

Worship: It is and it isn't about you

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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I'm [not much](#) of a Rick Warren fan, but I've always appreciated his best-known catchphrase: "[It's not about you.](#)"

The evangelical worship life I grew up with was chock-full of "I" language, with less room for substantive statements about God. (An occasional "we" would have been welcome as well.) A hobby horse among evangelicalism's critics, these individualistic songs and speech patterns have been much criticized from *within* as well, resulting in some real improvement. (The most recent [Top 25 Praise & Worship Songs](#) album leads off with the theocentric "How Great is Our God.") *The Purpose-Driven Life*, whatever [its problems](#), played a significant role in this shift.

I agree with [CCblogger](#) Debra Dean Murphy, however, that the "it's not about you" argument as applied to worship presents an incomplete picture. [She offers James Alison](#) as a counterpoint to Warren (a not altogether fair fight), drawing from [Undergoing God](#):

God
needs no worship, no adulation, no praise, no glory.... It is entirely for our benefit that we are commanded to worship God, because if we don't we will have no protection at all against the other sort of worship [one invested in the world's violence].

"Yep," concludes Murphy. "Worship: It's about us."

What do you think? Are the two ideas in conflict, or are they talking about different things? Is it simply a question of balance?