

Ego And The Church Musician

I can still hear the Senior Pastor's words ringing in my ears! He was on a roll about church musicians and worship leaders. He said, "These worship leaders and musicians think that the church is totally built around them!" "They are so ego-driven and self-absorbed that I can't even stand to be around them!!" " And temperamental.... whew!!!

Maybe you have heard similar words from the mouths of other pastors. There seems to be a general consensus amongst people that artists and musicians in general are more egotistical and temperamental than people in other professions and walks of life. And here in America with our obsession for "celebrity superstars" certainly a case can be made that artists, musicians, entertainers, and actors certainly seem to fit the description of being 'ego-driven' and self-absorbed! Here is where I am going to possibly shock you with a question... is being ego-driven really all that bad? Please stay with me while I try to provide some fresh insight into this subject.

If you are a musician go back in your memory banks to the time where you first started developing your musical gifts. If you started young your first fans were probably your mother or dad! Can you remember how much those first words of praise meant to you? Maybe you started singing in the children's choir at church, or perhaps you sang a solo or played an instrumental. And then the good folks at the church started heaping praise on you. Words like, " How talented you are, or how very gifted, ect! " Words that soaked in and made you feel very special. Can you remember how good it felt to receive a special word of praise about yourself and your budding talent? Then maybe your music teachers at school helped feed you swelling ego or you started gaining recognition from your circle of friends that you were " A Musician!" All these people were helping to motivate you by making you feel very special.

You might ask," well what's your point?" My point is that one of the primary reasons you were motivated to keep on developing your musical gifts is because it made you feel very special! And there is absolutely nothing wrong with that! As human beings we all need to feel like we are "very special"!

I would in fact go further and say that throughout our lives we are constantly looking to feed that need by obtaining approval from others! We are all born with this need for approval. And if you as a child were given a healthy dose you will continue to look for it as an adult. If you weren't given a lot of praise and affirmation you will also be looking for praise and approval throughout your life.

You see, God has simply made us to be that way. We need the affirmation and encouragement of other people. And no athlete, musician, or actor would go very

far without a healthy ego! It's okay to feel good when people compliment you and heap praise on you about your talent. There is scripture that commands us to encourage one another, to give honor to whom honor is due.

But there is a tremendous difference between a healthy ego and an arrogant attitude. Here is a barometer you can use to tell when arrogance has superseded a healthy ego. It is when a person begins thinking he is more special than others. He begins to be filled with pride and views everything from a lofty, exalted position. Then a person begins demanding personal praise from others after every performance or worship leading experience. He has become intoxicated and addicted to the praise of others because of his inflated view of himself. And then the whole central teaching of Jesus concerning equality and treating one another with love and mutual respect gets thrown out the window.

The person who falls into this trap is usually totally blinded by his arrogant attitude. He thinks he is great...others are not so great. It happens subtly and catches leaders unaware. There is a theatrical term aptly called, "upstaging". It is where an actor gets out of his proper place on stage and moves right in front of the leading person so that the audience cannot see or hear the most important one in the cast. Worship leaders, musicians, singers, and Pastors upstaging God! How many people in the ministry are upstaging God? They are intoxicated by the approval and praise of others. They are obsessed with their "CD's, new songs, sermon series or books". We say "It's all for Jesus" but really its more "all for me"! People clamoring and clawing for attention at almost any cost! How many of us church musicians and pastors have become arrogant and believe that we are more the most important players on the field?

In the book of Genesis we find what I feel is some of the most profound words ever written. In the Bible God says that we are all made in his image! Wow! How can you top that? What can you ever do or achieve in this life that can upstage that? Who's approval can make you feel more special than God's own stamp of approval? The fact that we are all made in God's image levels everything on the playing field! In the most diverse way we are all a reflection of God's design! How can one honestly look down on another person after that realization? After the personal example of humility displayed by Jesus and His teaching how can we who call ourselves His followers become inflated with pride?

Part of the answer to that question can be found in the superstar world that we live in today. Where Christian musicians and worship leaders are forced to buy into media and marketing hype to make a name for themselves. But unfortunately in order to market and position oneself today you have to start using the "I'm extraordinary\your not" approach and this runs contrary to the Bible's words that we are equally made in God's image. God says you are somebody, that there is no such thing as nobodies!

Let me leave you with the words of one of the great theologians of the 20th Century, Francis Shaeffer. He has a sermon entitled, "No little people, No little places". The central point to his sermon is that with God there are no little people or no little places. As a church leader, church musician, singer, or pastor, the call and challenge is to begin to view yourself and everyone else as somebody because you are made and specifically designed in God's image. Let that be the thought that builds your ego and keeps you ever humble. Remember, you are a privileged recipient of God's precious gift of life and a reflection of His image! The old Quaker hymn says it this way:

It's a gift to be simple
It's a gift to be free
It's a gift to come down
To where you ought to be!

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