

"Worship Tools"

by Heath Rogers

We recently received a pamphlet advertising "Worship Tools." The creative artwork on the cover depicted a cymbal shaped like a saw blade, a guitar turning into a screwdriver, and a tape measure releasing a keyboard. The company that sent the pamphlet was offering a quick and easy way to incorporate new and popular "worship songs" into our worship services. Inside, the brochure read, "Imagine easily mastering the fastest-rising worship songs everyone loves. Now you can!" Included was a partial list of these songs that "everyone loves." I haven't heard of any of them.

The front of the mailer stated: "The freshest most passionate worship experience is right here at your fingertips." The purpose of this brochure is to get us to question whether or not our worship experience is everything that it could or should be. Perhaps we need their "worship tools" in order for us to have the best worship experience possible.

Worship is not to be looked upon as something we "experience." Whatever *we* get out of worship is secondary at best. Worship is something that we are to *give*. I am afraid that many people today view church services as just another form of entertainment. Church-goers sit in the pew as if they are in an audience. Some churches have even replaced the old-time "Amen's" with applause. After attending a service, worshipers will often evaluate their experiences according to how the sermon and the music (performance) have made them feel. The reality (that has been lost on many people) is that all worshipers are to be *participants* and God is the *audience*. He is the one who is receiving the praise, honor, glory and thanksgiving. Shouldn't it be God who determines the acceptability of the "worship experience"?

Jesus said, "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). This short passage teaches us several important lessons about worship.

Jesus said that there are "true worshipers." If there are true worshipers, then there must also be false worshipers. We also learn that God is seeking for true worshipers to worship Him. Not all worship is acceptable to God. Those who will worship God acceptably must worship in spirit and truth. "Worship in spirit" does not refer to an emotional experience that one undergoes while worshipping. Our worship is not made more spiritual by singing the "fastest-rising worship songs everyone loves." To "worship in spirit" means to worship from the spirit (or from the heart). "Worship in truth" does not mean that our worship must be true or sincere. Of course this is important. Our worship must be sincere, and Jesus deals with this in other passages, but such is not the particular point being made here. To "worship in truth" means to worship according to the pattern set forth in God's word. "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

Perhaps these "worship tools" will appeal to churches that are catering only to men. However, those who are content with the purity and simplicity of the Bible know that the only worship tool that "true worshipers" need is a heart that shows that it loves God. The Lord will not receive worship that does not come from the heart. "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (Matt. 15:8). We do not need cymbals, guitars, pianos or computer programs to praise God. We need to make melody in our hearts. "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Are you a "true worshiper?" Does the church where you attend worship in spirit and in truth, or are the

leaders more concerned about your having "the freshest and most passionate worship experience"?

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