## *The Worship Journey* by Andy Park

## Foreword by Mark D. Roberts

*What is worship?* If you were to ask that question of the average Westerner fifty years ago, it's likely that you would have heard about going to church on Sunday morning, sitting uprightly in sanctuary pews, singing hymns accompanied by an organ, listening to a sermon, and, perhaps, receiving Communion. Worship was an activity characterized by reverence, rationality, and regularity. It may not have been much fun, but it was required of faithful Christians and expected of patriotic citizens.

Then something happened. As the Sixties upset the familiar structures of Western society, the church and her worship were not immune. I will never forget the first "8:19 Service" at my home church, the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood. In a sanctuary that normally featured one of the finest choirs in America, we were led in worship by long-haired young men and women who played guitars and sang about Jesus in a folk-rock genre. This was bold, edgy, and controversial in 1969, when guitars were almost never to be found in church sanctuaries.

What I experienced on that watershed morning at Hollywood Pres caught on like wildfire, especially in Southern California. Soon, Calvary Chapel sponsored standing-room-only concerts with Christian bands and founded Maranatha! Music, which popularized Christian folk-rock through records and cassette tapes. Meanwhile, the Vineyard was born in the homes of popular Christian rock stars. By the early eighties, the Vineyard's version of folk-rock, music-saturated worship began to impact not just new churches in Southern California, but also thousands of traditional churches throughout the country. That impact has grown by leaps and bounds in the last three decades, touching believers throughout the world.

Thus, if you were to ask the "What is worship?" question today, odds are that you might hear about music and singing, especially if you're asking someone under forty. In many segments of the church today, "Let's worship" means "Let's sing worship songs." These compositions, which promote intimacy with God, incorporate mind, body, and emotions. For many worshipers, the emotions matter most of all. Real worship happens when one feels peace, joy, love or some other manifestation of God's presence while singing to him.

Andy Park has been a major leader in the transformation of worship during the last half-century. As a pastor and worship leader for the Vineyard, he has been in the center of the action, with extensive experience leading people into God's presence through the use of contemporary music. Several of the songs written by Andy have become international favorites, most notably, "In the Secret," which expresses the worshiper's desire for deeper, more intimate knowledge of God. Andy's pervasive influence on contemporary worship has also been felt through his mentoring of other prominent worship leaders and songwriters.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that Andy has written a new book on worship: *The Worship Journey: A Quest of Heart, Mind and Strength*. This is especially true if you're familiar with his first book: *To Know You More: Cultivating the Heart of the Worship Leader* (InterVarsity Press, 2004). This book, which I've used when teaching graduate level courses on worship, testifies to Andy's skill as a writer of prose, as well as his wisdom in the facets of worship. We might expect someone with Andy's skill, experience, and vision to write a book about worship.

But we might not expect some of the things Andy has to say about worship in *The Worship Journey*. For example, he writes: "Just as we can erroneously think that believing the right doctrine makes us good Christians regardless of how we're behaving, we can be duped into thinking that singing is the main course in a menu of worship."

Then there are Andy's reflections on the role of feelings in worship: "The truth is this: when we behold Jesus on the cross, and all it means for us, we don't have to feel anything else to have a valid worship experience." He explains how this challenges our cultural assumptions about worship: "We have many songs these days about being in the Father's warm embrace and being filled with His comforting Spirit. I love those songs. But in our culture of narcissism, we could be led to believe that intimacy with God is all about *feeling* loved. It's as if we believe that if *we can get a warm, fuzzy experience in worship then we have been intimate with God*. I really enjoy every *feeling* that comes from worshiping Jesus, but friendship with God is bigger than that." In fact, according to Andy, "respect, reverence, and obedience" are central to a truly intimate, worshipful relationship with God.

You might not be surprised if I, as a Reformed Presbyterian, were to make such observations about worship, music, and feelings. But given Andy's leadership in a worldwide worship movement that has emphasized singing and helped millions of people to feel God's presence as they sing, you might wonder where he's getting this stuff in *The Worship Journey*.

He solves this puzzle throughout the book. First, Andy's understanding of worship is grounded on clear, careful reading of Scripture. The claims in this book are drawn from God's Word, which is Andy's chief authority for faith and practice. Second, Andy has been instructed by some of the greatest Christian thinkers, including both classic and contemporary spiritual writers. Third, he has learned from the experiences of Christians throughout the world as they seek to worship God with integrity.

Last, but surely not least, Andy has drawn freely from his own experience as a Christian on a worship journey with Jesus. Throughout the pages of this book, Andy shares his discoveries, joys, prayers, sorrows, and struggles. His candor and authenticity invite us to come along with him on his pilgrimage into deeper, truer, and fuller worship of the living God.

Andy surely believes that songs and emotions are central to worship. But, he knows that, in biblical perspective, worship includes far more. "If we become focused on music to the

neglect of a life of worship, we're missing God's heart. If we step off the path, we become ingrown, narrow sighted and imbalanced. Because worship is all encompassing, and not limited to singing songs, I wanted to write a book about the *life of worship* instead of the *music of worship*." This is an apt description of *The Worship Journey*, a book about the life of worship, about living worshipfully every moment of every day.

Andy explains that, "to honor Jesus in every activity is to worship him." Thus he urges us to ask: "How is a heart of worship worked out as you mow the lawn, drive on the freeway, surf the Internet, watch TV, teach school, hammer nails, and relate to your family members?" According to Andy, true worship also has to do with how we spend our time and money, how we confront our addictions and seek justice for the oppressed, how we work in the world and how we rest in God's grace.

Though worship is something we do for the Lord with all that we are, Andy continually reminds us that worship is not something we do on our own. It is our response to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. As Andy writes, "Trying to live a life of worship is an unbearable burden without the foundation of grace resounding in our hearts." Moreover, Andy's teaching and example remind us that we worship in the power of the Holy Spirit who regularly guides us, helping us to know the heart of God. The Spirit joins us to other Christians who encourage and challenge us to offer whole life worship to the Lord.

I could say so much more about this book and why I find it compelling. But, rather than read what I have to say about *The Worship Journey*, you'd be much better off actually reading the book for yourself. So I'll sign off now with a prayer: May God use this book to renew you in his love and refresh you in his grace, so that you might indeed offer to him all that you are in a life of worship. In the name of Jesus, our Lord, Savior, and Friend. Amen.

—Mark D. Roberts
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