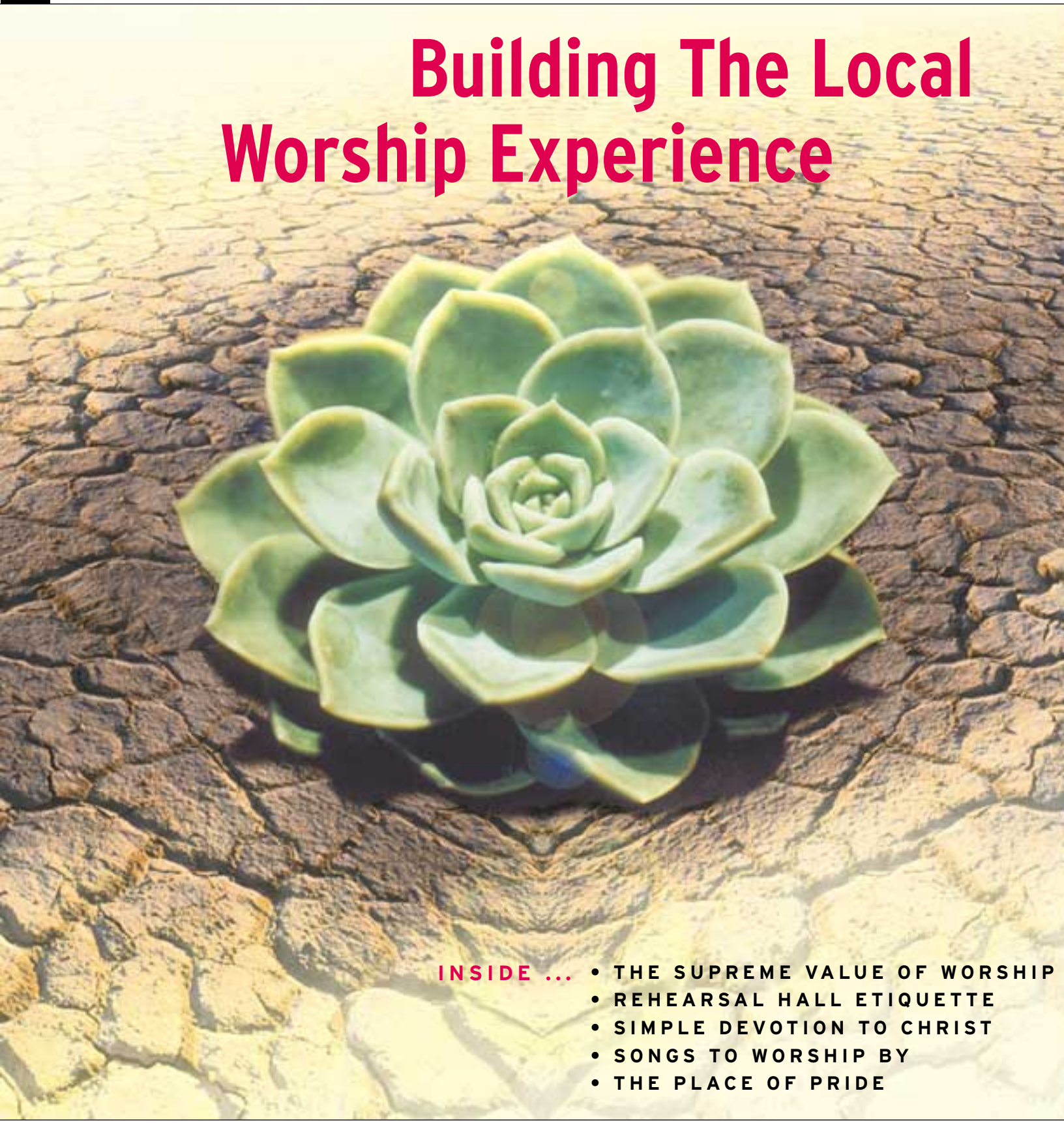
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VOLUME 45 | OCTOBER 2001

inside worship™

A DEEPER LOOK

Building The Local Worship Experience



INSIDE ...

- THE SUPREME VALUE OF WORSHIP
- REHEARSAL HALL ETIQUETTE
- SIMPLE DEVOTION TO CHRIST
- SONGS TO WORSHIP BY
- THE PLACE OF PRIDE

PLUS: WONDERFUL MERCY: LIVE FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Worship: Fact or Feeling



As I travel around to churches and conferences, occasionally people come to me with a comment such as "I didn't get much out of the worship today" or a similar statement. My usual response tends to be humorous, such as "Oh, I didn't realize that we were worshiping you" thus trying to make them realize what they are saying.

At one level, I do understand what they are trying to say. Namely, that they could not, or did not, enter into the worship experience. Perhaps this is because it was not a very accessible worship time, or maybe it was due to where they were emotionally. Either way, it does highlight what I think is a much deeper issue – that worship is an act of our wills and is not primarily about our feelings. It is about us being created to worship God, Who alone is worthy of our worship.

Some years ago, I was struck by Job 1, verse 20: *"At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship"(NIV).* This verse follows a narrative where Job discovers that he has just lost all of his livestock, servants and children. It is hard to imagine such a situation where you receive news that your wealth, livelihood and children are all gone – and the whole process has taken just a few minutes! It is inconceivable to consider what pain Job felt, or what thoughts went through his mind in the turmoil of that moment. Often, we find it hard to follow God when we have just had a bad day or things have gone wrong at work. Let's look at Job's reaction.

Firstly, he responds by tearing his clothes and shaving his head, which was the typical Jewish response to such calamity. Then, almost as a throw-away comment, the verse finishes with the phrase *"Then he fell to the ground in worship."* What an amazing response! Despite his emotions in that moment, he instinctively knew that he must seek God and worship Him.

Job knew that God was his only hope, and that worship was the only fitting response. He knew that God was the only One who must be worshiped, and was the only One worthy of worship. Despite Job's circumstances, God would never be found wanting, unjust or unrighteous. That does not mean that Job understood his circumstances (namely that he was undergoing a severe testing from God), but He did understand that worship was his only appropriate response. Job survived his tests, as I am sure God knew he would, and the book of Job finishes with God speaking to him words that are, in my view, some of the most beautiful and worshipful in the Old Testament.

As you consider your responses to God in the midst of your difficulty, consider Job's response of worship. You were made to worship, and to respond to God with worship. May God continue to bless you as you pursue Him.

Jeremy Cook
President, Vineyard Music International

insideworship

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Letter From the Editor

A familiar slogan of the last decade reflected the global mentality of a needy world community: "Think globally; act locally." In an age where the world is on our doorstep via technology and media, we as the Church are presented with amazing opportunities to touch what God is doing around the world. Yet, in the day-to-day activity that makes up life as we know it, it is what happens in our local church community that enables us to experience God's presence for ourselves.

This edition of *Inside Worship:* ***Building The Local Worship Experience*** focuses on the central importance of the local church in building true disciples of Jesus. We will be reminded once again of the vital role that a meaningful worship experience plays in the local church, and will be guided to fresh perspectives on how we can nurture that experience.

Dr. Peter Fitch's article will awaken us again to the supreme value of worship in the local fellowship, while others will arm us with helpful tips for supporting a consistently dynamic worship time in our home churches. From songwriting to song selection, devotion to discipleship, practice to pride – may you be directed toward the goal of your local church experiencing the unmatched presence of God.

Finally, be sure to read Jeremy Cook's letter, which brings a vital pastoral perspective on the worship experience from Vineyard Music's president.

"Think globally; act locally." It is my prayer that this issue will strengthen and build you, in both your individual and corporate encounter with God.

Dan Wilt
Guest Editor

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BY DR. PETER FITCH

The Supreme Value Of Worship

After an exciting time as a young Christian in the early '70s, I somehow landed in traditions that had expressions of worship that didn't quite fit my personality or values. For about the next 15 years, I longed for a quality of spiritual life, a depth of community and an experience of worship that continued to elude me. I cried out for reformation in the church at large, but it was years before I knew that God had raised up people like John Wimber and others as instruments of change around the world. When I finally found out that such a depth of worship experience existed, it made my hunger all the more intense. I felt as though I was pastoring in chains, caught in a system that didn't feel like a home to me. Finally, during an Easter service in 1992, my heart was broken by a reading that had been based on Psalm 27:13-14 that read, "Wait for the Lord, O my soul, for I shall again praise Him in the land of the living." God would answer my cry for a living worship experience with Him.

God likes to give the kind of parties where the guests get treats.

Out of this and other fresh encounters with God, my wife and I, along with a group of friends, planted a local church – the St. Croix Vineyard in New Brunswick. We spent considerable time in loving and expressive worship. Developing intimacy with God became one of our greatest priorities. We weren't necessarily very "good" at this at first, but we devoted ourselves to seeking after God, primarily using contemporary worship music and intercession as our starting place. It didn't matter if the times didn't always seem to be rich; we knew that worship was for God and not for us. We were aided by a statement made by John Wimber, that when people say "I didn't get anything out of that worship time," it is like going to someone else's birthday party and complaining that you didn't get any gifts! In time, and with an additional focus on serving the community around us with practical acts of love, things began to improve – we learned that God likes to give the kind of parties where the guests get treats.

The Supreme Value Of Worship

The following thoughts on the supreme value of worship are based in a local church's ongoing encounter with God. While the way we choose to worship is unique to us, the principles that flow from authentically "living worship" experiences apply to us all. Actually, encountering God in worship is a little like changing guitar strings – there's no way to know how dull your old ones sounded until you hear the new ones ringing. It's often the same with our hearts.

1) Worship Sets A Time To Focus On God

It doesn't seem to matter if our worship is quiet or exuberant, sonically current or traditional; people often respond by being drawn into a place that is special to them and to God. We see it in the tears of newcomers, the quietness that comes over young people and the look on faces simply lost in concentration on Jesus. We also see it in the loving gestures and the meeting of eyes that flow from normally reserved people to those around them. Simple songs sung from sincere hearts make a resting place for Jesus to visit, and His presence brings a warm breath of spring to hearts captured by various forms of winter.

Living worship draws us into God.

2) Worship Creates A Space For Communion With God

To me, this is the supreme value of worship: it creates a space in life for true communion and relationship with God. We open our hearts to God in vulnerability and transparency, and He comes among us in different ways, some of which are very tangible. He continues the work of setting things right in our hearts, and as we set our eyes on Him we are changed. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), in his sermons on the Song of Songs, spoke of the touch of the Holy Spirit as the kiss of God.[1] He wanted people to understand that God's presence is an expression of His affection for us. He also suggested that we come to God with our own kisses: first, the kiss of the feet, then the kiss of the hand, and finally, the kiss of the mouth. Here is his explanation:

"This is the way; this is the order. First we cast ourselves at His feet and deplore, before God who made us, the evil we have done. Secondly, we reach out for the hand which will lift us up, which will strengthen our trembling knees. Last, when we have obtained that, with many prayers and tears, then perhaps we shall dare to lift our faces to the mouth which is so divinely beautiful, fearing and trembling, not only to gaze on it, but even to kiss it . . . . When we are joined with Him in a holy kiss we are made one with Him in spirit through His kindness.[2]"

These themes resonate in many simple worship songs such as "All I Need," "Hungry" or "You Are My King." While I don't consciously go through these steps every Sunday morning, something like this often happens to me. After my head empties from the busyness of the week, I suddenly notice the music (after I laugh at the new hat the bass player has found) and I am swept into joy: remembering God, loving God, remembering my need, receiving His answers, singing from the heart, singing in the spirit, awakening, awakening to Him – alive again to communion with God.

Living worship awakens us to God.

3) Worship Prepares Us For Commitment To God

Another value that flows from a living worship time is its ability to draw forth

lue Of Worship

deeper commitments from our soul. Athanasius (c.293-373) taught that worship music had the marvelous ability to focus all the parts of the soul in one direction, to sort out our contradictory desires. He said, "As in music the pluck is used to strike the string, so the human soul may in music become like a stringed instrument completely devoted to the Spirit, so that in all one's members and emotions one is thoroughly responsive to the will of God."[3]

Living worship prepares us to make a deeper commitment of our lives to God.

4) Worship Opens Us To An Opportunity For Healing From God

Worship also helps to heal us. Martin Luther (1483-1546) wrote, "I firmly believe, nor am I ashamed to assert, that next to theology no art is equal to music; for it is the only one, except theology, which is able to give a quiet and happy mind. This is manifestly proved by the fact that the devil, the author of depressing care and distressing disturbances, almost flees from the sound of music as he does from the word of theology."[4] In another place he said that music was a gift from God that drove away the devil and made people cheerful.[5]

Living worship heals us, from the inside out.

5) Worship Provides A Place Where We Can Be Transformed By God

William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942 until his death in 1944, captured many of these benefits in the beautiful description of worship that he gave in his book, *Hope Of A New World*. He also affirmed the importance of the worship experience in transforming us into the image of Jesus:

"To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.[6]"

Living worship increasingly transforms us into the image of Christ.

Within Your Reach

In light of this wisdom from older voices, and in light of my own continuing experience for most of the past decade, I think it is almost impossible to overestimate the importance of living worship for the human soul. We need it to survive spiritually; we need it in order to become what God wants us to be. Each community of Christian believers must work with heart and mind to find the living way that works for them. It is a tragedy of the first order that many churches have fallen into a "worship slumber," with members thinking they have worshiped when they have barely scratched the surface. Lack of a living worship experience, and its consequent disappointment, can shield us from searching for the true communion that is nearer than we can imagine. Living worship is within reach for all of us.

Living worship is within reach for all of us.

I thank God that He heard my desperate cry and allowed our local congregation to develop a worship structure that enables us to meet with Him in a real way. Discovering a style that works in your local church is worth more than any tradition, and certainly worth more than the small amount of time that is often allotted to it. There is a place called "the land of the living." It's a place of living worship for every person, and for every local church. I counsel you not to rest until you have experienced the supreme value of worship.



PETER FITCH, D. MIN. (FULLER)

Dr. Peter Fitch shares the senior leadership of St. Stephen's University in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, Canada, where he is Dean of Ministry Studies. He is also the senior pastor of the St. Croix Vineyard and the author of Learning to Suffer Well, a devotional workbook for individuals and small groups.

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1 Bernard of Clairvaux from Sermon 8 on The Song of Songs, Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works, trans. By G. R. Evans, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987) 237.

2 Clairvaux., from Sermon 3, 223.

3 Athanasius, A Letter to Marcellinus, quoted in Thomas C. Oden, Classical Pastoral Care, Volume Two: Ministry Through Word and Sacrament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1987) 103.

4 Martin Luther, quoted in Oden, 106.

5 Luther, quoted in Oden, 106.

6 William Temple, Hope of a New World (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1940).

Rehearsal Hall Etiquette

BY BRUCE ELLIS

For many, a worship team rehearsal is a wonderful experience - fun, encouraging, challenging, community-oriented and pleasing to God. For others, however, rehearsal night can represent an evening wrought with feelings of fear, inadequacy and even loneliness – clearly not all God had intended.

The Worship Team Dilemma

From a musical perspective, a worship team presents an interesting dilemma. Firstly, this is probably the only context where such a diverse group of musicians are gathered together and expected to produce a sound suitable for mass consumption. A worship team can, and often does, represent a wide mix of musical abilities and strengths – from the seasoned professional to those who have just learned a few chords. Since musicians naturally tend to gravitate toward those who share similar levels of ability, this integration can, if not kept in perspective, have some devastating effects on the worship team experience. Factor in that many pastors, too often, closely correlate church-growth with the worship team's sound and you've got a breeding ground for division and contempt. That's the bad news.

The good news is that we can have confidence in the wonderful way God has both called us to, and provided the means by which, we can interact on both a spiritual and a musical level. If this sounds a lot like the Kingdom of God to you, you can rest in knowing ... it is! One of my swan songs over this past year has been that strapping on a guitar, or stepping behind a microphone, never excuses the musician from a life that seeks after righteousness and the character of Jesus. The artistic person is accountable! After all, a rehearsal should be an environment of trust - a place to relax, let down your guard and work out music together. To this end there are a few suggestions I'd like to offer regarding rehearsal etiquette.

Rehearsal Hall Etiquette

One of the most common errors occurs when a few musicians are permitted to jam indulgently before rehearsal begins. While this can be a lot of fun, and may seem innocent enough, there can be some unfortunate implications. Consider for a moment the musician who feels as if they are musically hanging on with white knuckles. Just walking through the door can be enough to deflate them to the point of giving up. While it is true that unchecked feelings of inadequacy are not godly, our call is to encourage and embrace the afflicted with truth and love. Worship leaders can actually schedule time for interactive jamming – perhaps as the rehearsal winds down, when everyone is breathing a little more comfortably. Time should also be allotted for players and singers to interact without their instruments. While semi-annual retreats and periodic get-togethers are effective, weekly non-musical fellowship goes a long way toward building relationships that are rooted in trust and acceptance.

Another over-looked issue is the matter of allowing everyone a chance to contribute to, and grasp his or her particular role in, a song. Far too often, singers patiently put up with a band struggling to get their parts right, only to get short-changed as rehearsal draws to a close. They have had neither an opportunity to work out meaningful parts, nor a suitable sound check (i.e. "I can't hear myself!"). One simple idea is to intentionally divide the group into instruments and vocals. Rehearse the band for a controlled period of time and encourage the singers to listen, sing off-mic and basically get comfortable with the feel of the song. Then give the instrumentalists a short rest while the vocalists go over their parts. Call back the players and run the song down with everyone involved. The same exercise can be applied to the instrumentalist who is not required to play all the time. This practice does two things. Firstly, it says right up front to the singers, "you are important and we have time set aside specifically for you." Secondly, it forces a band to prioritize, and be good

It is our spiritual like-mindedness that enables us to worship and lead others



stewards of, typically limited rehearsal time.

One wonderful way of breaking down walls within a team context is the concept of inquiring of others. Rather then displaying what you know, find out what someone else knows. There is no greater gesture of musical acceptance than a seasoned drummer approaching a timid flute player and asking them about their instrument and how it works. You see, regardless of a person's ability and experience one thing is certain – we have all given ourselves to a particular instrument and would like no better than to tell someone about it. Be that someone who asks the question first.

One final thought regards the issue of tuning. I am a firm believer in the electronic tuner and personally suggest that a tuner be an integral part of a church's sound equipment budget. Why do I bring this up in this discussion of the heart? While it is true that many of you can tune perfectly "by ear," modeling the practice of using a tuner goes a long way. Firstly, others won't feel intimidated in pulling out their own tuner. Secondly, there is a unifying gesture when everyone gathers around a tuner. This may sound strange, but the point is that there should be no perception that a maverick or lone cowboy is present on the team. Thirdly, even the most gifted "tunist" can have a bad day. Finally, music just plain sounds better when everyone is sonically, and spiritually, in tune. You'll be surprised how much more effective your rehearsal will be when a few minutes are given to this important task.

Champion The Team

While our musicianship simply gives us a context in which to worship, it is our spiritual like-mindedness that enables us to worship and lead others. The heart issues that good rehearsal principles can address actually facilitate playing the notes well together – a primary goal for most worship teams.



BRUCE ELLIS

is the worship pastor of the Cambridge Vineyard in Ontario, Canada. He is also a songwriter, producer and professional musician, and lives in Cambridge with his wife Laura and their four children Sam, Abby, Noah and Sally.

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This article is excerpted and adapted from a word David Ruis brought to the Canadian Vineyard worship leaders at their National Summit in October of 2000.

Simple Devotion To

As soon as any organization gets larger than the life of the organism that sustains it, it can begin to crush that organism, and the organism begins to die. Many of us have lived through that kind of experience at some point in our journey.

As the Church, we never want to put ourselves in the position where we exist to provide certain "services" as an organization. To use a Biblical image, we must fight to sustain the *organism* that is the Church. Our goal as an organism is to be obedient to Jesus, to live a life of simple devotion to Him and to constantly fight for something truly organic to live within our organizations.

A few months ago I had a little run in with the Lord. I had a simple encounter with God, and yet it was very profound. The Lord challenged me with this statement:

Stop inviting people to church; invite them to me.

There is a tremendous pressure on our worshiping communities to make a palatable experience for people, often in the hope that they will eventually find Christ, join our church and say a prayer in which they give their lives to Jesus. I think it's a wonderful starting place.

But I want to ask a direct question: *Are we drawing people to an encounter with Christ?* The next question that follows is this: *Have you truly encountered Jesus for yourself?* Not through your pastor, not through your dad or your mom, not through your house group leader and not through a song and/or an emotional response – *Are you encountering Jesus for yourself?*

All of these things have their place, but have you encountered the living Jesus Christ? I don't think we have much else to hang on to.

Re-Encountering Jesus

Something that Dr. Don Williams said has been turning me upside down for almost a year now. He looked at a number of us and said, "You know what guys? Jesus is alive!"

Jesus is alive – this is what sets our life's journey apart from any other thing we could touch or experience. This truth catapults us past Buddhism, the Islamic faith, Mormonism or the New Age movement. We serve a *living* God, and Romans encourages us, in light of this dynamic and sacrifice, that Jesus has now ascended to the right hand of God the Father and mediates for us. Our faith is *alive*, and we are living sacrifices. We are trying to unlock the whole, wide pallet of how God expresses His heart through His children. This thing called life is about Life – Jesus is *alive*, and you are *alive* in Him.

He is also a ruling king, and so the whole dynamic of worship is not static. The question is not whether you have a devotional life; it is whether or not you are living a devotional life – which is an invitation to re-encounter the living Jesus.

Steps Toward Simple Devotion

1) Are You Encountering Jesus As Truth?

Jesus is Truth. John 14:6 says *"I am the way, I am the truth..."* He Himself is truth. When we encounter truth, if we can hang on to it, I believe we will encounter God. A phrase that John Wimber liked to say was "All truth is God's truth." We have a wonderful Vineyard community in the city of Katmandu, Nepal. The man who is leading that community, a Nepali, tells how his great grandfather, a Buddhist priest, encountered Jesus Christ – right in the middle of his prayers! He was in pursuit of truth. There is now a lineage of passionate Christians all throughout the Himalayan Mountains out of that one man's experience. We must know Jesus as truth.

Whether you want to or not, you have a theology – and you had better know what it is. The scripture says, *"Study to show yourself approved unto God"* (2 Timothy 2:15). You might not be a scholar with five degrees hanging on your wall, speaking Greek when you get up in the morning and Hebrew when you go to bed at night. But again, in the pursuit of truth, go for an encounter with Christ. The scripture says that while knowledge puffs up, the truth will set you free.

2) Are You Encountering Jesus With Faith?

Put yourself in situations where you are taking risks and seeing the Kingdom come. You will encounter Jesus in that place. As worship leaders and songwriters, this must be a part of our life experience, or our songwriting will be "fluff" – those songs will not be anchored to the Kingdom experience.

A true encounter with Jesus causes repentance – repentance in the biblical sense. I am not talking about being a heap of tears in front of a meeting at an altar (though that can be an awesome piece of the journey of repentance). That is not necessarily biblical repentance. The Greek word for repentance is "metanoia," and it means, "to change your thinking." You can change the way you think.

There are things you haven't thought about before that are actually truer than what you are holding on to as a reality right now. Change your thinking. There's an alternate reality; it's called the Kingdom of God and it is



BY DAVID RUIS

Christ

crashing in everywhere! Pursue Jesus in that place of risk and you will find Him there.

3) Are You Encountering Jesus Among The Poor?

I have more questions than I have answers on this one, but I do know that our worship, from a biblical standpoint, has absolutely no integrity if our lives are not touching the poor. I am not talking about your church's soup kitchen, or free store, or the percentage of the budget that goes toward the poor. You have got to sort out who "your" poor are. Let me qualify by saying that the poor I'm speaking of are those who are tangibly poor – not a rich guy who is "poor" in his heart. I challenge you to look through the teachings of scripture regarding the poor and attempt to spiritualize the passages. It cannot be done.

God will be kind to you and there will be some poor that you will encounter if you ask Him. He is gracious, and James in fact says that the poor are a gift to the whole church because they are ones who understand faith. It's the rich who often do not understand. James goes as far as to say, and I don't fully understand this, that God has actually *chosen* the poor.

Jesus did not even seem to be too worried about ending poverty. Now, there are issues of justice around poverty that we must take seriously, but the issue of the poor is, at some stage, more about us than it is about fixing people. It is about "me encountering myself," and even more so, it's about "me encountering the Lord."

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 25: "*Whatever you've done to the least of these, you've done to me.*" I don't know a better definition of worship than that. If Jesus is not getting pleasure out of this thing called the Church, then we may as well pack it all up.

Jesus says in John 4 that the Father is actually looking for this kind of worship. Worship seems to be absolutely attached to our engagement with the tangible needs around us. When you start encountering the Lord among the poor, it can seem to become an unending avalanche. But I believe that is where God is.

Conclusion

We can never pin worship into a service. Just when you think you have God cornered, the Living One has gone somewhere else. So you run after Him, and you find Him in a place you never expected, or you see His face in the poor. Our journey is one of life, and our worship is a living sacrifice before a living God.

That is a life of simple devotion to Christ.

Are you encountering Jesus for yourself?

Jesus is alive.



DAVID RUIS

pastors the Winnipeg Centre Vineyard in Manitoba, Canada, which seeks to provide a safe place for the artistic and native communities in that city. He has written many popular Vineyard songs such as «We Will Dance» and «Break Dividing Walls,» and resides in Winnipeg along with his wife Anita and their four children.

Songs To Worship By





BY MONIQUE TUTE

Have you ever had one of those Sundays when you were sure that your musical set list was personally inspired by the breath of God – only to spend the next 40 minutes of worship wishing that your platform had a trap door that could magically swallow you up and whisk you off to a tropical island?

While there are many factors that influence any given worship experience – many completely out of our control – some practical guidelines for planning a worship set can help:

Pray and worship. Your own relationship with God needs to be growing and current for your worship leading to have integrity.

Use familiar songs as the staple of your set list – remember that it takes much longer for your church to "own" a song than it does for you.

Choose songs that make God famous. Elevate Him above human experience to create a sense of awe and wonder at the greatness and diversity of God.

Vary your themes. We all have favorite songs that we will tend to over-use. Is it time to celebrate? To listen to God? To cry out to Him? A good working relationship with your pastor and leadership team enables you to hear God together.

Use songs and arrangements that are appropriate for the skill level of your band.

Sing songs that "work" for your people. While we want to avoid emotional manipulation in our song selection, it is good to find the songs that set people's hearts free.

Keep spoken introductions brief and focused on Jesus. Focusing on personal experiences can be distracting. Say whatever is helpful for fixing our eyes on God, and then step away.

Don't "overlead." Let the Holy Spirit do the leading, and let the songs have their impact.

Be tasteful with instrumental solos. While musicians love them, make sure not to lose your congregation in the process.

Rehearse intros and transitions. In other words, know how you are starting and ending any given song. While deliberate silence can add to a worship experience, people get nervous if they sense that you don't know what you are doing. Make transitions as smooth and as short as possible.

Know your congregation's age and style preferences. While you want to give room for your church to grow in their expression, know what kinds of music create a resting place for their hearts. Some things that you long to try out in worship may have to be the exception, and not the rule.

Take calculated risks when you feel God is asking you to.

Show restraint from doing all that you could do musically and creatively. If it doesn't serve God and help your church to worship, it is not essential to the worship set.



MONIQUE TUTE

is a worship leader and songwriter who lives in British Columbia, Canada. She also serves as executive assistant to Gary Best for the Association of Vineyard Churches Canada.

INTERVIEW WITH GAVIN BROWN

Wonderful Mercy
- Live From South Africa

IW: *When did you make this recording, where did you record it and what was the event like?*

Gavin: *Wonderful Mercy* was recorded live on April 7, 2001 at the Rosebank Union Church in Johannesburg, South Africa. It is Vineyard Music South Africa's first fully national recording. Worship leaders from around the country came together for an intense week of rehearsal, team building and recording. There was a great sense of expectancy as people from Vineyards all over South Africa joined together to worship.

IW: *How many worship leaders were involved and where are they from?*

Gavin: Six worship leaders were involved on *Wonderful Mercy*, representing Vineyard churches from various regions: Sibusiso Ntsala from Soweto, Thys Meades from Port Elizabeth, Tanya Gould from Johannesburg, Michelle Stafford from Centurion, Lennon Naidoo from Durban and Stew West from Cape Town.

IW: *What is unique about this project?*

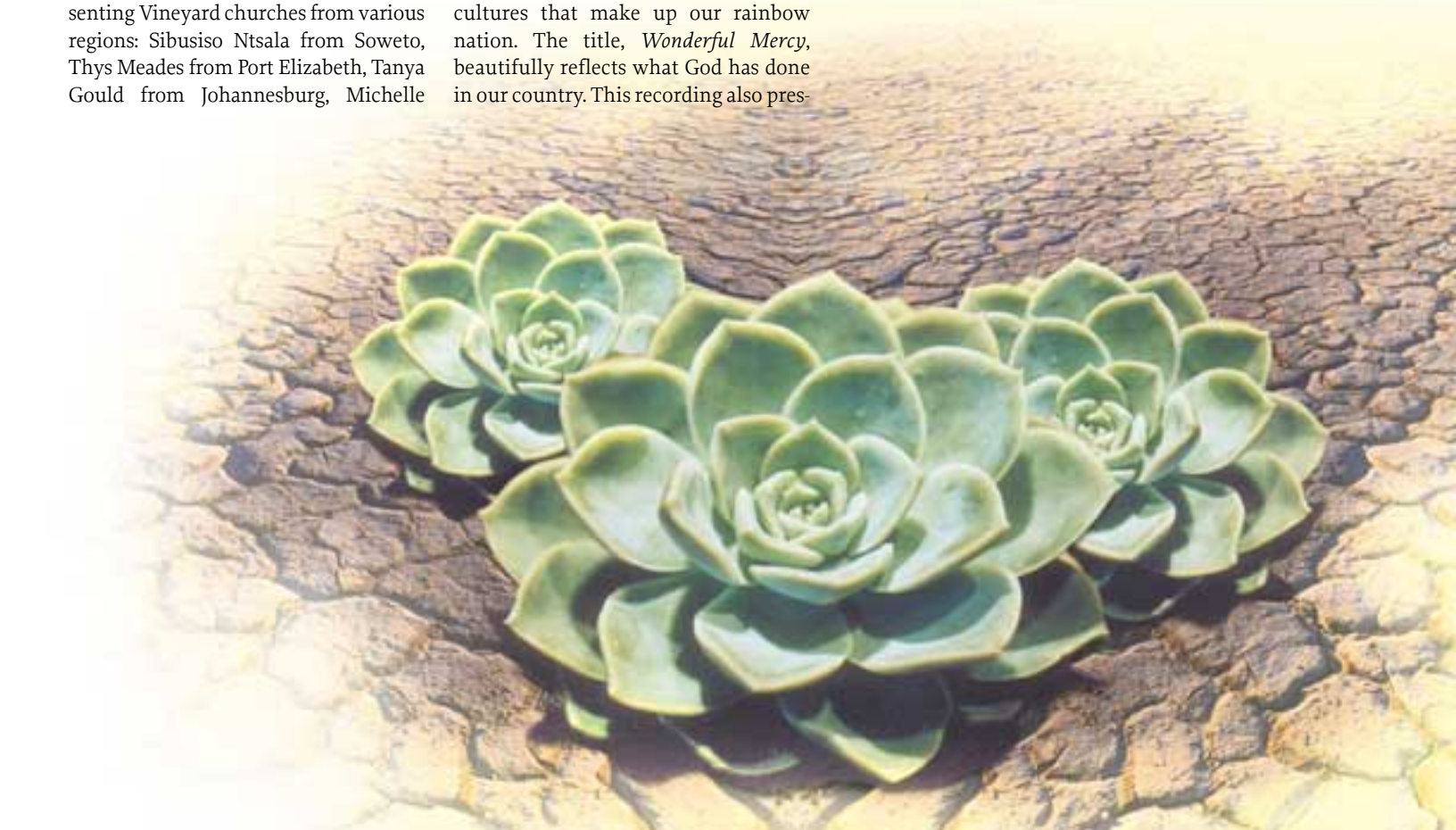
Gavin: *Wonderful Mercy* truly expresses the heart of Vineyard worship in South Africa. The average age of those who played and sang on this album was 24, and for most of our worship leaders, this was their first experience as part of a live recording. To have it be an international release through Club Vineyard is both unique and encouraging.

IW: *What are the songs like?*

Gavin: True to our Vineyard values, the songs on *Wonderful Mercy* are accessible, intimate and authentically South African. They express the diversity of cultures that make up our rainbow nation. The title, *Wonderful Mercy*, beautifully reflects what God has done in our country. This recording also presents a variety of sounds ranging from African Choir, to percussion, to intimate worship songs. A raw passion for God comes through in the song «This Day.»



GAVIN BROWN
is the general manager of Vineyard Music South Africa. He and his wife Lindsay are part of the Valley Vineyard in Johannesburg, where they are involved in ministry to the poor and to newcomers. They have two beautiful boys Michael and Andrew.



The Place Of



The worship leader begins his God-inspired set. He strums the first chord. His eyes are closed. What is he thinking? Is he seeing the heavenlies open up before him – perhaps, the very throne room of God? If it happens to be me in the position of worship leader on that occasion, I am probably thinking any of the following thoughts: "Who's here? Anyone of significance? I wonder who's watching me play this morning? I'd better make sure I do some cool things on the guitar." Sadly, these types of thoughts can run through all of our minds as worship leaders, even as we endeavor to bring people into the presence of God.

The Place Of Pride

Pride is an issue for us all, and especially for those who have a visible role leading others. Pride comes in many forms, and shines through in countless ways. I struggle with pride when I lead worship, I struggle with pride when I play guitar for another worship leader and I struggle with pride when I am not involved at all – but am simply listening to another leader!

When I started attending the Vineyard back in 1989, I enjoyed playing electric guitar in the band. Yet I was not accustomed to involving lead solos in worship. Being on the stage for the sole purpose of pointing all to Jesus and then playing lead solos (which in my mind pulled all the attention onto me) seemed to be a contradiction. It was an awkward adjustment, but my eyes began to open to a new way of thinking. People would share how they were deeply touched by God as a result of certain solos. Some even felt the power of God driving away darkness when I would play. I still could not lose that sense of all eyes being on me as I played, but I knew that I needed to express my heart through my instrument anyway – and allow God to use it to get past people's defenses. I needed to learn how to keep pride in

Pride

BRIAN THIESSEN

is a worship leader/songwriter at the North Langley Vineyard in British Columbia, Canada. He and his wife, Loralee, live in Cloverdale, BC with their three beautiful children Tyus, Brendan and Makenna.



BY BRIAN THIESSEN

check as I played, instead of running away from this spiritual battleground. I knew without a doubt that I would be destroyed if I allowed pride to stay, and to grow.

Dealing With Pride As A Worship Leader

Here are some thoughts on how I deal with pride as a worship leader/musician:

Make A Choice To Walk In Humility

First of all, pride is like a disease, and must be treated relentlessly. While I am only in my early thirties, I know that as long as I am alive I am going to have pride courting me. I must consciously choose to point people to the Bridegroom – and avoid stealing glimpses from the Bride to myself.

Confess Your Motives And Attitudes To Others

Secondly, one of the greatest helps for me in keeping my heart in its place is to confess my motives and attitudes to others. It is a great blessing for me to have friends with whom I can relentlessly "tell on myself." In doing this, I am winning over pride. Tell on yourself regularly. Even though you might feel like you are portraying yourself as a worse person than you actually are, confessing your sin feels great afterward.

Keep Your Leadership In Perspective

Keeping a proper perspective on what you are doing as a worship leader is an important step in overcoming pride. I remember an analogy that suggested that leading people in worship was comparable to being the best man at a wedding. As the analogy went, the best man is present for the sole purpose of bringing everyone's attention to the Groom, a role not unlike that of John the Baptist. Could you imagine a wedding where the best man tried to steal the affections of the Bride for himself? Losing our perspective can cause us to do that very thing when we are leading people in worship.

When I feel myself pulled to think of how I am performing, how my new song is going over with the crowd or how my last guitar lick sounded, I think of the wedding. I am struck with the fear of God, as I never want to steal the affections of the Bride from Him. I make it my business to always point to Jesus, no matter what nagging thoughts may pester me.

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Mentoring A Worship Leader

BY DAN WILT

Raising up worship leaders is both a relational and functional task. The following are a few tips on how to facilitate the growth of a new worship leader:

Co-Lead With Them. This gives them credibility before the congregation and enables you to prepare, lead and de-brief together. Give them familiar songs to lead for six months to a year, so the congregation learns to trust them.

Spend Time With Them. If the leader is of the same sex, spend time with them doing spiritually important activities like watching a movie, eating food, laughing hard and listening well. If they are of the opposite sex, involve others.

Take Your Time With Them. There is no rush. Give them a little bit of leading room over a long period of time. The issues of pride and identity are dealt with as you take the slow and steady route with a new worship leader.

Share Input With Them. When you lead together, help them choose songs and show them how you organize the set. Assume that you actually know something about worship leading and give confident guidance to their unique style.

Share Friends With Them. Expose them to your mentors via seminars, CDs or other media. Set up times for others, like the pastor, to comment on their heart, style and skill growth.

Give Gifts to Them. Take a year, and put generosity into your budget. When you have it in your power, buy them gear or music items that remind them of their personal importance to you and the investment you're willing to make.

Give Hope to Them. Celebrate the hard process of growth and maturation with the new worship leader. Honestly, but lovingly, point them toward faithfulness above "success."

DAN WILT
is the worship development team leader for the Association of Vineyard Churches Canada. He lives in Ontario, Canada with his wife Anita and their three children Anna, Abigail and Benjamin.

Songwriting: From The For

BY MARC PUSCH

We recently recorded an album at Vineyard Music Canada titled *All I Need*. One song has had an immediate and lasting impact on me from the first time I heard it. It is titled "Into Your Presence," and was written by Kim McMechan. Here is how Kim describes the history of this song:

Our church was in a very dry time spiritually. There seemed to be a united cry going up in our intercession meetings that corporately said, "We cannot be satisfied saying the same prayers, and singing the same songs, without touching something deeper of God." We felt united in a frustrated, desperate way, and yet there seemed to be a lack of words to express our hearts. I began to write a new song for our church in an attempt to give this aching a melody that we could all sing together, lifting it up to Heaven.

While this song was very much the cry of Kim's own heart, it came out of a shared experience with others in her local church. Local church communities need worship songs that release their corporate cry to God. Here are three thoughts to consider as you write worship songs from the Church, for the Church:



Church, The Church

Know Your Church Through Your Participation

For songwriters to write out of community, they will have to be in community. In the story above, Kim knew what was going on in her church because she was in the intercession meetings. Because she was connected to the life of her community, she was able to find a worship expression and vocabulary that benefited everyone.

Build Your Church With Your Pastor

It is vital that worship songwriters be in good communication with their pastor. Writers should ask questions such as "What are the upcoming teaching themes?" or "What do you sense God is doing in the life of our church?" Most importantly, spend time in prayer, searching out God's heart for the life of your church.

Serve Your Church With Your Creativity

I am all for songwriters and musicians exploring their creativity and self-expression; it is essential to the Church. However, this must not be done at the expense of serving your local church worship experience. As a worshiper, I rely on the songwriting gifts of others to unlock what is in my heart so that I can express it back to God.

The next time you are looking for worship songwriting inspiration, try looking around your church on a Sunday morning. You may be surprised by the inspiration you find.



MARC PUSCH

is the production manager for Vineyard Music Canada. He also sits on a number of committees implementing global initiatives for Vineyard Music International. Marc lives near Vancouver, on Canada's beautiful west coast, and attends the North Langley Vineyard.

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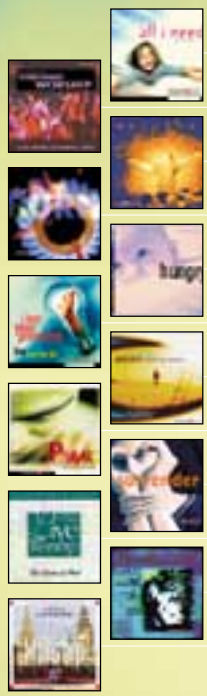


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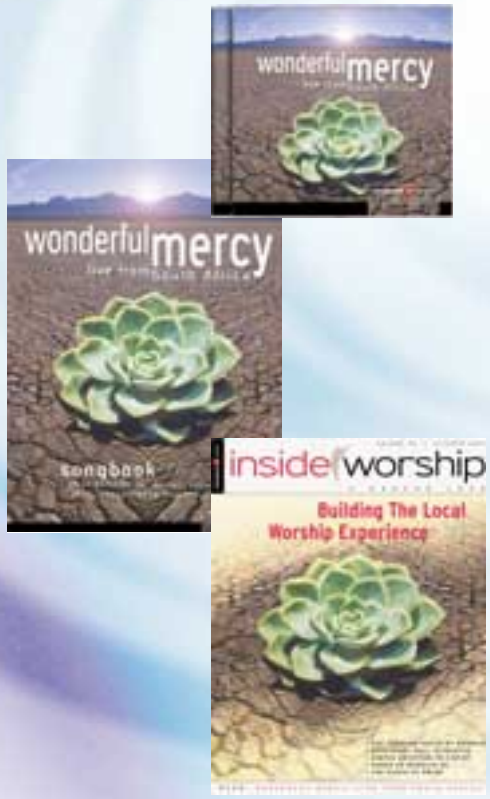
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