

Altar

**CONTEMPORARY ALTERNATIVE
WORSHIP**

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THE MAGICIANS SECRET

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ALTERNATIVE PRAYER EXERCISES

alternative WORSHIP

Ok, we admit it.. The title is pretentious.

How 'up yourself' do you have to be to claim to be 'Alternative'?
And *worship* - who the heck knows what that really is? Not us, that's for sure.

Ask most people to describe worship and they automatically mention music. Contemporary worship? - that must be modern songs about Jesus. If we were good at that, we'd come up with the next wave of worship styles and make some bucks.

We were challenged by Dr Jeff S in moments who said worship should be costly and action more than words. It could include such things as lament. We were still bugged, more than a little by the music emphasis. A little footnote in an Application Bible, pointed out that the children of Israel worshipped using all the senses - listening, verbalizing, tasting, seeing, smelling.... Smelling? Yep.. it seems that the smell of an animal burning on the altar reminded them that their sins were a stench in the nostrils of God, which made the forgiveness all the more real. Bad smells don't have much of a place in worship these days - maybe they should?

And Leonard Sweet has coined the idea of epic faith - expertise, participative, imaginative, and communal.

The exercises in this booklet are hardly new, we've pinched them from all sorts of places (and we anticipate you'll copy and distribute them without paying us for the privilege - to copyright is a bit of a nonsense).

But they represent our attempt to explore some new options of worship. Call them devotionals, worship experiences, whatever. Our conclusion is that worship puts God where he ought to be - awesome creator and loving father, and us where we ought to be - shipwrecked sinners in need of his grace.

PRAYER EXERCISES

We have included some ideas for prayer. We concluded that collective prayer shouldn't be limited to just one or two traditional methods. There's no reason not to be creative in prayer. Sure, we shouldn't need it, but why not try something different.

Credits:

We owe a huge debt to all the Youth for Christ leaders and young people who put up with our experiments as we developed these worship activities - in training sessions, camps, club nights and the like. They were patient and enthusiastic enough to give it a go.

THE MAGICIAN'S SECRET

The word is out.

When it comes to worship there is no magic.

Abracadabra, Hubba Bubba, play the song slowly in Em ...

none or it creates worship.

They're all just devices. Things to help. Worship depends on the heart of the participants. Our desire to come to God, in our broken foolish state, and acknowledge him as God. And the good thing is.... he's always keen, we don't have to clean ourselves up, to be good enough to worship. It may happen as we worship but that's the whole point. As we worship God, he changes us.

And none of the activities in this booklet are particularly entertaining. In fact they could be as boring as. They're a place to start, to focus, and let God be God. If no one seems to 'get it', don't worry. That's God's business. He won't judge you for being a busy worship leader. (Hopefully he'll toast the participant who says 'this is boring' - *just kidding*).

HOW EVER

Like all activities, you'll do yourself and everyone else a favour by reading thoroughly and being well prepared. Getting halfway through a worship event and discovering you don't have enough jelly babies (we're not joking!) for everyone is just plain bad planning. We owe it to God to at least do our best.

SONGS

Each activity has some suggested songs you might like to incorporate. We have often avoided these in order to break our dependence on music as essential to worship.

Over to you..

1. the perfume of God

This exercise has two aspects. One, that God brings a fresh aroma to our lives and that he calls us to be a 'sweet smell' to those around us.

MATERIALS

- 3-4 'scent' cards freshly sprayed with different perfumes
- A list of the major ingredients of each perfume
- A bible

PROCESS

Number the cards. Give everyone a copy of the ingredients lists, UNNAMED. Pass around the cards so that everyone gets a chance to smell the cards, and write the card number, alongside the ingredients they believe go with it. When they've all finished, announce which is which. Then go around the group and ask for a response to the question: *'What is it about God that makes him unique to you?'*

Then, have someone read Ephesians 5:2 and 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 and discuss the following question: *'How can we exude the fragrance of Christ to others?'*

Allow for responsive prayer.

POINT TO WATCH

-Although the first part is like a game, be careful that the competition doesn't become more important than the discovery.

2 Crown of Thorns

This worship exercise
is quite

provocative and has
the potential

to draw
a strong emotional
response.

It was developed as an Easter
reflection but would be
appropriate
at any time.

SETTING

Ideally, a bungee or comfortable room with a TV to set the scene, use candles for lighting.

PROCESS

Explain that the purpose of this worship event is to get an inkling of what it was like for Jesus to be tortured prior to crucifixion.

Have someone read Matthew chapter 27:1-46

MATERIALS

- TV and Video
- Bible
- Candles
- 300 - 500mm strips of thorn branches (barbery thorns are ideal)
- Rental copy of The Last Temptation of Christ video

Explain that while the video is playing, they should take the thorns and attempt to make a crown of thorns. Warn them to be careful but to expect a few finger pricks.

Play the video from the scene where Jesus (William Dafoe) is being questioned by Pilate (David Bowie), right through the crucifixion scene.

But stop the video after Jesus calls out 'My God why have you forsaken me?'

When the video is over, ask them to show their 'crown' and explain how they felt what they learnt through the experience.

Allow for responsive prayer.

POINTS TO NOTE

- It pays to wash the thorn branches beforehand in hot water.

- *'The Last Temptation of Christ'* is a controversial film. Many Christians object to it. It presents Jesus as a human, uncertain of his mission. After the 'My God why....' scene he goes into a dream sequence where a young girl leads him from the cross, he meets Mary Magdalene, marries and experiences sex. He comes out of the dream and stays true to the call of the Cross. This is an adult theme relating to whether Christ truly grapples with human temptations and whether death on the Cross was worth it. However, the torture and crucifixion scenes are the best we have found.

You will need to decide whether to use it, and whether to explain that you are not endorsing the overall slant of the movie. The age of your group may dictate this.

- Every time we have done this some of the participants have had quite a few painful thorn pricks. Many have responded that they saw the exercise through rather than let the pain put them off, because it was nothing compared to what Jesus went through'. Handle this wisely. And some salvon ointment and bandages might prove handy!

3.

CHINESE PRAYER COOKIES

This exercise focuses on thankfulness to God for who he is and what he is doing in us

PROCESS

Explain that everyone should write out 2 or 3 things that God is doing in their life, for which they are truly thankful. They roll these up and enclose them with (pre-prepared) cookie mixture. Once all the cookies are ready, place them on trays and into the oven.

SETTING

You'll need a location that has a kitchen handy

While they are cooking read the story of the one leper in ten who thanked Jesus, Luke 11:17, The parable of the Forgiven Loans (Luke 7:41-43).

Then discuss the following statement:

MATERIALS

- Chinese fortune cookie mixture
- Oven and trays
- Small thin strips of paper
- Pens

"When you arise in the morning, give thanks for the light, for health, and for the joy of living. And if you see no reason for giving thanks, be assured that the fault lies with yourself" -Chief Tecumseh

When the cookies are ready, place them in a bowl and pass it around until every cookie is taken. In turn, people then break open the cookie, read out the thankfulness note, and eat the cookie.

When they are all finished, allow for short prayers of gratitude to God.

4.

the i believe collage

This provokes
people to think about their core beliefs

SETTING

Can work with any number
so long as there is enough
materials. Afterwards,
you need to get in smaller
groups to share the results.

MATERIALS

- Backing sheet of
paper or card, A4
or bigger
- Magazines
- Glue
- Scissors

PROCESS

Each poster has printed at the top 'I Believe'.
The challenge for each participant is to make
a collage from images and words cut from the
magazines, that reflect their core beliefs.

Allow approximately 20 minutes, then in groups
of 4-5, get everyone to share their collage,
and their basic beliefs.

POINTS TO NOTE

- In your introduction explain that 'less is more'
is: rather than a large page full of nice ideas
or values, it's better to have a few deeply-held
convictions and core beliefs represented. The
goal is non-negotiables.

- In the sharing, while people can ask questions
to clarify what someone believes, this is not
the place to challenge other people's
convictions.

5 art worship

This is an adaptation of ArtTherapy - a helpful creative method for building relationships; conflict resolution; and self discovery.

SETTING PROCESS

Works best in groups of 4-6, so if you have a larger group, break them into smaller groups. Ideally seated around a table (easier to draw).

At the beginning, someone in each group will read out a Bible passage, twice. (There should also be printed copies for each participant). Allow 2-3 minutes of quiet reflection, then when the facilitator says 'start' each person should start to draw a pictorial representation of what, in the passage, has most spoken to them. After 2 minutes, the facilitator says 'change', at which point the drawings are passed to the person on the left.

MATERIALS

- A4 or bigger, white paper or card
- Pastels
- Bibles

They add whatever they choose. (There should be no taking of non-verbal influence on what is added by the rest of the group).

Repeat the process until the drawings return to their owner'.

At this point everyone in turn should share what they were trying to express in their original drawing i.e. what spoke to them in the passage. Then as many of the rest of the group as want to, should explain why they added what they did.

POINTS TO NOTE

- In your introduction, make sure people understand that the drawing is functional - it is a method of reinforcing what the living word of God is saying. It is NOT a competition to see who can draw the best.
- Once the drawing starts, silence is essential, until the sharing starts.

ALTERNATIVE OPTION

If you are dealing with a small group that knows each other well, try this option:

One large sheet of paper. Each participant selects 2 pastels. Then you need the passage twice, read, then start drawing ONE composite picture. Here's the catch - silence rule still applies. So if you want the person with the green pastel to add something, you can't tell them. You have to communicate non-verbally and work together to complete a picture that reflects a collective response to the passage. (This is great team building).

At the end, discuss together what you were trying to achieve.

GOD THE SOLID ROCK 6

The focus
of this worship
experience is the
dependability of God.

SETTING PROCESS

Can be done anywhere
but an ideal setting
would be a riverbank or
seashore.

In advance, prepare the pebbles by writing a
variety of qualities of God on them, using the
confection pen (white stands out well). The
qualities should be taken from Lam entations
3:22-33.

Then scatter the pebbles amongst seashore
stones or river pebbles.

MATERIALS

- Pebbles or rocks, approximately 50cm long
- Allow for 2-3 per participant
- White confection pens
- Lam entations 3:22-33 printed on sheets of paper (1 per participant)

Each person gets given a copy of Lam entations
3:22-33. They are to search for the pebbles.
After they have found two, they should find a
quiet place to meditate on the passage while
holding onto the pebbles. Then prayers should
focus on the difference Gods 'solidity' makes
in their life.

POINTS TO NOTE

-A few weeks, participants can take their pebbles
home, or, if yours is an ongoing group with a
regular meeting place, you might like to use
them to construct a small altar, a cairn of the
stones, as a constant reminder.

tropical communion

Here's a way of celebrating communion using different Pacific style elements. The change allows participants to focus on meanings rather than bread and wine.

SETTING

The ideal would be outdoors, under a coconut palm. Assuming your group aren't traveling to a tropical paradise anytime soon, you can still do it.

But by decorating the room with cardboard palm trees, tapa cloth, lava lavas, leis etc.. to create the setting.

MATERIALS

- Green coconut
- Machete (and someone familiar with using one to open a coconut)
- Bible

PROCESS

This activity links key elements of harvesting a coconut with the act of Christ's sacrifice for us. The order is jumbled but that's no big deal.

1. He was taken down from the tree: (if you are in Fiji, have someone climb the tree and bring down a coconut). Read Luke 23:50-54
 2. He was stripped: Have someone strip the outer covering of the coconut until you have the core part. Read Matthew 27:27-31
 3. He was pierced and his blood shed: Punch a hole in the coconut 'eyes' and draw the milk into a bowl. Read John 19:30-37
 4. He was broken: Break the coconut into two halves. Read Mark 15:16-20
 5. Pass around one half of the coconut so people can take some of the coconut flesh and eat it. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-24
 6. Pour the coconut milk into the other half of the coconut. Pass it around so everyone can drink it. Read 1 Corinthians 11:25-26
- A low for responsive prayer.

8 NAIL THOSE SINS

One of the most powerful and challenging experiences is to realise that our sins were responsible for putting Christ on the cross. This activity focuses people's thoughts on that truth.

SETTING

You need enough room for participants to work individually with a reasonable amount of privacy, and a place for the cross, that allows people to do the nailing.

MATERIALS

- A large wooden cross
- An enlarged traditional style full length picture of Christ
- Hammers
- Nails (2-3 for each participant)
- Bible
- Labels
- Pens

PROCESS

In advance glue the picture of Christ to the wooden cross.

Have someone read Romans 3:21-28

Allow time for personal reflection on the nature of our own sinfulness. Then encourage participants to write 2 or 3 of the sins that bother them most on the labels, then attach the labels, like 'tags' onto the nails.

When they are ready encourage them to go to the cross and nail them into the image of Christ.

POINTS TO NOTE

Unlike nailing to the cross' events, the fact that people are nailing into an image of Christ makes the experience far more personal and emotional. We have found some struggle to do this. That of course is the strength of the activity - it brings us closer to what it really cost Christ to save us.

PHOTO WORSHIP 5.0

This allows people to use their creativity to interpret key Bible passages about God.

SETTING

Ideally with access to a variety of locations within walking distance.

MATERIALS

- Cameras for each group of 5 people (polaroid or digital are best)
- Bible passages (with a minimum of 5 verses)
- Backing sheet
- Pens

PROCESS

Hand every group a passage from the Bible. Tailor the passage to suit what your needs are.

Each person spends 10 or so minutes in quiet reflection on the passage. Then they meditate and share something of what they got out of it.

Then, in turn, they take a fifth of the passage each. Using the rest of the people in the group, and whatever locations they can get to, they must pose and shoot a photo that reflects their part of the passage.

When all the photos are taken, fix them to the backing sheet like a story board. Add your own words to it if necessary.

When it's finished, stick it on a wall and spend a few minutes in responsive prayer to the overall message.

10

The suffering psalmist

This provides greater identification with the psalms of lament.

SETTING

Can be done anywhere

MATERIALS

- Bibles
- Worksheet
- Pens

PROCESS

Hand out the worksheet below. Their task is to read the background story that provides context for the psalm. Then, placing themselves in the story, rewrite the psalm as a lament or cry for help, to God - in their own words.

Get participants to share these with the rest of the group.

Tackle as many as you have time for.

SUFFERING PSALMS WORKSHEET

BACKGROUND STORY

RESPONSE

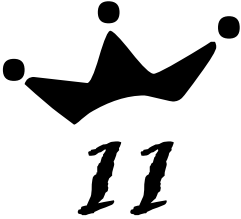
* 1 Samuel 21 Psalm 56

* 2 Samuel 15 Psalm 3

* 1 Samuel 22 Psalm 142

In your own words.

The Royal Gift



A reflection on the implications of the gifts given to Jesus at his birth. What they implied about his character. What they say to us.

SETTING

Can be done anywhere. Ideally around Christmas time, with theappings of Xmas evident.

THE GIFT OF GOLD is a statement about Jesus being a king from a royal line. (Read Luke 2:69)

—————Take a gold coin collection —————

Read Luke 23:36-43, then allow for responsive prayers that reflect a desire to let King Jesus have control of our wealth.

Explain that the coin collection will be given to a needy family.

MATERIALS

- Bibles
- Incense
- Body button

THE GIFT OF FRANKINCENSE is a statement about Jesus as our priest. (Read Hebrews 7:1-7, 15 and 8:2)

—————Light incense sticks —————

Read Hebrews 2:17-18 and 4:14-16. Then allow for responsive prayers that reflect our need for him to act on our behalf with God.

PROCESS

Read Matthew 2:9-23 aloud, then work through the following comments and activities

THE GIFT OF MYRRH is a statement about his willingness to die as a sacrifice for us. (Read Luke 23:44-56)

—————Pass around Hand or Body button —————

Everyone takes some and rubs it on their arms and hands.

Read Luke 23:32-33 and allow for responsive prayers that reflect our willingness to die to our own desires so that his sacrifice can cleanse us from sin.

alternative PRAYER EXERCISES

After years of sitting in group prayer with long pauses as people tried to work out what to pray, we have explored creative ways of praying together.

PRAYER TRAIL

In advance, place some prayer requests on the walls of your venue. Place two trails of different coloured label dots on the floor leading in different directions around the prayer requests. As people arrive they choose which trail to take. They follow it and at each prayer request, they stop and pray for 1-2 minutes before moving on.

BANDAID PRAYER

Have a supply of plain band-aids (1 per person) and pens. Get everyone to share specific prayer needs. Each person should write at least one on their band-aid. They pray for that need, then (either at the meeting or later at home) they should stick the band-aid on to a not obvious part of their body. The goal is to leave it there for as long as possible and each time they shower or undress and see the plaster, they are to pray for the need.

WOOLAWAY

Get in groups of 6-8 people. Standing in a circle, with a particular prayer need or focus. One person starts by holding a roll of wool (cheap at wool shops). They pray, then toss or pass the wool to someone else while holding on to the end. That person prays, and passes the wool, holding onto their part... and so on. At the end the circle should be criss crossed with layers of wool stands. It's a visual reminder of our inter-connectedness in prayer.

KEEP THE FIRE

Have a box or large matches in the center of the group. The rules are someone can only pray if the match is lit, but prayers must continue while the match is still a light (i.e. can't deliberately extinguish the match).

So a number of things will happen. Someone will start praying but their match may go out quickly. Tough! They can keep praying until another match is lit. Someone else may run out of words but their match is still a light. So they pass it to someone else who must start praying until the match goes out.

SHELL TO ES

Have a supply of small shells or stones available. Whatever the individual prayer focus (a troublesome sin, an ongoing need...) each person writes what it is on a piece of shell or a stone. They pray about it, then place the shell inside their shoe. Goal is to keep it there for at least a day, and each time they feel it, they are reminded to pray. (Good for weekend retreats).

PRAYER DRIVE

Get people in cars. They drive to a location that represents some aspect of the prayer focus.

For example:

- * Praying for Intermediate outreach (park outside an Intermediate School)
- * Praying for Youth Suicide (park outside A&E)
- * Praying for creative outreach (park outside local concert venues)

This helps focus the prayer. They should stay in the car and pray as long as they want.

Humorous Note: One of our outreach clubs did this, in a van, parking outside the houses of kids we were trying to reach. At one place we were enthusiastically praying when the van door was yanked open and a young person from up the road said, "What the hell are you guys doing?"

THE AWARD GOES TO ...

Place a number of prayer requests in an envelope. Pass it around the group, everyone taking at least one. They read it but don't show it to anyone else. When you start they just pray for what was on their strip of paper - each one a wild surprise to the rest. The challenge is for everyone to support and agree with their colleagues prayer even though they haven't had time to think about it.

SILENT SPARKLERS

Give everyone a fireworks sparkler. Light the first persons. They pray silently while theirs is going, at the same time trying to 'spell' a key word from their prayer request with the sparkler, that everyone else can see. When their sparkler is almost out they should use it to light the next persons, who does the same thing. At the end go around the group and see who managers to guess the various prayer topics from 'reading' the sparkler message.

PHOTO FOCUS

Get photos of people you want to pray for. Tape them around the walls. People stop at each photo and pray for the person.

STANDING IN THE GAP TWO OPTIONS:

1. Make up some A4 sheets with prayer needs relating to specific people not at the meeting. Attach a loop of string to one end of the paper. Hang them around the neck of volunteers who 'stand in' for the prayer recipient. They spread around the room, people gather round them and pray for the absent persons needs that are listed on the sheet.

STANDING IN THE GAP CONTINUES..

2. Write up prayer requests on a variety of sticky labels. Plaster them on the backs and fronts of volunteers. People gather around them and pray for what's written on the labels.

THANKS

Give each group a sheet of paper with the word THANKS spelled out. The group must come up with six specific things to be thankful for, each starting with one of the letters. Once they've listed them, they pray thanksgiving prayers for them.

SEEDS OF FAITH

Give everyone a small pulped paper seed potter (check the \$2 shops) and a seed, (sunflowers are good because traditionally they have represented eternal life). Each person writes the name of a person they would like to see come to Christ, on the inside of the potter. They place the seed in and cover it with potting mix or dirt. Then they pray for that person. They take the potter home and each day they must water the plant and pray for the person.

MOSAIC

Have a supply of different colored post-it notes, and pens. People write prayer needs on the notes. Then when they're ready they go to a large sheet of card setup on a wall. They place their note on it and pause to pray. Then sit down and allow someone else. A secondary goal is to see if the notes can be arranged in a kind of colorful mosaic - say in the shape of a cross or dove.

STUTTER FOR JESUS

Each person in the group prays. After the first one has finished and before the next one starts, the person to the right of the pray-er must give a verbal affirmation that they agree with the prayer. Like 'Amen', 'Absolutely Lord', 'For Sure' etc... The next person does the same but without repeating one that's been used. This should be quickfire, no gaps, all the way around. Then the next person prays their prayer, and the affirmation process is repeated.

GRAFFITI PRAYER

Have a large paper or card roll stretched along a wall, with lots of pens, crayons or felt available. People go up and stand at the wall, and quietly write out their prayer (obviously not appropriate for anything too personal or libelous). Can probably have about six people doing their prayers at once. At the end, you should have a complete graffiti prayer wall.