

Worship Team Training - Archives



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May ARCHIVED ARTICLES

5.12.08

Pictures From Santa Fe, NM

Just got back from NM. Man, the mountains and the cool temperature environment was outstanding! I met with about 22 close friends and worship leaders from around the country. The southwest style food was great coupled with the rich time of camaraderie among friends. A special thanks to Martin Allen of Worship Foundations, Karen Lafferty and Sandy Hoffman – you guys rock!

We discussed the value and biblical importance of biblical worship. Not by the songs we sing or what songs we sing, neither did we share what tools we employed or the kinds of technology used in our services. I don't know if this bores anybody, but for us, discussing the significance of biblical worship served as an important topic for today. Reason? It's great to have a well tuned service, but three startling questions rocked us: 1. Is the local church merely putting on a "show," to our congregations? 2. Are we truly worshipping? 3. Who is the service for?

We are surrounded by a popular individualistic world-view that has an anything-goes mentality – even in other worship movements and local churches. Biblical foundations places worship in a more Christ-centered context (1Cn 16:29; Ps. 98:5; Ex. 24:7; Lk. 4:15-21; Ac. 4:31; Lk. 22:14:20; Mt. 26:30). There is no doubt that both traditional and contemporary churches face their set of challenges of maintaining biblical and cultural relevancy for today's people. The toughest point I see is how do we maintain an accurate biblical view, while relating authentically to the world as Jesus? To often, we dress our services in many different styles in order to appeal or to "show" to the masses. There also seems to be rivalries among local churches to affirm their efforts over another. Making services relevant to our communities is needed; like anything else, we can get caught in the motions and our purpose loses vitality. Unfortunately, this has been the case for decades in battles over preference issues: music styles, our appearance, culture as well as old arguments of carpet color, bible study programs and what the pastor ate last night. These minor subjects seem to override the spiritual priorities of the Church.

It is true that a church must have a defined DNA of style of worship, but biblical worship, reading of the Word and the preaching of the Gospel, should not be compromised at the expense of relevancy. Praise be to God, that he is not concerned over style preferences in our attempts to worship Him. He does not only hear traditional hymns, contemporary choruses or responsive readings; neither is he concerned about the caliber of our bands, video-eye-candy or catchy sermons. What He is concerned with is the condition of our hearts and the attitude of our souls in worship. Our concern does need to be in how we present ourselves to the world by our heart and biblical posture.

God is honored by a contrite spirit of worship. The worship service is for God and He alone. The Gospel belongs to the work of God in missions. The balance is found in how we rightly anchor worship services on the Bible while relating to the world via the Gospel. Through ardent praise and response from the community of worship, the unchurched and de-churched can experience the Gospel and God's unconditional love through authentic relationships.

John Piper put it clearly in "Let The Nations Be Glad," that evangelism (missions) comes out of worship – this means that worship comes first. For worship services to be ardent, authentic and of relevant substance, the Word of God needs to be the foundation for conducting services and not by our style preferences to govern our praise. Neither should the Gospel be governed by how the church presents a "style" in order to show relevancy, otherwise we appear to the world as just a show. What are your thoughts?

Love you guys - see you on the next post! bd.

5.2.08

Back From San Antonio

I just got back from doing a clinic in San Antonio with University Baptist Church. The weather was outstanding and the people were even better! No, I did not get a chance to visit the Alamo, but we'll give another visit later; this clinic was the bomb!

We had around 45 people in attendance on the weekend; I must say: this clinic was definitely inspiring. The worship team ministry graciously went out of its way in their hospitality and kindness – I thank them all for the rich time we had together!

Friday night we discussed the meaning of worship; folks shared with me the following morning that they had a renewed perspective concerning worship. They began to understand the biblical value: Worship begins with God and ends with God. Saturday was a blowout of music theory, hands on training and band/vocal work. All of the attendees fully agreed that they wish we had more time for the hands on training. I could not agree more; I only wish we had more hours in the day among the other pertinent category topics. It's like the old saying: time flies when you're having fun!

Two greatest takeaways from the team:

1. Getting out of the way musically.

Among the many “aha moments,” the team really pulled together as they understood the value: the Art of 100%. This concept is nothing new as it was originally introduced by my mentors from the Maranatha! Worship Leader Workshop Band. The band formed a new appreciation of their role in supporting the singers (as the leaders). The singers learned from the band in forming their own core value in better understanding musicianship and work ethic. On a humorous note, each of them boasted: “well I guess what they do is not so easy!” Each of them truly learned the value of musicianship, teamwork and most importantly, balance-control. I was told that this church had major sound issues. At the end of Saturday when the team implemented the Art of 100%, I asked about “those sound problems,” and the worship leader said: “we fixed them!”

2. Getting out of the way spiritually.

It was obvious that this team learned the importance of allowing God to use them as a conduit of worship leading. Removing self and placing God first to lead is a critical aspect for all of us to employ in our leadership. Each team member, through both smiles and tears, shared with me how God had touched and breathed the flame of encouragement in getting to know Him more - deeply. These guys put on their “mock,” worship service and let me tell you, I was in worship myself. Chills run up down my sides as I experienced God moving within their souls. When Sunday arrived, the house of worship was filled with such a joy and excitement that you could see the light of the Son shining through the hearts, eyes and mouths as we praised and worshiped God. This team is so very special to me as my heart was moved. I so look forward to our next clinic soon!

Testimony From The San Antonio Clinic Weekend:

Branon opened our retreat with a lively discussion of Biblical worship. His experience and candid evaluations encouraged our team and revealed our potential. We walked away with a renewed sense of responsibility including fresh insights and practical techniques for reaching our goals. There is little wonder Branon is such a sought after clinician and worship leader. All he needs is MORE COWBELL!

Michael J. Peeler

Associate Pastor of Music & Worship
University Baptist Church

5.1.08

The Challenge of Worship and Evangelism

In the worship of our churches today there is a popular movement of moving toward deeper levels of cultural relevancy. Music, styles and preaching formats have changed, along with the design of our environment, landscapes and architecture. Overtime, we as a people have also changed in our forms of relativity, communication and education in addition to our ever increasing complex world. Our approach and purpose for worship has also shifted. However, what has not changed is God Himself, the Word and what He says about worship. Maintaining an accurate biblical model of worship is something that

seems to be in competition with style and format issues in the local church. As a result, our worship is distracted and the message of the Gospel is blurred.

We are surrounded by a popular individualistic world-view that has an anything-goes mentality – even in local churches. Biblical foundations and history places worship in a more meaningful context (1Cn 16:29; Ps. 98:5; Ex. 24:7; Lk. 4:15-21; Ac. 4:31; Lk. 22:14-20; Mt. 26:30. There is no doubt that both traditional and contemporary churches face their set of challenges of maintaining biblical and cultural relevancy for today's people. The toughest point I see is how do we maintain an accurate biblical view, while relating authentically to the world as Jesus? Too often, we dress our services in many different styles in order to appeal to the masses. Although, making services relevant to our communities is needed, like anything else, we can get caught in the motions and our purpose loses vitality. Unfortunately, this has been the case for decades in battles over preference issues: worship-war music styles, carpet color, bible study programs and what the pastor ate last night, which override the spiritual priorities of the church.

It is true that a church must have a defined DNA of style of worship, but biblical worship, reading of the Word and the preaching of the Gospel, should not be compromised at the expense of relevancy. Praise be to God, that he is not concerned over style preferences in our attempts to worship Him. He does not only hear traditional hymns, contemporary choruses or responsive readings; neither is he concerned about the caliber of our bands, video-eye-candy or catchy sermons. God hears our worship - giving Him worth. However, when our worship services shift from the centrality of Christ to self, we are simply making noise as we are reminded in Amos 5:21-23:

"I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps."

God is concerned with the condition of our hearts and the attitude of our souls in worship (Rm. 12:1). Our reasonable (default) act of worship is to offer ourselves as living sacrifices - holy and pleasing to Him. If we are truly the bride of Christ, our concern needs to be how we are to present ourselves and the worship of God in a way that is honoring to the Bridegroom among the witnesses. God is honored by a contrite spirit of worship. The worship service is for God and He alone. However, through ardent praise and response from the community of worship, the unchurched and de-churched can experience the Gospel and God's unconditional love through authentic believers.

John Piper put it clearly in his book "Let The Nations Be Glad," that evangelism (missions) comes out of worship – this means that worship comes first. For worship services to be ardent, authentic and of relevant substance, the Word of God needs to be the foundation for conducting services and not by our style preferences to govern our praise. The worship and work of God is of the essence - not by our standards of style preference.