Inner Living, Outer Giving

Spiritual Disciplines For The Worshiping Heart



Inside Worship asked Dr. Peter Fitch, Canadian author, pastor and theologian, his perspective on how spiritual disciplines should be lived out in the life of the worship leader. Here is Dr. Fitch's creative answer, and recommended reading list.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. PETER FITCH

What areas of spiritual discipline would you say are vital for modern worship leaders to integrate into their lifestyle? Why?

Rather than speaking of spiritual disciplines like fasting or contemplation, I'm drawn to using some familiar terms in an unfamiliar way. I think that the following disciplines are essential for worship leaders: ***foot-washing, offering loaves and fishes, water-walking, cross-carrying and, on occasion, dead-raising.***

Foot-washing – because worship is the service of washing dirt from people's souls, and it must be done from a posture of humility if it is to be invested with power. The quality of the water in the basin will have something to do with the quality of the leader's secret inner life with God.

Offering loaves and fishes – because after all of our preparation (which should be done well – this work is for the Lord), we are ultimately in a position of inadequacy no matter how gifted we are. Human musicianship, though often impressive and wonderful, does not have the capacity to touch the soul and set it spiritually free. Jesus does. We offer the loaves and fishes of our songs and ideas; He adds His Presence in a mysterious and miraculous way.

To speak of ***water-walking*** is to make an admission of the danger of this enterprise. Worship leaders are called to get out of the boat, out past the known and comfortable place of their familiar lyrics and chord patterns. There is a divine dance in worship. The Spirit beckons, the musician plays. Often the Spirit will invite the player to follow to some new vista, to be so enveloped in Life that he or she will hardly notice that the dancing is now in thin air. Worship leading is holding on to the invisible hand for just the right amount of time - not too little (or the dance is incomplete) and not too long (or – and this is a sad joke – we get to experience the sound of one hand clapping). I mean that it's possible for us to try too hard and worship past the place where the Spirit is leading.

Cross-carrying is an essential discipline because there will be more need for soul-cleansing in the people around you than there will be for you to artistically express yourself. To take on this ministry is to give yourself to others, to be available when you don't feel like it, to sing songs long after they're meaningful to you on a human level. It only seems glamorous in the beginning.

But this leads to the last of my list. If you are faithful in foot-washing, loaves and fishes, water-walking and cross-carrying, from time to time you get to play a role in ***raising someone from the dead***. Humans do not have words to express the glory of this experience, of watching people that are lost and hopeless suddenly receiving the Life of God in a tangible way, shattering bondages and bringing them into newness and freedom and joy. Worship leaders get to do this more than most.

Recommended reading on this topic:

1. *The Bible*
2. Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding The Heart's True Home* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992)
3. Dallas Willard, *The Spirit Of The Disciplines*: Understanding How God Changes Lives (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1988)







PETER FITCH (D. Min., Fuller) is dean of ministry studies at St. Stephen's University (www.ssu.ca) in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, Canada. He is also the senior pastor of St. Croix Vineyard, a church that he and his wife Mary Ellen planted in 1992, and the Canadian board representative for Vineyard Bible Institute (www.vineyardbi.org). Peter is the author of *Learning To Suffer Well*, a devotional workbook for individuals and small groups, and he has a passion for building healthy leaders and healthy communities.