

## Stages of Meeting for Worship

### "The Door Before"

*Preparation* – The best preparation for worship grows out of our lives. It is being touched by the Spirit in the reality of what we experience daily, our joys, sorrows, and surprises. God often touches us in our self-searching, our spiritual disciplines, and our spiritual conversations. As we grow in our ability to notice and trust the mysteries and miracles in our day-to-day lives, we also grow in our hunger to stay close to them. This kind of preparation deepens our commitment to meeting for worship.

### "The Door Inward"

*Entering* – At this stage, we are coming into the meeting with an expectation that here we encounter the Divine. This is what I call the conscious intent, the choosing to commune with that which is deep and precious within ourselves and others. This is why we come to meeting, to be with God and others who are seeking this reality. We come as early Friends would say, "to wait upon the Lord."

*Centering or Settling-in* – Listening is at the core of centering. It is like letting the layers of yourself slip away. This happens if we just keep listening and not trying to engage in active conversation with our thoughts. As I enter and settle-in, I try to keep my spiritual antennae high.

### "The Door Within"

*Experiencing God* – This may start with a glimpse of the Eternal, a whisper, an image, a recurring word or song, or someone's vocal ministry that answers something deep within ourselves. It can seem like a veil falls away. We see differently, as if with God. Someone may speak. Someone may pray silently and deeply. These silent Friends play a major part in the centering of the meeting.

When we feel led to speak in meeting for worship; we may have a pounding heart, or sweating palms, or actually be shaken to our feet. Other times it may be less dramatic and it's helpful to ask, should I speak, or should I pray? Sometimes we're given an image, an insight, or a repeated phrase. We may not even know what it means. We may be asked to pray out loud for someone or something. We may be moved to share an experience we had earlier in the week. The best vocal ministry holds a deep sense of being led by the Spirit. Often it's not the words but the feeling content that communicates most clearly.

There are many ways of experiencing the Spirit in meeting for worship. One can tell the difference between worship that's filled with God or filled with ourselves. Having the patience to let God lead the worship is the sign of a deep spiritual meeting. (The conservative Friends call this waiting worship.) We may experience the miracle of the covered or gathered meeting, without anyone speaking. We may also experience someone giving a message which is exactly what we needed or what we were feeling ourselves, but weren't quite led to say.

### "The Door Beyond"

*Meeting breaks and aftermaths* – As we emerge from worship often there's a feeling of being on a different plane. Life is filled with faith, hope, love, new life, or actions we feel we must pursue. In a deeply centered meeting for worship, the worshippers often feel changed.

– Michael Wajda & Alison Levie, SEYM, April 2001  
– based on *Four Doors to Meeting for Worship*,  
by William Taber, *Pendle Hill Pamphlet #306* (1992)

<https://pendlehill.org/product/four-doors-meeting-worship/>