

MS Worship and Media Conference challenges leaders 'to break the rituals for worship unusual'

By Lindsey Williams
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On July 25, the Mississippi Worship and Media Conference (MWMC) convened at First Church, Fannin, seeing nearly 90 worship pastors, media ministers, guest speakers, exhibitors, and hosts make connections and build relationships to bless the Body of Christ. Three years ago, the Worship Ministries department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) combined their annual conference with Communication Services in order to bring worship and media pastors, whose ministries join forces for effective Sunday morning experiences, to one place to be strategically equipped.

Terry Williams, founder of Priority Worship Ministry and Music and Worship Consultant of the Florida Baptist Convention, spoke on the theme of "Worship in the Wilderness." Williams and Earlene, his wife and ministry partner, brought an upbeat passion for praising God. "I believe that our church culture has lost the high and holy view of Who God is," said Williams in the general session, "because we have been so busy doing the work for the Lord, that we have lost the presence of God.

"Church leaders have totally lost our influence in America. I think about what we face on a daily basis, what the enemy does to us and our family, our ministries, and our churches. He wants us in a spiritual wilderness, where we no longer have joy. He fights us at every turn to take our joy and keep us from an abundant life, which God promises we can have in Him."

The welcome team of First Church, Fannin, greeted the MBCB team and conference guests with a joyful spirit of hospitality. Needs and questions were met with rapid and cheerful responses, and their presence filled the building with a sincerely servant-hearted attitude on a gloomy, rainy morning. The work could not have been done without First Church, Fannin, graciously hosting MWMC with Christ-like service!

The greeters and church leaders set an example for what it means to serve God worshipfully. In his sermon, Williams emphasized, "You and I are God's greatest desire. We are the bride of Christ and His greatest treasure. Did you know that God desires our presence at times far more than we desire to be in His? He wants a relationship with you and me, and not just salvation. That's the base level. He wants to take the relationship to new levels daily. But the sad reality is that in all of our busyness, there are times He desires to be in our presence more than we desire to be in His. We don't have time, we don't feel good, we have work to do, and because of that, we don't find any kind of quiet and personal one-on-one time with God."

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“An encounter with God and an encounter with the church are two different things,” said Williams. “Some go to church and have encounters with worship, artistry, and musical talent. Some go to church and have an encounter with personalities and preachers, fellowship and friends, musical and stylistic choices. While I love going to church, the church’s presence cannot substitute God’s presence.

“Our salvation encounter with God was a powerful transformation which tethered us to the very presence of God and reconciled us to Him. Somewhere along the way, life got in the way. We got in the way. Even church got in the way. Ministry got in the way, and for sure, the enemy got in the way. We need to prepare for life with unusual encounters with God, allowing us to have worship experiences that were never in the book, and I’m not talking about the Bible. I mean the ‘Baptist book’. Have you ever encountered expressions of worship which were unusual? Were you fearful? Did it make you nervous? Did you know the presence of God is fearful? That’s how massive, how powerful, how unbelievable His presence can be. The Bible talks about the fear of the Lord all the time. It’s an unusual experience to be in His presence. You should not fear to get there, but once you are in it, His presence is fearful.

“I don’t want to go through life as usual. I don’t want to go through life as predictable. I want to encounter brand new things, fresh things, different things. Does the Bible say His mercies are new almost every year? No, they are new and fresh every single day. We need worship expressions and experiences that break all the rituals, that break all the routines, all the preferences, the partialities, the traditions, the formalities, the cultures, the customs, the systems, and the ceremonies. We need to break all of that.”



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Williams emphasized to church leaders and laymen, “If we come to church on Sunday to worship, it’s too late. We do not go to church on Sunday to worship. We bring our worship with us into the house of the Lord because we should have already been worshiping during the week. If you wait until Sunday, you’re too late and you’ll have a very difficult time in that expression.

“God wants the splendor of His presence to be the object of our adoration. So He destroys what we are running from, because He does not want us to come into His presence as a captive or a refugee. He desires for us to run into His presence in freedom. He desires for us to come into His presence healed from the wilderness, no longer bound by the things we fear. ‘He whom the Son sets free is free indeed.’ In His presence, I am no longer in bondage. I’m in freedom.”

For more information on Priority Worship Ministry, visit <https://www.priorityworship.com/>

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