

Does Trend of Concert-Like Worship Help or Hinder Intimacy With God?

A worship experience in which an individual can actually sense the presence of God and respond with heartfelt gratitude and praise is, in my opinion, one of the greatest aspects of the Spirit-filled life.

Worship and praise as central parts of church services go back many decades in the Pentecostal/charismatic movement. The advent of the Charismatic movement brought a new level of worship choruses and created an entire industry with organizations like Integrity Music rising to the forefront. Since then, Hillsong and many others have taken “worship music” to a level of sophistication those early Pentecostals would have never envisioned.

Today, this style of worship has come to many non-charismatic congregations, and you can attend churches as different as Saddleback Church, pastored by Rick Warren; Skyline Church, pastored by Jim Garlow; or Lakewood Church, pastored by Joel Osteen, and not distinguish any difference in worship styles. Saddleback is a Baptist church, Skyline is Wesleyan and Lakewood has charismatic roots.

However, a trend has developed that concerns many of us in that the worship portion for many services, particularly at Charismatic and Pentecostal churches, is that it is almost more like a well-produced concert than it is true worship from the heart.

The next time you attend a service, turn around and see how

many people are actually participating and how many are simply listening.

My brother, Paul Strang, from Lexington, Kentucky, has been involved in music and has served as a worship leader for most of his career.

In the 1970s, he actually traveled the country with Terry MacAlmon and another man and ministered in many churches. In fact, it was at one such church in Kentucky where he met his wife, Hazie, in 1975.

Recently, I recorded a podcast with my brother in which we discuss this trend toward concert-style worship. Paul has a special gift of bringing people into a worship experience. It is very intimate, and although he sings many of the newer songs, his style and methods are more along the lines of the era before worship-leading became big business and the worship experience became a concert rather than an intimate time with God.

You'll want to listen to the podcast, and you'll even hear a few funny stories as two brothers banter back and forth. I believe Paul shares some real insights about worship that you'll appreciate.

Please take time to leave your own comments, and perhaps we can begin a dialogue where iron sharpens iron and the body of Christ can reevaluate whether worship as it now happens in most churches is moving in the right direction.

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