

# Crisis In Worship

## Part 1

In the December 1999 issue of Charisma Magazine, is an article on the Christian band Delirious and the future of worship in the church. Everything in the article is about how worship is changing in the church, and how it is being taken to the streets, and to venues not normally associated with Christianity. These are all good things, because music is such a good tool to use to present the Gospel.

I remember all thru the 1970's, I played in a Christian band that traveled regionally thru the various coffee houses in the Chicago and Milwaukee area and all around the Midwest. In 1977 we did a trip to Sweden and Denmark that lasted about 6 weeks. There we were able to play in the public schools and various other venues. In a 5 week period, we played 42 times, sometimes 3 different places in a day. The thing is, we never called it "worship". It was an expression of worship, at times, other times it was a tool for evangelism. Music is a universal language, but I fear we have become confused about what "worship" is.

Today, when someone talks about "worship", they usually mean the music and singing. You hear phrases like, "a powerful time of worship" or "I can't wait for the worship to start" or "I love to worship". A lot of times, powerful worship means ear deafening music that you literally feel the vibes from. These are things I enjoy, it makes me feel good and it is fun. In a lot of ways very similar to be in a rock concert, that is fun too. Don't get me wrong, nobody likes music better than I do. You can ask my wife! I usually go to sleep with a headset on. I have been a musician for over 40 years, and have been involved with Christian music since 1971.

What really concerns me here is this. We are losing the true meaning of one of the great biblical words, and that word is "worship". It has been redefined to mean less than what God intended for it to mean, and if we continue on this course, it will weaken the church and the body of Christ.

In Genesis 22, it says the following. <sup>1</sup>And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am*. <sup>2</sup>And he said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. <sup>3</sup>And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. <sup>4</sup>Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. <sup>5</sup>And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and **worship**, and come again to you.

This verse in Genesis is the first mention of the word "worship" in the Bible. Usually that means that it sets a precedent or understanding of what that word ultimately means. Here it is easy to see a few things clearly. God was testing Abraham, and in that test, would Abraham obey and give sacrificially.

In Genesis 18 <sup>1</sup>And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; <sup>2</sup>And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw *them*, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and **bowed** himself toward the ground...

The word “worship” in Genesis 22 is the same Hebrew word “bowed” in Genesis 18. So we have a basic understanding of “worship” from just these few verses. A bowing prostrate, in obedience and sacrifice unto the Lord, in all things. Even in tests and trials as great as those of Abraham.

The New Testament says the following In Matthew 2 <sup>7</sup>Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. <sup>8</sup>And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found *Him*, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.” <sup>9</sup>After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over *the place* where the Child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. <sup>11</sup>After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and **they fell to the ground and worshiped Him**.

One thing is very clear in all of these verses, there wasn’t any music being played or songs being sung, it was more solemn and more reverent. Has the modern church lost those things? If we lose the original meaning of “worship” and the importance of that word in our modern church, we are at great peril. Worship involves humble obedience and sacrifice in our lives in all circumstances, in times of wealth and in times of poverty, when we have plenty or when we have little. When we have trials and are tested of the Lord, that is when our worship is shown. It is how we live when no one sees us, day to day, walking with him.

Now out of that walk with the Lord, music can be used as a great way of expressing our joy and adoration for Him. Worship can be expressed thru music and thru praise, but we must never confuse worship, with music and praise. They are two different things. True worship is of the utmost importance, outward expression thru music is a privilege. I know missionaries in China, when they meet together with believers, they can’t sing or have music because they are in hiding, but they still worship the Lord. When you speak of “worship” with them, they don’t think of music and singing.

The future of “worship” in the church is in the past, in the foundational teaching and understanding of a great biblical word.

Jeremiah 6 <sup>16</sup> Thus says the LORD,  
“Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths,  
Where the good way is, and walk in it;  
And you will find rest for your souls.

Blessings,  
Niels Prip