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## Worship

*“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.” – John 4:23*

If the focus of silence is *listening to* God, the focus of worship is *experiencing* God. Worship starts with who God is, not music, not our emotions, not our feelings. Worship is about giving God the worth that he is due. God is so approachable, and worship prompts us to approach him with regularity. Worship puts God in his rightful place as the worshipper reflects on who God is and all he has done. It might be somewhat difficult to think of worship as a discipline, since the first thing that usually comes to mind when people think of worship is the singing that takes place during a church service. This perception can cause problems, though, for several reasons. First, worship is much more than just singing. Worship can include prayer, silence, reading, dancing, clapping, and many other expressions of praise and adoration. Worship is also a cleansing experience. So it is important to move beyond any stereotypes you might have about worship. Worship has also become one of the most hotly debated topics in many churches because of the tensions between worship styles. So it is also important to move beyond a perception of worship as a reflection of generational styles or cultural preferences.

Richard Foster says,

*To worship is to experience reality, to touch Life. It is to know, to feel, to experience the resurrected Christ in the midst of the gathered community . . . Worship is human response to divine initiative. . . Worship is our responding to the overtures of love from the heart of the Father . . . It is kindled within us only when the Spirit of God touches our human spirit.<sup>1</sup>*

In reality, people are used to worshipping many kinds of things such as sunsets, art, music, celebrities, athletes, etc. So as you spend time in the discipline of worship, seek to move beyond worship as you have ever known it before, and make sure that God is the object of your worship.

- One of the most important prerequisites to effective worship is getting rid of distractions. So whatever it is that might be a distraction, make sure you identify it and do whatever it takes to eliminate it.
- If you like to sing, plan a time to sit in the presence of God singing to him your favorite songs or hymns of praise and worship.
- If singing is not something you prefer, you might try listening to recorded praise and worship music. As you begin to learn the words of the songs, you find them very easy to adapt as prayers to God as part of your personal worship.
- It is good to learn to worship without music and singing. There are countless ways you can do this. You might enjoy reciting the names of God, reading Scripture out loud, creating a dance, or even worshipping in silence. The important thing is to have a heart focused on God.
- Many people enjoy worshipping God in nature. If you can take a walk in the forest or mountains, carefully observe all that God has created and spend time worshipping him for each one.
- It is often helpful to include as many of the senses as possible in worship. Think of ways you can worship using sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste.
- As you experiment with worship, feel free to use your imagination in new and creative ways. Allow your imagination to draw you into the presence of God.
- If you are not familiar with liturgical worship, you might find it refreshing and enlightening to explore the liturgy, recite various creeds, explore the Book of Common Prayer, etc.
- Visit a church that is outside of your worship style preference and enjoy the different flavor.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 138.