

## Introduction

In Chris Tomlin's song, 'Made To Worship', he writes that "you and I were made for worship.." In this world of so many faiths, beliefs and priorities, we know that not everyone worships the one true God. Instead, they worship many other things that this world offers. Instead of worship simply being a musical genre, as Christians we are called to worship God with all we are, our whole being. This is the heart of worship, true worship. Tim Hughes' 2007 album summarises it so clearly - 'Holding Nothing Back'.

In his book of the same name, Tim writes, "In every situation that comes our way, our role is to centre our lives around Christ, and allow Him to glorify His name in and through us.. We're called to surrender our lives to Him, holding nothing back, allowing access to all areas. He is the all-powerful God, mighty to act, the God who has the whole world in His hands. It's as we say 'Yes' to Him, following His ways no matter the cost, that we will see God's transforming resurrection power.. Holding nothing back, the Father delights in us, sings over us, chases after us, cares deeply about us, and sent His only Son to die for us. And what is our only possible response to this extravagant love? . . . To hold nothing back ourselves." (Tim Hughes, *'Holding Nothing Back'*. Survivor 2007. pp 103-105)

For this session, we'll be thinking about 'worship music' but also going a little deeper into what worship is, in a fuller sense! Much could be said about worship, but we'll just scratch the surface and challenge you to go further into God's Word for yourselves.

**As David Crowder has eloquently put it, "I want to build cathedrals. I want to use words and notes, rather than stone and mortar." ([davidcrowderband.com](http://davidcrowderband.com)). Amen!**

### Music

Play a compilation of well known worship tracks and ask people to name the tracks and the artist (a kind of Christian bits and pieces game..) For example: Matt Redman - Facedown; Chris Tomlin - How Great Is Our God; Brenton Brown - Everlasting God (Strength Will Rise); Tim Hughes - Greatest Day In History (O Happy Day) etc.

The key is to get songs that your group will know. Get them into teams, give them some paper and play clips of 5-15 tunes and see how many they can guess. Prizes to the team with the most correct entries. Throw in some unusual ones that people may not know and some funny ones if you can / any in-jokes within your group or church!!

## **YouTube – 'Me Worship'**

There's a great YouTube clip called 'Me Worship' - <https://youtu.be/t9dvVp0Nxjo>

Play back this track as it's quite funny and does raise some issues about what we worship, and what we mean by worship.

## **Rap Lyrics**

One of the lines from my raps says: *"We sing songs and praise to the Ancient of Days. But musically our phrase is as ancient as those days.. Laying down rules like a broody nagging wife. Singing styles in church I don't listen to in life. See in my eyes true worship is coming from my heart. Don't matter what the instrument - decks, drums or harp. Gotta get right with Christ, in Spirit and in truth. Check John 4.24 if you need Biblical proof.."*

## **The 'Harmony' - funny mp3 clip**

This 'harmony' was taken off the audio of a wedding I filmed. The song is 'Only By Grace' by Don Moen/Graham Kendrick. This was played by an organist during the signing of the register. When the harmony kicked in, I struggled (at the front of the whole church) to contain my near tears of laughter as the discordant harmony played on, with seemingly no-one noticing.. [You can find the mp3 clip by clicking here...](#)

## **Matt Redman, Facedown (Survivor, 2004), pp 45-46**

Matt Redman's beautifully poetic words are worthy of being read. They summarise a lot of God's character and heart better than my words ever could!!

*"The God we worship is clothed in majesty. He reveals and He conceals. He invites and He hides. He confounds and He confides. The God who rests but never sleeps. Who thunders and whispers. Terrifies and befriends. Whose anger lasts a moment, but favour lasts a lifetime. All consuming, yet kind. All knowing, yet capable of forgetting the sins He forgives. The King whose footstool is the earth, yet who humbly washed the earth from the feet of those He disciplined. Who reigns in righteousness, yet carried our shamefulness. Who walked in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day, yet sweated drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane one agonising night. The God of the smallest detail, and the grandest design. Who issues ornate designs for an extravagant temple, yet saw pleasure in the humblist offering of the widow's two tiny coins. The suffering servant who commands the universe. The sinless friend of sinners. The Saviour who hung in agony on beams of wood, He himself had called into being. Fiercesome yet welcoming. Unfathomable yet knowable. God of kings and beggars, presidents and porpers. Who fathers the fatherless, yet works through our weakness. Burning with holiness, yet refreshingly graceful.*

*He who is worshipped by the multitudes of heaven, yet rejoices over a single returning heart. Perfect in every way, yet able to help those who are being tempted. He who is faithful even to the faithless, for he cannot disown himself. This is the God we worship - the God of all mystery."*

## **What Is Worship?**

Worship is an attitude of our heart. God is more interested in our character than he is about what we do and where we go.

Derek Prince has a threefold strategy for looking at worship that may help: **Thanksgiving is about God's goodness. Praise is about God's greatness. Worship is about God's holiness.** (Entering God's Presence, Whitaker House 2007, p16).

Psalm 22.3 says in the KJV, *"Yet thou art holy, O Thou who art enthroned upon the praises of Israel."* God lives in the praises of his people. So where there is praise to God, God is there and we have access to God. In Hebrews 1.28, the writer encourages us to *"be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe."* Just think about these verses. Something happens when we praise God, something unique and awesome - God lives in that praise. Take a moment to think about what that means and how we should respond..

Psalm 100.4 encourages us to, *"Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name."* So we find that we can enter into the gates of God by giving thanks to God. We then go on into his courts (a more 'inner' place) by praise. Praise unlocks gates by which we can enter God's presence and boldly come before the throne of God - Hebrews 4.16. Without thanks and praise, we cannot get into the inner courtroom of God's presence.

## **Psalm 95 - exploring worship**

**1** Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. **2** Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. **3** For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods. **4** In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. **5** The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

In this Psalm, we find so many things about moving into worship, true worship. Worship is the attitude with which we approach God. It is not just words, but an attitude. It is complete submission to God, reverence and awe. In the Old Testament, you could pass through into the holy of holies. In there, God was the only light, only the pure had access and God was the only thing in there (Christ in us symbolised by the tablets in the ark). God is looking for a people who will seek him simply for who he is. Seek his face, not his hand. We worship him, bow down before him, feed on him, enjoy him and receive revelation.

Psalm 95 encourages shouting and music and song. In Revelation 19, we find multitudes shouting and singing praise to God. There is a unique power in music and praise. Psalm 100.4 says, "enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise." This is a 2 stage process - entering the gates with our thanks and then moving further in to his inner courts with our praise. Of the 10 lepers, only the one who returned to thank God received complete restoration. Worship is our response to the revelation that God is the great God, the great King above all other gods. He alone is God and alone is worthy to be praised. We come before God, praise him and extol him through our music and song - these being the physical manifestation of the worship inside of us.

*Zephaniah 3.17 - "The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."*

God rejoices over you with singing. What a beautiful picture. I see a parent singing over their baby. How much more then, should we respond with our hearts and voices!!

Our worship must acknowledge that God is great, that he alone is God and is above every king, authority and power. This is true worship - seeing ourselves in the perspective of the one true almighty, eternal, great, Holy God. Nothing compares to him. He is utterly perfect and all his ways are just. In fact, he is justice and truth. Our songs should have a mystery about them - looking at the fact that God has made all of creation and does things beyond our understanding.

**God is calling a people for himself** - see 1 Chronicles 17.21 (although talking about Israel, the principle is transferable to the church as well). Revelation 21.3 says, "*They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*" Song of Songs is a love song of Jesus speaking to his church. One day Jesus will be the bridegroom and the church will be the bride. In 2 Corinthians 6.16 Paul points out that the church are God's living temple, quoting Old Testament Scriptures, "*I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.*"

**Our Hearts** (adapted from Al Gordon, writing on worshipcentral.org) - God looks at our hearts (1 Samuel 16.7, Proverbs 5.21). He searches us (Jeremiah 17.10 - "*I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind*"). God tests our hearts and knows what's going on in them (Luke 16.15 - Jesus said, "*..God knows your hearts*"). Whatever has our heart's affection has our worship (Matthew 6.21 - "*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*").

## **Our Right Response - Psalm 95**

**Psalm 95.6** Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;

**Psalm 95.7** for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if you hear his voice,

**Psalm 95.8-11** do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did. For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways." So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest."

True worship is associated with a position of the body throughout the Bible. This reflects a life submitted, humble and under the mighty hand of God. In Psalm 95.6, we bow down in worship, kneeling before the Lord our Maker. When we are faced with the truth of who God is, we fall to our face. When faced with a revelation of God, *Moses hid his face (Exodus 3.5) and Isaiah was broken, thinking he was ruined (Isaiah 6.5).*

*Nehemiah 8.5-7: "Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground."*

We are under God's care. We worry so much about life, are so quick to put our trust in things, but not God. But God is the Great Shepherd and we are his people, under his care. A response to God is to trust and obey him. *In Jeremiah 7.23, God says: "Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people."* Obedience to God opens doors from God. Disobedience closes God doors.

In return to our response to God, He does something even more awesome. He extends his hand towards us. In Psalm 95, we are encouraged to listen and hear his voice, and obey him. God longs for us to worship, love and serve him. He loves it! Our response is to love and obey him.

God is always speaking to us. We must listen. God is looking for a people for himself.

*This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. (Hebrews 8.10).*

When we do not worship, we cannot and do not know God's ways. So do not harden your heart. This in turn causes God to become angry with a holy and right anger - and this meant that the people of Israel did not enter God's rest. Only 2 people from the original people entered the Promised Land - Joshua and Caleb. Today, we cannot enter into what God has for us, into his inner courts, unless we worship God with love and obedience.

But in return to our response to God, He does something even more awesome. He extends his hand towards us (through the blood of Jesus) and calls us by name to serve him alone (he is a jealous God). In Psalm 95, we are encouraged to listen and hear his voice, and obey him. God longs for us to worship, love and serve him. He loves it! It's amazing but true. He speaks to us, refines us, helps and guides us. Our response is to love and obey him. Obedience and faithfulness (endurance) is essential to God. When we have a true revelation of who God is, our hearts long to serve and obey him, filled with ever increasing levels of love for God and the world around us. The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 is evidence of a life submitted.

**Our Response** (adapted from Al Gordon, writing on worshipcentral.org) - It is with our hearts that we look for God (Deuteronomy 4.29), love God (Deuteronomy 6.5, 1 John 2.3-6), serve God (Joshua 22.5), meditate on him and his Word (Psalm 19.14, Psalm 119.15,99), hang onto his word and keep it in your heart by learning it (Psalm 119.11), trust in him (Proverbs 3.5), do the will of God (Ephesians 6.6), love others (1 Peter 1.22) and pour out our worship to God (Psalm 62.8). *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."* (Ezekiel 36.26). Our new hearts become our main instrument for worshipping God. We are to, *"sing and make music in your heart to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5.19).

## **God's Holy Character**

Deuteronomy 32.3-4 says, *"I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he."*

Derek Prince points out 7 characteristics of God ('Entering God's Presence, p28):

Light; Love; Justice and Judgement; Anger and Wrath; Mercy and loving kindness; Grace; Power.

We need to be aware of all these aspects of God's character and holiness as we worship him, especially if we are leading others in worship.

## **What Now?**

Ephesians 5.8-11 / 15-21 - find out and then do what will please God's heart..

*Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Take a look at this and then ask yourself - is this the life that I have? If not, it's time to pray to ask God to make changes in your heart and your life. You can't please God by following religious rules but by living in the freedom that comes from the new life in Christ:

*"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (1 Corinthians 3.17).*

*"God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth." - John 4.2. It's time to enter the mystery of worship and worship God in Spirit and in truth.*

## **Worship Quotes / Facts**

"When wonder is dead, the soul becomes a dry bone." (Bishop William Quale)

"Our worship is a response, and will grow and shrink in direct proportion to our view of Him" (Graham Kendrick)

"Music should strike fire from the heart of man, and bring tears from the eyes of women." (Beethoven)

"Above all, sing spiritually, have an eye to God in every word you sing, aim at pleasing Him, more than yourself" (John Wesley)

## **What kind of worshipper are you? (Thanks to ML)**

Thermometer worshipper - comes and their gauge is affected by how hot the worship is on a Sunday.

Thermostat worshippers - turn up, ready, expectant, they set the temperature and others are drawn in...

Which are we? I believe God's calling us to be thermostat worshippers. We do set the temperature for worship - be it here at our churches, or living an example to the world.

### **(From Russ Fenn):**

Bob Dylan once sang that 'you gotta serve somebody' - the same is true about worship. Human beings are created with the inbuilt need to worship. And in our fallen nature that can be worshipping all kinds of things - but all of it will boil down to worshipping 'me'. We will *by default* be self worshippers unless we are caught up into a *greater* orbit than our own - the One True God. In true worship, we have sanity restored to us - we break the circle of our own orbit, our own smallness and are released into His greatness. It is the 'otherness' of God - the fact that God is far far greater than us. To spend a life worshipping oneself is the ultimate madness - the ultimate delusion of grandeur. In true worship only do we find our true perspective & identity. In worship we are expressing things the way they *really are* - the right relationship between the Creator and the created.

We also worship in faith. This means we, in our incompleteness worship God in His completeness. 'In Christ' lies our completeness. He is the guarantor that the present incomplete work in us will one day be complete. That is why we 'fix our eyes on Jesus' in our worship. We take our eyes off ourselves and 'look to Him'. How we feel is immaterial. Yes, we don't casually worship God with unconfessed sin, but we don't get caught up in fruitless navel gazing either. Fixing our eyes on Jesus instead in worship releases faith for all that we face - in ourselves and in life. That's why when we assemble together the bias is 'towards celebration' - because Jesus *has already done* all that was necessary, but also His already finished work, will result in my, your and *our* completeness - in Him.

### **Books / Resources**

There are a number of great books on the subject of worship - from Matt Redman (Facedown, The Unquenchable Worshipper, The Heart of Worship Files, Passion For Your Name), Tim Hughes (Holding Nothing Back), Marcus Green (Salvation's Song), Derek Prince (Entering the Presence of God).

Plus you can find articles and help (music-related) from [worshiptogether.com](http://worshiptogether.com), [worshipcentral.org](http://worshipcentral.org) and [mattredman.com](http://mattredman.com) and many other excellent sites.

## **Conclusion**

Worship leading is something many young people want to do. This is great, as God is moving in power through contemporary worship across the world. But with great gifting comes greater responsibility. With leadership comes the need for great accountability and a heart that is prepared to serve and be a slave to others. It is not about self promotion or fame. It means being at the building first and leaving last. It means being highly organised and developing great communication skills, working with a range of people and abilities. It means a commitment to constant self improvement. Most importantly, God will take you on a deeper, more exciting but often harder and more difficult journey than other people. Why? Because the role is so significant. Music and leading others in worship is incredibly important and powerful. Satan fell because of pride and he was a worship leader in heaven (Ezekiel 28.13-15). Therefore we must be incredibly careful and humble before God, daily - in our private and public lives (in that order). We must have absolute integrity and guard our hearts, be utterly and fiercely surrendered to God and his Word completely, completely open to his Spirit. If you think you're up to the role, step forward in faith and God will lead you. My prayers are with you.