

2. What God thinks of our worship

Recap

- We are all worshippers
- We have exchanged the worship of God for worship of the things he has made – our default setting is idolatry
- True worshippers are defined primarily by the object of their worship
- Our calling as worship leaders is to call others to join with us as we magnify God as the Object of true worship

- **What do you think are the qualities that make a good worship leader?**

- **What does God think?**

- If true worship has an object, and that object is God, then we must ask the question: what do you think about our worship, God?

- **Who is our worship really for?**

Zechariah 7:2 The people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regemmelech, along with their attendants, to seek the Lord's favour. 3 They were to ask this question of the prophets and the priests at the Temple of the Lord of Heaven's Armies: "Should we continue to mourn and fast each summer on the anniversary of the Temple's destruction, as we have done for so many years?"

4 The Lord of Heaven's Armies sent me this message in reply: 5 "Say to all your people and your priests, 'During these seventy years of exile, when you fasted and mourned in the summer and in early autumn, **was it really for me** that you were fasting? 6 And even now in your holy festivals, **aren't you eating and drinking just to please yourselves?**

9 "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: Judge fairly, and show mercy and kindness to one another. 10 Do not oppress widows, orphans, foreigners, and the poor. And do not scheme against each other.

- v3 – questions about the practices of our worship are legitimate
- v5-6 – but it's not where God starts – he's interested primarily in more foundational issues. What is my heart like? What is my life like?
- v9-10 – worship should be formative, defining who we are and what we do from God's perspective

Offering acceptable worship to God

- Acceptable or authentic?

1 Pet 2:5 you are ... offering spiritual sacrifices **acceptable** to God through Jesus Christ.

Heb 13:28 "...let us be thankful, and so worship God **acceptably** with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."

- 1 Peter reminds us that the whole basis for God finding anything we do acceptable is because of what Jesus has done on our behalf. This foundational truth is vital for our security as we serve – our acceptance before God is secure because it rests in Christ
- At the same time, Heb 13 reminds us that, *in response to Jesus work*, our worship should be characterised by certain qualities: thankfulness, reverence and awe.
- Holding these two in healthy tension will help us strive on in our calling as worshippers, while at the same time resting in the peace that Christ has won for us.

What is God looking for in us as worship leaders?

- God is interested in character ahead of competence, because he is more interested in people than programmes.
- As worship leaders, we must be vigilant about the idols in our own heart – who or what are we serving
 - 2 Ki 17:41 Even while these people were worshipping the LORD, they were serving their idols.
 - Ps 106:36 They served their idols, which became a snare to them.
 - 1 Jn 5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

What are some of the idols we as worship leaders in particular must be on our guard against?

1. Being a worshipper

Example of Jesus during his temptation – worship = core orientation of our lives. True worship involves making God the centre of gravity of our lives, the reference point for all that we think, say and do.

Heart attitudes to develop

- **Strive to make God the object of your worship**

Ps 115:1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us
but to your name be the glory,
because of your love and faithfulness.

Evidences of seeking our own glory include:

1. Am I more concerned about how my performance was received than how people engaged with God?

- **Pursue humility**

Isa 66:1-2 This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word."

Evidences of pride include:

1. Do I pray before leading, cultivating my awareness of my need for God?
2. Do I react negatively against feedback and critique? Am I easily offended?
3. Am I bitter if someone else is chosen ahead of me for service?
4. Do I react negatively when someone new joins the team? Am I easily threatened by others?

"Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, cleverer, or better-looking than others. It's the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest." CS Lewis

- **Remember to say thank-you!**

Ps 50:23 He who sacrifices thank offerings honours me, and he prepares way so that I may show him the salvation of God."

- Gratitude displaces grumbling
- Gratitude fosters humility

Evidences of ungratefulness include:

1. Have I become used to my salvation? Do I remember where I have been saved from and what I have been saved into?
2. Am I more focused on the problems that exist and the progress still to be made than on evidences of God's grace already at work in our church?
3. Do I readily fall into a critical spirit? Am I judgmental of the motives of others?
4. Do I cultivate a natural sense of celebration of what God is doing in our church and in the lives of others?

- **Seek a servant's heart**

Phil 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant...

Evidences of lack of servanthood include:

1. Do I think I deserve to be treated differently because of my role?
2. How do I react if I'm asked to make changes to my set list at the last minute?
3. How willingly will I lay aside my own preferences for the sake of the good of others?

- **Don't let yourself be ruled by the "artists' temperament"**

Eph 4:22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Evidences of being ruled by the artists' temperament include:

"Some of the things that make us good artist can also bring great conflict into our lives and can actually work against us as we try to grow spiritually and minister to the church. For example, it's okay to be introverted but it's not okay to be self-absorbed. It's okay to be in touch with our feelings, but it's not okay to be controlled by them all the time. It's okay to be sensitive, but it's not okay to be overly sensitive or chronically defensive. It's okay to do things with excellence but it's not okay to be overly perfectionistic." Rory Noland

I know we know all these things, but given the tendency of our hearts to run after idols, even making a god-thing out of a good-thing like leading in worship, it's good for us to reflect from time to time. To pause and ask the Holy Spirit to expose the secrets of our hearts, that he might bring us to repentance and make us more like Christ.

2. Leading as a worshipper

Leadership qualities to demonstrate

- A worship leader is a leader!
- If we want to be effective as leaders, those whom other will readily follow, Godly character must be readily observable in our lives

1 Tim 3:8 In the same way, deacons must be

- well respected
- not double-tongued,
- not addicted to much wine
- not greedy for dishonest gain.

9 They must

- be committed to the mystery (open secret) of the faith now revealed
- with a clear conscience.

10 And let them also,

- be tested first,
- then let them serve as deacons.
- if they prove themselves blameless.

See Gilbert's talk from the Pursuing God series on 1 Timothy 3:8-16 (it's talk 8 in the series), where Gilbert hits us full on with the challenge of Christian leadership

3. Leading people as we worship

A pastoral heart to develop

We lead *people* in corporate worship

- We are there to serve God by serving others.
- Much of the New Testament references to the gathered worship of Christians emphasises the horizontal dimension of what's going on
 - Heb 10:24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
- We have been granted a position of delegated leadership by the Elders, and so, we serve under them, helping to contribute to the pastoral care of the church.
 - The biblical responsibility of elders towards the church is clear: 1 Pet 5 'So I exhort the elders among you...shepherd the flock of God that is among you...'
 - The elders have delegated some of that responsibility to us as we lead. We are to be those who develop a pastoral heart for all those whom we lead.
 - 1 Thes 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

How often do we complain about the people we're leading in worship? How do we voice those complaints? What is revealed about our heart through this?

How do we foster Christ's heart for his church?

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

See the April 08 edition of Transformission. Better still, watch or listen to CJ Mahaney's talk 'Pastoral Character and Loving People' on 1 Cor 1:1-9, available from www.theresurgence.com/text_and_context_media

1 Cor 1:4 I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.

- Seek to understand God's **call** on us and our church
- Seek after evidences of God's **grace** at work in our church
- Place your confidence in **God's ability** to complete the work he has begun in us