

CH 1: The Disguise

I'm not a religious person, although I've been going to church my entire life. The connotations associated with religion in our Western Culture, are negative. In fact, I can't think of one positive thing about it. It institutionalises people. It binds them up. The literal translation of religion in Latin is, 'to bind'.¹ Religion can tell people that the way they are created isn't acceptable unless it fits into a nice and neat, little box. It forces people to wear a mask so that we all look the same. A disguise if you will. Religion isn't meant for anyone.

Take for example, some of the very 'conservative' religions that require the congregation to sit in acceptable and orderly rows, in an orderly service, singing the same hymns that require no expression or passion, and hopefully if they make it through the experience without making a mistake, they can breathe a sigh of relief as they walk out the doors and think to themselves, "Thank God I only have to do that once a week!" I believe that what I'm

describing was probably more extreme about one hundred years ago and earlier, so today, things seem to be more lax. Even so, the thought of having to endure such an experience, to me, seems totally pointless and a complete waste of time! If what we experience inside the four walls of any place of worship is something we're glad to be rid of, do you think that's how God intended it to be?

So, where did we (being the human race) go wrong? How did we end up so far away from the original design of our earthly experience? Religious thinking. Religious tradition. A tradition that was established to cause all participants to think and act the same way, with no individual expression.

Now, what I'm saying can be misconstrued, of course, and taken to all sorts of extremes because now what I'm actually saying is, "Hey! It's okay that we're all different!" Some people may think that EVERYTHING is acceptable. What I will mention on this point, is that in 1 Corinthians 10:23 it says, "Everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial" (my paraphrase).

Truth be known, I do like to stir the pot a little. Paul, one of the most spiritually mature men of the New Testament, also liked to stir the pot so I think I'm in good company. Like Paul, I'm not one for debating anything really. In fact, most times when people debate on a matter it's not to hear the other side but simply to have themselves heard. People like to stick to their guns and take an inch so that they can run a mile. For example, when people find out that Jesus turned water into wine, they're suddenly like "Yahooooo!!! Let's get plastered every weekend! Jesus looooooves the wine!!!" Somehow, I think they've missed the point!

One of the things that I'm passionate about in life is to, in some way, help people take off the mask! To help people see who they really are and why they're here, particularly in the area of worship. Now all of the 'non-musical' people have switched off and decided to put down this book because you think it's not relevant to you. That's the very lie that religion has taught us for hundreds of years and it's about time we realised it for the lie that it is!

If you are one of those people that think worship is only about music and singing, please do something for me right now. Put down this book, take your left or right hand, and give yourself a swift slap on the face! Bit harsh? Maybe. The slap is not to punish you but to knock out the religious spirit that lied to you about worship. It is time we learnt a thing or two about this stuff! It's important! It's relevant to every single person on the planet!

Did you know that you were created to be on this earth for one sole reason? Now many of you may be sitting on the edge of your seat because you're about to be told the meaning of life! Well, here it is. Here is the reason why God created you...

TO BE LOVED!

There it is! But there's more. It's not just to be loved, but to be loved by GOD and to be a lover OF God! How simple is that? Haven't you ever wondered whether you're supposed to be here? Am I even necessary in this massive production of humanity called life? And why am I here NOW?

Why wasn't I born in the 16th Century, or another 100 years in the future?

When God created the universe and everything in it, He did so by producing a sound. He spoke, "LET THERE BE LIGHT." This sound that came out of Him, was in fact, a frequency. Have you ever seen 'cymatics' in action? If you haven't, picture a square metal plate held up by a metal rod in the centre. Attached to the metal rod is a frequency generator that sends a frequency (or sound) through the rod and vibrates the metal plate. Sand is poured on top of the plate and the generator is turned on. As the frequencies go higher and generate a higher tone or pitch, the sand on the plate begins to create symmetrical patterns. These patterns become more intricate and detailed as the frequency goes higher. It's quite an amazing thing to watch, so go search for it on youtube.

Here's something else quite amazing. In a particular rural area there were crops that were not thriving. In fact they were dead. This area was full of crows and other predator like birds that had driven

out the native birds of that area. The locals of this area began to drive out the crows. When they did they noticed that the native birds actually came back. When the native birds came back, they also brought back their song (frequency). Guess what else came back? Yes. The crops came back to life and everything began to flourish! Amazing!!²

What I would like to suggest, is that when God created all things, He actually spoke the exact frequency that 'looked' like the thing He created. Just like the cymatic patterns in the sand. Something we 'hear' can create something we 'see'. When He created a horse, He spoke the frequency that would create a horse, and so on. God created mankind in the same way, except we are the only thing He created that He actually breathed life into. We contain the breath of God! All of us contain a frequency that has come out of God Himself. There is nothing accidental about that. So, when He spoke you into being and you began to grow in your mother's womb, He wanted your unique frequency to be on the earth at this time. Right now. What God put inside of you and the way He made you is not

only necessary right now, it is vital. What for? To love Him, to praise Him, to worship Him.

If we really believe that we are vital in the age we live in, then surely we need to be seen, heard, and realised; firstly, by ourselves, and then by others. Why? Because if God put you here for now, then you must be carrying something of Him that needs to be seen, heard, and realised by those around you. We cannot afford to hide or keep silent. The very words and actions of our praise is a testimony of Jesus. We are making HIM known in the earth! The very thing that I carry, the way in which I worship Him with my life, will be what changes the generation I live in.

WORSHIP.

It is an expression of love. In fact, here is a definition of 'worship': The feeling or expression of reverence and adoration.³ This is a direct translation of the Greek word for worship. If you compare that to the Hebrew definition which is: to pay homage; prostrate oneself; bow to.⁴ There is a major difference between the old and new testament. The

old testament (Hebrew) being a reflection of the law, and the new testament (Greek) being a reflection of grace. Two different ways of worshipping and two different ways of approaching God.

So many cultures, including westerners, are stuck in the law-version of worship. Emphasising the sinners that we are and how unworthy we are as human beings, and really, we will never measure up to the requirements of that law. Have we all forgotten what Jesus did for us? HE is the One that brought grace into the equation! He made it possible for us, through the most traumatic and humiliating death possible, and the most glorious and death-defying resurrection so that we could be with Him, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. It is because of Him that we can ALL come to God with a different attitude to worship Him. We can now worship God from a place of 'right standing' and simply ADORE Him! Completely give Him ALL that we are and ALL of our heart, being a LOVER of God , and LOVED by Him!

So let's go a bit deeper here. For all of you non-musical people, I have good news! Worship has nothing to do with music! Let me rephrase that because now all of the sensitive musicians in the room are feeling worthless. Worship is not JUST about music. It's just one facet of this thing we call worship. Yes, worship is multi-faceted, just like our God is multi-faceted. In fact, for every person that He has created, there is a different expression of worship. A different expression of reverence and adoration... a different expression of love. In fact, a life lived in worship is to live out the purpose God has given you.

God asks for our obedience in the unusual. In the things that we wouldn't think of ourselves, or the things that we cling on to tightly. It's a bit like the gift-love that C.S. Lewis wrote about. Living a life of obedience is living a life of worship. We can see that our worship has very little to do with the song and a lot more to do with the condition of our heart.

My mum always used to say to me, "Slow obedience is no obedience!" This was usually after

her request to make her a cup of tea. In fact, it's still one of her top requests. The same could be said of our slow obedience to God. The longer it takes me to obey is indicative of how long it took me to talk myself into doing what I was told, which means I needed to work on the condition of my heart.

We know that our heart is most important when connecting with God. It's essential in our intimacy with Him and intimacy is essential in our adoration of Him. Adoration is the key to our worship. If my heart is slow to obey Him, then my heart is slow to adore Him.

This is what it might look like if a group of people, in the same room, worshiped in their unique way...

I'm a musician, and my 'primary' way of worshiping is through singing and playing guitar. That is the most effective way that I can connect with God's heart and tell Him my feelings of adoration. However, my friend who's an artist may be standing in the corner with her canvas and paints, and as the music is playing, she begins to see colours and images in her mind. She begins to paint and

draw the exact image that the Holy Spirit has put inside her in that moment. By doing this, she feels just as connected to God's heart as I do when I'm singing or playing.

In that same room, there is another lady standing still, waiting. As the music plays, she begins to see or hear words that are not in the song being sung, but are being spoken to her by the Holy Spirit. She can hear them inside her. She quickly sits and pulls out her iPad and begins writing furiously, not wanting to miss a word. During this time she doesn't know why she is writing or even what it means. She doesn't know whether it is for herself or for someone else. What she does know is that she is writing the words that are coming straight from God's heart.

A man, standing near the front of the room, who is seemingly conservative, begins to feel the rhythm of the music, right in his chest. He feels that if he doesn't begin to move in some way, that his physical body might just explode. So, he begins to dance. Not just a subtle tapping of the foot, but an explosive,

whole-body dance that would put any hip-hop krumper to shame!

These are just a few examples of **MANY** expressions of worship, that are inside all of us just waiting to burst out! If these expressions aren't able to come out in some way it is like we are disabling our worship to God. It's a bit like trying to give someone a hug with just one arm (you know the christian side-hug?) You just can't give it everything you've got. It feels very half-hearted. Why on earth would we want to give God half-hearted worship? He is nothing less than a full-hearted God!

"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." John 4:23-24 (The Message)

This scripture totally sums up what I'm saying. In fact, I couldn't put it any better than The Word of

God! Who can? The part that really gets me, is, "The Father is out looking for..." He is looking? LOOKING?! Searching even! I'd hate to think that God even needs to do that. He shouldn't have to be searching for true worshipers! We should all simply be at His feet, to the point that He no longer has to look. Wouldn't that be amazing? We are His creation after all. The creation will always be drawn to its Creator. The creation will never feel content until they're in union with the Creator. If it's our true worship that connects us to The Creator, then a lifestyle is ever more our purpose. The alternative can feel like a life of eternal longing, emptiness... a life of searching, just as the Father searches for true worshipers. How long must we all be searching, more than likely, in our stubbornness? For some of us it looks a lot more like running.

I've definitely spent some time running. In a very sporadic fashion too. Mostly because as soon as I started, the gravitational pull I felt drawing me back to Him was very hard to ignore. I didn't at all feel 'grown-up', 'independent', or 'adventurous'. I just felt, well... stupid. I knew I didn't really want to do what I

was doing but I did it anyway. To me, that's stupidity, and so I felt like I was just trying to be someone else altogether. Some people call it 'finding yourself'. I call it 'losing yourself'. We can't possibly 'find' ourselves outside of our Creator. We can only find distorted reflections of the real thing and convince ourselves that we've succeeded, yet all we've really done is become something other than... original.

For example, when a young girl finds the love and affection she longs for in the arms of a man that treats her less than what she's really worth, when she can only be fulfilled by the love of THE Father. Or, when a teenage boy begins the downward spiral of drug abuse to experience the 'highs' of life, when he could be experiencing the TRUE high of living in the third heaven, bi-locating, seeing angels, and transfiguration, to name a few.

The origin of all things tells us how God intended all things. The closeness of man and God, the co-labouring with Him, the beauty of perfection, the love between man and woman, the equality of their bond, the dominion over the earth, and the list goes

on. The closer we draw to God, the closer we get to His original design. Living in the design is the only way we feel... complete.

How could one find out so much about themselves with their face to the ground, prostrated at His feet? This has been my experience. Every time I fall at His feet in adoration, He lifts me up to see Him face to face. It's not a position of degradation, unworthiness, or condemnation. It's a position of absolute servanthood and through this He lifts us to the rightful place of royalty, reigning with Him. We are after all seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus! (See Ephesians 2:6)

One of the best insights on worship that I've ever read, comes from Loui Giglio's book, *The Air I Breathe: Worship as a Way of Life*. It says:

"When God is not greatly praised, it's only because we think He's not that great of a God. When our worship is small, it's because our concept of God is small. When we offer God little-bitty sacrifices, it's because we've somehow reduced Him in our hearts to a little-bitty God. Our vision has become clouded, our hearts distracted. As

a result, our lives shrivel into insignificance and meaninglessness. We just bump along in this mass of humanity, having no real clue what life's about. We fret. We get depressed. We worry and get bent out of shape. We go down all kinds of dead-end paths as we try to accomplish everything by ourselves."

When I first read that statement by Loui, I felt like I had been slapped across the face (in a good way). I felt so convicted. I know in my heart I repented for all the times that I may have given God little-bitty sacrifices. I knew that as a worship leader, and a leader in general, that I had a responsibility to not let my heart be distracted. But even more than that, I knew that as a CHILD OF GOD I had a need inside me to be with Him, and having a distracted heart would not draw me closer. My life is a worship service.

I know now, that I'm free to love Him in my own way. The way I'm created to. The feeling of freedom that comes with that revelation, is bliss. Freedom should always follow repentance. If it doesn't, we've slipped into condemnation, which is the absence of

grace. It's because of grace that we can live in relationship with God. When you know Him, and I mean truly know Him, there's little chance of ever turning away and saying, "I don't need Your grace anymore." How could lovers reject each others love? They don't! If they do, they can't be called lovers, but mere acquaintances. Surely we don't want to reduce Jesus down to our acquaintance. He is the lover of our souls!

Think...

What is stopping me from greatly praising God?

Do I think my worship is even valid or necessary?