

**CD701 Worship Art, and Discipline (SP-2022)**

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Book Review #4

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The Next Worship - Sandra Maria Van Opstal

Ms. Van Opstal presented worship as a rite to bring communion between human and God. She used nine chapters along with many appendices to discuss how Diverse Worship brings communion not only to the brothers and sisters in one church, but also helps reaching out to people who may be worshipping in different styles and/or has different cultural context. Ms. Van Opstal also presented many case studies to discuss the rationale behind each cultural context that shaped the worship differently. Moreover, she provided many tools to help the worship leaders or brothers and sisters such as leadership skills and interpersonal skills in chapter 5 and chapter 8.

Throughout the book, Ms. Van Opstal developed a definition of worship as a rite to remind Christian about the coming God's kingdom. She thinks reconciliation is not only between a person and God but also others as a core to the gospel. By the work of the Holy Spirit and the imagination of the congregants, the lives of Christian including Christian from a different cultural context can learn from each other and submit themselves to God in the midst of whatever life struggle they are facing. This theory/definition of worship can be observed and compared to the Acts of the Apostles (Acts) 2:1-12.

In Ms. Van Opstal's theory of worship, she spent almost all 8 chapters discussing one thing, Communion. In page 61, Ms. Van Opstal stated Reconciliation is central to and a mandate of the gospel.<sup>1</sup> It resonated to Acts 2, when the disciples came together to celebrate the pentecost before the Holy Spirit arrived, the power and work of the Holy Spirit allowed the disciples to speak in tongues. They then connected with the people outside from their group. The people

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<sup>1</sup> Sandra M. Van Opstal, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a diverse world* (Illinois: IVP Books, 2016), 61.

were all speaking in different languages but connected with the disciple as they heard and understood what the disciples were talking about. The gospel is thus being evangelized for the very first time in a corporate manner after Jesus rises. Moreover, this is the first fellowship of people coming together in one accord since the Tower of Babel.

Ms. Van Opstal also emphasized something that evangelical Christian seldom talk about, the Holy Spirit. When Act 2 is read, it is not difficult to spot that the Holy Spirit was the core character of the incident. The weather changes as well as the new superpower of the disciples was offered, speaking in tongues that allowed people around them to be attracted. In Act 2:10-11, the disciples attracted people who visited Rome from Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, including both Jews, converts, Cretans and Arabs.<sup>2</sup> In p.22, Ms. Van Opstal added to her own definition of Multicultural Worship. She stated *Multicultural Worship is an act of solidarity with a community we may never meet. It is connecting our story to their story, through which the Holy Spirit brings communion.*<sup>3</sup> She believed the Holy Spirit is the most important matter to make all the transactions work. This definition was being placed at the beginning of this book, and signified two issues the church faces when it comes to multicultural worship and gospel: 1) There will be conflict when Multicultural Worship is attempted; 2) There wouldn't be any solution without submission to the work of the Holy Spirit.

As the early church and fellowship of Christianity kicked off in Acts 2, verse 10-11 emphasized there were people who came from many places including Jews, converts, as well as other gentiles. Ms. Van Opstal coincidentally sees worship, like gospel is something needed to be shared cross culturally. As she mentioned on p.15 in her book, *Expression of worship helps capture the imagination of congregants. And through worship, we experience the*

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 2:10-11 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> Sandra M. Van Opstal, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a diverse world* (Illinois: IVP Books, 2016), 22.

*now-but-not-yet of God's Kingdom.* <sup>4</sup> When the disciples connected with the people who heard them speaking in tongues, a trial of God's Kingdom began with fellowship of each other. The disciples shared to the people about the gospel, and the people returned with sharing of their daily life including their suffering. This is indeed a perfect demonstration Ms. Van Opstal tried to manifest from Acts 2 through Multicultural Worship.

The Multicultural Worship sounds perfect in terms of communion, the spread of the gospel, as well as the great commission. Ms. Van Opstal seems able to forecast her readers are going to say, *Such a too-good-to-be-true scenario will be challenging.* She included many tools, case studies, as well as her own personal experiences as reference. She also provided sources like the SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Oriented) on p.68 as a method to create a proposal for the Multicultural Worship. <sup>5</sup> She mentioned worship leaders and how their emotional intelligence and self awareness bring success to Multicultural Worship. <sup>6</sup>

Ms. Van Opstal provided a complete theoretical framework of worship in this book, as well as a reminder to Christian to not be satisfied by pragmatic worship. The worship can play an enormous role in great commission by extending it to a multicultural level when it is conducted properly. The book served as a great inspiration for the minister to start a new worship ministry, also an encouragement to rejuvenate the heart of worship from a dying and burnt out worship team or church. Hopefully, the dream and vision of Ms. Van Opstal can really bring revival to the church in need, as well as channeling God's worship to the diaspora.

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<sup>4</sup> Sandra M. Van Opstal, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a diverse world* (Illinois: IVP Books, 2016), 15.

<sup>5</sup> Sandra M. Van Opstal, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a diverse world* (Illinois: IVP Books, 2016), 86.

<sup>6</sup> Sandra M. Van Opstal, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a diverse world* (Illinois: IVP Books, 2016), 162.