

WORSHIPLEADERLIFE.COM PODCAST – EPISODE 1

INTERVIEW with ANDY PARK

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Stephen: Welcome to the Worship Leader Life Podcast. I'm your host Stephen Toon and we're here to disciple worship leaders. On today's show, we're interviewing a great old friend Andy Park. Andy is a true forefather of the present day worship movement that's been going on for decades, really. What I like to refer to as the music of the people, the folk music, the rock and roll element in churches and in worship. It's really not rocket science. It's music that people love and it's, it's a way to communicate with God...and Andy was a part of the early days of the Vineyard movement, the Vineyard Churches down in California, and he eventually came up to Canada and was pastoring here and he's done a lot of work with Vineyard worship both in Canada and in the States and abroad. And I'm just looking forward to having you hear this interview. So let's get started.

Stephen: Most people do know, you know, at least a little bit about you, at least your songs that are used around the world. And, , why don't you just tell us, you know, from your standpoint, just a little bit about yourself and how you got your start as a worship leader.

Andy: Sure. Yeah. , well I was 17 when I really came to the Lord in a big way and it was my first year at University and I had grown up in the church, but, didn't ever have a living powerful connection with God and till that first year away and, and, I began to know God began to hear from God, began to worship God and feel like it was a conversation, feel like it was a living thing. It was...God was there, he was alive and present and, and, uh, interested in me and wanting to communicate with me. And, and, and that was the beginning of launching into

music. I had never sung much at all because I was just not interested in singing. I, I was, , I like to play the guitar. And I had been doing that for many years, mostly in my bedroom. But all of a sudden everything changed. And, I gradually got the courage to get out in front of people and, because now I had a reason to, you know, the Lord's Love was something that pushed me into going past my fears of getting in front of people. And then for 10 years I led worship in my local church, started in a small group for too long. I was leading in larger meetings, like by the time I was 19, I was leading a Sunday morning worship in Church of about 700 people. A lot of those people were either in the music industry or the movie industry. This was near Hollywood. And that was great...for, I can't remember how long I did it, a year or something. And then I got let go from that volunteer position because we were, we were not sophisticated enough musically. Me and my massive band of me on guitar and my two friends who were both backup singers. And, so three vocals in one acoustic guitar. That was the Band, the "Worship Band" as we now know, it had not yet been invented in those days of early dawning history. That was 1976. Uh, so, but of course I learned from that and , uh, I mean, that right there is a huge lesson of how to handle disappointment, you know..

Stephen: For you at that time, was it really tough or, or, , you know, whether it's your self esteem, your ego or whatever.

Andy: Yeah, it was, it was really hard. I mean, we were shocked, you know, because we're getting tons of good feedback from the congregation. And it's in hindsight too like, I don't know if any of those guys that were took our place, I mean they were professional caliber musicians, you know, for sure. I don't know if any of them really went on in worship ministry for very much longer so they had skill. Uh, but, you know, just one of those things where we, I was very early in my experience of playing music in front of crowds of people and I had good basic guitar skills, but I had a lot to learn and I, you know, I can't remember a lot of

details. I do remember at one point I was at my job as a teacher's aide, you know, which is, what was it that was my part time job to help pay my bills. And uh, I just felt like God let me know, you know, it's going to be okay and just move on and, and there's new things coming up and I, that was just the very first chapter of many, many different things that were to come along, of course. And so, yeah. So, you know, John Wimber used to say you can either get bitter or get better when stuff like that happens and that's it. Very important piece of wisdom in life is not getting bitter when, you know, you get reassigned and, and uh, yeah, it's hard. But, uh, I mean it happens a lot in life. Uh, it's, there's a lot of relational conflict that is part of being in church and I know, you know, something about that and uh, yeah. And uh, and so you got to get really good at forgiving people and I'm trusting that God's going to work things out despite the weaknesses and injustices that might happen to us, you know?

Stephen: Yeah. I was, I think I was saying to you just a, you know, a few weeks ago when I saw you that if that had happened to me as a younger man, it might have sunk me like as far as, , you know, certain things that I've been through is whether it's conflict or even feeling rejected or, or any kind of failed ministry or work situation like, so god, it was God's, by God's grace, he, he, uh, he let me experience that later rather than earlier. I mean, he's, he obviously is, he's the strength, right? Like he, so who knows, but I just think it's interesting. I think it's a testament to your character and your faithfulness to be able to go through something like that and, you know, just keep, keep plugging away. There's that, there's that term. Grit is being thrown around a lot these days, just so you know, God called you to it so you, so you can just keep, keep doing it and listening to his direction in it. So that's awesome.

Andy: Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

Stephen: So how about, like how about today, what's happening for you in this season? Like are you, are you, you're traveling, you're leading locally, uh, any other ministries?

Andy: Yeah, I am. I'm going to Chile, South America and for about a dozen days coming up here to work with some churches down there that I've been to before or really great friends down there. , I was just in Kelowna doing something not too long ago, , and I might be filling in for a guy, a worship leader who is going on sabbatical this summer. That's not finalized yet, but it looks like that'll probably happen. And , and then I, I'm doing a weekly outreach at a ministry called night shift, which is a meal for the needy and we're gonna be doing music and also sharing testimonies, sharing stories of Jesus and having discussions with about that, you know, just, around tables, hat, you know, sharing a meal and, and, inviting people to just listen to our story and tell us their story and that's awesome. Yeah. And so, aside from family stuff, that's the main thing. That's the main things that are going on. And, yeah. So, and I'm writing and I'm. Oh, the other big thing I'm doing is I'm writing a book. I'm like, I mentioned that to you recently. It's so on the subject of humility and other character qualities that a, surround that and are related to that. And , so that's my big creative project. It'll probably take up a good chunk of the summer and it's, don't do it all day long, but uh, pretty much every morning I'm working on that and uh, yeah,

Stephen: Right on. Yeah. So, so in between question one and question two, a lot has happened in your life and you know, one of the reasons I wanted to interview you is, is just because of that you've led worship in a number of different settings and you know, in a number of different cultures, not just, , based on, you know, geography, ethnicity, but also denominationally. And so I figured, you know, Andy probably has a lot of great tips and tricks and obviously you've shared a lot of those in, in your, your first two books. I'm the first one being more directed to the Ministry of worship, leading and, and the second one being more about the

journey of the worship leader. Right. So, I mean, I highly recommend both of those books...what's the first one? What's the first one called? It's called to know you more to know you more. Right, right, right. And the, and the next one is Worship Journey, is it?

Andy: Yeah, the worship journey, which is temporarily not available, but I'll be getting that one back online sometime in the next year or something. Right on. Yeah.

Stephen: Yeah, they're both great.

Andy: Oh, thanks. Yeah.

Stephen: I usually have a couple of copies on hand that I try to give out and, I think the last time I actually bought a bunch for our worship leaders in our worship team and, and, I actually bought too many. So as, as the months went by, the years went by, I still had some to give out to every new person that came my way. So when you get that back up, maybe I'll order a couple more and we'll, we'll have, we'll have to give some away to some of our faithful listeners here. But, but yeah, great books, great advice. I mean, I'm just curious. Uh, well let's, let's talk about soul care because I think that's something I want to focus on. You know, as someone who's been doing this for a long time and been in ministry, you know, not just music and worship, but pastorally and in leadership in general, what are some are your go-tos to take care of yourself? , you know, how do you cultivate a balanced life that allows you to fulfill your call as a worship leader?

Andy: Right? Yup, yeah. Well, , you know, every morning starting with the word and I'm just trying to listen to God everyday trying to pray every day and uh, praying in the middle of the night when I wake up and this filling my mind with good material, whether that's the Bible or other books about people from church history or, or, you know, modern day examples of Christians and , and , you know, really, uh, it, it's all connected to relationship with people obviously to.

And so just I'd say my wife is my best friend for sure. And so I talk about, oh, all of these things with her and yeah, and challenges I'm facing in my work and in her work and, and, uh, just, uh, being honest with her about what's going on and, and, yeah, she's a good counselor and...working hard but not too hard. I, my general bent is to, you know, work hard. I want to, I liked, enjoy accomplishing meaningful things. You know, and, and, uh, uh, and so I've learned slowly learned over the years to pace myself and, and early on I was, you know, probably didn't have that figured out as well and I, I was pushed really hard and I was really intense and, and, uh, it's challenging when you do really enjoy what you're doing and, and yet you can't ignore rest. I mean really resting is huge, you know, in soul care, just physical rest. I'm taking time away from people. I'm an introvert so I definitely regenerate, , in alone time and get my fuel tank filled up that way...And you know, doing, doing some things like a, for me, a good outlet of a is just getting out and doing something in my yard like mowing the lawn or something. That's it's brainless, but it's good exercise and it's surrounded by the greenery of God's creation. And so that really helps me. Exercise helps me, in fact, I, I take little mini, I wouldn't call them an exercise break, but I, after I've been sitting for a while, I will just get up and do a chore around the House, uh, because it's, a lot of research has shown you should do that. It's actually really bad for your health, so just never get up and walk around. So those are some obvious ones, but they're big keys for me. I'm a for me my, because I'm self employed, I can create my own workflow and, and I, my most productive time is in the morning, which, you know, obviously not everybody's like that, but , so like lately I've, I will wake up really early and get up and get, get work and get writing and usually take a little nap at some point in the day, 20 slash 20 minutes or something, 15 minutes like doing this. Writing this new book is part of writing is you read a lot because you read what a lot of other people have said on the subject. And so it's very inspiring to hear all these stories of Godly character, you know, every, you know, in everybody from like Abraham Lincoln to Winston

Churchill to modern day sports figures to you name it. And so it's refreshing. It's, it's, you know, it helps me keep my, my own personal life on the right track to be so immersed in all that stuff, you know. And , yeah. And I, you know, I don't, I don't have like strict rules of how to spend time with God. I just do the basic, get in the Bible some and pray some, and I go for a walk and I'll pray while I'm walking sometimes when I'm running and yeah. So it's a...

Stephen: Right on.

Andy: Yeah.

Stephen: I mean, I haven't mentioned this, but I will. I mean Lisa and I used to live in your basement suite and I used to notice, you know, your routine or your rhythm when you were home and not like I was, I wasn't like spying on you or anything. I definitely would notice, like, you know, Andy would disappear for a couple hours and then I'd see them out playing basketball with his, with his kids, , or like you said, mowing the lawn or doing something. And we would, we would go on walks together once in a while and , things, you know, and then whenever you guys had us for dinner, you were always introducing us to some awesome healthy, you know, version of something. And so if there's anything I took away from those couple of years was, was really a balanced lifestyle. And that's what I'm hearing you say now. And that's what I'm reading about too. I mean, whether it's, I have this huge thick Tim Ferriss' book and , I think I might've mentioned this to you too, that where he, he kind of outlines he interviews and hangs out, spends time with a bunch of CEOs and, you know, record producers, hit songwriters, , athletes, you know, people from all different walks of life, lawyers, doctors, authors, and And that's the consistent thing is that they all have this sort of balanced, you know, lifestyle or routine. And it's all to fuel. And James Schramko is a guy I've been listening to lately. He talks about the same thing and he, he, he talks when he talks about diet, he says like, if you were a racehorse,

you'd be eating the, your, you know, your, your, your owner would be feeding you the finest of grains and you know, you wouldn't, you wouldn't feed your race horse a potato, chips and Cola, you know. So these are, these things apply to worship leaders too. I mean if you, whatever your calling is, whether you're a plumber or a midwife or a worship leader, you know, like we have to fuel our lives and, and part of that is having balance. And so that's, that's really great man. That's awesome. And I'm just curious like, do you have any, you have some key stories or experiences in regards to, you know, worship that have fueled your journey along the way that have kind of kept you in the game, so to speak, you know, like whether it's inspired you or reminded you of what, why you do this to begin with, you know, like...?

Andy: Yeah, yeah. , well, one thing for sure is like I mentioned before, pursuing peace with people because really the hardest part of ministry is getting along with people. That's one of the hardest parts. Another one was, you know, when I really got launched into larger and larger platforms of leading worship and the recordings and the travel to all over the place, uh, that was a test for me, to not be in it for the wrong reasons. You know, that I mean I was fulfilling my calling and I was doing the right thing. But then it's always lingering there as a potential idol. You know, the whole thing of I'm really making ourselves as the star of the show rather than God. And so it was really continual soul care of not exalting myself, of not giving into tempting thoughts of, you know, competing with other worship leaders and just really trying to constantly let go, do the best I could, but then leave it in God's hands. And so, you know, when, when you're, you know, launched into venues where you playing in front of thousands and there's a lot of people that know your name, like your music tell you that, and people are singing your songs all over it. It's a challenge, you know, and talks about that in Proverbs, you know, that we're tested by the praise that we receive from people. Are we still going to reflect that back to God? And then in later years, there's been a new kind of test and that is really coming out of the limelight and, uh,

accepting that new phase of life and ministry and, you know, like less travel, less recording, ah, less, you know, fanfare and et Cetera, et cetera. And trying to handle that graciously and with humility. And I really, you know, uh, I'm in a good place with that, but it, it really took work had really took, you know, okay, I'm examining myself and, and just keeping on handing it over to God. And I'm, I'm actually really at peace with what I'm doing. And he's always, I'm always busy with ministry stuff and feeling engaged and productive and, and uh, and I don't always know where, you know, my next assignment is going to be, but it's so far so good, you know, God's faithful, and it's really, I mean, it has been a test of, you know, am I willing to serve in humble situations, you know, smaller crowds, doing a lot of volunteer work. And uh, the thing is I can, I can afford to do that and so it's all good. You know, my wife has a good job, but to me, I mean, if I wasn't willing to do that then there would be something really wrong because yeah, uh, you know, I, that's how I got into this whole thing in the first place is out of love for God. And of course I'll do it voluntarily. And I did it as a volunteer for about 10 years and back in the day. And , so now I have the privilege of serving in different ways. And so that's good.

Stephen: Well, you know, I remember hearing or reading, you know, I think it was on a video, like a training video. David Ruis said you guys all started doing this because you love God and you love the church and you, you were writing songs out of your genuine, like you're just writing songs. Like there was no CCLI, there was no royalties back in the day and, and that kind of came later and I've heard Matt Redman talk about this too, just, you know, I guess keeping our eye on the prize. So what is the prize? And the prize is, it's God, it's just, you know, He's revealed himself to us. He touched our lives and, but yeah, it, it's, that's really cool just to hear, kind of come back to this place of not having peace and being content and, and yeah, I mean people. Yeah. , there's something else you said. So I actually, I was talking to, , your friend Marie Barnett and she wanted to share some kind of wisdom or just things to pass onto other worship leaders and

uh, along those same lines, like she's like, you know, we're all worshipers we're all worship leaders, like, you gotta ask God daily, like, what, who are you bringing to me today and how am I reflecting you to them, kind of thing. It's not even, it's more just like knowing her, it's like she's, (I mean, I don't know her very well, but you do) but you know, she's, she's all about being herself and meeting people right where they are. And so she's talking, she's not talking about music, she's talking about like, you know, a meeting, somebody at the grocery store, what does God have for them today that I can give to them, you know, that will draw them closer to him, you know. So I just thought that was great. That's, and that's the humility. You should talk to her for your book, haha. But like, you know, just being, being yourself and being everyday, every moment, just being aware of what God's asking you to do, like, because we're always, really, we're always leading worship through something.

Andy: That's right, that's right, yeah,.

Stephen: Maybe just quickly as we draw near to the end here, do you like, do you have any, just crazy stories about. I don't know, like is there anything that stands out as like the most amazing time in worship through music that you've ever had or you know, I'm sure you have lots but like...?

Andy: Yeah, well I mean those years from about '93 to '96 or seven, there was a time of renewal in the church and there were a lot of amazing times of worship and just the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and people being prayed for and being healed of all kinds of things and, and a super readiness among the church to worship, which of course makes it way easier to lead worship because, you know, instead of having reluctant worshipers, you have highly engaged or shippers, you know? Yeah, it's, it's kinda hard to describe. It's, you know, you feel like there's, you're riding a huge wave really. I mean, the wind is blowing the wind of the spirit and, and you, you know, all of us experience this in varying degrees, right. You know,

today and any, any time in our lives that sometimes there's a gentle peace when we're leading worship and sometimes there's a very special sense of God's intimate presence and then, you know, sometimes he just completely blows our mind with letting us experience His love and power and, and so we can't control that. But yeah, those were some amazing years. And I did have, you know, peaks of that. I did have glimpses of that for really all the way since the seventies, you know, and uh, you know, a lot more concentrated in consistent though in that period in the nineties. And uh, again, I mean, it brings to mind that all that stuff is wonderful and it is a gift from God. But, but the Godly character then has to go along with it. And, and, you know, our egos are so huge, and, and so we just have to always do the plain simple work of loving one another, caring for the people God puts around us, not taking ourselves too seriously. Uh, you know, always remembering it's not our show, it's God's thing. And ah, yeah...

Stephen: That's awesome man. I don't think I need to ask the next question, which was basically, you know, assuming you can recognize a gifting in somebody, a worship leader who's just starting out, what would, what advice would you give them? I mean, I think what you just said is, is it like, I don't know if you have anything else to add to that, but that's, that's like don't take yourself too seriously, you know, like character is...I keep thinking about the parable of the seeds like being thrown, you know, some of them went off the path, some of them fell on the rocks and some were choked by the weeds. And like, I want to be growing and well like, I guess, you know, it doesn't matter where you're planted or what's going on around you or what season of life it is. Like you still, you want to remain rooted and watered by the father, you know, and, so...

Andy: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, I mean that's, that's all good what you just said. And , yeah, when we first start out we're nervous, we're really usually very concerned about what impression we're making on people. I mean, that's a natural human reaction and so I would say just, you know, take this one step at a time and love,

love God and love people and gradually grow and you know, keep working on your musical skills and uh, like I feel like I've grown a lot in, especially in playing electric guitar over the last three years. That's really...and so in your late fifties, you know, that you can do that. And so really, you know, everybody shouldn't be applying themselves to sharpening their skills and, but a little bit at a time will, if you sustain that over the long haul, that'll bring good results.

Stephen: Yeah. Well, I watched this with my, uh, with my Stepdad Rob who plays, and I've watched it with you too...once the kids were older and out of the House, I saw Rob started playing a lot more and, and so like on the one hand us, in our family, we kind of got out of the way and that gave my parents time to sort of pursue things more. But the thing I saw with you was as your kids got older, they all started playing music and they were spurring you on challenging you, like bringing home new gear, bringing new music into the home. I'm thinking even right now with like, Ben, and the music that he's writing and doing like, it's amazing and every time you find a new artist I sent him a little message to see okay, am I on track? Is this guy cool or you know, cause like you know, your kids are sort of bringing things into your life and into, you know, into my life too. Like that's kind of keeping me...so that, that's really cool. That's a great point. I mean, I think, uh, if you, if you don't have kids that are around the age of 20 or so, uh, just do something to kind of like open your mind up and, and challenge yourself musically, whether it's learning a new instrument or, or, uh, you know, switching from electric to acoustic or vice versa. So that's great. , so finally, do you have any songs you're doing right now? Like anything, anything that's really like, you know, striking a chord in your heart and in the church's heart and...?

Andy: Well yeah, I mean some of the hits that everybody's doing today, you know, like What a Beautiful Name. But really when you said that what came to mind is in my Night Shift outreach to the poor. I'm doing songs like Streets, Where the Streets Have No Name and I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For by U2, and

there's a lot of Christian influence in those, how those songs were written. And I use those as a way of communicating with unchurched people and I do songs that I've written in the last months there as well. But, I'm always learning new stuff. There's a great song called Saved by Samuel Lane from England and from the Vineyard that's...I've been doing that one. That's cool. Yeah, it's great to always be learning new stuff.

Stephen: And you told us earlier were reading a bunch of books and stuff because you're writing and you were referencing things and any, any, any books at the top of the list right now?

Speaker 2: You know, one great one, it's actually by a secular writer, but yeah, it's called Ego is the Enemy. It's amazing because I had already started writing on humility, then I heard my wife refer to this title. It's a guy named Ryan Holiday that's, he's a well known author and it's amazing how it just was perfect timing for like one more source for me for digging into that subject. , I wrote another one, I read another one rather by going to Pat Williams who was, he's like a General Manager of major sports organizations and he's an author. That's called Humility, the Secret of Success. It's a great one. Yeah, so there's a few titles.

Stephen: Well, I look forward to this new book. I can't wait to see what you've, what you've mined for us, haha, what you're going to put out for us. Have you read any, I forget if you read any Brene Brown?

Andy: Oh, you know what, I've read quotes from her, from Richard Rohr, quotes her sometime.

Stephen: She's got some good stuff in there. Her stuff is not specifically on humility, but it definitely connects to it and...

Andy: Yeah, definitely talks about vulnerability. How you can't really go forward in life without that.

Stephen: Totally. , I've been reading, I started reading a book I often forget titles of songs and books, but this, it's something about grit. I mean that to me, part of being humble is like what we started talking about in this, knowing what you're called to and pursuing that no matter what, like no matter how people treat you or the world treats you or whatever. I mean there's, there's definitely humility, I think, in grit. Like I just watched that film, the Clint Eastwood film about the guys, they intercepted, they stopped a terrorist from, Gosh, they're on, they're on a train on their way to Paris and anyways, the whole thing, there was this kid, this guy had grit, like he wasn't the best, uh, when he was training, when he started out with the air force, he didn't get into what he wanted to get into because he found out he had no, he didn't have proper depth perception and, but the kid had grit and he kept working and kept working. He lost a bunch of weight, got really healthy, finished training, became an EMT and learned a lot. Anyways, the point is all that grit paid off and he was able to use everything he had learned. And everything he had attained to, to, to serve, you know, literally hundreds of people by saving their lives anyways...I'm not giving anything away.

Andy: That's the one. That's the one that's the true story, right?

Stephen: Right

Andy: Yeah I've seen that trailer. Yeah.

Stephen: Well I'll give you my iTunes sign-in and you can watch it, I bought it a few weeks ago, haha.

Andy: Great, ha, ya, cool...

Stephen: Anyways, hey Andy, thank you so much for taking the time to share with us, pass on your wisdom, your experience, your knowledge to our listeners, and how can people find you, like, do they go to your website?

Andy: That's the easiest place, ya. andypark.ca

Stephen: Awesome. So ANDYPARK.CA. I will link that in the description and you know, on our website as well. And uh, yeah, thank you so much man. It's awesome.

Andy: Okay. So, It's been a pleasure. Thanks for inviting me and uh, look forward to talking again.

Stephen: Totally, totally. Cool man.

Stephen: This has been the WORSHIPLEADERLIFE.COM Podcast. You can find us at worshipladerlife.com, and we just released a new mini eBook called four pillars of an awesome worship leader. We'd love for you to check it out. That's at worshipladerlife.com. I'm your host, Stephen Toon. I'm an ordained minister with the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada. I was a pastor for almost 20 years and now I support local churches by discipling worship leaders. I look forward to serving you again. Our next podcast is going to be released in a week and featuring Jon Buller from Hear the Music and the Levite Summit. You're going to want to hear that. It's awesome. Talk to you next time.