

# ENRICHING

## HOW TO INTRODUCE WORSHIP



**If you are patient, prayerful and act with people’s permission, you can help the group to evolve into a worshipping community. You might include a time of reflection, with a lighted candle and some background Christian music.**

### **YOU COULD SAY...**

‘Let’s have a time of headspace or mindfulness. If you believe in God, please feel free to address your thoughts to God as you understand him, her or it. Or if you prefer, just dwell in your thoughts. Or address positive thoughts toward someone you love, or a person in the group, or toward a situation in the news.’

As the leader, you might pray quietly that the Holy Spirit will work through people’s silent reflections. Afterwards, you might ask people for their reactions.

If someone talks about a warm sensation, or a feeling of peacefulness or points to an answered prayer, you might respond with an encouragement,

and then add: 'As a Christian, I would say that this is a sign of God's Spirit at work in your life.'

You would not be telling them what to think, but you would be offering some Christian language to help them interpret their experience.

Some people lack the concepts to talk about spirituality. You could be a gift to them by suggesting Christian language, but in a manner that leaves them free whether or not to use it.

## INTRODUCING PRAYER

You can encourage spoken prayer by asking people to write a prayer or bring one, and to share it with others. Or you might say together the Lord's Prayer or another Christian prayer.

Or you might suggest, as a prayer exercise, 'Imagine that Jesus is in the room now. What would you say to him?' Invite those who wish to to share what they would say. Suggest the group says 'Amen' when everyone has finished as a way of supporting these prayers. Then ask what people think about this way of praying.

Members of Just Church in Bradford, England wrote letters on behalf of Amnesty International as a form of action prayer.

Might the group come up with other forms of action prayer, such as writing a blog or a tweet in response to the Bible discussion, or photographing an object to illustrate what you've learnt. Address these actions to God.

Or someone might find a secular or Christian song that illustrates what they want to say to God.

In a multi-generational context, you could try Messy Prayer. Developing the prayer life of your Messy Church. (Just Google Messy Prayer.)

## SOME RESOURCES

Keep ringing the changes so that the group can explore various types of prayer. Different approaches will suit different people, which is why variety is important.

Here are some resources you could explore:

**Prayer from the Taize Community** - a daily 10 minute podcast prayer session of readings and taize music and contemplative reflection. Prayer for Each Day

**The Bridgetown Paschal Cycle** – a daily meditation including scripture and quotes from the life of saints to ground you in God and his peace.

**The Examen Daily Prayer** – St Ignatius Loyola’s Examen is an opportunity for peaceful daily reflective prayer. It invites us to find the movement of God in all the people and events of our day. The Examen is simply a set of introspective prompts for you to follow or adapt to your own character and spirit. To discover more read Timothy M Gallagher, *The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today*, 2006. Also available on audio.

**Lectio 365** – an app to help you pray that is inspired by lectio divina, a way of meditating on the Bible used by Christians for centuries. Pause to be still. Reflect on Scripture. Ask for God’s help, and Yield to His will in your life. Each week focus on one of six practices that help us live like Jesus – prayer, mission, justice, creativity, hospitality and learning.

**Inner Room** – an app from 24-7 Prayer that turns one of our biggest distractions – our mobile phones – into a portable prayer tool. Jesus said, ‘When you pray, go into your inner room...’ (Matthew 6.6). Inner Room is a prayer list app that equips, enables and inspires you to pray, each day.

**Worship Wednesday on Facebook** – musicians lead half an hour of worship each Wednesday morning from 8:30-9am on Facebook.

## **SONGS AND HYMNS**

If you introduce Christian songs and hymns, you don’t have sing out loud. Play the music on an iPad for instance, and let people sing quietly in their hearts. If they want to sing out loud, well and good.

Again, keep varying the music till you find what works for the group. Remember: what works for you may not suit others.

In time, invite members themselves to choose and download the songs. Encourage people to put Christian words to popular music. They are now writing their own hymns! (Read 1 Corinthians 14.26. Were the Corinthians producing their own hymns?) Maybe some musicians from within the community will eventually lead worship.

This is all about developing worship bottom up, from within the group.

## **GIFTS AND INTERESTS**

Give space for the Spirit to work through the gifts and resources of the community you have gathered.



- Might someone into craft bring an object they have made to spark prayer?
- Might others offer a poem they have selected or written?
- Might a painter or photographer bring a picture for the group to prayerfully reflect on?

God is into bodies – after all, he made them and in Jesus became one of them! So use all the body’s senses in worship, including attractive aromas to accompany prayer. Revelation 5.8 associates incense with prayer.

There’s loads of worship material on the internet. Why not identify some sites, and invite group members to visit them and download some material – perhaps a video with a Christian meditation, for example?

Create opportunities for people, if they are ready, to make a personal response to Christ. This could take the form of inviting him into their lives and making a public statement (such as re-affirming their baptismal vows). The person should be baptised if they weren’t as a child.

## **HOLY COMMUNION**

If your community is part of a church where only ordained ministers can celebrate Holy Communion, here are some ways to remember the Last Supper:

- Ask the local minister to preside at Communion as a representative of the wider church. This would be a reminder that the community is part of the whole body of Christ.
- Periodically join another congregation when they celebrate Communion.
- Hold an agape meal (or ‘love feast’ or ‘remembrance of the Last Supper’), involving a meal, Scripture, prayer, sharing stories, listening to or singing hymns/songs, and sharing bread and wine, but without using set words. To avoid confusion, explain that this is not Holy Communion as normally celebrated in your denomination.
- Combine these possibilities – e.g. attend a nearby church occasionally and hold ‘love feasts’ in between.

## **SHARING JESUS THROUGH WORSHIP**

A final thought: we’ve put worship as the last topic in our sequence of seven. But it could equally come first. Watching worship or taking part, including tiny steps into prayer, can draw people toward Christ before ‘Conversations with a difference’ and ‘Bible Talk.’



Think back to the first topic. Might you introduce a short time of reflection – Christian music, a Bible reading, silent and spoken prayer – alongside your existing outreach activity? For some people, it could be the start of their journey toward Jesus.

