



# Marketplace Moments

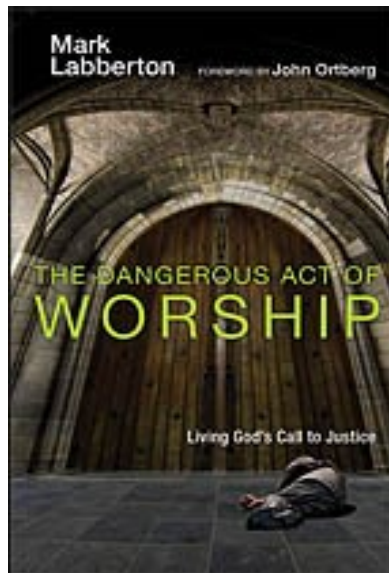
## Bibliophoria

### The Dangerous Act of Worship Mark Labberton

We rarely consider worship as being a dangerous act. Rather, we usually relate it to being inspirational and uplifting. This book will change your paradigm and expand your horizon as it did mine. My personal journey as a worship leader for Sunday services, has led me to understand worship beyond the forms of worship, to worship in the whole of life under the Lordship of Jesus, as in the title of Harold M Best's book, 'Unceasing Worship'. Then a little further, to understand Work as Worship as in the theology of work, vocation and calling. This book further expands and challenge my paradigm into the realm of living God's call to Justice.

Why is Worship dangerous? Labberton writes, 'Worship turns out to be the dangerous act of waking up to God and the purposes of God in the world, and then living lives that *actually* show it.' (emphasis mine). Labberton exerts that the church is asleep. She is asleep to the call of God to seek the welfare of the poor, the forgotten and the oppressed.

'Many of us want to remain asleep. Pastors (Labberton himself is also a pastor) have in part fostered this somnambulating life with preaching that avoids problems and prophets, controversy and complexity. When preaching plays to the culture without substantially critiquing and engaging it, it becomes part of the problem. Sermons that only apply to the indi-



vidual and to the inner life of the disciple without raising biblical questions about our public lives are also a factor. So, too, are worship services that offer little more than comfort food: the baked potatoes of love, the melting butter of grace, with just enough bacon and chives of outreach to ease the conscience. All this becomes a churchly anesthetic.'

He goes on in later chapters to articulate the real battle over worship and the real and false dangers. He explores the paradigm of the Exodus and the Exile and their relevance for our Christian living. You need to persevere to the last chapter about how to live awake from our slumber.

Though from an American perspective, it has much to offer us who are in Singapore, with English speaking churches being predominantly middle class and white collared. We need to wake and stop domesticating God.

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### Highlights

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## Of the Heart and Mind

### Adoption (Part 2)

There have been many children to pass through my home since that first. The shorter term ones only leave small cracks on my heart, it is the longer term ones that take a few weeks, sometimes months to glue my heart back together. It's the ones that have weaseled their way into my heart with their smiles when they know they are in trouble, or the hugs when they are scared, or the giggles when they are playing. I don't have days when one of them doesn't enter my mind.

After one left my home and I was on the phone with Jean crying over my broken heart, she asked me something to the affect of is the pain worth it, but not in those words. I told her, "Yes, because even though I am hurting now over this child, it doesn't compare to how I hurt God with my stupidity and stubbornness, and it doesn't compare to the pain Jesus

went through to die for my sins."

So even though the most recent munchkin to break my heart wasn't a safe family child, and even though I know she is loved and cared for more deeply by her family than she may ever realize, I'm taken solace in the fact that God instilled in me a heart that can love a child as if they were my own. I know it is God given because these children take up residence in my heart at lightning fast speed, it simply doesn't seem natural for it to happen as fast as it does. I have to believe He is using it in ways I may not always understand, perhaps in simple ways that are mere seeds at the time. When I pass by a picture on my fireplace of a smile that makes my heart skip a beat, I hold firm to those small things like seeing a little face light up when I sing Jesus loves me to her.

I don't always give God enough credit. I know His ways aren't our ways and yet, I'm often



too quick to take credit for the successes, or responsibility for what I consider a mess up. For tonight while I write to assist in mending my broken heart, and reflect and thank God for this gift He has given me, Jeremiah 29:11 rolls around in my head. "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." - (Part 1 was published in the previous edition of Marketplace Moments from MCN E-newsletter Jan 2012 edition)

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## Of the Heart and Mind

### Don't waste sighs and tears

Many times, we travel, work, take a trip to the local grocer or encounter a bad situations, a sad scene that so often touches us in some way, we instinctively sigh, even shed a tear. Being good Singaporeans, we may even complain and say the government should be doing something about it. But as quickly as the sigh is over, so are our minds having moved on

to other concerns. While we cannot be jumping into something at the turn of every such encounters, we need to see how God has placed us or even for us to develop some sensitivity to address the needs of the poor, lonely, disadvantaged and oppressed among us, both locally and beyond.

Tammy (author of the article above) has done something about it. In her own way, she has

taken a step to address what she has seen. We don't need big ministry plans, ornate strategies or getting our act together. We are all broken and spilled out, fellow lepers helping each other along the way. Don't waste your sighs and tears. Do something about it. "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." (Jesus, Matt 25:40).  
Timothy Liu

## Eyes in a Darkened Room

### *Black Swan*

Natalie Portman has come of age in her performance in this psycho-thriller. Its' plot revolves around a production of Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake ballet where Nina Sayers (Portman) landed as the principal dancer. The director, Thomas Leroy (Vicent Cassel), wants the same dancer to be both the White Swan and the Black Swan. He says that despite casting Nina, who is perfect for the role of White Swan, she lacks the passion for the Black Swan role, much better played by Lily (Mila Kunis), whose personality matches the Black Swan.

In Nina's exploration into the character of the Black Swan, she discovers a dark side of herself. In her obsession to win the role of the principal ballerina, she found herself sinking further into her 'dark-side'.

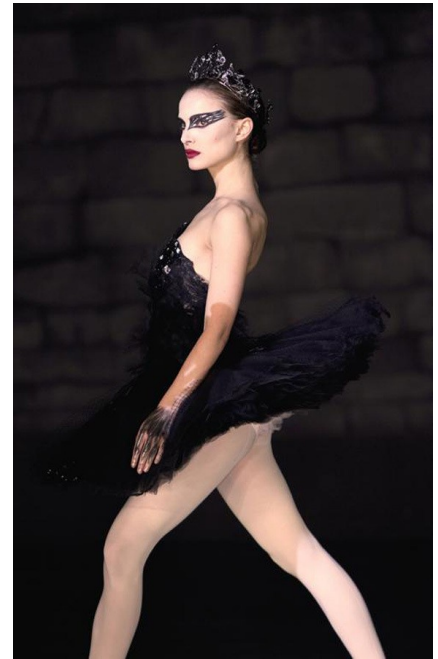
I have grown to appreciate the ballet since my daughter is very much into the art. I like the stage and beauty of this film and know

how much is required of a performer. I like this film for many reasons but frankly takes a lot of emotional energy out of me, just watching it.

This movie brings an allegory of an individual who is battling with her real and perceived self. Who is the person on stage and who is the person behind the stage? Can we truly separate the two? How about the real self which we have been vehemently denying, because in real life, we have to play the role which is expected of us?

As Nina explores the character of the Black Swan, is she discovering herself or is she slowly becoming more like the character which she has chosen to play?

Another question is this whole pursuit of dreams. Whereas the popular media calls us to pursue our dreams, appealing to our aspirations, what if our dreams also costs us our life? Many times, these pursuits do not immediately



demands of us, but ever so slowly gnawing at us, until such a time that may be too late? In one of the episode of 'China got Talent', one participant said that he would be happy to live 10 years less for the few moments he has on stage. What are you willing to pay for your dreams?

Of course we are staging it here pitting dreams vs. life. We understand that our dreams can also be God's calling, 'a sweet summon of a good God' as Prof Paul Stevens puts it. So there is not necessarily a conflict when our dreams are submitted under the Lordship of Jesus.

A final consideration is how Nina may be living out her mother, Erica's dream which was given up when she became pregnant with Nina at the age of 28.

Be prepared for a roller coaster ride of emotions and surprises as I also try not to give too much of the movie away.

(Timothy Liu)



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