

Up Close and Personal

It's too easy to take for granted. We're too prone to become numb to the pure wonder of it. How amazing it is to consider that when we lift our voices to God in praise—as Psalm 22:3 reminds us—He inhabits our praises. Think about that. The God of all creation is moved by us, His children, when we worship.

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However, I've discovered that true worship is more than music or a song. At the heart of worship is the Lord's desire for relationship and communion with us. Another word to describe this would be *intimacy*.

Worship of the Father and intimacy with the Father go hand in hand. We can't really have one without the other. In order to pour out our hearts to Him—not just with music, but with our lives—we must pursue a real relationship with God.

It requires transparency. True and loyal relationship carries the weight and responsibility to be honest and completely yourself with the other person—and God, more than anyone, wants our honesty and truth in worship. As Jesus declared in John 4:23, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks" (NIV).

This kind of honesty with God will throw open the door for a real and transformative relationship with Him. You'll experience real intimacy and all the amazing benefits that flow from it. As astonishing as it sounds, God's greatest desire is ... us! And the more we experience real communion with Him, the bigger our desire grows for His glorious manifested

presence.

I suspect that for some, the word *intimacy* is a little scary. Rejection, pain and disappointment from the past can cause us to shy away from vulnerability and transparency in relationships—even a relationship with one we know is loving, like our Father God. We can't help but guard ourselves against being hurt again. But may I encourage you with this? Find healing in that place, and don't allow those deep hurts to rob you of the riches of a real relationship with the Lord.

Whether you're a worship leader, a church leader or someone who's simply reading these words because you love the Lord and long to know Him in a more meaningful way, I am confident you'll benefit from pursuing great levels of intimacy with the Father.

Each of us has our unique story of how we came to know His love and grace, but one thing is true for all of us. Somewhere along the journey of our lives, we had an encounter with God—an encounter in which we fell in love with the fact that the God of the universe hears us when we worship.

We've experienced that miraculous moment of His coming and filling a room with His presence. He wants that intimate experience of His nearness and glory to be not a rarity, but a daily part of our lives—not something we experience only in church, but also in our most common moments.

Yes, God is so very good. Let's respond to that goodness by letting our worship be vulnerable, transparent and real. And let's live with the breathless expectancy that our amazing God can and will invade our days.³

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