**Spiritual Couch to 5K - Worship**

**1 We Warm Up!**

The author of Hebrews calls us not to neglect meeting together but to gather to encourage one another and stir each other up to love and good works (Heb. 10:24–25). Our active participation requires warm-up and preparation. Psalm 100 urges us to prepare for the coming of the Lord by calling us back to worship, thanksgiving and praise. However, sometimes it can be so hard to think about preparing to worship God. What may help - is if we can consider all that God has done and is doing to prepare for us, the labor of love, the sacrifice, even His Son Jesus. God’s been getting ready for us to walk through those sanctuary doors for a very long time, Even today!

**Here are some warm-up movements to get you going.**

* Find out what text will be preached and read the passage before church – individually or as a family – to stir up hunger for God. The bulletin, sermon topic and text can be found on our website prior to Sunday. Spend some time studying and praying through the text. If you don’t know the passages, work back through the text from the previous week’s sermon. Look for glimpses of God's character and ask him to reveal how he is calling you to respond in obedience.
* Work ahead to make room for rest - Review your calendar, clean your home, and plan your meals for the week. Finish your tasks from the week before so you can wake up on Sunday with a clear mind. Consider preparing a meal that can go into the crockpot on Sunday. Use paper plates to avoid dishes.
* Set your alarm early enough to get ready on Sunday morning and go to sleep on time the night before.

**2. We Generate Expectancy!**

The Jews, in traveling to Jerusalem had a great warm-up routine, which had them on fire before they even walked through the gates. For those pilgrims traveling to the city from faraway places, entering the gates meant entering the holy city and the temple - the very presence of God. Which was the cause for great songs like Psalm100.

* Psalm 100:4-5 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him, bless his name! 5 For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures for ever, and his faithfulness to all generations.
* Anticipate what God has in store for you and what the worship has in store for God’s adoration.

**3. We prepare our Mind!**

Turn off your Smart devices! Several research studies like *Frontiers in Psychology, 2024* found that athletic performance, and particularly skilled performance, was negatively affected by smart phone use like video games, social media scrolling. Doing these things prior to an event caused “brain drain.” When focus was needed, their cognitive functions were already drained by the scrolling.

Well over 3,000 years ago, God must have foreseen the social media revolution, and its ability to affect our minds, using up our cognitive resources for God. God gave us the 8th commandment, in Exodus 20:8 “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

* Deuteronomy 5:6-21. 12 The Shema “‘Observe the sabbath day, to keep it holy! We set aside Sunday, especially prior to getting in your car, and the drive, getting the phone, and noise, out of our head making room for God.
* Create a teachable spirit. Ps 119:18 says, *Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.* Enter the worship prepared to gain from the message.
* Come hungry, ready to pay close attention to what you hear and immediate apply it to your life. Ps 19:10-11 *“More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”*
* Come to church ready to think deeply about what is sung, prayed, and preached. 1 Cor 14:20 *Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; be babes in evil, but in thinking be mature.*

**4. We Center Ourselves (In the worship)**

Find the center place in your spirit where all other things, thoughts, feelings, situations are moved to the periphery, just for those sacred moments. Sacred, means set aside, make holy.

Worship must happen in our heart, or it is shallow, Matthew 15:8 Jesus taught that authentic worship flows from a heart filled with love for God and not just going through the motions of worship. Quoting the prophet Isaiah, he said, “This people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me.” Centering allows you to be aware of the presence of God.

**Here are some passages to help you center (calmed focus) on God and the worship.**

* Prepare your mind for action. 1 Pet 1:13 says, *Therefore gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*
* Jer 24:7 “Give me a heart to know you.” I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.
* Confess your doubts, and your failures. James 1:21 also describes an attitude of humility as you receive the very words of God.
* Ps 86:11 “Give me an undivided heart.” *Teach me thy way, O Lord, that I may walk in thy truth; unite my heart to fear thy name.*
* Pray the Jesus prayer, “*Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me a sinner*.”

**5. We Invite The Help Of The Holy Spirit**

Worship is something we do and something which happens. We can’t really worship alone. Three or more really helps but we cannot worship without the help of the Holy Spirit! Thinking we can give God proper worship without the Spirit’s help is really without any merit and I believe breaks God’s heart.

Jesus said, John 4:24 “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” The Holy Spirit is the energy, the presence of Jesus’ sent helper. That is how the Holy Spirit, (Paraklētos) is often translated, as the one who comes along side. It can also mean breath, like the breath of God filling our being. Ask, invite the Holy Spirit to come, to help you become part of the worship. To sing out loud, to listen deeply to the worship liturgy. To worship!

**Here are some ways the Holy Spirit can help us worship:**

* John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.
* Ephesians 2:22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.
* 1 Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own.
* Romans 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

**6. Participate with Prayer!**

We can’t prepare for worship on our own; we need the Lord’s help! So, we pray.

1 John 5:14 Encourages us that “…this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.”

**Here are a few ways you can pray:**

* Pray that the Holy Spirit will open soften your heart to what your ears will hear.
* Pray for the Holy Spirit to speak to you to help understand the message. A key the roles of the Holy Spirit.
* Pray for the pastor prior and during the message, asking the Lord to empower the pastor to speak with clarity and biblical truth.
* Pray for the worship, for the worship team leading - The greeters, the nursery volunteers, the tech team, and everyone else who serves would exemplify the love of Christ and be filled with joy as they serve.
* Pray for the people attending. Ask God to help them see Jesus more clearly and personally when they exit than they did when they entered.
* Pray that God would bring hope, healing, and new life to those who attend.

**7. Live Boundaryless Worship**

Worship happens all the time and everywhere. Psalm 113 *From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the Lord is to be praised.* We worship and give God the praise that is HIS due because of who he is and what he has done for us by sending Jesus into the world to save us. And our God is all around us! So, in one sense, worship extends into all our lives.

The Apostle Paul teaches in Roman 12:12 *I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* Boundaryless worship affects how we live, how we work and our relationships. How we handle money and practice generosity. Everything we do can be an act of worship. It can encourage and strengthen other Christians while also showing others how incredibly great God is, and God’s love for them, is.

* Ps 119:18 Talk with each other afterwards about their insights and how they want to apply the truth.
* John 4:23-24 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

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