

What's Wrong With Contemporary Worship?

Worship—it's the hottest fad to hit the Christian music industry since contemporary Christian music came into its own more than 25 years ago. Worship music heads the lists of many musical surveys and reports that come across my desk. Even artists who are known for other types of music have jumped on the worship bandwagon.

Bands are doing worship tours around the country. Christian radio stations are adding more and more worship to their programming, and compilations of the top worship songs of the year sell like hotcakes and zoom to the top of the charts.

Worship has also invaded Sunday church services. When I was a kid, worship was limited to singing a hymn about the deity of God. The rest of the song service was spent singing testimonial and feel-good songs.

Nowadays, worship songs and choruses based on Scripture dominate the church gathering. Traditional churches offer special services featuring contemporary worship, and charismatic and Pentecostal churches tout their worship programs as the No. 1 way to get new members.

Let's face it—worship is all the rage. It's everywhere. It's taking over. Wow!

But wait a minute. I have sat through countless church services and listened to thousands of songs (on the radio as well as on CDs, tapes and even long-play records). In light of my observations, I must ask this question: What about His presence?

As I see it, true worship is designed for (or at least offers the byproduct of) entering the **presence of God**. I am not

talking about the popular word *presence* found in many Christian lyrics. I am talking about the felt, manifest presence of Jehovah, the Creator of the universe, the eternal and everlasting King, the passionate lover of every believer's soul.

Where is His presence?

Does your soul feel a void after listening to Christian music for a while or after leaving church on Sunday morning? Does anyone recognize the gaping hole? My friend, we are missing out on one of the greatest and most powerful gifts freely available to the body of Christ today—His presence, His glorious presence!

Music fads sometimes become so popular that the listener loses the true message by getting caught up in the fad itself. This is what British worship leader Matt Redman was writing about when, during a fast from all music in his church, he penned the lyrics “I’m coming back to the heart of worship/And it’s all about You/It’s all about You, Jesus.” I believe Matt had a wake-up call one day—a revelation that although they were singing songs and playing instruments in his church, God’s presence was nowhere to be found.

True worship is not a fad; it never has been and never will be. True worship is **eternal**. Other trends come and go, but spirit-and-truth worship always has been what the Father is seeking (John 4:23), and it always will be the unending song of the elders, the angels and the redeemed that will ring throughout heaven for all eternity.

Why should we seek this often-elusive gift from on high? In the worship experience, the presence of God is what transforms the heart of man. When you truly **encounter** Him, you cannot help but be changed. It’s automatic.

Why? It’s so simple. Big God, little man. When the presence of the Creator of all visits your space, anything can happen.

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