

# The Awakening Power of Truth

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The truth of God has power to awaken. Many times my heart has been slumbering - I have been dull in my walk with God, and lacking in energy and passion. Before too long I start looking for the reason. Overworked? Perhaps. Distracted? Perhaps. More often than not I realise I've fallen for the same old trick. I've been neglecting the word of God - somehow trying to move on with God without the daily bread of scripture He has so wonderfully provided. Often it takes just a single, piercing line of His truth to begin the wake-up call in my soul and brighten my walk with God. One passionate psalm, one wise proverb, or one teaching from the mouth of Jesus and I know I've come to the right place. Before long, I'm worshipping Him in thought or word or song.

Risking an obvious statement, we need to be a people of the Word. That's true for our lives of worship, but it's equally true for the times we gather together in congregations and worship the Lord through song. The church needs songs rooted in the voice of scripture - creative poetry which wraps itself around the truths of God and reveals Him with every single line.

It is said of the old preacher Charles Spurgeon, that 'his blood ran bibline', that if you'd have cut him, the bible would have flowed out. What an amazing tribute. Would it be that people could say the same of musical worship leaders and songwriters within the church. But if we want to bleed the bible, we have to read the bible. If we want to bleed the truth of God, we have to feed on the truth of God.

Kevin Navarro, in his book *The Complete Worship Leader* comments that "every worship leader must be a theologian". He's saying that as leaders of a large part of a worship service, we're placed in a position of great responsibility. And to handle that entrustment well, we need to become students of the word of God. That will help us ensure our lyrics are God honoring - that nothing in them misleads the people of God, and that we're rallying around the essential focus points of our faith. A deepening knowledge of the word of God will provide us with the discernment we need for this task. Every worship song-writer also needs to become a student of the word. Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks, and if we digest the truths of God's word, this is what will flow out when we turn our hearts and hands to writing a song. It's a little like eating garlic - if you eat lots of it, it will find it's way out somehow,

Some songs may include large portions of scripture, presented in an unedited form, and that is wonderful for as well as presenting truth, they give us a great vehicle for memorizing the Word. At other times we'll write brand new poetry, but in the best cases, every single line, though maybe not quoting actual verses, is rooted in the essence of scripture and its truths. That too is a wonderful thing.

Marva J Dawn comments that a worship service may never contain every single aspect of God's truth, but "worship must never contain untruth." It's also important that we make sure none of the major ingredients are missing. Over a decade ago, the Vineyard Movement were leading a conference in Australia. As a response to the worship songs, one pastor wrote to John Wimber (who led the Vineyard Movement) and pointed out that out of around 70 songs in the conference songbook, only a couple referenced the cross. His point being that the centrality of the cross is essential in Christian worship. Wimber was grateful for this insight from an outsider, and shocked by it too. He immediately set about feeding his songwriters once again on the beautiful truths of the cross, sending each one of them some of the major Christian writings on the cross. Sure enough, many new songs flowed out, centering around the truth of the cross. If we feed deeply on the truth, this is what will flow out in our song-writing.

The truth of God sets us free to worship. Many times I've have heard the hearts of a congregation resounding with a certain lyric - a powerful display of God's revelation in the line of a song which those singing it out resonate with, Perhaps a little moment where people let out a cheer of praise, or some other sign of agreement as they receive a glorious truth of God. For example, the hymn *Thine be the glory*, which powerfully presents the glorious truth of the resurrection of Jesus. I've noticed that each time we sing those powerful old lines, there's an upsurge in worship, as all around

hearts and souls resound with the truth. "Endless is the victory, Thou over death hast won." This is the awakening power of truth.

Too often we mess around trying to *make* something happen in congregational worship times. And we underestimate the awakening power of God's truth. This an urgent matter for all us lead worshippers to attend to - to write and choose truth filled songs that are poetic, congregational, and yet massively soaked in scripture. Worship, as John Piper described it, is meant to be a 'glorious feast on the perfections of Christ'. Let us present the glories of our Lord Jesus in the lines of our songs, and an appropriate response to His splendour. At times our congregational worship songs could be accused of being a little too 'feelings' based. We run song into song about how God makes us feel, and though there's nothing wrong with an emotional response to God- in fact there's something very right with that - we must be careful to present the foundations for that response also. Some songs go to the other extreme - so crammed full of lengthy and complicated lines, that there's no real space within the song to respond. It becomes simply a cerebral exercise. The best worship songs poetically, relevantly and biblically, capture the truths of God, And at the same time they also give the singer a way of responding to these truths. A great example of this is Tim Hughes' song, *Here I am to worship*. The verses take us through the powerful truth of the incarnation of Jesus - "Light of the world you stepped down into darkness" and "Humbly you came to the earth you created, all for loves sake became poor." And the chorus gives us an opportunity to respond to that beautiful truth:

"Here I am to worship. Here I am to bow down, Here I am to say that You're my God."  
(c 2001 Kingsway's Thankyou Music)

The healthiest congregational worship times, give us space to both inhale and exhale. To breath in the powerful revelation of God, and then breath out with a cry of praise and devotion.

The truth of God has power to wake up both the lost and the found. To bring fresh flame to fading embers, and to ignite for the first time a fire in the hearts of those who had never before seen Him. As leaders of worship, let's never underestimate the awakening power of truth.