



NO LONGER MUSIC

DAVID PIERCE

YOU NEED TO TALK ABOUT THE CROSS

It will revolutionize everything. The only catch is that in order to effectively communicate about the cross, we need our own revelation of what it means. For this reason, we all have to seek God and ask him to help us understand what the cross is. Maybe you don't get it anymore. Maybe it has become just a word to you. You need to ask God to help you understand and to make it real again, so that you can show it to others.

We have used many different ways to demonstrate the cross over the years. Once, the band was singing about how Jesus defeated the power of death, and I came out of a coffin with a sledgehammer and smashed the coffin to bits. At other times, we have turned my mic stand into a cross, and my band would put me on there, hook jumper cables up to it, and electrocute me on the mic stand cross. So when I say to lift up the cross, I am talking about what the cross would look like today in the group of people God is calling you to reach. But you at least need to say something.

Once, someone invited me to come watch a Christian band that was playing a concert at a public school. When they finished their set, the singer spoke. He told the students that he had been an alcoholic and had struggled with severe depression for much of his life. But when he came to have a relationship with Jesus, he said, his depression disappeared, and so did his addiction to alcohol.

And that was the end of the concert.

Now, this man clearly has a wonderful testimony, and Jesus certainly does the things this guy talked about: he sets us free from our addiction and sin, and he takes away depression and alcoholism. All that is true. But it is not the Gospel. I am not saying that we shouldn't talk about how Jesus has set us free and healed us, but that is not the Gospel. In fact, someone who subscribes to New Age philosophy can stand up and say, "*I was depressed, and I was an alcoholic. Then I started to meditate, and now I am not depressed, and I'm not an alcoholic anymore*". That sort of thing is not unique to Christianity.

Yes, we should tell people about how God changes our lives and sets us free. But what they really need to hear about is the cross. That's why Paul said, "*When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear and with much trembling. My message and*



my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom but on God's power" [1 Corinthians 2:1-5].

Paul could have spoken about any number of things, but he chose to focus on the cross. The power of the Gospel is in Jesus' death and resurrection. Lifting up the cross is like setting off spiritual dynamite, because it reveals the passion of Jesus. So many people outside the church today think that Jesus and his followers do not care about injustice, but the cross shows that the opposite is true. It shows how angry God is about suffering and injustice; but even more importantly, it proves that he is not passive. Many non-Christians imagine Jesus as a New Age guru in a white robe walking around with a blank expression on his face. But the cross exposes the falsehood of that perception, because it shows that he was passionate enough to suffer and die on our behalf. The cross shows the heart and love of the Father—a love so deep that he was willing to send the most precious thing he had, his son Jesus, to be killed by people who misunderstood and hated him. The cross reveals the only way we can be made clean and shows us that we cannot do it ourselves. The cross proves how bad sin and evil actually are. The cross is the basis of all of God's plans. It is why Jesus came.

God has called NO LONGER MUSIC to bring the cross into secular places—not the cliché of the cross, not the jewelry that people wear around their neck, but the real thing. I want to challenge you to take on this mission and bring the cross to people who need to experience God's power. When you do, you will begin to see God move in miraculous ways.

Once, a church asked us to perform only the part of our concert that shows the cross. There was a businessman in the city who had a very cynical, anti-Jesus attitude, but some people told him that he needed to see our crazy drama. So he came to the church to see our show, and he said that suddenly, while he was watching, he went blind and deaf. After a while, he could see again but still could not hear, and when we showed Jesus on the cross, he said that his hands started lifting up involuntarily. Finally, he started to hear again, and he came up and asked me, *"What's happening to me? What is going on?"*

You see, the cross is powerful. These days, we sometimes think that the cross is too old-fashioned, and since we want to be modern, we leave it out. In our attempts to be *"relevant"*, we avoid things that seem outdated, so we don't talk about the cross. But when you omit the cross from your message, you leave out the power of the Gospel. God has chosen to use the foolish message of the cross to shame the wise [1 Corinthians 1:27], which means that if we avoid the cross because it is too old-school, we do not really understand what it is or what it means.



I BELIEVE THAT WORSHIP CAN BE A PROFOUND FORM OF EVANGELISM

And I am convinced of the need for artists who evangelistic worship. Moses, Miriam, and the Israelites sang a powerful song of worship to God after they passed through the Red Sea, and I think it provides a model for the kind of worship we should see today. The song is found in Exodus 15, and if you read it, you will see just how intense their worship was. They sang things like, *"The horse and its rider, he has hurled into the sea"*. Keep in mind that this is not symbolic; they were not talking about a figurative horse and rider. They were talking about a literal horse with a real guy on top of it who had been thrown into the sea.

The song continues, *"Pharaoh's chariots and his army, he has hurled into the sea"*. This was the most powerful military force of the time, so people who heard this would have thought, we know who Pharaoh is, we know how many chariots he has, and we know about his powerful military. And his army was hurled into the sea. Wow.

Then they sing, *"The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea"*, and once again, this refers to real individuals who drowned. These are radical lyrics! They refer to powerful political figures and describe real events that actually happened that demonstrated the power of God. They were relevant to the people who heard them, because they were not just symbols. When people heard these lyrics, they trembled with fear because they were confronted with how powerful God was. But so much of our worship today is just sweet and nice. That is okay, too, because there is a place for all kinds of different worship, but I would like to see some worship like Moses and Miriam sang.

I think that perhaps today's worship is the way it is because we can't talk about things we have not experienced ourselves. You can only be as radical in your lyrics as you are as an individual. You can only talk about God's power with authority if you have witnessed it yourself. You can only see God move outside the church as much as you allow him to move in your own life.

Let me give you an example of a worship song that my band used to sing. One of the lines was:

*On the boat, punks came to kill,
but your power held them still.*

It was about a real event that happened at our church in Amsterdam. Some violent punks had come to the boat where our meetings were held; they had weapons and were planning on smashing up the place and beating people. But God's power came upon them so strongly that they were literally frozen in place and unable to harm us or do anything to disrupt our meeting. Another line said:

*In the Black Hole, Satan's place,
They found Jesus, saw his face.*



The Black Hole was a really heavy club that was totally against Christianity, and people there fell on their faces and gave their hearts to Jesus. Everyone who heard our worship knew about that club, so the song wasn't symbolic to them; they really knew what it meant and saw how powerful God was.

Can you imagine singing worship like that? I really want to see lyrics like those in worship music today, where people sing about real things, not just symbolic ideas.

I also want to know why the devil should have all the good videos. Shouldn't we worship God with everything? Why is worship limited to music? Why shouldn't we worship God with every possible expression? With lasers and smoke bombs and pyrotechnics? You can use a laser in a superficial, meaningless way, or you can use it to glorify God. And you can play the piano in a superficial, meaningless way, or you can play the piano to glorify God. Maybe God has called some people reading this to be truly radical in worship. I would love to see some hardcore, revolutionary expressions of worship.

It is good to be contemplative, so we need that style of worship, too; but I think we shouldn't be limited to using only music in contemplative worship either. We live in a visual time, and we need to use visual arts as well. Let's break out of the idea of how we "do" worship. I think that God wants to do so much more. I believe it would be powerful in evangelism, and that many people would come to Jesus.

Excerpts entitled "*You Need To Talk About The Cross*" and "*I Believe That Worship Can Be A Profound Form Of Evangelism*" taken from David Pierce's upcoming book "... " (2009) available from Steiger Press. © 2009 David Pierce/Steiger Press. All Rights Reserved. Used with permission.



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IN NO LONGER MUSIC**