



## Greater Sydney SDA Conference

# Thinking About Inspiring Worship

"Bring to Me all the people who are Mine, whom I made for My glory,  
whom I formed and made."

Isaiah 43:7 (New Living Translation)

"Inspiring worship is a personal and corporate encounter with the living God. Both personal and corporate worship must be infused with the presence of God resulting in times of joyous exultation and times of quiet reverence. Inspiring worship is not driven by a particular style of ministry focus group – but rather the shared experience of God's awesome presence." Bob Logan *Releasing Your Church's Potential*

"There is probably no area of church life in which the important distinction between 'models' and 'principles' is so frequently ignored."  
Christian Schwarz , *NCD Guide 30*

Inspiring Worship is about the community of God being in an environment in where they honor God for who He is, experience the presence of God and grow in their relationship with Him.

### **What works against inspiring corporate worship**

A lack of orientation toward community.

- Different age groups
- Different spiritual pathways

Poorly planned and delivered services.

Lack of intentionality.

Christians who go to fulfil their duty – who go to do the pastor and God a favour.

A poor theology of worship in the congregation.

**We're going to do everything in our power to create the most prayer-filled, practical, creative, compelling, Christ-centred, relevant services that we possibly can.**

### **Created To Worship**

Dallas Willard writes; "We were made for worship and our hearts are restless until they have found the object of worship that we were created to honour." (*Spirit of The Disciplines*)

We either worship God or we worship creation, there is no middle ground. We have all been created to worship something – we choose.

### **It's About God**

While we are blessed and encouraged through worshipping God our goal, when we worship, is to bring pleasure to God, not ourselves. If you have ever said, 'I didn't get anything out of worship today,' you have misunderstood worship. Worship is for God.

Psalm 147:11 says, "The Lord takes pleasure with those who worship Him and trust His love". Just like a parent loves the feel of their child's unsolicited tight hug God takes pleasure when we honour Him.

In Isaiah 29 God complains about worship that is half-hearted and hypocritical. The people were offering God stale prayers, insincere praise, empty words and man-made rituals without even thinking about their meaning. 'These people come near to me with their mouths and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up of rules taught by men.'

As Chuck Swindoll once put it, our tendency is to worship our work, work at our play and play at our worship. But playing at worship will cause us to miss out on all that worship can bring to our lives, beginning with its role of helping us order our lives around God.' (James Emery White, *You Can Experience A Spiritual Life*)

### **What Is Worship?**

If we fail to worship God, we always find a substitute, even if it ends up being ourselves.' We either worship God or we worship creation, there is no middle ground. We have all been created to worship something –

we choose. It is not just a movement of the mind, but a rich and complex action, which consumes our very nature. It affects the way we live life.

We were made for worship and our hearts are restless until they have found the object of worship that we were created to honour. (Dallas Willard) The word worship literally means 'worth-ship' and it involves just that – giving worth or honour to someone or something.

Worship is a lifestyle. In Romans 12 Paul talks about being a living sacrifice in **all** you do. He says that this is your spiritual act of worship. Worship is far more than music, a service that happens at 11:00am on Sabbath, or time spent reading the morning devotional. Often we think of worship as a particular style of music – a worship song as compared to praise. Worship is not the style of a song – it's whether that song expresses to God the thoughts and feelings which arise from your heart. Worship can happen in many ways: singing, communion, baptism, prayer and awe over nature plus a myriad of other thoughts, actions and feelings that can be expressions to God.

### **Worship Is Not For Your Benefit**

We are blessed and encouraged through worshipping God. However, when we worship our goal is to bring pleasure to God, not ourselves. If you have ever said, 'I didn't get anything out of worship today,' you have misunderstood worship. Worship is for God. Of course there are many benefits to worship, however our motive is to bring glory and pleasure to our Creator, not to 'get something out of it'.

In Isaiah 29 God complains about worship that is half-hearted and hypocritical. The people were offering God stale prayers, insincere praise, empty words and man-made rituals without even thinking about their meaning. 'These people come near to me with their mouths and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up of rules taught by men.'

### **Worship Is Not Part Of Your Life: It Is Your Life**

We are told to worship continually, Isaiah 29:13. In the Bible people praised God at work, at home, in jail and even in bed. Your routine activities can be transformed into an act of worship when you do it for the praise, glory and pleasure of God. Martin Luther said, 'A dairymaid can milk cows to the glory of God.' Work becomes worship when you dedicate it to God and perform it with an awareness of His presence.

Perhaps its time to take stock of who you are as a worshipper. What do you do when you worship? What do you bring to offer as worship to God?

## **God Seeks Worshippers**

Worship is our response to the overtures of love from the heart of the Father... Forms and rituals do not produce worship, nor does the disuse of forms and rituals. We can use all the right techniques and methods, we can have the best possible liturgy, but we have not worshipped the Lord until spirit touches spirit.

'God seeks worshippers from the heart, rather than worship consisting essentially of ritual forms conducted at some particular place.' (*SDA Commentary*)

### **In Spirit**

Worshipping in Spirit is to do so in all sincerity, being genuine and real – applying truth to the heart. Sometimes we can be very head oriented and not let the implications travel the worlds longest 50cm, between the head and the heart. Micah points out this distinction in chapter 6:7-8. Jesus said, 'It's not just whom you worship that matters, but how you worship'.

God is pleased when our worship is authentic. God looks past our words to see the attitude of our hearts. While the heart is about emotions, God is not seeking showmanship or phoniness in worship. He wants your honest, real love.

There's an old story about a man who went to church with an angel as his guide. Every seat in the sanctuary was filled, but there was something strange about the service. The pianist moved her fingers over the keys but no music came from its strings. The choir sang and their lips moved but no sound was heard. The pastor read from the Bible but the man with the angel did not detect the rustle of pages. The Lord's Prayer was recited but not a single syllable heard. Turning to the angel the man said, 'I don't understand. What does all this mean? I see that a service is being held, but I hear nothing.' The angel replied, 'You hear nothing because there is nothing to be heard. You see the service as God sees it. These people honour Him with their lips. But their hearts are far from Him. Worship without the heart is not worship.'

God wants you to worship sincerely, however sincerity alone is not enough – you can be sincerely wrong... That's why both spirit and truth are required. God-pleasing worship is both deeply emotional and deeply doctrinal.

### **In Truth**

When worship is not from the heart it is false. Cain and Abel both brought sacrifices to God. However, Abel's was what God asked for,

while Cain's was what suited him. Both worshipped, however one of the brothers worshipped out of surrender and the right attitude while the other came from self. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for the way tradition, pride and their own comfort and greed had taken over from genuine worship. Throughout Daniel and Revelation we see the big issue in the end-times being true and false worship. It's not about if you are worshipping or not but what attitude you come to worship with. When we read about modern Babylon, it still worships, but does so in a false 'counterfeit' way, choosing self over God. You and I can drift into this type of worship very easily when we substitute what the world tells us is important over God.

## **Celebrate God**

Take a look at the spirit of celebration through the 96<sup>th</sup> Psalm:

Sing to the Lord a brand-new song! Earth and everyone in it, sing! Sing to the Lord – worship the Lord! For the Lord is great and worth a thousand Hallelujahs... Brave, Yahweh. Everyone join in the great shout: Encore! In awe before your beauty, in awe before your might. Bring gifts and celebrate...everyone worship! Get out the message – Yahweh rules! Let's hear it from the Sky, with Earth joining in and a huge round of applause from Sea. Let Wilderness turn cartwheels, animals, come dance, put every tree of the forest in the choir – an extravaganza before the Lord as he comes (The Message)

The Bible says that every good gift is from God. Everything good, everything noble, everything praiseworthy, everything that has worth and merit and truth and goodness is from Him. One thing that moves your spiritual life from one that is drab, lifeless and boring to one that is exciting, energetic and joyful is to learn to celebrate all of that! Worship is God's way of saying, 'Life is meant to be a celebration of all that I am, all that I have done and all that I am doing in you, with you and through you' (James White). When you add some of that celebration to your spiritual life it makes the world of difference.

Have you been too casual about worship, too laid back, taken it too much for granted? Would you be willing to suffer for the experience? When Jesus said 'Love God with all your strength' he pointed out that worship takes time, effort and energy. It is not always convenient or comfortable.

## **Reflection:**

How might you ensure that you don't just carry out acts of worship, but that your life is an act of worship?

What factors might hinder you from surrendering to God in all aspects of your life?

Would your friends say that Jesus is at the centre of your life-governing system?

## **BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF WORSHIP**

(Papatoetoe SDA Church)

**As worship leaders we will stay focused on God, making our own personal worship experience a priority.** (I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. Galatians 2:20)

**Our worship will be Biblically based, centred on Jesus and His saving grace.**

By beholding Jesus we become changed- If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me. (Everything, all truths must cluster around the cross...must be taught in the light that streams from Calvary. (Gospel Workers, pg 326)

**Worship will be a real experience – from the heart and the head, involving individual participation and experience**

(I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. Ezekiel 36:26; True worship is in spirit and in truth John 4:23)

**Our worship will include a variety of experiences, considering different age levels, intellectual levels, learning styles and current cultural norms.** (eg. Jesus taught fishermen to be fishers of men. Farmers to sow seed and harvest for the kingdom; Age – Samuel worshiped differently as a boy to a man. 1Samuel)

**Our worship experience will build community in regard to style and music** (Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honouring one another above yourselves. Romans 12:10)

**Our worship programmes will be excellent in their quality, while allowing for individual ability** (Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. Colossians 3:23)