

First Baptist Church



Worship Leader
Seminar

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WORSHIPING A BIG GOD IN A SMALL GROUP

- **Current Conditions**

You know the deal; twenty people crammed into a living room with hardly enough room to move. The night seems to be going well; the tea is flowing, the snacks have all been consumed, the conversation is just heating up and suddenly someone reaches for their guitar. Almost instinctively the room has filled with terror. Everyone starts rubbing their throat as if there's no way they're going to sing with such a sore one! Coughing has now replaced conversation and the kitchen suddenly becomes a hive of servant activity.

I don't know if something like this has been or indeed is your experience of worship in a small group. But it doesn't have to be. Perhaps leading worship in a small group fills you with dread. Perhaps your small group expression of worship is one of enthusiasm, creativity and sensitivity. Great.

- **God with Us**

Although we can't do much as worship leaders and singers about the ability of our fellow small group members, we can do a lot to teach them about the value of worshiping in a small group environment and leading them in such a way that minimizes any embarrassment. Matthew 18:20 says, *"For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them."* One of the biggest temptations we face when we are leading worship in a small group is to try and replicate what we see on a Sunday or at a large conference. It's important that we get our motives and values right when we come to lead people in this way. This is not our chance to show off our talent or how well we can play the latest songs. Small group worship is not merely a stepping-stone to leading worship in the grander place of church on a Sunday. Our role is to lead people nearer to Jesus. Remember He should increase and we should decrease (John 3:30).

- **Small Group Worship versus Large Group Worship**

Obviously, the dynamic of a small group is very different to that of a larger congregation. For example, pumping out a big exciting worship song alone on your 6 string may not have quite the same drive amongst 20 of you as when there are 500 singing passionately along to a fully amplified band at worship on Sunday. We can get it into our heads that these larger contexts for worship can

be the only useful expression. Anything less is a flop. However, nowhere in this verse in Matthew do I see anything about large conferences, PowerPoint word projection, sound systems, band arrangements or microphones. The one and only factor is that Jesus' name is glorified and that can be done when there is a few as two or as many as a few thousand people. The size of a group doesn't matter and small groups hold advantages all of their own.

We tend the flame of spiritual vitality at the center of congregational life when we worship together. Young and old, brand-new Christians and long-time Christians — we all gather together as one worshipping body on Sunday morning. In worship we see who God is and come to recognize how and where God's lively Spirit is at work in the world. In our songs and prayers of commitment, we unite with God's life-giving purposes in the world.

Small group worship, while sharing elements in common with Sunday morning worship, is often less formal and more intimate in character. Ten to twenty people gathered in a face-to-face setting can all participate actively in each element of worship. As group members take turns leading the group, members gain valuable experience in worship leading. Within the circle of trusted sisters and brothers, each can become more transparent in responding to the moving of God's Spirit and discerning paths of faithful obedience.

Large Group	Small Group
Bigger congregational sound	Generally more personal and intimate
Typically uses more musicians	Uses fewer musicians
Conducive to celebration and majesty	Easier to discern how people are doing
Contributions are usually more mature	Can be tailored to the needs of the group
More leader dependent	More group dependent

Reasonable Expectations for Small Group Worship

- Some unreasonable expectations
 - thinking it should sound like Sunday morning with all the dynamics
 - think there will always be a professional musician in your group (not necessary)
- Hindrances
 - new or immature group
 - old resistant to change group
 - fear of man - every leader has to deal with fear of man - crave for people's worship (fear - strongly desire something you think you will not get) When People Are Big and God Is Small (book to read)
 - weak or no instrumentalists
 - (we are talking about worship in the narrow sense - worship is all of life)
- **We are gathering to magnify the works, word, and worthiness of God, especially revealed through Jesus Christ by the power of His Spirit.**
- Typically involves music - that is our focus.

Four things we can expect when we gather.

- I. **Every Member Participation** *we can expect that everyone will in some way be involved*

What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. (1Cor. 14:26 ESV)

- A. **Prayer** (it encourages each other, teaches others) prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, petition
- B. **Scripture** - Remind people to bring their Bibles and let them share a passage that God has brought out to them
- C. **Testimonies** - share evidences of grace in people's lives. Where have you seen God working in your life this week

- D. **Spiritual gifts** - Everyone has at least one gift. What ways can people in this group contribute to the growth of the group
- E. **Good Leaders:** (we aren't the only one that God will use in this)
1. Ask others to contribute in advance (would you bring a scripture, have the opening prayer, share a testimony, etc. It's not just the leader—others can participate too)
 2. Invite participation as the meeting starts
 3. Encourage those who have shared - thank them and be specific about how the contribution has served the group - "it really helped us. . ."

II. Expressiveness and Engagement

Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy! (Ps. 47:1 ESV)

Most words for worship in the Bible have a physical significance

Bodily expressions:

- Reflects a passion for God - it shows that something is there
- Encourages a passion for God - by raising my hands to you, it will help me know how worthy you really are.

Everyone in your small group is passionate for God or wants to be. We can all grow in this, even if this kind of expression is foreign to you.

Common in non-religious forms of worship - football game

- A. **Singing** - not about whether or not we have a voice but whether or not we have a song. You don't have to have a good voice.

over 500 references to song in the Bible- over 50 direct commands

1. **Singing helps us remember God's words** (songs you haven't sung for thirty years comes to you - God wants us to remember His words.

2. **Singing helps us respond to God's grace** Psalm 92:1 *It is good to give thanks to the LORD And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High*

It is good to sing to the Lord.

Psalm 147:1 *Praise the LORD. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!*

pleasant, enjoyable. Thanksgiving & joy most often associated with singing in the Bible. Grace—we must do more than talk about it—we must sing about it

B. Clapping

Psalm 47:1 *Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.*

to the beat, for expression of appreciation and gratefulness to God for what he has done—clap for the glory of God—if the trees can clap their hands we can. We can't make a noise loud enough to celebrate your goodness. God loves loud sounds of praise.

C. Raised Hands

Ps 28:2 *Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place.*

134:2, *Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the LORD.*

141:2 *May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.*

63:4 *I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.*

I Tim 2:8 *I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.*

An expression of joy and dependence. A request for help. A sign of celebration, joy.

D. Kneeling

Phil 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

Eph 3:14 For this reason I kneel before the Father

Ps 95:6 Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;

E. Good Leaders:

- 1. Model truth-driven expressiveness** - outward expressiveness not our goal—seeing the glory of God in Christ is our goal. Expressiveness is the response. (*Ex. Basketball arena - you need to jump up now and celebrate - because people are seeing something to them that is significant—there is a celebration - no instruction needed*) We want to model a valuing of truth and biblical reality. Choose songs on the basis of the lyrics and not just on other things (not just because it has only four chords and is in the key of G) Music cannot do what biblical truth is meant to do. Too often we end up doing songs too fast just to hype people up—just seeing the glory of God should be all we need. It's about the words to the songs. If people are expressive just because we are doing a great groove that is not necessarily helping them grow in their expressiveness to God,
- 2. Give Scriptural instruction** - Point out in God's word how God's word speaks of physical expression. Encourage others to try this. As you see more clearly who our Savior is, you will lose your inhibitions and want to tell Him "you are so good."
- 3. Lead with grace** - by modeling expressively. (If not - go to your heart - are you generally happy in the Lord or just concentrating on "me") Psalm 34:5 *Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.*

Practice being expressive in private. Encourage people as they are being expressive-no matter what kind of day you are having, you are showing God is worthy. We can exercise patience. Emphasize the greatness of God.

4. **Use songs that are new or difficult to sing sparingly.** Make sure you know the song well. The care group can function with 20-30 songs in the main repertoire. It isn't about singing what's new but what's true. We want them to know it so they can focus on the truth. It is good to bring new songs in that are good. It is fine to bring songs in that were done Sunday or even last week.

III. Mutual Edification

Col. 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

the goal is to worship God through songs of praise and ministering to one another

- A. **Encouragement and Comfort** - we should expect this to take place.

2 Cor 1:3-4. *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.*

So we may be able to comfort others . . . It can happen while we are singing/praying

- B. **Instruction** - singing brings instruction if we are singing songs with good words - instructing on who God is, about what He's done, His promises, character, and commands. We are remembering who we are and what God has done. (Is anyone here dealing with the issues in this song? - personal interaction can take place- bring the songs to more of a personal nature) a good word of instruction can help people sing with more faith help them see things more clearly, etc.
- C. **Conviction** – secrets of his heart are exposed. This can happen in the cell group meeting. People may be convicted. We need to look for that. "Does this seem to touch anyone?"

D. Good Leaders

1. **Pray for members outside the meeting** , pray with gratefulness as well
2. **Don't dominate the meeting** - recognize your limitations and your responsibility to equip others - it is not all about me
3. **Allow time for mutual ministry** - plan for the meeting, just don't depend totally on the plan or overplan. Sing 2-4 songs and allow time for other things to take place. God uses the music to soften people's hearts and fill their minds with truth and the spirit is working in people - allow for people to make contribution, not a spectator mentality. Make the time of singing more interactive time. Songs are more rest stops along the way. We the greatness of God to be exalted in their hearts, minds, will, choices - the more we love Him the more we want to live for Him.
4. **Utilize variety in the meeting** - mixing up the meeting - perhaps sing at the end - don't always do it the same.

IV. Encounters with God

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. (Heb. 12:22-25a ESV)

We are not just coming to meet with other, but to also meet with God. We are joining with that choir. It is not dependent on the size of the meeting. We are the temples of the Holy Spirit. God is present with us. A reasonable expectation is that we will encounter God

- A. **Through the Gospel** - We are not looking for new experiences or new truths - we want to be freshly aware of the old story. We aren't pursuing a feeling - we are placing a trust in what Jesus has done for us - reminding

people of what Jesus has done for us. Heb 10:19-22 *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

The way has been open - let's not hold back.

B. Through the Word - don't underestimate the power and effect of God's Word. The power is not in the illustrations - it is in the word of God. The power is not in the size of the group, the flow, but the Word of God. Never communicate that singing is more powerful than the Word of God.

C. Through God's Spirit - make Christ's presence evident to us. When God speaks or acts, we need to be listening. "I am expecting you to speak to people tonight." Have heightened awareness.

D. Good Leaders

1. **Keep the Gospel central** - point people to Christ, help them make connections

2. **Inspire faith in and apply God's Word** Psalm 19:7-11

7 The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.

8 The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.

9 The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever.

The ordinances of the LORD are sure
and altogether righteous.

**10 They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the comb.**

**11 By them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.**

God's word is his gift to us to help us know Him better. People need to be feeding on God's Word on their own each day - not just group night

3. **Lead in responding to the Spirit's activity** - learning to linger, wait, not rushing from one thing from another. Not like directionless waiting

Concluding Thoughts

- A. Measure success by God's standards, not yours
- B. Never lose sight of the goal – lives changed by the grace of God for the glory of God
- C. **II Corinthians 3:17** *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect[a] the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*
 1. We are really seeing Him
 2. We are being transformed
 3. This all comes from the Lord who is eager to do more than we can ask or imagine

Responsibilities of the Lead Worshiper

The small group worship leader is responsible to help people:

A. Exalt God

1. We exalt God for who He has revealed Himself to be in his Word, for what He has done, for creation, redemption, His coming again – anything and everything which causes us to reflect on His greatness and majesty.

(Ps. 34:3 NIV) *Magnify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together.*

(Psa 145:1-3 NIV) *A psalm of praise. Of David. I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever. Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.*

2. Our exaltation of God should always reflect our experience of forgiveness through the cross, by which we are able to draw near to God in full assurance of faith (Heb. 10:19-22). *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*
3. God must become bigger in our eyes. Bigger than our sins, our circumstances, our trials, our successes, our fears, etc. EX: Grand Canyon tour guide
4. Exaltation does not begin with feelings, but should eventually affect the feelings. Truth, properly presented and knowingly received, invites a response.

(Psa 34:5 NIV) *Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.*

“I should think myself in the way of my duty, to raise the affections of my hearers as high as I possibly can, provided they are affected with nothing but truth, and with affections that are not disagreeable to the nature of what they are affected with.” (John Piper, quoting Jonathan Edwards in *Desiring God*, pg. 91)

“The engagement of the heart in worship is the coming alive of the feelings and emotions and affections of the heart. Where feelings for God are dead, worship is dead.” (John Piper, *Desiring God*, pg. 68)

5. If we sow generic thoughts, we will reap a generic response. Seek to apply the truths you’re singing in specific ways.

B. Encounter God

I Corinthians 14:24-25: *But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"*

“1 Cor:14:24-25 suggests that God presences himself in a distinctive way in the Christian meeting through his word and the operation of his Spirit.” (David Peterson, *Engaging with God*, pg. 196)

1. Expect God to manifest His presence through the Holy Spirit.

“For Paul the gathered church was first of all a worshipping community; and the key to their worship was the presence of the Holy Spirit.” (Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, pg. 884)

2. Our guide is the Holy Spirit, not our plan.

“What is most noteworthy in all the available [biblical] evidence is the free, spontaneous nature of worship in the Pauline churches, apparently orchestrated by the Spirit himself. (Fee, pg. 884)

3. He may speak to us through the songs we sing, a Scripture, a prayer, an impression, etc.

C. Respond to God

1. Once we have encountered God through faith, we are responsible to lead a “group conversation” with God.
2. Requires listening attentively to what the Spirit of God is saying.
3. Responses may be immediate (prayer, celebration, repentance, etc.) and/or outside the group meeting (serving, Bible study, evangelism, etc.)

Choosing Songs

- A. Determine what theme the Holy Spirit may be wanting to emphasize by asking questions like:
 - 1. What have we been learning about?
 - 2. What seems to be the need of the hour in people's lives?
 - 3. What has God been saying to the group recently?
 - 4. What is the group thinking or concentrating on?
 - 5. How can I reflect these things in this time of worship?
 - 6. What are we going to learn about?
 - 7. Where are people in regards to their understanding of grace? Holiness? The cross? etc.

- B. Determine how many songs are needed.
 - 1. Our tendency is to plan too many songs.
 - 2. Three or four songs are usually plenty.
 - 3. Use songs which meaningfully contribute to the theme.

- C. For the most part, use familiar, simpler songs (words and music).
 - 1. For the musicians
 - 2. For the people

- D. Communicate with your group leader

- E. Don't be afraid to do the same song a few weeks in a row, or repeat what was sung on Sunday.

Leading

- A. Be natural as you begin. Don't assume a "spiritual" posture which isn't natural.

- B. A good introduction right from the start or early on can help to give focus. Make it clear why you're sharing what you're sharing.
 - 1. Scripture

 - 2. Personal experience

 - 3. Prayer

 - 4. Testimony

- C. Lead confidently, but don't overpower the people with your voice or instrument.

- D. Make use of personal exhortations and encouragement. Don't depend on the songs to say everything. Again, speak naturally.

- E. Although it may be uncomfortable, take time to wait on the Lord. Be sensitive to a new direction the Spirit might take you in. Usually an impression is sudden, clear, and concise. Take risks!

- F. Be open to contributing more frequently than you might in other contexts.

Musical Matters

A. **Take time to establish a clear tempo from the start.** (Think of perhaps the fastest word part or chorus)

B. **Think about who is in your group:**

What is the vocal ability/range of the group? Don't exhaust a non-vocal group with song after song after song or with songs that require an excessively high or low range. People are more self conscious in a smaller group setting, so try and transpose some songs that are too high into a lower key.

What is the distribution of males and females? Especially in a small group try not to do too many songs with male - female repeats such as 'I will worship'. This can be embarrassing if there is only one girl who doesn't even like singing. People also start to struggle if you do too many songs with a lot of words or new songs that they have not heard much. Small groups can be a great place to learn new songs and they can help keep things fresh, but remember the members are people, not guinea pigs! Perhaps give people a sheet of the new song's words and let them know when you are going to use it. Try and also use simple songs or chorus sections that people know better than the whole song. This can help freshen things up and reduce the one song after another routine.

C. **Be flexible:**

It may be that you have prepared your set list and when you arrive the dynamics of the group are different than what you were expecting. Perhaps you got some wrong information and the evening is actually on a completely different theme than what you thought. Try and stay flexible. This is where learning songs by heart or in different keys can really come in useful and will give you an ability to mold to unexpected situations.
EXPLAIN THE SONG LIST CONCEPT.

D. **Stringing the songs together for smooth flow.**

When worshiping, we want to allow people to focus on Jesus. With this in

mind, it's best to keep any other distractions to a minimum. Try and create a seamless flow of worship using some songs that are in the same key or require the same capo position. Try and work hard at memorizing chords and lyrics. This will help you focus on God and leading the people rather than the barre chord that is looming. If however you have to use song sheets or a song book, think about photocopying and reducing them in size onto one A4 sheet of music or mark the relevant pages. The flow of worship can really be broken if you have to fumble with pages after every song. It's also a good idea to take the phone off the hook, switch off all mobile phones in the room and remove the cat!

E. No Instrumentalists?

1. Try singing a cappella

- a. Simple songs work best
- b. Have your best singer lead out
- c. Hymns can be quite effective
- d. If embarking on this style, it's important that the leader has a good sense of rhythm and timing. Percussion can work well to aid this or perhaps even clapping. This lets everyone know when to come in and when to stop singing. Try not to use songs that don't have much of a melody or songs with long gaps between lines. It's also good if the leader can extend notes at the end of a line to reduce the length of silence before the next line begins. As the leader, always lead using the melody line. If the melody is out of your range, try and transpose the song into a more manageable key. With this in mind it can be good to practice vocal key changes in case someone starts a song either too high or too low. PITCH PIPE - or think highest and lowest parts of song before pitching it.

2. Use CDs/DVDs
 - a. Careful of melody range
 - b. Resources available for small group
3. Borrow a musician for a season

F. Think about the Theme: It's often good to think around a general theme. This doesn't mean that every song has to express that theme, but the main thrust of the worship time could perhaps draw people's attention to that particular focus point. It may be that one song is particularly appropriate or fresh which you can build your set around or towards. This can also prevent you just choosing your top ten favorites or songs you can play that just fit together musically! For example if the group was looking at the subject of the Cross-, you could use songs such as Amazing Love; When Is Survey; It Is Well with My Soul (2nd stanza), etc. When you have thought a bit about a theme and what songs could express this through their lyrics and feel.

G. Accompaniment Concerns: in general it is always best to underplay. If it is quite a large group with enough space you could ask someone to play guitar alongside you or to play some percussion to add some flavor or color. Above all practice so that your playing becomes as unobtrusive as possible. If there are chords you know you struggle to get, practice them until they become smooth. Also be careful with instrumental sections.

H. Use of Song Sheets

1. Loose-leaf notebook updated regularly
2. Song sheets each week
3. Small book
4. From the heart

Stimulating Worship in the Small Group

The following ideas can stimulate worship that deepens faith and inspires joyful ministry in the church and in the world.

Provide a simple visual center and worship environment.

Small groups typically meet in spaces designed for social interaction, not worship. One way to help focus the group's attention on worship is to light a candle in the center of the space and enter into a few moments of silence, becoming more consciously aware of God's presence. Such centering actions also make a good transition from the opening conversation to the time for prayer and worship. Consider the worship space as well - candles, flowers, art, banners, music as people enter.

Sing together.

Even if the group has only modest musical talents, singing together is one of the most significant ways to experience the Spirit's vital presence. Although it is possible to sing while seated comfortably in overstuffed furniture, everyone will sing better if they stand. Some ways to include singing:

- Select music to illuminate the theme for the session.
- Weave together Scripture reading and singing. A psalm may be read in sections with an appropriate song or perhaps only a refrain sung in response to each section. Or read several Scripture passages on a common theme with an appropriate song after each passage.
- Invite individuals to choose songs—planned or impromptu. Even though it's not possible for each worshiper to exercise such choice on Sunday morning, the small group setting provides a wonderful opportunity for singing songs that are close to people's hearts.
- Learn a variety of new songs, repeating them at succeeding meetings until everyone is comfortable with them.
- Finally, if instrumentalists belong to the group, by all means make use of their gifts. And be sure to give plenty of time for singing. One or two songs won't be adequate to unite the group in spirit and invite them into the spaciousness of God's presence.

Pray together.

Common prayer brings the entire group directly into God's presence. Praise and thanksgiving as well as petition and intercession are particularly appropriate forms of prayer in small group settings. Although small group members typically pray for one another, they can also be encouraged to pray for others beyond their circle. At times, prayers of confession may also be appropriate.

Some ways to pray:

- Pray silently or invite members to offer short spoken prayers (remember that even in this informal setting, not every person may be comfortable praying aloud).
- Guide the group in intercessory prayer, suggesting different categories to which group members may respond with silent or spoken prayers.
- Sing responses such as "Lord, listen to your children praying" (HWB 353) after each prayer or section of prayers.
- Select prayers to pray from Scripture (e.g., Ps. 63:1-8 or Eph. 1:17-23).

Meditate on God's Word.

Each time the group worships, a portion of Scripture can be included. Some choices:

- Read aloud the texts that will be used in next Sunday morning's worship.
- Invite individual members to choose a significant text for reading during worship time.
- Follow a Bible study guide, using the assigned texts for each session as the focus for meditation during worship.
- Practice "praying the Scripture" (for guidance, see titles by Bohler and Vest below). When Christian formation is the goal, it is better not to use overly long biblical passages in worship. Rather, time is given for deeper listening and meditation on briefer portions of Scripture.

Actively participate.

While the small group setting offers many opportunities for participation, leaders still have to decide how much structure to provide for worship. Some groups worship best with a very informal structure — each one brings a song or Scripture, and the time of worship flows as these offerings are presented. Other groups prefer a more formal structure.

Personal Reflections

prepare your heart daily with prayer, Bible study, and personal worship time.



Forty Creative Worship Ideas for Small Groups

1. Meditate on a psalm
2. Act out a part of scripture
3. Have a time of testimony, giving thanks to God
4. Worship Dance
5. Re-write a psalm in modern language
6. Use artistic material to express your praise to God.
7. Say out the names that describe Jesus
8. Silent Reflection on who God is
9. Use percussion as a means for intercession
10. Read out an inspirational poem
11. Play a song and use it for reflection/inspiration
12. Read through a psalm and get group members to write their own, or write a group psalm and end by reading the psalm(s)
13. Using a large sheet of paper in the middle, get everyone to write down words that describe God, then find out why people chose those words
14. Read through a passage of scripture and use it to go into a time of prayer thanking God for who He is and what He has done
15. Use Bible prayers
16. Meditate on a passage of scripture e.g. Psalm 23 (maybe use a few different Bible versions), asking God to speak through it then come together and share anything God has revealed.
17. Go through the different names attributed to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, discussing what each means
18. Read an excerpt from a classic Christian Book - e.g. JI Packer - Knowing God, AW Tozer - The Knowledge of the Holy etc
19. Use the natural beauty of creation to focus on God and let Him speak
20. Use some liturgy to pray, recite and/or meditate on
21. Turn off the lights and light a single candle, focus on it while someone reads a suitable scripture - "I am the light of the world.." etc.
22. Celebrate communion together if everyone in your group is comfortable doing that

23. Have a time of confession in which everyone writes down what they need forgiveness for, hindrances in the way of God, or burdens they are carrying. Then symbolically shred or burn the paper
24. Have some of the group share their testimony and then thank God for how He has been at work in their lives and what He's going to do
25. Lead members in a time of testimony. Have them share one of the following
 - a. Their answered prayers during the week
 - b. One or two special things God did for them this week
 - c. The thing about Christ that make them follow him
 - d. One attribute of God that was demonstrated to them this week
 - e. Then have a time of praise with song and prayer reflecting the testimonies shared.
26. Read some Psalms. Then have individuals write their own Psalms or letters to God.
27. Have a time of positive biblical confession: Confess your faith in God. Confess Jesus Christ as your Lord. Confess your willingness to serve Him. Confess your love for God.
28. Use a hymn or worship song. Read it and discuss how it relates to each member's life. Pray it to God. Then sing it together.
29. Have small group members take turns reading several Psalms out loud. Then pray in response. Or instruct them to speak their praise from the Psalms. Some good Psalms for this are 23, 27, 40, 103 and many more.
30. Have a time of silence before the Lord to hear His voice and worship.
31. Use Psalm 136 as a responsive reading. Have one person speak the descriptive verse and the group responds with the repeating verse. Read from the heart.
32. Choose an appropriate Psalm and have each person read a verse, or alternate verses where one person reads a verse and the group responds by reading the next verse in unison. Remember to stress listening to the words and worshipping God through them. Read with expression and from the heart.
33. When you read the Scriptures about various physical expressions of worship, practice one or two during each small group meeting. Position is more important than we think; the outward is a reflection of the inward. Consider a person slouching in his seat who doesn't budge when someone important walks in. It says something. Often when we use our body in worship our heart responds and we are able to enter into God's presence more easily and quickly.
34. Discuss these questions:

- a. Describe a time in which you really sensed God's presence in a close way.
 - b. What are things you do to draw close to God?
 - c. Choose a few ideas and practice them together as a group.
35. Read Romans 1:20 or Psalm 104. Then, spend time reflecting how nature reveals God's character, for example the mountains speak of His majesty. Either go outside for a walk or look out a window. Ask each person to reflect on one part of nature (a tree, the clouds, a blade of grass). Then come back and share.
36. Read Romans 12:1,2 and talk about how we worship by dedicating every action we do to the Lord: our work, studies, conversations, as well as our songs when we gather. Remind your small group often that worship's number one goal is to bless God, not bless us. Our blessing is a by-product of worship.
37. Scripture reading as readers' theater. Ask members of the group to take the parts of the characters in a Bible passage to help bring a story to life. For example, if your gospel lesson is John 9:1-34, someone could read the part of Jesus, another the Pharisees, and another the blind man who was healed. Photocopy the passage for as many readers as you need and highlight each part. Then hand out the copies to people as they come in Sunday morning. Because no amplification is needed, readers don't have to come forward—they can read from their pews.
38. Have times in worship where your small group members, one by one, speak out:
- a. The names of God (see appendix)
 - b. Attributes of God
 - c. Or finish the sentence: "Lord I thank you for..."
39. Prayer - In a small group, worshipers can hear one another, which allows for people to pray in their own voices. It's not always perfect—sometimes two people will begin praying at the same time and sometimes no one will pray aloud. But hearing each other's thanksgivings and difficulties strengthens the ties between the members of the group. Here are some types of prayer you may want to try:
- a. Bidding prayer. The worship leader or group leader opens the prayer and bids worshipers to pray out loud or silently for each category he or she mentions. These may include thanksgiving, concerns, and other categories determined by the particular service, such as prayers for the persecuted church on All Nations Sunday.
 - b. Joys and concerns. The worship leader solicits joys and concerns from worshipers, while the group leader or another leader writes them down. Then the group leader or other leader offers the prayers of the people, incorporating the items mentioned.
 - c. Encircling prayer. The worship leader gathers everyone into a circle for

prayer, perhaps also for the laying on of hands around someone who's having a particularly difficult time. For example, a member of your group might bring a person to your meeting who is grieving the loss of their mother. The worship leader could invite them to the center and gather the rest of the group around them for laying on of hands while you pray for them. This can be a powerfully moving time of prayer.

- d. **Prayer journal.** Ask someone in your group to keep track of prayer requests as they are offered during the prayers of the people. At the end of the year, review some of the requests during a service or ask someone to distribute a synopsis of all the requests so you can see how God has worked in your group throughout the year.

40. Special Services

- a. **Ebenezer.** This Thanksgiving service is based on the Ebenezer—a milestone Samuel built to remind God's people of God's grace and love (see 1 Sam. 7:12). When worshipers arrive, they receive a brick and an adhesive label on which to write what they are thankful for from the previous year on the label. They attach the label to the brick. During a cycle of alternating hymns and quiet, they will bring the bricks forward to build an Ebenezer. Silent times between the hymns allow worshipers an opportunity to read a Scripture passage that's meaningful to them or to tell the group what they are thankful for.
- b. **Scapegoat service.** This service of repentance and renewal is appropriate at the beginning of the year or as part of Lent. Ask worshipers to write particular sins on a slip of paper. After the confession and reconciliation, during a time of silence or quiet instrumental music, invite them to come forward and burn that slip of paper. The paper disappearing into ash symbolizes how Christ causes our sins to vanish. In this service the silence is used for personal reflection.
- c. **Maundy Thursday.** Incorporate footwashing (or handwashing) into the Maundy Thursday service before communion. Ask one person, perhaps the group leader, to wash worshipers' hands or feet and another person to be available with a towel to dry.
- d. **Flowering of the cross.** For Easter, make a cross of chicken wire nailed to a large wooden cross. Ask worshipers to bring flowers to the group meeting (make sure to bring extra flowers for people who forget). After the confession and reconciliation part of the service, sing several Easter hymns (especially ones that people know the words to). Invite members to come forward to insert their flowers into the chicken wire cross. The flowers symbolize the new life we receive in Christ through his death on the cross. They turn a symbol of pain and suffering into something beautiful.

Names and Attributes of God

My advocate (Job 16:19)

Bread of life (John 6:35)

Comforter in sorrow (Jeremiah 8:18)

My confidence (Psalm 71:5)

Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:6)

Defender of widows (Psalm 68:5)

My strong deliverer (Psalm 140:7)

Faithful and True (Revelation 19:11)

A consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24)

A sure foundation (Isaiah 28:16)

My friend (Job 16:20)

God Almighty (Genesis 17:1)

God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3)

God who avenges me (Psalm 18:47)

God who saves me (Psalm 51:14)

Our guide (Psalm 48:14)

Head of the church (Ephesians 5:23)

Our help (Psalm 33:20)

My hiding place (Psalm 32:7)

A great high priest (Hebrews 4:14)

Holy One among you (Hosea 11:9)

My hope (Psalm 71:5)

Jealous (Exodus 34:14)

Righteous judge (2 Timothy 4:8)

King of kings (1 Timothy 6:15)

Our leader (2 Chronicles 13:12)

Your life (Colossians 3:4)

Light of life (John 8:12)

Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15)

Lord of the harvest (Matthew 9:38)

Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5)

The most holy (Daniel 9:24)

Our peace (Ephesians 2:14)

Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6)

My Redeemer (Psalm 19:14)

Refuge and strength (Psalm 46:1)

My salvation (Exodus 15:2)

My Savior (Psalm 42:5)

The good shepherd (John 10:11)

Sovereign Lord (Luke 2:29)

My stronghold (Psalm 18:2)

My support (2 Samuel 22:19)

Good teacher (Mark 10:17)

NAMES AND TITLES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

God Of Abraham, God Of Isaac, And God Of Jacob: (Exodus 3:15)

The Great Mighty Awesome God: (Deuteronomy 10:17)

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Father Of Eternity, Prince Of Peace: (Isaiah 9:6)

Holy One: (Habakkuk 1:12)

Holy One Of Israel: (Psalm 78:41)

Light To The Nations: (Isaiah 42:6)

Our Dwelling Place: (Psalm 90:1)

Tower Of Strength: (Psalm 61:3)

Refuge: (Psalm 46:1)

Strength: (Psalm 46:1)

Shield: (Psalm 18:30)

Rock: (Habakkuk 1:12)

Rock Of My Strength: (Psalm 62:7)

Cornerstone: (Psalm 118:22)

Branch: (Zechariah 6:12)
Potter: (Isaiah 64:8)
Maker: (Psalm 49:2)
Creator: (Ecclesiastes 12:1)
Shepherd Of Israel: (Psalm 80:1)
Messenger Of The Covenant: (Malachi 3:1)
Redeemer: (Psalm 19:14)
Deliverer: (Psalm 144:2)
Savior: (Isaiah 45:15)
King Of Israel: (Zephaniah 3:15)
Lord Of All The Earth: (Micah 4:13)
Ancient of Days: (Daniel 7:9)
The Most High: (Deuteronomy 32:8)
Ruler In Israel: (Micah 5:2)
Messiah The Prince: (Daniel 9:25)

NAMES AND TITLES OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Yeshua Of Nazareth: (Matthew 26:71)
Messiah: (John 1:41)
Only Begotten Son: (1 John 4:9)
Son Of David: (Matthew 1:1)
The Root And Offspring Of David: (Revelation 22:16)
Son Of Man: (Matthew 26:64, see Daniel 7:13)
Son Of The Most High: (Luke 1:32)
Firstborn From The Dead: (Revelation 1:5)
The Last Adam: (1 Corinthians 15:45)
King Of Israel: (Mark 15:32)

The Word: (John 1:1)
The Word Of God: (Revelation 19:13)
The Word Of Life: (1 John 1:1)
The Life: (John 11:25)
I AM: (John 8:58, see Exodus 3:14)
Immanuel: [God with us] (Matthew 1:23, see Isaiah 7:14)
Savior Of All Men: (1 Timothy 4:10)
The Deliverer: (Romans 11:26)
Holy One: (Acts 3:14)
Righteous One: (Acts 3:14)
Judge Of The Living And The Dead: (Acts 10:42)
Passover Lamb: (1 Corinthians 5:7)
Advocate: (1 John 2:1)
Light Of The World: (John 8:12)
King Of Kings And Lord Of Lords: (Revelation 19:16)
The Faithful And True One: (Revelation 19:11)
Servant: (Acts 4:27)
The Great High Priest: (Hebrews 4:14)
The Author And Perfecter Of Faith: (Hebrews 12:2)
The Way, The Truth, And The Life: (John 14:6)
The Alpha And The Omega The First And The Last: (Revelation 22:13)
The Image Of The Invisible God: (Colossians 1:15)
The Bread Of Life: (John 6:35)
The True Vine: (John 15:1)
The Lawgiver And Judge: (James 4:12)
A Consuming Fire: (Hebrews 12:29)