all back to front - God is the audience, the congregation are the actors and the person leading worship is the prompter, who keeps the production going. Colossians 3:16 shows there are three dimensions to corporate worship: “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” - (1) we communicate with God (up); (2) we communicate with each other (sideways); and (3) God communicates with us (down).

Richard Foster has some helpful guidelines on developing the spiritual discipline of worship: (1) Learn to practise the presence of God daily. (2) Have many different experiences of worship. (3) Find ways to prepare for the gathered experience of worship. (4) Have a willingness to be gathered in the power of the Lord - submit to one another. (5) Cultivate holy dependency. (6) Absorb distractions with gratitude. (7) Learn to offer a sacrifice of worship.

The fruit of worship is holy obedience! Isaiah said: “Here am I, send me!”

**WORSHIP WORKSHEET**

We have been created to worship the most high God, redeemed for an eternity of lovemaking with our wooing bridegroom, filled with the Spirit to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to the Lord with thanksgiving in our hearts. Let us more and more, each and every day, be worshippers of the most high God, brides to our lover Jesus, growing into the likeness of Christ as we are surrendered through worship to his will and purpose. “Lead me, Holy Spirit, into loving relationship and willing surrender. Help me to love God and enjoy him forever, with all of my heart, mind, soul, and strength.”

***Right now:***

Using the words of Frances Havergal’s well‑known hymn, surrender yourself to God in confession, adoration, and praise.

Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

Take my moments and my days; Let them flow in endless praise.

Take my voice and let me sing Always, only, for my King.

Take my lips, and let them be Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my will and make it thine; It shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart, it is thine own; It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour at Thy feet its treasure store.

Take myself, and I will be, ever, only, all for Thee.

***In the Coming Days and Weeks:***

\* Make it a regular habit during the next few weeks to offer the Lord a “sacrifice of praise.” As you pray, read the Bible, do the dishes, take a coffee break, or go for a walk, let your heart flow out toward God in praise. Let one or more of the psalms guide you as a starting point, or write your own psalm of God’s grace to you and sing it to him. Fix your mind on Jesus, his glory and majesty, his beauty and strength. Let the Holy Spirit release in your spirit a language of praise. Remember that God invites us into his very self to taste and know his inner sweetness. Praise him for this and ask him to help you taste and know him more.

\* Take some time this week to “hallow” God’s name. His is the name above all names. He is God above all gods, the Lover of our souls, the Bridegroom, the Faithful One, Jesus, the Rock of Ages, King of the nations. Let the Spirit bring to your mind the names of God and the aspects of his character that these names reveal. Bless and praise him just for who he is.

\* Take time to receive from the Spirit in worship. Lie still in a relaxing and comfortable place (bathtub, sofa, lawn chair, hillside) and listen to a favourite worship tape. Let the music and words wash over you, sinking into your head and heart.

\* Imagine God singing one or more of these songs to you. Let your heart flow out toward God in surrender and thanksgiving. Imagine yourself in the throne room of God (Isa. 6; Rev. 4‑5) worshipping with the seraphim, elders, and angels. Feel the pillars of the temple shake from the loud praise. See the Lamb upon his throne and enter into vocal rejoicing and praise ‑ “And he shall reign Forever and ever... forever, and ever...alleluia, alleluia.” Take your pride, accomplishments, and whatever concerns you have and cast them at his feet in surrender to him. He is worthy! Tell him so.

\* As you attend corporate worship in the next few weeks, practice the Presence of God on the way as a means of preparing your heart for worship. Some ideas: pray silently for those you see, thank God for the day and all its possibilities ask him to bring to your mind things you should know about yourself or others. In this way, you are preparing your heart and mind to worship in spirit and in truth. Remember Paul’s encouragement to be continually filled with the Spirit (which naturally overflows into worship) so that you are ready to enter into corporate worship with others, sharing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, making music in your heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19‑20).