

Balance

Hopefully, what I want to talk about will be a way of evaluating where we're at as a team and as individuals and I hope it will give us things to consider, when we think about moving forward and progressing. We need to know where we're at to help us move forward!

This isn't "THUS SAID THE LORD", but just thoughts that I've had and have discussed with a few people to draw the conclusion I'm about to share. You'll need to test it and evaluate where you fit in to this.

IN RESPONSE TO WORSHIP CENTRAL BLOG: (See below)

To sum up, Tim isn't content. Are any of us content? As I read this I get this feeling that Tim isn't satisfied with his present experiences of Worship and that he seems to think that neither is anybody else. He might be right but I believe that there are different scenarios here that need to be taken into account. Tim Hughes, Matt Redman, Kevin Prosch, Martin Smith may well lead Worship in a church but they're all in a very different setting to the majority of Worship teams around the country.

Like many, I went to see Kevin Prosch at a worship event in Birmingham and it was everything that Martin Smith said it was. Very spontaneous, free, but by no means disjointed in any way. I've had the privilege of meeting Martin Neil who was the drummer for Kevin Prosch and to say he's good is an understatement. Drummer/Percussion animal is more appropriate. The point I'm making is that these guys have to play at a standard of excellence. Chances are, we wouldn't know who they were if they didn't. There will inevitably be a high standard expected of these guys and probably be expected of themselves. Being surrounded with these sorts of musicians ultimately means they'll play at the top of their game and I think this is where Tim is talking from. At the point where the song's sound great but there's still something missing. It's easy to imagine this scenario where they have to play well, but struggle to find God's heart in it.

We must be careful though not to think that we're in a similar position. Reading through, you might relate to the practices and the song development and then find yourself thinking that this is us. I don't believe it is.

These guys play at a level where they don't have to think too hard about what they're doing.

Whether the music itself is simple or challenging is not the point. They can play and sing it with their eyes closed. This is actually an ideal place to be. The word freedom popped up a few times in Tim's blog and practically this is the way to gain freedom in playing and singing, or at least one of the first steps. If we've got our heads down in music sheets our minds will be focused on that. What's the next chord or next line. Let's do ourselves a favour and be adequately prepared so that we can be free in our Worship. This isn't a criticism but something for us all to consider. When you know the songs intimately your mind is free to consider other things (THE LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!), and I believe that this is the point that freedom in worship begins. When you can sing/play the song to a level that you yourself are lead into worship without being too distracted by the next chord or lyric, then you're in a position to usher others to follow you.

For the Tim Hughes' of this world, I believe they're past this point. They know the songs back to front but have forgotten what they're for.

Godfrey Birtill likens songs to tools. You pick out the right tool for the job. But the end goal isn't the fact that you have the tool, it's what the tool may help you to achieve. Although he would disagree with me, Godfrey actually plays his songs very consistently and to a high standard. Rarely do I see him thinking about chords or structures. When I've played with him, freedom has never been lacking. I believe this to be down to attitude and approach. His attitude is to use the tools to achieve

a goal. Not just to use the tools. However, the other side of the same coin is to try to use the tools but not know how!

We will all naturally lean in one direction. Either spiritual preparation over the practical, or visa versa. We each have to make a choice to lean in the other direction a little to try and find the balance. Spiritual preparation without the practical may give us a goal, focal point or God's direction but can leave us struggling to use music as a tool, as the song's themselves are distracting or disjointed. Practical preparation without the spiritual leads us to a place of freedom within the songs but the inability to recognise God's guidance for what that tool is for, where He's leading and what He may be doing in the congregation.

John has used this quote before, "Pray like you've never practiced and practice like you've never prayed". Again, it's a balance and it's about knowing who we are.

Yes God could lead the Worship on each and every Sunday, without us and it would be awesome. However, He wants to use you and me. He wants us to put our talents given by Him, to best use. He wants us to develop them. That's how He frequently chooses to be Glorified.

Faith without deeds is dead.

Let's evaluate where's we're at individually and as a team and let's try to find balance. Hopefully this will bring a freedom to our Worship and enable us to all progress as a team.

Worship Central Blog, By Tim
14 Apr 2011

Something has been stirring in my heart. There's an unsettling; a cry for more in our worship.

Over the last decade there have been many amazing songs written that have inspired the Church and drawn millions of people into a response of worship. The quality and choice of excellent worship songs has perhaps never been better. But are we missing something?

Reading Martin Smith's book "Delirious" I was struck by his comments:

"We've become too song focused, and in truth I believe that we need to be more worship focused. We've lost the ability to push aside the songs and replace them with 25 minutes of crying out, opening our hearts and heads with the raw worship of God who's within us. With Kevin (Prosch - a pioneer of spontaneity and prophetic worship in the 1990's) you never knew what was going to happen at any point in a worship session, but in church today, often 6 songs in 29 minutes, you make sure you get your 2 most popular ones in there so they get a decent boost up the CCLI charts."

I fear that for many of us in our corporate expression of worship we've allowed the song to become king! Are we more focused on getting the songs right and the arrangements sounding huge, than we are on preparing our hearts? Are we expectant in leading a time of worship because of a great new song that connects or because God is at work?

I'm desperate to see more freedom in our worship. To move beyond the songs. The songs in themselves have never been the final destination in our worship. Simply a vehicle to facilitate our worship. How amazing would it be to spend 30 minutes standing in silence in our times of worship simply because people are blown away by the majesty of God? Wouldn't it be exciting to see congregations take over the worship spending 20 minutes singing their own songs and words in response to God's mercy?

Worship is a spiritual activity. If we want to recapture more of God in our worship, more freedom and more of God's power, it will come through following the lead of the Holy Spirit. I've been

thinking about how we can step out more in the spontaneous. Not for the sake of it, but simply because we're hungry for a more authentic, raw and profound encounter in worship. Here's some thoughts:

1. PRIVATE CRY: Someone once said, "worship leading is taking your private cry and making it public." How much are we spending time alone crying out to God? Singing our own songs? Offering up our messy and heartfelt cry? If we want to step out and lead in this - we've got to engage with it ourselves.

2. LEAD WITH THE END IN MIND: In the 'Seven Habits of Highly Effective People' Steven Covey writes about the importance in leadership to begin with the end in mind. When leading worship what are we trying to accomplish? Is it to teach great new songs? Is it to encourage people to 'feel great?' Surely it's about people being freed and released to meet and encounter Christ. To spend time in his presence. To respond with gratitude and thanksgiving. Ultimately it's about relationship - intimacy. Worship is about glorifying God and enjoying him forever.

I've observed in the way I lead worship that often I try and make each session of worship the most amazing time. Nothing wrong in that - but in doing so I came to realise that I wasn't taking risks. I was in danger of focusing so much on the present that I wasn't leading with the end in mind. I wasn't thinking about where I wanted to see the worshipping life of the church in 6 months. I was taking all the leadership and responsibility of leading worship on myself rather than placing the responsibility on the congregation. As worship leaders we need to be training, encouraging and inspiring people in their worship. We need to release their song and cry of praise and adoration. We're not about performing, we're about encouraging participation. We don't want consumers, we want a people consumed with God! In releasing this, let's not be afraid of mess and a few mistakes. It's part of the journey. It's part of relationship.

3. RADICAL FRINGE: This isn't about a haircut - but it's great to find places to step out in spontaneous, free flowing worship. Whether it's a group of mates, a prayer meeting or creative worship night. We're currently trying to put a few dates in the diary where the agenda is simply to meet with God and to step out. There's no pressure of leading a congregation. It's relaxed and a safe place to experiment and grow in this stuff.

God is up to something. I believe there's a real need for worship leaders to seek more of God's Spirit and lead in our worship. Never at the expense of content and sound theology, but surely there is a place where we move beyond the songs and find ourselves overwhelmed and undone.

P.S. Do grab a copy of Martin Smith's new book - a great and fascinating read. ["Delirious - My journey with the band, a growing family and an army of history makers."](#)