

# IMMERSE

A JOURNAL OF FAITH, LIFE AND YOUTH MINISTRY

## Worship Stations

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Worship is a lifestyle. It takes place outside the walls of the church. It is praise when you don't feel like praising and actions that speak louder than any high school worship band can play. Worship is walking through your daily life with God and seeking him in the high points and the low.

When we come together as a church, we get the pleasure of corporate worship. You get to join your heart with the hearts of others who are walking the same road with you as you tell God how great he is. Your praise is added to the praises of others. You are encouraged by their worship, and you encourage them through your praise. We are drawn closer to each other as we praise God together. In youth ministry it is vital to teach students to worship God corporately (not only with other teens but adults as well). It is at the heart of our shared Christian experience.

But if you ask the average youth about worship at her church, she will begin talking about music. He will talk about worship styles and how good or bad the praise band is. But singing is only one small way to engage in corporate worship. As youth leaders, we must find new ways to help students worship God in a corporate setting. This is because some students don't express themselves through music and because the familiarity of singing has caused many students to forget whom they are supposed to be worshipping while they sing.

While singing is an effective way of expressing our praise, it is just a small part of how we can worship. Worship should engage all the senses and all of our talents. I am a writer at heart, so I love opportunities to journal or write poetry in worship. That type of worship helps me come alive. I have a

friend who sees everything in 3D. Everything he touches is an object lesson. Once, we were all writing sins on paper and nailing them to a cross. He took off his watch and nailed it through the face; that is just the type of person he is. He is moved by worship he can touch. There are youth I work with who roll their eyes when we sing but draw amazing pictures of their worship.

In my student ministry, we often let students worship in different ways through worship stations: what a friend of mine calls choose-your-own worship. Setting up various stations allows people to worship how they feel comfortable. Most of the stations we use also have an element where people leave something original behind (a prayer request, a poem, a piece of art, a prayer, etc). This allows participants to worship through the works of others, making it a truly corporate experience.

The most straightforward way to incorporate worship stations is to have a gathering with several stations set up around the room. At each station there are guided exercises that lead students to worship in creative ways. There may be a station that asks students to draw about the mercy of God or to write a poem about how he is just. We have asked students to list ways to complete the sentence "God is..." and posted all of those on a wall for the group to see. Certain stations contain hands-on elements, such as flashlights or model cars or flowers. Each station is designed to help students to worship in a different way.

Normally on nights when we worship with stations (what my group tends to call take-your-shoes-off worship because I often have them remove their shoes as an indication that we are moving into a sacred space), we have some singing time then break up to participate in the stations. We play some soft music in the background and let people gravitate to whichever stations they choose.

The only rule I give my students is not to talk. We have lots of loud times of worship, but on these nights, I ask for silence. When we first started, I expected resistance from my students, but I was amazed to find that even the young ones engaged in the different types of worship.

Some students choose to go to each station in order around the room. Others sit and pray and choose stations at random. Still others spend all their time at one station, either drawing or writing or sculpting their praise.

As a worship leader, it is difficult for me not to be in control of what is happening. I feel like I should be stepping in and guiding them, but I have found that these nights—when I just let the students interact with God alone—are the most "worshipful" events of our year.

You can also set these stations up during your traditional worship times and invite people to use them then too. In the past, we have had an art or poetry station set up in the back of the room and open to anyone who felt like worshipping in that manner. Let me tell you, it takes time to get used to people drawing while I teach, but it is cool to see when their art lines up with what I am saying.

A few tips for using worship stations:

- Bring the lights down low. It may seem superficial, but people respond better in candlelight than under fluorescents. Candles indicate that something ancient and important is happening.

- Make sure to have some background music playing. This helps set the tone of the evening and also masks distractions. When you are planning background music, make it a blend between slow songs and slightly faster songs. Think of the mood as a sine wave. I am always amazed by how the speed of the music affects everyone and how they worship, so be deliberate in your choices.

- Remember that setting is important. Make your stations look like art themselves. People are visual, so plan accordingly. This is a great way to incorporate different people into worship planning. You likely have some *Trading Spaces*-type people who would love to help you with this.

- You may want to have someone who projects worship images (crosses, creation, candles, people praying, etc.) during the worship time.

- Make sure each station has more than enough material. You don't want to run out and have to cut more strips of paper. Plus, the leftover materials can be saved and used again next time.