

Worshipping

An Experiential Workshop

Handout #1

Give over thine own willing; give over thine own running; give over thine own desiring to know or to be any thing, and sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee, and be in thee, and breathe in thee, and act in thee, and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that, and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of life, which is his portion. --
Isaac Pennington

Session #1: Introduction

- Overview
- Requested Commitments
- Small Groups – Share a powerful worship experience you've had.
- Spiritual Exercises
- Readings

Workshop Session Schedule

7:00 - 7:15 pm	Worship
7:15 - 8:00 pm	Small Groups -- Worship sharing of Homework
8:00 - 8:05 pm	Break
8:05 - 8:30 pm	Discussion
8:30 - 8:55 pm	Talk, Q&A
8:55 - 9:00 pm	WorshipEnd

Session Topics

#1 – Introduction

#2 -- “Give over thine own willing...”

#3 -- “Sink Down to the seed which God sows in the heart...”

#4 -- “And thou shalt find by sweet experience...”

Requested Commitments

- 1) Attend all sessions
- 2) Do the homework
- 3) Participate whole-heartedly
- 4) Worship whole-heartedly this week

Exercises for week following Session #1

Exercise Day #1 (15 mins) -- Settle your mind and body into a comfortable, relaxed state.

What are you willing? What are you striving to attain, both in this moment and generally? What are you planning, working for? As you become aware of these, gently let go of them – just for these fifteen minutes... Release these questions. Settle; pray; release. Repeat at comfortable pace as time allows. Ending: express gratitude for what you have learned.

Exercise #2 (15 mins) -- Settle your mind and body into a comfortable, relaxed state. Try to let go of every distraction and just relax. Notice what distractions come up – of body, mind, emotion, thought. After noticing, gently let them go. Settle. Repeat as time allows. Ending: express gratitude for what you have learned.

Exercise #3 -- Settle ... relaxed state. What do you desire to know? What expertise do you want to master? As you become aware of these, gently let go of them... Settle. Repeat as time allows. Ending: express gratitude...

Exercise #4 -- Settle ... relaxed state. What do you desire to do or be? What accomplishment do you long to achieve? As you become aware of these, gently let go of them... Settle. Repeat. Ending: express gratitude....

Exercise #5 -- Settle ... relaxed state. Open your heart and mind to what arises. Settle. Repeat as time allows. Ending: express gratitude...

Readings:

from Robert Barclay's *Apology*, Chapter 11, "Worship"

§VII. As there can be nothing more opposite to the natural will and wisdom of man than this silent waiting upon God, so neither can it be obtained nor rightly comprehended by man but as he layeth down his own wisdom and will so as to be content to be thoroughly subject to God. And therefore it was not preached, nor can be so practised, but by such as find no outward ceremony, no observations, no words, yea not the best and purest words, even the words of Scripture, able to satisfy their weary and afflicted souls; because where all these may be, the life, power, and virtue which make such things effectual may be wanting [lacking]. Such, I say, were necessitated to cease from all outwards and to be silent before the Lord, and being directed to that inward principle of Life and Light in themselves as the most excellent teacher, which "can never be removed into a corner," came thereby to be learned to wait upon God in the measure of life and grace received from him, and to cease from their own forward words and actings in the natural willing and comprehension and feel after this inward Seed of Life; that, as it moveth, they may move with it and be acted by its power and influenced, whether to pray, preach or sing. And so from this principle of man's being silent and not acting in the things of God of himself until thus acted by God's Light and Grace in the heart, did naturally spring that manner of sitting silent together and waiting together upon the Lord.

For many thus principled, meeting together in the pure fear of the Lord, did not apply themselves presently to speak, pray, or sing, &c., being afraid to be found acting forwardly in their own wills, but each made it their work to retire inwardly to the measure of Grace in themselves, not only being silent as to words but even abstaining from all their own thoughts, imaginations and desires, so watching in a holy dependence upon the Lord and meeting together not only outwardly in one place but thus inwardly in one Spirit and in one name of Jesus, which is his Power and Virtue. They come thereby to enjoy and feel the arisings of this Life, which, as it prevails in each particular, becomes as a flood of refreshment and overspreads the whole meeting, for man and man's part and wisdom being denied and chained down in every individual, and God exalted, and his Grace in dominion in the heart, thus his Name comes to be one in all, and his glory breaks forth and covers all; and there is such a holy awe and reverence upon every soul that if the natural part should arise in any, or the wise part, or what is not one with the Life, it would presently be chained down and judged out. And when any are through the breaking forth of this power constrained to utter a sentence of exhortation or praise, or to breathe to the Lord in prayer, then all are sensible of it; for the same Life in them answers to it "as in water face answereth to face."

This is that divine and spiritual worship which the world neither knoweth nor understandeth, which the vulture's eye seeth not into. Yet many and great are the advantages which my soul with many others have tasted of hereby, and which would be found of all such as would seriously apply themselves hereunto. For when people are gathered thus together, not merely to hear men nor depend upon them, but all are inwardly taught to stay their minds upon the Lord and wait for his appearance in their hearts, thereby the forward working of the spirit of man is stayed and hindered from mixing itself with the worship of God; and the form of this worship is so naked and void of all outward and worldly splendor that all occasion for man's wisdom to be exercised in that superstition and idolatry hath no lodging here; and so there being also an inward quietness and retiredness of mind, the witness of God ariseth in the heart, and the Light of Christ shineth whereby the soul cometh to see its own condition. And there being many joined together in this same work, there is an inward travail and wrestling; and also, as the measure of Grace is abode in, an overcoming of the power and spirit of darkness; and thus we are often greatly strengthened and renewed in the spirits of our minds without a word, and we enjoy and possess the holy fellowship and "communion of the body and blood of Christ," by which our inward man is nourished and fed. Which makes us not to dote upon outward water and bread and wine in our spiritual things. Now as many thus gathered together grow up in the strength, power, and virtue of Truth, and as Truth comes thus to have victory & dominion in their souls, then they receive an utterance & speak steadily to the edification of their brethren, and the pure Life hath a free

passage through them, and what is thus spoken edifieth the body indeed.

Such is the evident certainty of that divine strength that is communicated by thus meeting together and waiting in silence upon God, that sometimes, when one hath come in that hath been unwatchful, and wandering in his mind, or suddenly out of the hurry of outward business, & so not inwardly gathered with the rest, so soon as he retires himself inwardly, this Power, being in a good measure raised in the whole meeting, will suddenly lay hold upon his spirit, and wonderfully help to raise up the good in him and beget him into the sense of the same Power, to the melting and warming of his heart, even as the warmth would take hold upon a man that is cold, coming in to a stove, or as a flame will lay hold upon some little combustible matter lying near unto it; yea if it fall out that several met together be straying in their minds, though outwardly silent, and so wandering from the measure of grace in themselves (which through the working of the enemy and negligence of some may fall out) if either one come in, or may be in, who is watchful, and in whom the Life is raised in a great measure, as that one keeps his place he will feel a secret travail for the rest in a sympathy with the Seed which is oppressed in the other and kept from arising by their thoughts and wanderings; and as such a faithful one waits in the Light, and keeps in this divine work, God oftentimes answers the secret travail and breathings of his own Seed through such a one, so that the rest will find themselves secretly smitten without words, and that one will be as a midwife, through the secret travail of his soul, to bring forth the Life in them, just as a little water thrown into a pump brings up the rest, whereby Life will come to be raised in all and the vain imaginations brought down, and such a one is felt by the rest to minister life unto them without words[.

Y]ea sometimes when there is not a word in the meeting, but all are silently waiting, if one come in that is rude and wicked and in whom the power of darkness prevaieth much, perhaps with an intention to mock or do mischief, if the whole meeting be gathered into the Life, and it be raised in a good measure, it will strike terror into such an one, and he will feel himself unable to resist, but by the secret strength and virtue thereof the power of darkness in him will be chained down, and if the day of his visitation be not expired it will reach to the measure of Grace in him and raise it up to the redeeming of his soul, and this we often bear witness of, so that we have had frequent occasion, in this respect, since God hath gathered us to be a people, to renew this old saying of many, “Is Saul also among the prophets?”

For not a few have come to be convinced of the Truth after this manner, of which I myself, in a part, am a true witness, who not by strength of arguments or by a particular disquisition of each doctrine and convincement of my understanding thereby, came to receive and bear witness of the Truth, but by being secretly reached by this Life: for when I came into the silent assemblies of God’s people I felt a secret power among them which touched my heart, and as I gave way unto it, I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up, and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this Power and Life whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed: and indeed this is the surest way to become a Christian, to whom afterwards the knowledge and understanding of principles will not be wanting but will grow up so much as is needful, as the natural fruit of this good root, and such a knowledge will not be barren nor unfruitful after this manner.

We desire therefore all that come among us to be proselyted, knowing that though thousands should be convinced in their understandings of all the truths we maintain, yet if they were not sensible of this inward Life, and their souls not changed from unrighteousness to righteousness, they could add nothing to us; for this is that cement whereby we are joined “as to the Lord,” so to one another, and without this none can worship with us. Yea if such should come among us and from that understanding and convincement they have of the Truth speak ever so true things, and utter them forth with ever so much excellency of speech, if this Life were wanting it would not edify us at all but be as “sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1).

§VIII. Our work then and worship is, when we meet together, for everyone to watch and wait upon God in themselves & to be gathered from all visibles thereunto. And as everyone is thus stated they come to find the good arise over the evil and the pure over the impure, in which God

reveals himself and draweth near to every individual, and so he in the midst in the general. Whereby each not only partakes of the particular refreshment and strength which comes from the good in himself but is a sharer in the whole body, as being a living member of the body, having a joint fellowship and communion with all; and as this worship is steadfastly preached and kept to it becomes easy, though it be very hard at first to the natural man, whose roving imaginations and running worldly desires are not so easily brought to silence; and therefore the Lord oftentimes, when any turn towards him and have true desires thus to wait upon him, and find great difficulty through the unstayedness of their minds, doth in condescension and compassion cause his Power to break forth in a more strong and powerful manner; and when the mind sinks down and waits for the appearance of life, and that the power of darkness in the soul wrestles and works against it, then the good Seed, as it ariseth, will be found to work as physic in the soul, especially if such a weak one be in the assembly of divers others in whom the life is arisen in greater dominion, and through the contrary workings of the power of darkness there will be found an inward striving in the soul, as really in the mystery as ever Esau and Jacob strove in Rebecca's womb. ...

§IX. Many are the blessed experiences which I could relate of this silence and manner of worship, yet I do not so much commend and speak of silence as if we had a law in it to shut out praying or preaching, or tied ourselves thereunto; not at all: for as our worship consisteth not in words, so neither in silence, as silence; but in an holy dependence of the mind upon God, from which dependence silence necessarily follows in the first place, until words can be brought forth which are from God's Spirit[.

A]nd God is not wanting to move in his children to bring forth words of exhortation or prayer when it is needful, so that of the many gatherings and meetings of such as are convinced of the truth there is scarce any in whom God raiseth not up some or other to minister to his brethren, that there are few meetings that are altogether silent. For when many are met together in this one Life and Name, it doth most naturally and frequently excite them to pray to and praise God and stir up one another by mutual exhortation and instructions[.

Y]et we judge it needful there be in the first place some time of silence, during which every one may be gathered inward to the Word and Gift of Grace, from which he that ministereth may receive strength to bring forth what he ministereth, and that they that hear may have a sense to discern betwixt the precious and the vile, and not to hurry into the exercise of these things so soon as the bell rings, as other Christians do[.

Y]ea and we doubt not but assuredly know that the meeting may be good and refreshful, though from the sitting down to the rising up thereof there hath not been a word as outwardly spoken; and yet Life may have been known to abound in each particular, and an inward growing up therein and thereby, yea so as words might have been spoken acceptably and from the Life; yet there being no absolute necessity laid upon any so to do, all might have chosen rather quietly and silently to possess and enjoy the Lord in themselves, which is very sweet and comfortable to the soul that hath thus learned to be gathered out of all its own thoughts and workings, to feel the Lord to bring forth both the will and the deed, which many can declare by a blessed experience[.

T]hough indeed it cannot but be hard for the natural man to receive or believe this doctrine; and therefore it must be rather by a sensible experience, and by coming to make proof of it, than by arguments that such can be convinced of this thing, seeing it is not enough to believe it if they come not also to enjoy and possess it

from William Penn's *No Cross, No Crown*

§. XII. I will close this great Scripture Doctrine of Waiting with that Passage in John, about the Pool of Bethesda. There is at Jerusalem, by the Sheep-Market, a Pool, which is called in the Hebrew Tongue, Bethesda, having five Porches; in these lay a great Multitude of impotent Folks, of Blind, Halt, and Withered, Waiting for the Moving of the Water. For an Angel went down at a certain Season into the Pool, and troubled the Water: Whosoever then first, after the Troubling of

the Water, step'd in, was made whole of whatsoever Disease he had. A most exact Representation of what is intended by all that has been said upon the Subject of Waiting. For as there was then an Outward and Legal, so there is now a Gospel and Spiritual Jerusalem, the Church of God, consisting of the Faithful. The Pool in that old Jerusalem, in some sort, represented that Fountain, which is now set open in this New Jerusalem. That Pool was for those that were under Infirmities of Body; this Fountain for all that are Impotent in Soul. There was an Angel then that moved the Water, to render it beneficial; it is God's Angel now, the great Angel of his Presence, that blesseth this Fountain with Success. They that then went in before, and did not watch the Angel, and take Advantage of his Motion, found no Benefit of their Stepping in: Those that now wait not the Moving of God's Angel, but by the Devotion of their own Forming and Timing, rush before God, as the Horse into the Battle, and hope for Success, are sure to Miscarry in their Expectation.

Therefore, as then, They waited with all Patience and Intention upon the Angel's Motion, that wanted and desired to be cured; so do the true Worshippers of God now, that need and pray for his Presence, which is the Life of their Souls, as the Sun is to the Plants of the Field. They have often tried the Unprofitableness of their own Work, and are now come to the Sabbath indeed. They dare not put up a Device of their own, or offer an unsanctified Request, much less obtrude bodily Worship, where the Soul is really unsensible or unprepared by the Lord. In the Light of Jesus they ever wait to be Prepared, Retired, and Recluse from all Thoughts that cause the least Distraction and Discomposure in the Mind, till they see the Angel move, and till their beloved please to wake: Nor dare they call him before his Time. And they fear to make a Devotion in his Absence; for they know it is not only Unprofitable, but Reprovable. Who has required this at your Hands? He that believes, makes not hast. They that worship with their own, can only do as the Israelites, turn their Ear-Rings into a Molten-Image, and be curs'd for their Pains. Nor fared they better, that gathered Sticks of old, and kindled a Fire, and compassed themselves about with the Sparks that they had kindled; for God told them, They Should lie down in Sorrow. It should not only be of no Advantage, and do them no Good, but incur a Judgment from him: Sorrow and Anguish of Soul Should be their Portion.

Alas! Flesh and Blood would fain Pray, tho' it cannot Wait; and be a Saint, tho' it can't abide to Do or Suffer the Will of God. With the Tongue it blesses God, and with the Tongue it curses Men, made in his Similitude. It calls Jesus Lord, but not by the Holy Ghost; and often names the Name of Jesus, yea, bows the Knee to it too, but departs not from Iniquity: This is abominable to God.

§. XIII. In short, there are four Things so necessary to worshipping of God aright, and which puts its Performance beyond Man's Power, that there seems little more needed than the naming of them.

The First is, The Sanctification of the Worshipper. Secondly, The Consecration of the Offering, which has been spoken to before somewhat largely. Thirdly, What to pray for; which no Man knows, that prays not by the Aid of God's Spirit; and therefore, without that Spirit no Man can truly pray. This the Apostle puts beyond Dispute; We know not (says he) what we should pray for, as we ought, but the Spirit helpeth our Infirmities. Men unacquainted with the Work and Power of the Holy Spirit, are ignorant of the Mind of God; and those, certainly, can never please him with their Prayers. It is not enough to know, we want [lack]; but we should learn, whether it be not sent us as a Blessing: Disappointments to the Proud, Losses to the Covetous; and to the Negligent, Stripes: To remove these, were to secure the Destruction, not help the Salvation of the Soul.

The vile World knows nothing, but carnally, after a fleshly Manner and Interpretation; and too many that would be thought enlightened, are apt to call Providences by wrong Names. For Instance; Afflictions they style Judgments; and Trials (more precious than the beloved Gold) they call Miseries. On the other Hand, they call the Preferments of the World by the Name of Honour, and its Wealth, Happiness; when for once that they are so, 'tis much to be feared, they are sent

of God an Hundred Times for Judgments, at least Trials, upon their Possessors. Therefore, What to keep, What to reject, What to want, is a Difficulty God only can resolve the Soul. And since God knows, better than we, what we need, He can better tell us what to ask, than we can Him: Which made Christ exhort his Disciples to avoid long and repetitious Prayers; telling them, That their heavenly Father knew what they needed, before they ask **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** And therefore gave them a Pattern to pray by; not as some fancy [imagine], to be a Text for human Liturgies, which of all Services are most justly noted and taxed for Length and Repetition; but expressly to reprove and avoid them. But is those Wants [Lacks], that are the Subject of Prayer, were once agreed upon (tho' that be a mighty Point) yet how to pray, is still of greater Moment, than to pray; 'tis not the Request, but the Frame of the Petitioners Spirit. The What may be proper, but the How defective. As I said, God needs not be told of our Wants by us, who must tell them to us; yet he will be told them from us, that both we may seek him, and he may come down to us. But when this is done, To this Man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite Spirit, and that trembleth at my Word: To the sick Heart, the wounded Soul, the hungry and thirsty, the weary and heavy laden Ones; such sincerely want an Helper.

§. XIV. Nor is this sufficient to compleat Gospel-Worship; the fourth Requisite must be had, and that is Faith, True Faith, Precious Faith, the Faith of God's Chosen, that purifies their Hearts, that overcomes the World, and is the Victory of the Saints. This is that which animates Prayer, and presses it home, like the importunate Widow, that would not be denied; to whom Christ (seeming to admire) said, O Woman, great is thy Faith. This is of highest Moment on our part, to give our Addresses Success with God; and yet not in our Power neither, for it is the Gift of God: From him we must have it; and with one Grain of it, more Work is done, more Deliverance is wrought, and more Goodness and Mercy received, than by all the Runnings, Willings, and Toilings of Man, with his Inventions and bodily Exercises. Which duly weighed, will easily spell out the Meaning, why so much Worship should bring so little Profit to the World, as we see it does, viz. True Faith is lost. They ask, and receive not; they seek, and find not; they knock, and it is not opened unto them: The Case is plain; their Requests are not mixed with purifying Faith, by which they should prevail, as good Jacob's were, when he wrestled with God, and prevailed. And the Truth is, the Generality are yet in their Sins, following their Hearts Lusts, and living in Worldly Pleasure, being Strangers to this precious Faith. It is the Reason rendered by the deep Author to the Hebrews, of the unprofitableness of the Word preached to some of those Days; Not being (says he) mixed with Faith in them that heard it. Can the Minister then Preach without Faith? No, and much less can any Man pray to purpose without Faith, especially when we are told, That the Just live by Faith. For Worship is the supreme Act of Man's Life; and whatever is necessary to inferior Acts of Religion, must not be wanting there.