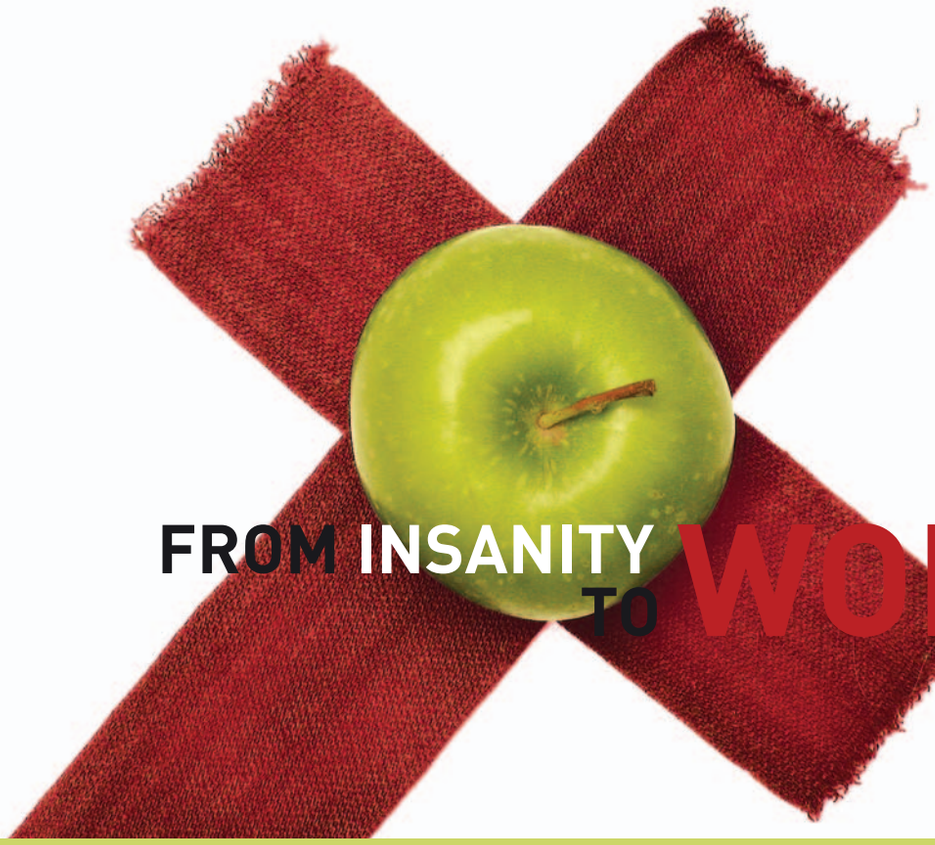


BOB VAN METER

FROM INSANITY TO WORSHIP

This article is excerpted from a word offered by Bob at a gathering of Vineyard US worship leaders in Estes Park, Colorado. Bob's experience, wisdom and devotion to Christ suit him to bring good counsel to worshipers from the depths of his own story with God.

Worship is sanity breaking into the insanity of sin. It is coming into the presence of the eternal God where no disorder or ruin is present; where our selfish, confused and tortured inner person can for a time stand in perfect sanity and inner peace in the presence of a loving Father.

Sin is, at its most basic, insanity. Trying to make it yourself, finding your identity in pornography, sex, money, your gifts, power or a hundred other ways, is insanity at its core. I'd like to tell you the story of my journey from insanity to worship.

Climbing Out In Community

I grew up in an Assembly of God pastor's home, but didn't commit myself to Jesus until I was 28. I was quiet, introspective, deeply deceived, and trapped in addictive behaviors. After becoming a Christian, I still struggled with sin, unforgiveness and addictions. My classic Pentecostal theological understanding led me to believe that as a Christian I shouldn't be having those kinds of thoughts.

I went to church every Sunday, dying on the inside, but found sanity, peace and comfort when I met God in the midst of worship. I found strength for another week remembering that even though I was struggling, God was with me. If it weren't for worship and a supportive church community, I couldn't have kept going, and wouldn't be here today. One of the primary ways my insanity expressed itself was in pornography. Because of my repeated sin, I found myself in a pit I could not get out of by myself. Gordon Dalbey in his book, *Fight Like A Man*, puts it like this, "A man can choose to jump into a pit deeper than he's able to climb out. Once he's in, though, you can't hold him responsible for not climbing out himself. But you can and must hold him responsible for not recognizing his predicament and calling out for help. The man who does so is humbled and delivered; the one who refuses is humiliated and destroyed (*Fight Like A Man*, p. 165-66)."

He's right. I tried many times to climb out of the pit by myself, but couldn't. When I reached the end of myself, with my marriage in crisis and my identity crumbling, I turned to the one place that I did not want to go – my local church. I was respected there and wanted to continue to be loved and respected. I did not want anyone to know who I really was,

WORSHIP IS SANITY

but I submitted myself to my brothers and sisters in repentance. They helped me to climb out of the pit.

Every week for a year and a half I went for prayer, confession and restoration. My fear that they would reject me, if they really knew my inner life, fell away. When I shared my story with my fellow elders and their spouses they responded by weeping, by hugging us and by acknowledging that God was speaking to them about the unhealed places in their own hearts. It was a transforming moment for me. I expected rejection, but received love and healing and restoration. The Kingdom of God was real, and it worked the way Jesus said it would work.

Like My Dad

I always had trouble believing in God's love for me. As a child, our lack of permanence made me stop seeking friends, so I looked for my intimacy in words, in books and eventually in pornographic novels. That way there were no attachments, no broken relationships, and no losses – only the empty world of fantasy. That led me to withdraw further from real life and real relationships. My story isn't unique. Many of us grew up with distant and emotionally unattached fathers who could not give us a blessing.

There's a great peanut butter commercial on TV right now. You've probably seen it: A father is making a peanut butter sandwich when his young daughter shows up. He invites her to have a peanut butter sandwich with him. He folds his sandwich in half before eating. "Why do you fold your sandwich?" she asks. "I don't know," he answers, "my dad always did it that way." "How silly," she responds, and then turns away and folds hers in half, too.

She received a blessing that connected her to her father and her grandfather. It is one small act that answers the craving for father love. We all need to hear the masculine voice speaking life and blessing into our lives, but not everyone receives the blessing. Perhaps a brother or sister gets the main blessing; or parents place the blessing out of reach. Sometimes the child feels s/he was never quite good enough. Maybe the blessing was replaced with a burden or sexual abuse. Sadly, the blessing is often withheld because the child did something that displeases the parent, or the parents die before they were able to give it.

A Desperate Search For Intimacy

When we don't get the blessing, we become seekers, always seeking emotional intimacy, but afraid of relationships. We're afraid of becoming meaningless zeros. We draw our value from others or things. We become angry, emotionally chained to parents or those who have hurt us.

A girl in our teen group was suicidal. She said that she could never forgive her parents; "I'll hate them forever." The staff member who was praying with her said, "What you are saying is, 'I'm drinking a cup of poison, and hoping someone else will die.'" When we refuse to forgive, to release the debt owed, the indescribable loneliness, withdrawal and isolation become like poison to us.

Being in ministry can also make us feel isolated and believe we have to be unreal. "If they knew me they'd toss me out into the street." I want to encourage you to find two or three who will minister to you, pray for you, challenge you and hold you accountable; someone who will hear your confession and lead you into repentance and life. It will be, and will remain, your place of healing.

Leaders In Need

I have spent over twenty years counseling in the church, so I know many in leadership are struggling with situations similar to mine. God has given freely to me and I want everyone to experience that freedom and life. Though my initial healing was instant, I have had to walk it out day by day. Through the cross I can come boldly and stand without fear in His presence; I can call Him *Daddy*.

Through the cross of Jesus reconciliation and peace can come to your heart, your mind, your spirit and your body. Our goal is not coping, but transformation. As we come to the cross and confess our anger and bitterness, we loose the life of Christ within us and we begin the process of entering into real life.

A Blessing From The Father

You please the Father. God is smiling on you. His love is never-ending, unfailing and unconditional. He loves you deeply and wants you to know of His deep, personal, and intimate care for you. Don't put off seeking wholeness; find a place of ministry and choose to become vulnerable. Decide now to encounter the real life that Jesus offers us in the Gospel of John. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. *"I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of"* (John 10:10 MSG).

Jesus also told us that the will of God for Him and for us was this; *"This, in a nutshell, is that will: that everything handed over to me by the Father be completed – not a single detail missed – and at the wrap-up of time I have everything and everyone put together, upright and whole"* (John 6:39 MSG, emphasis added).

That is God's will for all of us, to be whole, put together and upright. The journey may be hard and even painful, but the result is life and peace and blessing. My hope is that you will seek out all that He has planned for you and that you will find the life He is offering you.



Bob Van Meter joined Vineyard Music USA in June 2003 as General Manager, moving from his position as the Director of Business and Pastoral Services for the Association of Vineyard Churches USA. He has been married to the love of his life, Gabriele, for forty-three years and has two sons and four grandchildren.