

Worship

Darlene Zschech, *Worship Changes Everything*
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DARLENE ZSCHECH

CHANGES EVERYTHING

EXPERIENCING

God's Presence

IN EVERY MOMENT *of* LIFE



BETHANY HOUSE PUBLISHERS

a division of Baker Publishing Group
Minneapolis, Minnesota

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Published by Bethany House Publishers
11400 Hampshire Avenue South
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438
www.bethanyhouse.com

Bethany House Publishers is a division of
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in the United States of America

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ISBN 978-0-7642-1427-1 (cloth)

ISBN 978-0-7642-1499-8 (international trade paper)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Zschech, Darlene.

Worship changes everything : experiencing God's presence in every moment of life /
Darlene Zschech.
pages cm

Summary: "A Christian singer and songwriter presents a definition of worship and shares with readers how to let wonder and worship pervade their daily lives"— Provided by publisher.

1. Worship. I. Title.

BV10.3.Z73 2015

248.3—dc23

2015016129

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Cover and interior design by Peter Gloege | LOOK Design Studio

Author is represented by Iconic Media Brands

15 16 17 18 19 20 21 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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*To all those who have valiantly gone before . . .
announcing and declaring
the goodness and presence of God.*

A decorative scrollwork frame with elegant, symmetrical flourishes on the left and right sides, and smaller scrolls at the top and bottom. The text is centered within this frame.

BOOKS BY
DARLENE ZSCHECH

Extravagant Worship

The Kiss of Heaven

The Art of Mentoring

Revealing Jesus

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To all who have contributed to this manuscript, with all my heart I say thank you.

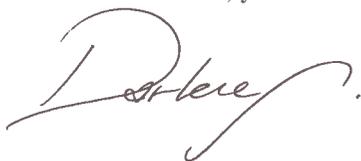
To my strong tower of a husband, Mark; to my world-changing children and grandchildren; to Mark Gilroy; and to our loving and prayerful church family HopeUC . . . I am as grateful as one can be.

In the end, with all that I am I say . . .

All glory to God, all praise to His holy name.

My prayer is that at the end of this book, you find yourself more in love with Jesus.

Love, your friend,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Darlene".



INTRODUCTION

WHEN GOD COMES CLOSE

Sing to God a brand-new song.
He's made a world of wonders!
He rolled up his sleeves,
He set things right.
God made history with salvation,
He showed the world what he could do.

Shout your praises to God, everybody!
Let loose and sing! Strike up the band!

Let ocean breakers call out, "Encore!"
And mountains harmonize the finale—
A tribute to God when he comes,
When he comes to set the earth right.
He'll straighten out the whole world,
He'll put the world right, and everyone in it.

Psalm 98:1-2, 4, 8-9 THE MESSAGE

WHAT IS WORSHIP? Worship is our response to His majesty . . . and as Eugene Peterson so magnificently put it, "A tribute to God when He comes." Worship is the created—you and I—responding to the Creator. Our spirit being fueled in His presence as we invite the river of life to do in us what only He can do.

God's presence defines us; we need more of Him. If you can casually meander through worship, then I would dare to say that maybe, just maybe, you have not entered into true worship at all. We need Jesus-centered, Holy Spirit-filled, passionately led worship. Because when God comes close, everything changes.

Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger." At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises: Glory to God in the heavenly heights, peace to all men and women on earth who please him.

Luke 2:9-14 THE MESSAGE

As the angel announced Jesus' birth, all of heaven joined in worship. Later, when the wise men came and saw the child in the arms of Mary, they were overcome and knelt and worshiped Jesus. These men were truly wise, for when they encountered the long-awaited Savior, their response was to worship.

When Paul and Silas decided to declare God's faithfulness toward them in a prison cell, their response was to worship. God was close, even in the midst of the trial. If we draw near to Him, He will always draw near to us (see James 4:8).

When the woman at the well met Jesus, she was feeling isolated, downtrodden, rejected, and hungry for something more—her heart longed to worship the promised King. When she encountered Him, her life was changed forever. Her worship found its intent. Her worship found its home (see John 4).

When we worship Jesus, we declare His kingdom and announce *His* presence. When we worship, we come by grace through faith, bringing the voice of our hearts before heaven. When we worship, we dispel the darkness and take authority over principalities and powers. When we worship, we exalt Christ and His dominion over every situation and circumstance. When we worship, thanksgiving is our entry point, joy is our strength, and breakthrough is our inheritance. When we worship, demons tremble and angels join in. When we worship, kingdom dominion is established in our lives.



It was God's passion for us that caused Him to send Jesus to us and for us. From that standpoint alone, we worship.

It all happened in a moment, a most remarkable moment. As moments go, that one appeared no different from any other. . . . It was one of the countless moments that have marked time since eternity became measurable.

But in reality, that particular moment was like none other. For through that segment of time a spectacular thing occurred. God became a man. While the creatures of earth walked unaware, Divinity arrived. Heaven opened herself and placed her most precious one in a human womb.

The omnipotent, in one instant, made himself breakable. He who had been spirit became pierceable. He who was larger than the universe became an embryo. And he who sustains the world with a word chose to be dependent upon the nourishment of a young girl.

God as a fetus. Holiness sleeping in a womb. The creator of life being created. . . . God had come near.

Max Lucado¹

With all my heart I pray that as you read these pages, you will be filled with wonder yet again at the beauty and faithfulness of our God, and that you will be reminded to see that *worship changes everything*.



THE HEART OF

PART ONE

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Worship

But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.

JOHN 4:23-24

*Our lives are changed forever
when we worship God for all He is worth
with all we are worth.*



CHAPTER 1

HE IS WORTHY

*Honor the Lord, you heavenly beings;
honor the Lord for his glory and strength.
Honor the Lord for the glory of his name.
Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.*

PSALM 29:1-2

I HAVE FLOWN A LOT OF MILES in the past twenty years, so not surprisingly, I take many things about the experience for granted. For example, when the flight attendants give safety instructions, I find myself switching off—I’ve heard them many times before and might be able to get on the intercom and recite them myself from memory.

One particular flight was one of those long international routes that you have to prepare for. Even though I quite enjoy them, many hours in a plane can wear you down. A book to read? Check. A second book to read? Check. A movie to watch? Check. I was ready.

There was a family with a little guy of about four years old sitting behind me. I opened my book so the time would pass more swiftly. But as we thundered down the runway, lifted off, and started climbing, the little boy got very excited and said loudly, “Wow, Daddy! I can see the whole world from up here!”

That brought a smile to my lips. I wasn’t the only one who put down what I was doing to take another look out the window. His

exhilaration and enthusiasm over what was a new experience for him were contagious. In fact, I stopped what I was doing to take another look.

My family and I now live on the stunning Central Coast of Australia. It is a place of both nuanced and stark beauty. I will look out at the ocean from a rocky outcropping and ooh and aah at the beauty of the waves and shore. I will occasionally get a funny look from someone who has spent their whole life in this area. They'll smile and thank me for reminding them to see the awesome beauty of what has become commonplace to them.

I'm like the little boy on the airplane, getting excited and saying for all to hear, "Take another look!"

Is it possible we have become so comfortably blessed and familiar with the grandeur of God, with the holiness of His presence, with the consistency of His goodness in our lives, that we take Him for granted? Is it time we put down what we are doing to take another look?

When is the last time you looked at God and marveled at His beauty and kindness and power and goodness and said "Wow!"?

It's time to look again and see just how wonderful and worthy He truly is!

GOD'S WORTH-SHIP

The word *worship* comes from the old English word that means "worth-ship." Doesn't that make worship simple and clear? We worship God because He is so worthy. We give God His due. All honor and worth belong to Him.

When I consider this, I can feel overwhelmed by the responsibility to honestly bring all that I am to respond to His greatness. But when I look upon the beauty of Jesus, it is there that *worth-ship* becomes so natural—no effort required in His great presence—as my heart simply responds to all of His goodness. He is, after all, the One.

The one who created a beautiful world for us to live in (see Genesis 1-2) spoke everything into existence with just the sound of His voice. “For when he spoke, the world began! It appeared at his command” (Psalm 33:9). Just look around you at the beauty and wonder of the world God created, from the roaring of the sea to the countless stars lighting an azure sky to the tiniest insect to a field of flowers to a towering mountain. Could that have been by accident? Not in a million or even a billion years!

He is the one who created you with purpose and eternal value—you truly are marvelous in all ways. “Thank you for making me wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it” (Psalm 139:14). You are no accident. You know you have been created as a unique and special person. Born *on* purpose, for purpose.

He is the one who is not only the all-powerful Creator, but eternally faithful and good to us. . . . “He is good! His faithful love endures forever” (Psalm 136:1).

He is the one who is so generous and lavish in His blessings to us. . . . “What can I give back to God for the blessings He has poured out on me?” (Psalm 116:12 THE MESSAGE).

He is the one who planned and gave all for our salvation—even when we rejected and rebelled against Him.

When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Romans 5:6-8

The perfect, spotless, precious Lamb was slain for our sins (see Revelation 5:9-12). When we didn’t have a prayer in the world, God gave us a prayer in His Son, Jesus Christ!

He stands alone as the One, the only true God, the King of Kings. Wherever else we might look for worth, greatness, majesty—it can never deliver what it promises.

At just the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will. All honor and power to him forever! Amen.

1 Timothy 6:15-16

There is so much more to be said of God's worth-ship, of how worthy He is to be praised. His wisdom. His kindness. His presence. His healing.

Yet how easy it is to take His faithfulness for granted. None of us like being taken for granted. We want those in our lives to recognize and appreciate us, to respond to the value we bring to them. Our relationships suffer when we are discounted or when we discount others. But it happens. We get self-absorbed, preoccupied, distracted.

Here is your call to not take God for granted. To call you from the distractions and self-absorption that would rob us of experiencing His majesty and greatness in every moment. Take another look.

WORSHIP RESPONDS TO GREATNESS

Tom Wells said it so well:

Worship is a response to greatness. A man does not become a worshipper merely by saying, "Now I shall become a worshipper." That is impossible. That cannot be done. A man becomes a worshipper when he sees something great that calls forth his admiration or his worship. That is the only way worshippers are made. Worship answers to greatness.¹

Worship is a response to the revelation of just how great God is. Do you recognize how worthy, how loving, how magnificent He is? His glory and strength, the splendor of His holiness? His saving and incomparable grace?

His glory is rising as the waters cover the seas; worship is being released across the earth like never before, from the temporal to the eternal, from age to age and generation to generation . . . the human heart giving voice to the deepest longing of our souls. Saints and angels join in this heavenly realm.

Then I looked again, and I heard the voices of thousands and millions of angels around the throne and of the living beings and the elders. And they sang in a mighty chorus: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered—to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.”

Revelation 5:11-12

This heart song is not just reserved for heaven. A day is coming when *all the world* will see Jesus for who He is—for all He is worth—for all His glory. Yes, the entire world, no exceptions, will worship because they will finally and ultimately recognize His worthiness:

And then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. They sang: “Blessing and honor and glory and power belong to the one sitting on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever.”

Revelation 5:13

DISCOVERING WHO WE WERE CREATED TO BE

So why do we worship? Because He is worthy. Period. His worth-ship is all the reason we need.

In our popular culture, we are trained to want to know what we are going to get out of any deal before we agree to it.



Amazingly, some people try to apply that to worship. They want to know if worship is worth it.

If I worship, what do I get? What's in it for me? I want to make sure I like the payback before I start.

Because God is worthy—worth it—we learn that “what’s in it for me?” is not a question worth asking. But this is where it gets interesting. Even if the question is self-serving, and even if we know better than to ask, God has provided an answer that is simple and obvious and profound. That’s how gracious He is. He answers a question we should never ask, and tells us that when we worship we get the only thing that matters in eternity, and the one thing that fulfills our purpose: *When we worship, we get to experience why we were created—we get to experience Him!*

Experiencing God is why we were created. It is embedded in our DNA. It is the only path to true peace and purpose and fulfillment. Worship lets us experience the Great One—and in the experience discover who we were meant to be.

In *The Purpose Driven Life*, a book that changed so many lives, Pastor Rick Warren wrote:

You cannot arrive at your life’s purpose by starting with a focus on yourself. You must begin with God, your Creator. You exist only because God wills that you exist. You were made by God and for God—and until you understand that, life will never make sense. It is only in God that we discover our origin, our identity, our meaning, our purpose, our significance, and our destiny. Every other path leads to a dead end.²

I can’t tell you all the ways your life will change. I can’t tell you the new adventures that will open before you. I can simply promise you that you will find your Creator is worthy. Your worship is important because He is worthy!

David is a man from Scripture who has inspired many of us in our approach to our faith and worship. His life was not easy and his conduct was not perfect, but he was a man who knew God’s heart and made it his own (see Acts 13:22).

All of us know about his battle with Goliath, but Goliath wasn't the only giant David faced. In 2 Samuel 21:16, we read that he was trapped by Ishbi-benob: "Ishbi-benob was a descendant of the giants; his bronze spearhead weighed more than seven pounds, and he was armed with a new sword. He had cornered David and was about to kill him." David was saved by his boyhood friend Abishai, but the man after God's heart knew deep down it was God himself who saved him.

The story of Ishbi-benob is a snapshot in the video of David's life. At each crucial moment, David turned to God—for help, for forgiveness, for salvation, for renewal. His petitions for mercy and rescue were so heartfelt that they become visceral for us. We actually feel and experience David's emotions—his pain, fears, joys, and hopes—in the reading of his words.

But whatever snapshot we look at from David's life—fighting giants, dancing before the Lord, leading armies, showing mercy to his enemy—we discover that the deepest, most pervasive, most inspiring thoughts and emotions of his life were his experiences of God's majesty. It is all about Him. When we say yes to life *in* Christ, our lives are lived *in* Him. Every victory is His. Every task and every word is for His glory. David knew what was due to God, and it was everything. He knew it wasn't about him, about what he went through or accomplished. It was about God. David's life and worship was built on the worthiness of God. The refrain echoes through his writings.

David sang this song to the Lord on the day the Lord rescued him from all his enemies and from Saul. He sang: "The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety. He is my refuge, my savior, the one who saves me from violence. I called on the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and he saved me from my enemies."

2 Samuel 22:1-4

I called on the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and he saved me from my enemies.

Psalm 18:3

Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise! He is to be feared above all gods.

Psalm 96:4

Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise! No one can measure his greatness.

Psalm 145:3

YOU ARE INVITED

God is worthy, but what about us? What makes us worthy to worship? Isaiah reminds us we can't worship based on our own worthiness: "A voice said, 'Shout!' I asked, 'What should I shout?' 'Shout that people are like the grass. Their beauty fades as quickly as the flowers in a field'" (Isaiah 40:6).

John the Baptist realized he was not worthy of Jesus: "Though his ministry follows mine, I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal" (John 1:27). If someone as powerful and righteous as John is not worthy of Jesus, what hope is there for us?

Paul echoed John the Baptist when he said, "For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God's church" (1 Corinthians 15:9). Our lives have not been worthy either. There are things in our past we are not proud of.

But don't lose heart. We've all been invited to worship. Through the glorious grace of Jesus Christ, God sees us as perfect. Jesus tells the story of a wedding banquet:

"God's kingdom," he said, "is like a king who threw a wedding banquet for his son. He sent out servants to call in all the invited guests. And they wouldn't come! He sent out another

round of servants, instructing them to tell the guests, ‘Look, everything is on the table, the prime rib is ready for carving. Come to the feast!’ They only shrugged their shoulders and went off, one to weed his garden, another to work in his shop. The rest, with nothing better to do, beat up on the messengers and then killed them. The king was outraged and sent his soldiers to destroy those thugs and level their city.

“Then he told his servants, ‘We have a wedding banquet all prepared but no guests. The ones I invited weren’t up to it. Go out into the busiest intersections in town and invite anyone you find to the banquet.’ The servants went out on the streets and rounded up everyone they laid eyes on, good and bad, regardless. And so the banquet was on—every place filled.”

Matthew 22:1-10 THE MESSAGE

The first group was too self-absorbed and distracted to recognize the feast to which they were invited—a feast to last eternity! But no one in the second group felt worthy of an invite to the heavenly feast either. The only difference was, the second group recognized the worthiness of the King and said, “Yes, I will come.”

Jesus ended that story with the haunting words, “That’s what I mean when I say, ‘Many get invited; only a few make it’” (v. 14).

It’s that simple. You and I have been invited to experience God now and for all eternity. The only response required is for us to say yes.

Ephesians 2:20-21 says that “together, we are His house, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined in Him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.”

It’s all about Jesus. Always has been, always will be.

SOLI DEO GLORIA

My heart responded in worship when I was just fifteen years old. I was a mess. I felt bad about myself. I blamed myself for so many things, some of them not even within my control. I was unhappy

and confused. I had made mistakes, but more importantly, my heart wasn't in a good place. I had no peace. I was on the wrong path in life. But that was the year that everything changed for me. In the midst of worship, in a crystal-clear moment, I heard God speak to my heart and tell me how much He really loved me. I had sensed His presence numerous other times, even as a young child, but this was the defining moment when I fell in love with Jesus and I felt His love for me. Light and love flooded my life, a healing balm flowing straight from heaven. I knew deep in my soul how worthy God was and that I must give Him my everything, starting with my heart.

That was the moment I was invited to a feast and said, "Yes, Lord, yes. Yes. Yes. Yes."

Since that experience, I have never wanted to stop responding to Jesus with love, praise, thanksgiving, and faithfulness. That's why when I think about my life and who I am as a person, my self-definition and understanding always begin with the simple thought, *I worship the one who knows me best and loves me most.* I worship the one who created and redeemed me. Worship is my song, my prayer, my message, my joy, my focus, my everything, my service, because that is where I experienced—and experience daily—the kindness and greatness of God. Worship changed everything for me. It still does.

At my core I am a worshiper of God, and the desire of my heart is to lead others into that transforming experience. In fact, I challenge all of you who are involved in worship ministry and leading others to take some time every day to thank God for all He is and what He has done. Thank Him for the authority and anointing He has placed within you to exalt His name. Thank Him for His miraculous outworking in your daily life, both private and public. These are great days of His power and might. Don't miss them as you lead worship and lead people to the incomparable greatness of God.

The past year has been a hard one for me and my family.

I was diagnosed with and treated for cancer. But I can tell you, our God is so faithful and loving, and the Bible describes Him as our Healer. I also want to share this discovery with you: The presence of God is for all our days and all our situations; the easy-going moments, the victorious moments, and yes . . . the difficult moments. *Especially* the difficult moments. Even on my darkest days, Jesus held me. I pictured God himself singing songs of love over me. Meanwhile, prayer-warrior worship leaders sang and rejoiced over me, and my family and I made a decision to trust God's plan and love for us all in the midst of the suffering.

Acknowledge Him. Recognize His worth. Say yes to the invitation to the feast.

Throughout this book, I will pursue the theme of God's presence—for there is no other starting point. That means *Worship Changes Everything* isn't just about going to church or what happens for a particular hour or two in the week, even though coming together as a body to worship is critical to our spiritual health. This book is about every moment of life and every step of our journey—at work, at home, alone or with others—because God is ever-present and He is truly worthy!

As you read this book, I pray your heart will be stirred by the glory of God and that with every fiber of your being you will recognize and acknowledge Him. It's not enough to know He is great; we must give expression to that thought. Start there.

I close this chapter where I started, with a definition of worship, this one expressed by Bill Thrasher:

The simplest way to define worship is that it is to attribute worth to God's revealed character. The command to "ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name" in Psalm 29:2 does not mean we add anything to God. It simply means that we acknowledge Him for who He is and in this way glorify or honor Him. This is precisely what is being done in heaven. . . .

[See Revelation 4:11; 5:12.]³



Soli Deo Gloria. That is the signature Johann Sebastian Bach and others have used on their works of art to let the world know that what they created was for *God's glory alone.*

I pray that same signature is used across the very fabric of our lives.



WORTHY IS THE LAMB

*Thank You for the cross Lord
Thank You for the price You paid
Bearing all my sin and shame
In love You came
And gave amazing grace*

*Thank You for this love Lord
Thank You for the nail pierced hands
Washed me in Your cleansing flow
Now all I know
Your forgiveness and embrace*

*Worthy is the Lamb
Seated on the throne
We Crown You now with many crowns
You reign victorious
High and lifted up
Jesus Son of God
The Darling of Heaven crucified
Worthy is the Lamb
Worthy is the Lamb⁴*