

Why Say No When My Hormones Say Go

Bob Wetmore

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Worship is a hot topic in evangelical Christian circles these days. Worship music in particular enjoys immense popularity: believers are seeking out recordings, live concerts, and even books by their favorite musicians in hopes that these materials will help them cultivate the presence of God in their lives. The prevailing approach to Christian worship, which centers on experiencing God's presence, spills over into many church services, and it is here-in the church-that the author meets this approach and challenges it.

Wetmore, associate professor of theology at Toccoa Falls College in Georgia, asks thirteen basic questions about worship, from "Why should I worship God?" to "How do I worship in spirit and truth?" and "How can I experience God's glory in my worship?" To find the answers, he consults the Bible, using word studies of Greek and Hebrew to build methodically his approach to worship. Although interpretations abound here, subjective ramblings and rants, thankfully, do not. A few underdeveloped sidebars on such topics as money appear, but by and large Wetmore bases his arguments on a thoughtful reading of Scripture. A fictional story about a church in the midst of a dispute over contemporary versus traditional methods is woven throughout the book, serving the double purpose of holding the reader's interest and showing how Wetmore's principles might play out in real life.

At a time when popular notions of relating to God center on emotion, Wetmore's Scripturally grounded take is fresh and original. His insights are surprising-yet upon consideration, utterly commonsensical. For instance, he posits that music is not even a necessary part of worship: "True worship obeys God in all things. True worship loves one's brother and one's neighbor. True worship defends the widow and the orphan. True worship loves the stranger." The life of the Christian, then, is his worship.

According to Wetmore, Christians are obligated to yield every part of their lives to God, so they must acknowledge the reality of suffering, as the Psalmists did. Only when the believer relates to God on a "real" basis can there be true relationship. As one of Wetmore's fictional characters says, "Don't cut out the passages in the Bible that talk about God bringing pain to our lives ... God brings blessing through the cross, not through singing and clapping."

Wetmore has issued a call for relevance in worship, intended for pastors and music ministers, and also for every Christian who attempts to relate to God on a day-to-day basis.

MELANIE SEIBERT (January / February 2003)

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