

The Benefits of True Worship

The benefits that spring from true worship go beyond just experiencing God through music. For one, it opens people's hearts to hear the Word of God. "Scripture says Judah plowed the fallow ground," says Robert Morris, senior pastor of Gateway Church. "*Judah* means 'praise.' After we've been in worship, my job is simply to get up and just drop the seed in prepared soil."

"We believe that half of the gospel is preached before the sermon even starts," Haas says. As a result, he puts a heavy emphasis on lyrics. "Like Wesley thought, theology can be taught through worship music. So we are wary of doing too many songs that lack theological substance."

Brian Johnson, worship pastor at Bethel Church in Redding, Calif., and vice president of the new record label Bethel Music, is a proponent of prophetic worship. In recent years, he believes many churches have been turned off by this term because "it feels like it's rambling and nonsense where nobody knows what is happening." But he believes worship pastors should tastefully experiment with it.

"Sometimes I'll be leading worship and will feel like God wants to release hope in the room, for example," he shares. "We'll just let the instruments play, I'll back off the mic and come up with a little chorus. As people are singing that melody, they are actually singing themselves out of that situation of depression, or whatever it is."

"I believe we should be singing prophetic declarations over our churches, over our lives," he says. "We should be singing what we want to see God do in five years—it will bear great fruit in our lives."

Finally, a byproduct of true worship is that it often leads unbelievers to Christ. "I think many people feel that if you

have interactive worship, a lost person might feel left out," Morris says. "I think worship is one of the best things a church can do for evangelism. Worship is actually what brings people to Christ."

Today, it's imperative for worship pastors and believers to set a new standard if the church is going to be known for true worship, rather than just quality entertainment.

"I long to see a body of Christ that recognizes its role as worshippers," says Walker-Smith. "I want to see a standard that is unwavering in its devotion to God's presence and seeks Him above all else."

Carol Chapman Stertz, a freelance journalist in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, is thankful for the Scripture songs she learned as a child.