“Practicing the Presence” – Worshiping in Spirit and Truth

Open the eyes of my heart Lord, open the eyes of my heart,
I want to see you, I want to see you.

Salvationists need to be reminded occasionally that we are an incarnational people. By nature of our holistic mission, we minister to body and soul. With Brother Lawrence of old (see his book *The Practice of the Presence of God*) we can learn again that worship can be just as much about washing pots, serving soup, or changing diapers, as it is about formally praying, leading worship or preaching. This does not denigrate worship, but elevates human experience. After all we are not just human beings on a spiritual journey, but spiritual beings on a human journey.

Made for worship
The poet Kabir states: “The fish in the water that is thirsty needs professional counselling.” Though we search everywhere for God, the good news is that he has already revealed himself to us – in Jesus, through his written Word, in nature and by his Sprit . The fact that God is ever-present often causes us to overlook him.

It is incumbent upon us to respond to these revelations if we are to live healthy, holy lives. Human beings are made to worship. They are made with a capacity to know God, and to enjoy Him forever. For the Christian, worship, being present with and to God, is a vital connection.

Revelation and response
In scripture we read of response to God’s activity - Noah builds an altar, Abram bows down, Moses takes off his shoes and fears, Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration wants to have an everlasting campout, the wise men bow, worship and give gifts.

In response to a wise and knowing creator in whom we live and move and have our being, Paul in Romans 12:1,2 (The Message) writes:

‘So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out’.

Made for worship
The church is discovering anew that worship is not restricted to place or time. We do not disparage corporate worship on a Sunday in a building or in a small house group. Rather, we aspire to: “Rejoice always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1Thessalonians. 5:16-18).

How
Much energy has been expended over “worship wars”. The key factor in worship is the posture of our heart (not our hands), our attitude (not the style of music). That said, humility and respect need to guide us as we navigate corporate worship.

The following are simple practices that can guide and change us in personal worship.

1. **Breathe.** Make a practice of taking long deep breaths, especially when stressed or disconcerted. We can't live with out breathing. It's a gift. We ourselves are God-breathed. Acknowledge God's presence in your breath. Breathe out short, repetitive prayers that connect your deep desires with God's spirit.

2. **Be thankful.** List ten things for which you are thankful. You can journal or list in your mind wherever you may be. Then make a list of another ten, and then another ten. David Steindl-Rast says: "Happiness does not make us thankful, but thankfulness brings us happiness" Your list will reflect your uniqueness.

3. **Talk to God**. You can even do it out loud. We remember things we say out loud (good news for this Baby Boomer). It may feel silly, but let God into your daily decisions and activities. Stop and say, "God, help me", "God I give you this challenge", or "God, let me see you in this person, this situation."

4. **Connect with nature and beauty.** Go for a walk, buy some flowers, or go to an art gallery. Sense the creator, his creation, and the creative abilities of others.

5. **Listen to music**. This may be an obvious one, but be creative - God is not restricted to specific genres. He is not bound by style.

Conclusion
We are made for worship. Worship is revelation and response. In worshiping we position ourselves to better perceive God's revelation.

As we yearn for him, or yearn to yearn for him, may he open the eyes of our hearts.

May our spirit connections continue to transform in spirit and truth.

May we learn to "pray with ceasing", incorporating worship into the very fabric of our lives.

We fall down, we lay our crowns, at the feet of Jesus,
the greatness of mercy and love at the feet of Jesus,
We cry holy, holy, holy Is the lamb.

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