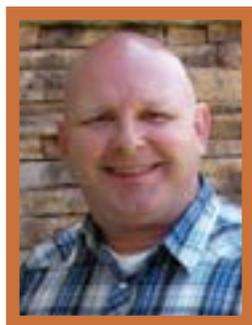


AS A WORSHIP LEADER, DESCRIBE ONE OR MORE IMPORTANT TRUTHS YOU HAVE DISCOVERED ABOUT WORSHIP.

FILLED TO OVERFLOW

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THE WORD OF GOD informs us that true worshipers worship God truthfully (see John 4:24). It almost sounds redundant; however, candid worshipers and worship leaders praise God daily, not just during weekend services. It is impossible for us to lead others to worship if we are not worshipers ourselves.



A comment from my assistant choral director articulated this truth during a meeting with our church's exaltation team. She stated that throughout the week, her goal was to fill her spiritual cup with worship so her praise would overflow when it was time to lead the congregation to connect with Christ.

We need to spend a considerable amount of time in prayer, Bible study, listening to worship songs from multiple genres, and just spending time in the presence of God before creating a worship plan, running a rehearsal, or stepping before a congregation to lead in worship. Of course, we are ministered to while we are leading worship; however, that should not be our priority. We come to church to serve and give, not to be served and receive. We must practice the presence of God (filling our worship cups) even more than we practice vocally or instrumentally.

The ministry of worship is not just combining the right tunes with proper chord progression and orchestration, nor creating the proper mixture of hymns, choruses, and contemporary sounds. Rather, worship is an outflowing of being in the presence of God.

In 2 Samuel 6:1-11, we read the account of David bringing the ark of the covenant (representing the presence of God) to Jerusalem. The journey was filled with great celebration, but along the way the oxen stumbled, Uzzah reached out to steady the ark, and God killed him. Why would Uzzah die for trying to do "right" in steadying the ark? I believe God is saying, Don't allow the "normal" functions of the job to obscure the sacredness of the role.

We who are worship leaders are dedicated to bringing the best worship experience possible to our congregations. However,

many times the "normal" activities of creating a worship experience are performed by rote. We fail to honor the sacredness of the presence of God by spending time in His presence.

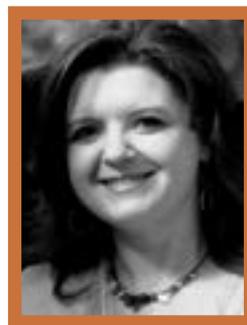
In summary, four truths: (1) We must spend time experiencing the sacredness of the presence of God daily—His mercies are new every morning. (2) Time spent with God will bring about extraordinary corporate worship experiences. (3) We must not allow mundane tasks to affect a sacred responsibility. (4) "Bringing the presence of God" requires a lifestyle of preparation, sanctification, and dissatisfaction with "normal" or rote performance.

MORE THAN A QUICK FIX

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AS A WORSHIP LEADER, one of the most profound truths I have learned is that true worshipers will worship. Like many worship leaders, I've often found myself discouraged by a lack of response from a congregation in the worship service. I've often tried to freshen up the set lists with new songs, or throw in an older song or hymn to engage the older generation in worship, while we've tried light shows and cool staging to engage our youth in worship.

What I have finally learned through all of the frustration is that true worshipers will worship no matter what set list I put together, or whether or not there is a stage set for a rock star.



Their worship is not based on the sound, the set, or the setting. They base their worship on their love, gratitude, and adoration for their God. Worship has absolutely nothing to do with genre, style, or generation. It is a reflection of one's heart toward God.

A pastor once told me about an 80-something-year-old lady who would come to church with earplugs in her purse, and when the music would get too loud for her, she would stick them in her ears. When asked about it, she replied, "Those young people like the worship good and loud, and since I don't want to hinder their worship or mine, I stick earplugs in my ears and worship." Wow! What if we all had that attitude toward worship?

It has become cliché to say that worship is a lifestyle, but it truly is. Someone who can truly worship no matter the style has

come to understand what a life of worship is. So, why are some churches still fighting over musical styles?

As a leader in the ministry of worship, part of my role is to teach and equip those who are under my leadership. My role does not simply revolve around a set list, rehearsals, and a few songs on a Sunday and Wednesday. If I am not teaching my teams and my congregation the purpose and necessity of worship in their daily life, they will not fully engage, and congregational worship will be a struggle.

When we begin to understand what a lifestyle of worship is, we will see it reflected in how we respond to our families, our other relationships, our finances, our struggles, and so on. Churches today are full of hungry people searching for something more than a quick fix. They are tired of going home the same way they came. The ministry of worship involves showing them in the Word that worship is not merely the first 40 minutes before the message. Instead, it is a daily lifestyle—putting God in His rightful place and the Enemy in his.

The greatest compliment someone could give me after a worship service does not concern the way we sounded or the songs we sang. The greatest compliment is someone telling me that God touched them, healed them, delivered them, or revealed His unending love to them during our time of worship. Those are results of true worship!

‘IN THE SPIRIT ON THE LORD’S DAY’

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WORSHIP IS AN encounter with God. Worship happens when a holy people gather together at a sacred place at a sacred time. The place of worship may be a simple house church or a grand cathedral, but the gathering of God’s people transforms it into a holy sanctuary—a place of restoration.

When worshipers walk through the door of the sanctuary, they walk into another world. The Holy Spirit falls upon worshipers and lifts them into heavenly places (Acts 2:1-4; Eph. 2:4-6). At that sacred moment, the worshipers from the earth are joined by heavenly guests, and all worshipers join their voices in adoration of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This divine encounter compels worshipers to cry out, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come” (Rev. 4:8 NASB). In the presence of God, human sinfulness is revealed and healed (Isa. 6:5; 1 Cor. 14:24-25).

Worship tells the story of God’s redemption. As worshipers sing hymns and spiritual songs, they offer a sacrifice of praise that testifies to God’s works (Col. 3:16; Heb. 13:15). As worshipers

pray, they anticipate the revelation of God’s eternal kingdom, trust for God’s daily provision, and practice the ministry of reconciliation (Matt. 6:9-13). The reading and hearing of the Word of God transforms the people of God (Rom. 10:14-15; 12:1-2; Eph. 4:23-24).

The sacraments are redemptive dramas that reenact God’s saving works. Water baptism signifies being born in the Spirit and anticipates being baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). The Lord’s Supper nourishes the soul (1 Cor. 11:23-34). Footwashing refreshes the weary traveler (John 13:5-15). Anointing with oil and laying on of hands offer restoration to the sick and suffering (James 5:14-16). Through the celebration of the sacraments, worshipers encounter the ever-present grace of God. From the call to worship to the benediction, the worship service is a majestic proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Worship is a celebration of life. Life is a gift of God. Every significant event of life is celebrated by the worshipping community. Children are dedicated by their parents at the altar. In so doing, parents acknowledge the child as a precious gift from God and commit themselves to the godly nurture and training of the child. At the altar, the love of a man and woman is celebrated as they selflessly commit themselves to each other in marriage before God. In death, the earthly remains of our loved ones are carried to the altar one last time so we may grieve their loss and rejoice in the hope of the resurrection. Life will present many times to weep and rejoice (Eccl. 3:4). Each moment is enriched by the presence of God.

Worship is expressed through a diversity of tongues. Believers of every nation lift their voices in the praise and adoration of God (Isa. 2:2-3; Rev. 7:9). As a congregation offers prayer in concert, a cacophony of voices comes together as a symphony of supplication and thanksgiving. Often the saints pray in the Spirit with inarticulate groans or speaking in unknown tongues (Rom. 8:26; 1 Cor. 14:14; Eph. 6:18).

The diversity of tongues is also expressed through diverse songs of worship. Each generation sings a new song with a distinctive voice. The worship of God cannot be adequately expressed through one voice, one tongue, or one song. The proper worship of God requires that the tongues of every nation and the songs of all generations must be heard. As the hearts and minds of the worshipers are drawn together by the Holy Spirit, the diverse tongues express the unity of the faith. ☪

