

Worship is Change

Worship changes us. However it begins with letting go. We worship best when we empty ourselves. That's the mystery of worship. We must find ways to completely abandon our self-importance. It's a paradigm that is opposite of "show business." Amazingly we seem to get the two paradigms confused. Worship is mystery. Not agendas, not strategy, and certainly not business. It's the mighty confession that we are totally at His mercy and covered by His beloved grace. It's not a celebration of glitz. It is a celebration of brokenness. Worship is a rehearsal for eternity.

A.W. Tozer said it like this:

"No one who knows Him intimately can ever be flippant in His presence."

We worship a God who changes everything. He apprehends our destiny and forges new trails in our lives. In the midst of our brokenness, like holy putty put in the eyes of a blind man, we are only asked to be still and obedient to the instructions. I often lose the simplicity of transformation. I can't transform myself any more than I can jump to the moon. It's surrender to something bigger than me. I must jump in the rocket and hold on. Even though I can't do it on my own I have to acknowledge that he is changing me constantly. We can either be changed by worship or we refuse to worship and we can be changed by life. When we're changed by life, it's rarely for the good. Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, was changed by life. I read her words in the book of Ruth and I am reminded of people I know who share her experience: "Don't call me Naomi. Instead, call me Mara, for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me home empty." Suffering through the death of her husband and both of her sons, she echoed a deep sense of

hopelessness and yet God wasn't through with Naomi, even though it seemed as if she was through with God.

Worship is a relentless act of engaging God. We take the focus off of ourselves and cry out to the one who gave us the breath to cry out. As a worship leader I realize that there can be no pretences, no masks, and no bartered exchanges. It must come from deep in our bones or it is nothing. It's like serving make-believe food or wearing the emperor's new clothes. It's shallow, trite, and powerless. It's lukewarm water and baby food bland. But as painful as it is, when we come broken before Him privately he comes to us in the sanctuary of worship. When I honestly engage Him, He engages me. Remember the night long rough and tumble bout of Jacob fighting God's ambassador. At the end of the night before the sun rose again, this otherworldly man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

God changes us when we come into His presence. He changed Simon to Peter, Abram to Abraham, and Saul to Paul. Each name changed in a time of clarity and sudden unexpected worship. Every weekend we have the same people coming into our places of worship. Their names are wounded, worried, hopeless, doubting, skeptical, broken, trite, distracted and weary. As you read their names, I would bet you know their faces! But something happens when we gather together. When God is exalted our names begin to change. We look around and see the faces now hopeful, trusting, peaceful, submissive, humbled and blessed. At least that's what we pray would happen. And when it does we can say to each other. This is church. This is worship. As you consider how to meet God in worship consider these 10 truths of worship.

1. **Worship must begin privately** before it is experienced publicly.
2. **Worship is your gift to God.** If you don't participate in

the worship you attend you are disgracing His presence.

3. Worship requires you to find the experience that allows you to **express your love to God authentically**.
4. No matter what style or genre of worship you experience, if its boring it's not of God.
5. **Worship is all about change**. If you expect things to stay the same in worship you might be experiencing something that is self-defeating.
6. Worship should touch the logical, emotional, and supernatural.
7. **Worship must be vernacular**. We should not have to enter a past era to experience worship.
8. **Worship is personal**. Worship is not a voyeuristic form of entertainment where we watch others connect with God but refuse to make it personal.
9. **Worship is dangerous**. We must approach it with a sense of awe, fear and expectancy.
10. **Worship is eternal**. Start enjoying Heaven today through worship.