WE EXPERIENCE AND WORSHIP GOD

One Sunday, a pastor asked his congregation to consider giving a little extra in the offering plate. He said that whoever gave the most would be able to pick out three hymns.

After the offering plates were passed, the pastor noticed that someone had contributed a $100 bill. Extremely grateful, he wanted to personally thank the generous person before the whole congregation.

A quiet, elderly widow shyly raised her hand. The pastor asked her to come to the front. Slowly she made her way to the pastor. He told her how wonderful it was that she gave so much and asked her to pick out three hymns.

Her eyes brightened as she pointed to the three handsomest men in the congregation: "I'll take him and him and him."

When I first came into the Vineyard and I heard the word worship… When I heard people speaking about the Presence of God… I was not sure what they meant. Wasn't worship something that strange people did in temples with statues of little fat men with incense burning? The Presence of God was a completely foreign concept to me. Was He standing at the back with lightning bolts in His hands glaring at us…? Was He some ethereal, Casper the friendly ghost kinda being…? I remember Costa Mitchell the director of Vineyard SA at one meeting saying He could see the Holy Spirit resting on people… Man I opened my eyes straight away looking around to see what the Holy Spirit looked like. Walking into this strange church where people sang with their eyes closed and prayed with their eyes open…

However the longer I stayed, the more I engaged, I began to worship, truly worship, and experience God.

As kingdom people, we worship and experience God.

> **Psalm 73:28** But I'm in the very presence of God-- oh, how refreshing it is! I've made Lord GOD my home. God, I'm telling the world what you do! MSG
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> **James 4:8** Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you. NLT

What amazingly wonderful words! Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you --I'm in the very presence of God. This is the greatest privilege in all the world: to have the glorious privilege to approach and draw near God, the Sovereign Majesty of the universe, the Creator and Lord of the universe. Just think, believers can approach God and talk and share with Him anytime, anyplace. The door into God's presence is never closed.

Unfortunately, these kinds of experiences come all too infrequently to most of us… But life without God's presence was not His original plan for us. He designed us to know Him, living in close, intimate fellowship with Him. That's why life is so difficult and unfulfilling for so many people. We are living without the one thing that is essential for our fulfillment and well-being. We are living without the continuous, enduring presence of God.

Myles Munro – "You were created to live in God's presence. Life anywhere else is a distorted, dissatisfying imitation."

> **Gen 1:26-28** Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." (27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (28) God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

1. The first thing God gave man was His image and likeness…
2. The second thing God did was to place man in His Presence, which is the meaning in the Hebrew language of the word *Eden.*

God's greatest desire was that we would act like Him and live with Him forever. This crowning act of creation Adam and Eve, were a result of God's desire to have a family. He wanted someone to be His friend and to live with Him… Whenever you live without a vital, ongoing relationship with God, you will struggle finding true happiness or of fulfilling that purpose for which you were born. Simply put you cannot function with your true life purpose, effectively outside the environment of God's presence.

SO HOW DOES THIS WORK? <u>We as humans will always worship something…</u>

Alexander Venter - "Whom and what we worship incarnates us!"

When we worship Jesus, we become like Him… When we worship other things or people the result is horrendous to our Lord and hellish for us…Think about it… Worship money… Worship possessions… Job… Then what about people…? Bands… U2… Movie stars… Liz Taylor… Michael Jackson… What about people worshipping the Kardashians and doing plastic surgery to look like them?

When we worship anything other than the Lord the results are tragic! Substitutes can't satisfy… They only give a sense of false intimacy which ultimately lead to enslavement and addictions… True Worship is the only complete connection between our Lord and ourselves… It is the fountain of fulfilment and pleasure… There is no substitute for this ultimate reality…

Has anyone been to the top of Table Mountain in Cape Town… or another mountain drive? Now take a moment to think about this picture. You get to the top and cloud cover comes in. Visibility is very low. As you walk on the table top, it is flat, but you approach the edge in the direction of Robin Island. As you are about 20 meters away the cloud cover begins to lift and at 2 meters away suddenly, the cloud disappears and the sun comes out and there is perfect visibility. BANG, the perfect sunny day and you see clearly all the way past Robin Island. Incredible BREATHTAKING views captivate you.

When we worship and encounter God's Presence in worship we are drawn into that intimacy with Him. After all these years in ministry, after 100's of worship sets, my breath is still taken away by Jesus. In worship I am drawn into His Presence and into a breath-taking intimacy with Him. As people of the kingdom of God - **We Experience and Worship God.** According to the **Westminster Confession**, *Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.* This makes worship and intimacy with God fundamental.

> **John Wimber on Worship:** "The highest honour that we have in the kingdom of God is the worship of the Father. Through praise and adoration, we grow closer to God, learning of this holiness and, in turn, growing in holiness. This one discipline is perhaps the most important means of character growth, because we sacrifice who we are to adore who he is. In our death to self, we open ourselves to his life-transforming power."

Worship should be characterized by love and intimacy with God, requiring us to self-disclose our thoughts and feelings to him, bringing our full humanity into the worship experience. But remember that Worship is not only an event but it is a lived life…

> **John 4:23-24 -** But the time is coming--it has, in fact, come--when what you're called will not matter and where you go to worship will not matter. "It's who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That's the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before him in their worship. God is sheer being itself--Spirit. Those who worship him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration." – The Message

The Greek word that Jesus uses here is **PROSKYNEO** – act of worship, to bow down and kiss the King… Speaks of love and surrender in relational intimacy and adoration… Paul in the book of Romans says it this way…

> **Rom 12:1-2** So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life--your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life--and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. (2) Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention

on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. MSG

The Greek word that Paul uses here is **LATREUO**– Lifestyle of worship… Do everything, every action in your life, every moment, whether work, ministry, family or recreation do it as "Unto the Lord." The reality is that worship is not just about singing songs for 30 minutes on a Sunday morning, it is way more than that… It is a lifestyle of worship that permeates all aspects of our lives. It is an approach to life that reflects our deep desire for the presence of God or what some have called the 'numinous' - that sense of the tangibility of His presence, or His manifest presence. It is not that God is ever absent, or that He is not present wherever two or three gather in His name. Yet we know that God moves at particular times in special ways so that everyone is aware that He is active, without human manipulation or contrivance.

When we live that way and are prepared to have our day interrupted by God, very often healing occurs, people are filled with his Spirit, released from bondages and inwardly changed.

> **William Temple – "**WORSHIP is the submission of all nature to God. It is the quickening of my conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of my mind by His truth; the purifying of the imagination by His beauty; the opening of my heart to His love; the submission of my will to His purpose. All this gathered up in adoration is the greatest of all expressions of which I am capable"

As a kingdom person you are created to worship and experience God. Submitting to God, being conscience of God, experiencing God, purifying your mind, opening your heart to Him, submitting your will to His purpose… Adoring Him…

I love Psalms and I close with one of my favourites, I am not going to put it on the screen, close your eyes and listen…

> **Psalm 139:1-18** …O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. (2) You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. (3) You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. (4) Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. (5) You hem me in--behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. (6) Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. (7) Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? (8) If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. (9) If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, (10) even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. (11) If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," (12) even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. (13) For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. (14) I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. (15) My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, (16) your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (17) How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! (18) Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.

As kingdom people we experience and worship God… **LET'S WORSHIP**