FIREPLACE 3 – Worship 1: Fuel on the Fire

WHY WORSHIP MATTERS

1. Songs of praise ENERGISE & STRENGTHEN our FAITH
   a) REMINDS us who God is, what He's done & promised.
   b) DECLARES PROMISES c) GALVANISES FAITH

What does singing 'Great Big God songs' do for you on a Sunday morning & why?
What do you like to see included in the song lyrics to give you that boost?

2. Awe awakens WONDER & RECALIBRATES our heart
   * A healthy relationship with the FEAR of GOD is critical.
   * The TRAP: Take ourselves FAR TOO SERIOUSLY; God nothing like SERIOUSLY ENOUGH.

Why is 'awe' so important? Why is it at risk when it's missing?
What should we do to make sure we cultivate that sense of awe, wonder, reverence & surrender in our times of worship?

3. PHYSICAL RESPONSE breaks down the WALLS of FLESH
   * We can become so accustomed to CONTAINING our EMOTIONS we end up CONTAINING our WORSHIP too.
   * God gave us body, voices, emotion, passion to EXPERIENCE & EXPRESS joy, love, gratitude, wonder & surrender.
   * If we stay BEHIND that WALL, we'll never quite break THROUGH or break FREE.
   * The shift from ROUTINE & PERFORMANCE to INVITATION & ENCOUNTER can unlock new degrees of LIFE & FREEDOM.

Why do you think physical expression can help us break through the barriers that keep us from fully expressing worship to God?
What expressions of worship do you find easy, difficult or uncomfortable? Why?

4. Praise INVITES God's presence & worship DRAWS us deeper in
   a) He is ENTHRONED on our PRAISES (Ps 22:3).
   b) Praise is the GATEWAY into God's presence (Ps 100:4)
   c) Once we've invited God into OUR presence, He invites us into HIS (James 4:8).

Read Psalm 22:3, Psalm 100:4 & James 4:8. What do these verses contribute to your understanding of worship as an invitation into God's presence?
What is the difference between simply being in a room where worship is happening and actually responding to God's invitation to draw closer to Him?

5. The ANOINTING on music OPENS hearts to God
   * Music is an extraordinary GIFT of God that TOUCHES the depths of our being in way NOTHING ELSE can.
   * There is a biblical connection between MUSIC, WORSHIP & PROPHECY (1 Sam 16:23, 2 Kings 3:15, Ps 49:3-4).
   * The anointing on music affects the ATMOSPHERE … SOFTENS & OPENS hearts … UNLOCKS the GIFTS of the Holy Spirit.

'Music is a divine gift.' Discuss! What is it about music that touches your soul?
What does it mean to say that a worship song is 'anointed?'

HOW DO WE MAKE IT HAPPEN?

1. Don't just SING songs – take a JOURNEY
   * If we don't pass through the initial PRAISE GATE, we won't get anywhere.
   * If we don't answer His INVITATION into WORSHIP, our hearts will remain hard, closed & distracted.
   * Only once the WORD has been SPOKEN can we step into the response the Lord is calling for.

What changes if you see a church service as a journey through a series of steps closer to the Lord?
Which part of the journey – praise, worship, Word or response – do you find easiest to engage with, and which do you find hardest? Why do you think that is?

2. Don't just STAND at door – STRIDE on through
   * There is a correlation between the DEPTH of your encounter with the Holy Spirit and your WILLINGNESS to break yourself wide open.
   * There are UNTAPPED TREASURES in worship and God invites us THROUGH THE DOOR (Ps 36:8, Ps 81:10, Jer 29:13).

What tends to hold you back from going further – fear, self-consciousness, disappointment, habit, control, past experience or something else?
What might it actually mean for you personally to 'stride on through' rather than simply stand at the door of worship?

3. Don't just SING the words – RESPOND to what it stirs
   * Think of a song as a DOORWAY … A MEANS not an ENDS.
   * The song is an ANOINTED GIFT to help you reach the destination, which is worship.

What might it look like in practice to move from singing the words of a worship song to actually responding to what God is stirring in us?
What could you do differently next Sunday if a lyric, phrase or moment in a song genuinely stirred something in you?