

A PERSONAL RETREAT EXPERIENCE *from*

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CHOSEN IN CHRIST
CALLED TO INFLUENCE

Worship Encounter

A personal retreat
experience from Kyria



A PERSONAL RETREAT EXPERIENCE *from*

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You've made it. You've carved out some space and some time to be alone. Just you . . . and God.

This is your moment to connect—your opportunity to offer God uninterrupted time as you quiet your heart before him and spend time in his presence.

This is your time to **worship.**



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How to use this personal retreat:

As busy women, our lives can easily become overwhelming and over-programmed. From work to parenting to marriage to housekeeping to church to volunteering, we can get used to having our lives jam-packed with responsibilities and commitments. Though we long for time alone with God, when we actually get that time, we can flounder. What to do? How do we fill an hour with God? Or two? Or maybe even three?

This Kyria download contains 12 different ideas and experiences you can use during a period of time you've set aside to be alone with God and focus on the topic of worship. Each idea can take from 10 to 20 minutes. So flip through these pages and zero in on the experiences that fit you best. If you've got just an hour, plan on doing about 4 experiences; or, alternately, you could take about half of a day to utilize all 12 ideas in this packet.





Worship Encounter

How to use this personal retreat

You'll need . . .

Supplies: Bible, pen, journal, notepad, extra blank paper

Optional: iPod, hymnal, crayons or markers, camera, picnic blanket, snacks, and water

Find a **space** in which you can be alone and focused on God, such as a peaceful spot in your local park, a corner of your backyard, or even your bedroom. If you want, bring a picnic blanket to sit on as well as some snacks and water to help you feel refreshed and energized.

DEFEAT DISTRACTIONS!

When you try to spend time focusing on God, countless distractions are bound to pop into your mind. Something you forgot to put on the grocery list. An appointment on the calendar for tomorrow. Worries about your daughter's allergies. A random idea for a project at work.

So be sure to bring a notepad and pen on your personal retreat. Whenever a distracting thought comes to mind, jot it down on the "distractions notepad" and set it aside. Put the distraction out of your mind and don't let it nag at you while you're trying to focus on God. It's on your notepad—you can deal with it later.



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Quick Overview

Click on an idea you'd like to explore:

- 7 **IDEA 1:** Explore—
Study what the Bible says about worship.
- 11 **IDEA 2:** Journal—
Use journal prompts to explore your own perspective on worship.
- 12 **IDEA 3:** Pray—
Use an ancient prayer to guide your conversation with God.
- 13 **IDEA 4:** Read & Respond—
Read an article about worship and respond with prayer.
- 16 **IDEA 5:** Read & Respond—
Read an article and go on a worship walk.
- 21 **IDEA 6:** Express—
Worship God through music.
- 22 **IDEA 7:** Express—
Speak words of worship aloud to God.
- 24 **IDEA 8:** Contemplate—
Meditate on what Jesus said about worship.
- 25 **IDEA 9:** Contemplate—
Meditate on psalms of worship.
- 26 **IDEA 10:** Create—
Craft a poetic prayer of worship.
- 27 **IDEA 11:** Create—
Create worshipful haiku poems.
- 28 **IDEA 12:** Create—
Use art to express worship to God.

Sample 1-Hour Schedule	
IDEA 1: Explore	15 minutes
IDEA 7: Express	15 minutes
IDEA 9: Contemplate	15 minutes
IDEA 11: Create	15 minutes





Worship Encounter Quick Overview

Sample 3-Hour Schedule	
IDEA 1: Explore	20 minutes
IDEA 2: Journal	20 minutes
IDEA 3: Pray	20 minutes
IDEA 6: Express	20 minutes
IDEA 8: Contemplate	20 minutes
IDEA 4: Read & Respond	20 minutes
IDEA 10: Create	20 minutes
IDEA 5: Read & Respond	20 minutes
IDEA 12: Create	20 minutes

For Women's Ministry

You can also use these experiences in a women's ministry setting such as during a women's weekend retreat or weekly Bible study. Simply give each participant a copy of this download and send them off to find a space of their own in which to spend an hour with God. Afterward, have women gather together in small groups and share with each other what their time alone with God was like.





IDEA 1:

Explore

Dive into God's Word and explore what it says about worship.

- Read two visions of heavenly worship, revealed to Isaiah and John, in **Isaiah 6:1–4** and **Revelation 4:1–11**. What's your initial reaction to these scenes of worship? Use your imagination to step into the shoes of Isaiah and John. How do you think you'd feel if you saw this? Why?





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Idea 1: Explore

- Read how Isaiah reacted in **Isaiah 6:5–8**. How does true worship change a person? When have you been changed in some way by worshiping God?

- Though singing is a wonderful expression of worship, Scripture records many other important avenues of praising God. Read **Exodus 31:1–11; 35:30–36:1**. God's Spirit filled Bezalel, enabling him to honor God with handiwork and art. How has God gifted you to worship and honor him?





Worship Encounter

Idea 1: Explore

● Though worship comes more naturally when we feel happy and life is going well, we should still worship God when it's tough—when we're hurting, when we're scared, when we feel alone. Read the psalmist's honest expressions of emotion as he worships God in **Psalms 42** and **43**. What can sincere worship look like during difficult times? Think of examples from your own life.

● Read **Amos 5:21–24**. In this passage, God rejects the people's acts of worship because their lives are so contrary to his values. Though they honor him with ceremonies and songs, they cruelly oppress the poor. Why do you think God uses such harsh words about their "worship"? Are there things God might "hate" about our worship today?





Worship Encounter

Idea 1: Explore

- Read **Romans 12:1-2**. How can your life be a sacrifice of worship to God? What daily choices can you make to better honor God and demonstrate your love for him?



IDEA 2:

Journal



In CHRISTIANITY TODAY, April 2005, author Philip Yancey wrote: "God inspires at once awe and love, fear and friendship." He went on to explain, "In the Hebrew Old Testament, the primary word for worship means 'to bow down in reverence and submission.' And in the New Testament, the most common Greek word for worship means 'to come forward to kiss.'"

In your journal, write your thoughts about these questions:

- *Do you more often approach God in awe, fear, and reverence? Or in love, intimacy, and friendship? Why?*
- *Why are both of these aspects of worship important?*
- *How do you desire to grow in your reverence for God? In your friendship with him?*





IDEA 3:

Pray

Use the following prayer written by Julian of Norwich (1342-1416) to launch your own time of prayer and meditation:

God, of your goodness, give me yourself; for you are sufficient for me. I cannot properly ask anything less, to be worthy of you. If I were to ask less, I should always be in want. In you alone do I have all.



IDEA 4: READ & RESPOND

Why Worship God?

What kind of God would require people to worship him?

By Frederica Mathewes-Green



Q. *What kind of God would require worship?*

A. In an episode of *The Simpsons*, Homer is asked a similar question. He replies, "God is very powerful, but also very insecure, like Barbra Streisand before James Brolin."





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Idea 4: Read and Respond

If you picture God as being like a giant human being, that makes sense. But in the Bible, the main thing people who've encountered God say is that he's the opposite of ordinary humans. He's holy. Those who meet him say, "You've never experienced anything like this before. It made my hair stand on end."

Their first reaction seems to be fear, since the first thing they are told is usually "Do not fear." Then, as they continue to stand in God's presence, they become overwhelmed with awe and love, and they start seeing their own failings very clearly. Strong light makes long shadows. Isaiah sees God "high and lifted up" and reacts, "Woe is me!" Peter sees Jesus perform a miracle and falls to his knees saying, "I am a sinful man."

That's what people who have "been there" report: God is "other," he's inexpressibly wonderful. When you experience him, you suddenly see how much you need to change. And that's worship in a nutshell. God doesn't command us to do this; it's more like he warns us that this is what will happen. Get ready, because his presence is going to knock you over.

Frederica Mathewes-Green is an author and a Kyria editorial advisor. This article was first published in TODAY'S CHRISTIAN in 2003.





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Idea 4: Read and Respond

Respond

- *Close your eyes, kneel down, and focus on God's presence. Consider how "other" he is from you—how powerful, amazing, phenomenal. Take time to tell God in prayer how truly awesome he is.*



IDEA 5: READ & RESPOND

Neat! Way Cool! Awesome!

Artists like to have their work admired; that is why we worship.

By Philip Yancey

To liven up a children's sermon, my pastor brought in Ralphie, a pet crayfish. "What do you think about Ralphie?" he asked, as the crayfish waved his claws menacingly. The kids responded with gusto: *Cool! Neat! Way cool! Awesome!*





Worship Encounter

Idea 5: Read and Respond

Next the pastor read us words used to describe crayfish in the dictionary—*decapod crustacean*, *invertebrate*—and drew a contrast between science and worship. Each has its place, he said. But artists like to have their work admired. If you show your parents artwork, you don't want to hear, "This appears to be a crayon drawing on pulp-wood paper," but something more like, *Beautiful! I love it!* That is why we worship.

John Calvin urges us "not to pass over, with ungrateful inattention or oblivion, those glorious perfections which God manifests in his creatures." After several trips "down under," I came away with a new reverence for "those glorious perfections."

On my first visit, I went whale watching off the coast of New Zealand. Bobbing about in a rubber dinghy, we felt very small next to a sperm whale, whose tongue weighs as much as an elephant. The whale would rest on the surface for a while, then spout spectacularly a few times before plunging a mile deep to feed on squid.

Between whale sightings the guide, a Maori biologist, described other sea life. When a royal albatross soared by, he rhapsodized about these "kings of the air." Their wings, spanning 11 feet, are so well-designed that an albatross can cover 600 miles with less flapping of its wings than a sparrow needs to cross a street. An albatross can sleep on the wing, flying on autopilot thanks to a small wind-speed recorder in its bill that sends data to the brain, allowing it to make wing adjustments as the wind shifts. Also, an albatross has a built-in desalinization factory. When





Worship Encounter

Idea 5: Read and Respond

it scoops up a mouthful of ocean, a series of tubes and membranes in the bill processes the water and extrudes excess salt.

I pressed the guide for more details. "Countries in dry areas like the Middle East pay millions for desalinization plants," I said. "Why can't we adapt the same technology on a larger scale?"

The Maori stared at me before responding. "You're an American, aren't you?" he said at last.

On a subsequent trip last fall, I tried to experience wildlife with the eyes of worship, not of science. I spent three days on Australia's Phillip Island, a showcase of God's creation.

In the morning, as I jogged, kangaroos and wallabies thumped alongside. Cockatoos, all black except for brilliant yellow wing crescents, wheeled noisily overhead. I ran through eucalyptus forests with my neck craned upward, looking for the telltale puffs of gray that marked sleeping koalas. And at night, I watched the spectacle of shearwaters and fairy penguins.

A million short-tailed shearwaters return to Phillip Island on the same day each year, September 24. Each night they swoop toward shore in waves of hundreds and thousands, skimming the surface of the sea ("shearing the water") to pluck off tiny fish. Awkward birds, they tend to crash-land, take a few tumbles, and stagger indignant to their nests. They migrate 9,000 miles from





Worship Encounter

Idea 5: Read and Respond

Alaska and the Aleutian Islands, farther than any other species. Most remarkable are their child-rearing habits. They fatten up their babies appropriately, but then one day the parents simply take off en masse, leaving the inexperienced nestlings to figure out how to fly, fish, and navigate to Alaska on their own. Amazingly, almost half survive the ordeal.

For sheer entertainment, nothing compares to the nightly parade of the fairy penguins, who return to their nests after a day's fishing. At dusk they float shoreward in "rafts" of 10 or 20. Less than a foot high, these midget penguins assemble along the beach in formation, waiting for courage to cross the expanse of sand. One feints, a few follow, then fear strikes and they all dash back into the sea. I watched one group make 15 false starts before feeling brave enough to waddle across the sand. Lacking knees, they rock back and forth as they walk, holding their side-flippers out for balance.

C. S. Lewis suggests that observing God's creation is a holy calling:

For the beasts can't appreciate it and the angels are, I suppose, pure intelligences. They *understand* colours and tastes better than our greatest scientists; but have they retinas or palates? I fancy the "beauties of nature" are a secret God has shared with us alone. That may be one of the reasons why we were made.¹

¹ *The Joyful Christian* (Touchstone)





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Idea 5: Read and Respond

Flannery O'Connor once wrote an essay about her peacocks and the reactions they would get as they unfurled their feathers to present "a galaxy of gazing, haloed suns." One truck driver yelled, "Get a load of that!" and braked to a halt. Most people would fall silent. Her favorite response came from an old black woman who simply cried, "Amen! Amen!"

I think the Artist who designed the peacock rather enjoyed that response. It's certainly what I felt on Phillip Island.

Philip Yancey is Editor at Large of CHRISTIANITY TODAY and the author of many bestselling books. This article was first published in the April 1997 issue of CHRISTIANITY TODAY.

Respond

- *Go on a "worship walk." As you do, be on the lookout for the amazing art God has made: leaves, clouds, bugs, birds, flowers. Quietly notice and appreciate the wonder of God's created world. In your heart speak words of worship to him for what you observe. (If you'd like, bring your camera with you to take pictures of the worship-inspiring things you see.)*





IDEA 6:

Express

In his *Confessions*, Saint Augustine wrote this about the power of worshipful music: "I wept at the beauty of your hymns and canticles, and was powerfully moved at the sweet sound of your Church singing. These sounds flowed into my ears, and the truth streamed into my heart."

Grab your iPod and put on a playlist of your favorite worship songs or flip open a hymnal. Whether you're a concert vocalist or are absolutely tone deaf, it doesn't matter! Just take time right now to worship God in song. Belt it out. Sing from your heart. Express your deepest emotions and affirm the foundational truths of your life as you sing them out to God.





IDEA 7:

Express

With great expression, read aloud the words of this famous hymn. Vocally instill each phrase with meaning and emotion. Let the profound truth of these lines, first written in 1561, focus your heart on who God is and the worship he deserves.

O Worship the King

*O worship the King, all glorious above,
O gratefully sing His power and His love;
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.*

*O tell of His might, O sing of His grace,
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space,
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,
And dark is His path on the wings of the storm.*





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Idea 7: Express

*The earth with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty, Thy power hath founded of old;
Established it fast by a changeless decree,
And round it hath cast, like a mantle, the sea.*

*Thy bountiful care, what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.*

*Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
In Thee do we trust, nor find Thee to fail;
Thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end,
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend.*

*O measureless might! Ineffable love!
While angels delight to worship Thee above,
The humbler creation, though feeble their lays,
With true adoration shall all sing Thy praise.*

*By William Kethe, 1561; revised by Robert Grant and Edward
Bickersteff, 1833. Public Domain.*



IDEA 8:

Contemplate



“**T**o worship God in spirit and in truth means to worship God as we *should* worship him. . . . To worship God in truth is to recognise him for what he is and to recognise ourselves for what we are.”

—Brother Lawrence in *The Practice of the Presence of God*

Read and reflect on **John 4:21-24**. Prayerfully invite God to help you understand what it means for you to worship him in spirit and in truth.





IDEA 9:

Contemplate

Meditate on some of the worship recorded in Scripture. Slowly, carefully read **Psalms 92, 93, 95, 96, 98, and 100**. Let the words draw out feelings and images in your mind; chew on them, prayerfully thinking about their meaning. Consider what God brings to mind for you as you worship him along with the psalmist.



IDEA 10:

Create

Read this poem written
by a nun from the
Middle Ages.



Praise to the Trinity

By Hildegard of Bingen

*Praise to the Trinity
Who is sound and life.
Creator and sustainer
Of all beings.
The angels praise You,
Who in the splendour
Of your hidden mysteries
Pour out life abundant.*

Now write your own prayer of "Praise to the Trinity," focusing on the traits of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.





IDEA 11:

Create

Try your hand at writing some *haiku* poems that express your worship of God or that describe reasons he is worthy of worship.

A haiku poem is meant to be short and simple, capturing an image or a feeling in its brief three lines. Structure your haiku poems by including 5 syllables in the first line, 7 syllables in the second line, and 5 syllables in the final line. If all the syllables are too daunting for you, just make a three-line poem. Your haiku poems don't need to be perfect! Just enjoy the experience of expressing yourself creatively.





IDEA 12:

Create

Use your pen, pencil, or some crayons or markers to sketch pictures of worship. Include words of worship in your art, draw images that inspire you to worship, or sketch abstract lines that express your feelings. Or turn to a psalm of praise, such as **Psalm 97** or **99**. Read the psalm, then try to capture it's meaning in a picture.

Remember, your creation doesn't need to be a masterpiece! You don't need to impress God with your artistic skills—just enjoy the experience of worshiping God in this way.



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