

# PRAISE & WORSHIP

True worship comes from the heart – we worship in spirit and truth.

**John 4:23** But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit (*pneuma – Holy Spirit*) and in truth: for the Father is seeking such to worship him.

**John 4:24** God is a Spirit (*pneuma – Holy Spirit*): and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

**John 16:13** However when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak : And he will show you things to come

It seems apparent then that “True worshippers” are those inspired by the Holy Spirit. It therefore also follows that there are worshippers that are NOT True worshippers, though they may look like it outwardly.

Praise and worship are the primary activities in heaven and practiced by angels.

**Isaiah 6:3** And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, [is] the LORD of hosts: the whole earth [is] full of his glory.

**Revelation 4:8** And the four beasts had each of them six wings about [him]; and [they were] full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

God has established a pattern by which we are to come into his presence.

Yet despite that, people still believe that they can come before the creator, King of Kings and Lord of Lords anyway they please. Personally I believe that if we take that attitude we have from the outset failed to revere and worship God.

**Psalms 100:4** says, I will enter his gates with thanksgiving in my heart, I will enter his courts with praise.

**I Chronicles 16:41,42** – The gatekeepers of the Tabernacle (priests) were appointed to give thanks to the Lord in song continually.

**I Chronicles 23:5** – There were 4,000 gatekeepers (Levites) who were in charge of thanksgiving to the Lord in song.

## The first phase of coming before God is Thanksgiving.

**Psa 147:7** Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God:

So what is thanksgiving anyway? Thanksgiving is both an attitude of heart and an acknowledgement. What are we thankful for exactly? Are we thankful for salvation?, for our jobs? For our health? For our families? – the list could go on forever really. BUT the key here is to mean it from the heart. Empty words of thanksgiving are just that – empty words and God reads our hearts not our mouths.

The gates referred to in **Psalms 100:4**, are a spiritual comparison with the Tabernacle where the priests ministered to God on behalf of the people of Israel in the wilderness. The gates of course were the entry point into the courtyard surrounding the Tabernacle itself. According to this pattern we commence

coming before God first and foremost with thanksgiving. Yet how often do we miss this critical step and get straight to the “help me God, bless me God, give me God”?

Thanksgiving could include testimonies of thanksgiving but can also be offered in words of thanksgiving in personal prayer and in song as we also see in scripture. Perhaps the song leader could lead the congregation by praying a prayer of thanksgiving. There are numerous ways to give thanks in corporate worship so be open to God’s guidance in this matter so that you don’t get bogged down in ritualistic form without meaning or spirit.

## **The second phase of coming before God is Praise.**

**Neh 12:46** For in the days of David and Asaph of old was chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God.

As with thanksgiving we need firstly to ask ourselves exactly what praise is. The dictionary definition is; “An expression of approval and commendation.” Praise therefore has to do with our recognition of someone – for who they are and what they have done. For example we may say (or sing), “You are the King of Kings and Lord of Lords”. This is an expression of our approval and recognition of who God is. So praise has to do with our acknowledgement of God’s character and His attributes – He is always faithful, he will never leave us nor forsake us, he loves us, he is righteous etc.

Praise has often been misrepresented as fast, loud and joyful music. While these factors are certainly valid in praising God that is really not all this involves. What about the lyrics in these “praise songs”. Do the words in fact “Praise” God for who he is and what he does for us? If not then even if it is a toe tapping, body moving song ITS NOT PRAISE.

Those who lead God’s people into his presence in song therefore need to make this aspect of coming before God a deliberate and exciting event. It may include applause, shouting, dancing and singing as we pay honor to God’s character and exalt him. What do we mean by “exalting him”? I thought God was already exalted? Yes he is but he wants us to declare before him and the entire world who he really is – not the author of calamity and suffering, but of blessing and freedom and joy.

By praising God we remind ourselves of who we serve. This may seem obvious, but often in the course of the struggles in life we tend to forget that God is still on the throne, that he loves us and that he wants to bless us. This is a real faith booster because it helps remind us that God is greater than all our problems and that he has not forsaken us. Once again testimonies of other people in the congregation to show that God is faithful, or gracious or longsuffering or kind etc. help to reinforce praise to God.

Merlin Coruthers has written many books on miracles that have happened as a direct result of praise. His books include Prison to Praise, Victory on Praise Mountain and Answers to Praise. In his books it becomes clear that Praise is a significant factor in building faith. Why? Because in praise you recognize a God who is greater than your problems, which results in faith. Faith results in God answering our prayers and meeting our needs.

**Hebrews 13:15** By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

## Psalms - Chapter 47

- 1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah. O clap your hands, all you people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.
- 2 For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.
- 3 He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.
- 4 He shall choose our inheritance for us, the Excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.
- 5 God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.
- 6 Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
- 7 For God is the King of all the earth: sing praises with understanding.
- 8 God reigns over the heathen: God sits upon the throne of his holiness.
- 9 The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted.

### The third phase of coming before God is worship.

Those who lead the church into God's presence in song need to be mindful that these first steps must be followed as we come before our God. They should therefore prayerfully wait on God on how best to lead God's people into this very important step of worship.

The first use of the word in the Bible is found in **Genesis 22:5**

The Hebrew word is [shachah \(shaw-khaw\)](#).

The meaning of the word is as follows;

to bow down

to depress (fig)

1) to bow down, prostrate oneself

a) before superior in homage

b) before God in worship

c) before false gods

d) before angel

In this aspect of worship we see a physical action of worship along with an attitude of respect or honor – humbling oneself. In different cultures we see somewhat different ways that people humble themselves in respect of someone of importance. I believe that God looks on the heart but sometimes a physical action along with the heart attitude helps us to fully humble ourselves before God. Whether we bow our heads, knees or lift our hands in surrender to God, the key is our heart attitude in worship

Its first occurrence in the New Testament is found in **Matthew 2:2**

The Word used in the New Testament is a Greek word – [proskuneo \(pros-koo-neh'-o\)](#). Its meaning is as follows

1) to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence

2) among the Orientals, esp. the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence

3) in the NT by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication

Once again the idea behind worship is one of prostrating oneself in respect and honor. The idea is similar to the tradition used in the military of saluting a higher ranking officer in a certain prescribed fashion. It is an act of respect and honor.

Therefore true worship should involve some form prostration, bowing down and mentally placing oneself low in reverence and honor of God. There is no shouting or dancing in true worship.

Another Greek word used and translated as worship is found in **Acts 7:42**

The Greek word is **latreuo** {lat-ryoo'-o} and means;

- 1) to serve for hire
- 2) to serve, minister to, either to the gods or men and used alike of slaves and freemen
  - a) in the NT, to render religious service or homage, to worship
  - b) to perform sacred services, to offer gifts, to worship God in the observance of the rites instituted for his worship
    - 1) of priests, to officiate, to discharge the sacred office

Of particular interest here is 2(b). It includes 1. To offer gifts and 2. to worship God in the observance of the rites instituted for his worship

Therefore we can conclude that worship can include offering our tithes and offerings to God as part of our worship – reverence and honor to Him. The picture we get here is of someone coming before a King, bowing before him with a gift in hand outstretched toward the King, hoping that the gift will be accepted by the King.

Are we missing something by taking up offerings the way we do in churches? Do we really put money in the offering bag or plate with this attitude of heart and mindset? Personally I don't. Maybe there is a better way to bring our offerings before God?

Obviously also there are certain rituals we can perform before God as an act of worship. In the Old Testament we see the high priest performing rituals of worship before God – burning incense, splattering the blood of sheep on the altar and so on. Today this may include songs of adoration and reverence. It may be observance of the Lord's Table (which we call communion).

So what does it mean to show reverence? The word revere means; fear, hero-worship, idolize, venerate, or worship. Most people can relate to having a hero or someone they idolize. Perhaps it's a parent or a movie star or singer or writer. When we understand how we act when we idolize someone, we have a small glimpse of what worship really means.

Worship declares that God is the greatest. We talk about him, think about him, would give anything to be with him, defend him to those who speak badly of him. We applaud him give him a standing ovation, read everything he writes and above all we want to be just like him. Its far more than just bowing in honor and respect. But worship begins where we humble ourselves in God's presence by bowing before him.

Some people argue that we can praise or worship God however we like and that posture is irrelevant. Yet all of scripture suggests quite the opposite. The truth is we are too self conscious or stuffy to use our bodies (the temple of the Holy Spirit) in praise and worship. The following are a list of some postures the scripture tells us are valid when we come before God.

**Psalm 95:2** - Make a joyful noise.

**Psalm 149:3** - Let them praise his name **in the dance**

**Psalm 150:3** – Praise him with the sound of **the trumpet**: praise him with the **psaltery** and **harp**.

**Psalm 150:4** - praise him with **stringed instruments** and **organs**

**Psalm 69:30** – I will praise the name of God **with a song**

**Psalm 144:9** – I will **sing a new song** unto you, O God.

**Psalm 33:3** – **Sing** unto him a new song; **play skillfully** with a **loud noise**.

**Psalm 47:1** – O **clap your hands**, all you people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

**Psalm 95:6** O come, let us worship and **bow down**: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

**1Chronicles 13:8** And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and **with singing**, and with **harps**, and with **psalteries**, and with **timbrels (tambourines)**, and with **cymbals**, and with **trumpets**.

Musicians and singers need to be full of the Holy Spirit.

**1Chronicles 25:1** Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with **harps**, with **psalteries**, and with **cymbals**: and the number of the workmen according to their service was:

The word “prophesy” here, comes from the root word “naba” and means “under the influence of a divine spirit”. This is important since often musicians fail to recognize that their gift is bestowed upon them by God and that the Holy Spirit wants to influence them and lead their music. Submission and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit for instrumentalists is vital in leading God’s people into His presence.

## Why Is Praise so important?

1. God inhabits the praises of his people

**Psalm 22:3**. But you are holy, O you that inhabits the praises of Israel.

2. God fights the battle for his people – Jehoshaphat.. It boosts our faith because we see a God greater than our problems or enemies.

**2Chronicles 20:18-22** And when he had consulted with the people, he **appointed singers** unto the LORD, and that should **praise the beauty of holiness**, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endures for ever

3. Evil spirits are sent away – David plays for Saul

**1Samuel 16:23** And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and **the evil spirit departed from him**.

4. It causes miracles to take place.

**Acts 16:25** Paul and Silas sing praises to God in jail. This results in an earthquake, and all the prison doors being opened.

## Why Is Worship so important?

Worship is about humbling ourselves and that has great benefit. **1Peter 5:6** Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

It keeps us in a right relationship with God. **James 4:6** But he gives more grace. Wherefore he says, God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble.

God rewards the humble by exalting them and the proud by bringing them down. **Matthew 23:12** And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. This is the case with King Saul who became great in his own eyes and that caused him to sin against God. Isn’t that also what Satan did in his rebellion against God?

Above all God desires that we worship him and no other person or thing. To do so is considered idolatry which God hates and judges harshly.

## Leading in praise and worship.

In the Old Testament God commanded Moses and David concerning the appointment of priests and singers who were required to lead God's people into worship and praise. Therefore we can conclude that this is a very important calling and should **NEVER** be taken lightly.

What qualifies someone to this ministry?

Is it the ability to sing or play an instrument only? I think not. That is no more valid a proof of a calling than the ability to speak in public makes you a pastor. Below are some characteristics of a worship leader.

1. In order to be a leader of worship you first need yourself to be a worshipper of God. It should be your passion and you should feel more fulfilled worshipping than anything else.
2. You need to be sensitive to the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This means you need to wait on God in prayer **BEFORE** leading and getting your heart and mind in tune with what God wants to do. This is not a 10 minute "quickie" prayer but will require much time before God.
3. You need to be "in tune" with all the instrument players and singers. Without unity you have discord. If all the worship team members are not of one mind and heart the ministry will be ineffective.
4. You need to have musical ability. Above that this ministry requires that you spend time in practicing with all those who are part of the worship and praise team. **Psalm 33:3** tells us to play skillfully.
5. You need to view this as a calling and therefore be prepared to commit yourself wholeheartedly making whatever sacrifice is necessary to fulfill this ministry. If you can't or are unwilling to make this commitment then you should not be involved in this ministry.
6. Always be mindful of what the purpose of your ministry is, - to lead the congregation into the presence of God so that the Lord can meet with his people. If there are divisions and ill feelings between the members of the worship team it will accomplish nothing worthwhile.
7. We should see the miraculous happen during times of worship – people healed, saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. These things will show that God is indeed present in power to meet his people. This is what the worship team should pray for and expect to see happen. Personally I was filled with the Holy Spirit during a worship service – nobody prayed for me and nothing was said about being baptized in the Holy Spirit. It was a sovereign move of God in response to true worship.

## Other Considerations:

**1Corinthians 14:15** What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

**Ephesians 5:19** Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Psalms – playing musical instruments which could include singing – using the voice as an instrument.

Hymns – A song in praise of gods, heroes or conquerors.

Spiritual songs – songs inspired by the Holy Spirit

**Colossians 3:16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

**1Cr 14:26** How is it then, brethren? When you come together, every one of you has a psalm, has a doctrine, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. (building up)

## Some types of songs:

1. Thanksgiving
2. Praise
3. Worship
4. Affirmation
5. Declaration
6. Commitment
7. Encouragement
8. Prophetic
9. Prayer request
10. Singing in tongues

Music is the fuel that drives emotion. That is why its the most powerful form of communication known to mankind. Through music people can be persuaded to do almost anything – as history has shown. We are mostly driven by our feelings rather than logic which is why sex education has not at all reduced the incidence of teen pregnancies or sexual behavior. Its all emotion driven.

Knowing this we need to be aware that we can affect people in positive or negative ways by the songs we sing.

## Some Examples:

1. Faith in God can move a mighty mountain
2. Jesus is alive
3. Amazing grace
4. How great thou art
5. Just as I am
6. What a lovely name the name of Jesus
7. In the name of Jesus – we have the victory
8. We bow down
9. What a friend we have in Jesus
10. Turn your eyes upon Jesus
11. Thank you Lord for saving my soul
12. I need thee every hour
13. It is no secret what God can do
14. Only believe – all things are possible
15. And Jesus said come to the water stand by my side
16. In thee oh Lord do I put my trust

## Some potential problem areas:

1. **Over emphasis on perfectionism and skill:** The Holy Spirit is not limited to our perfection in music. “Make a joyful noise to the Lord”! Simple songs with deep meaning that all can easily sing and remember are far more beneficial than “talented” music. For example the Beatles never wrote or sang any complicated or musically talented songs – yet they had a major impact on their generation all over the world. The hymns we used to sing were often Christian lyrics written to well known tunes sung in pubs – so everyone knew them, and they changed their generation for Christ.

It is almost impossible to enter into worship when the song is difficult to sing or remember. I believe we need more simple but powerful songs.

Years ago when I was in Bible School we had a native missionary come to teach. He played guitar and sang as well as taught us on angels and demons. His timing was poor when he sang. His guitar playing was simple and not impressive at all. His singing wasn't always on key either. Yet when he began to sing, the Holy Spirit began to move and the presence of God was there. What is more important is the presence of God and the anointing and sensitivity worship leaders have to the Holy Spirit. Leaders need to be more spiritually in tune than musically gifted.

2. **One track songs:** The beauty of a diamond is seen because of the many facets cut into its face to reflect the light. In like manner the more diverse the songs we sing, the more beautiful and enriching our singing becomes. Some folks sing almost only worship songs – slow worship. Others prefer the fast paced, exuberant and lively praise songs. Let us NEVER forget that the songs we lead God's people in are for edification and to glorify God himself.

3. **Singing too many similar songs:** How many praise songs does it take to fully praise the Lord? How many thanksgiving songs are enough? The converse of too many different songs is equally as big a problem. The song leader needs to know the mind of the Lord and what HE wants to do in the hearts and minds of his people at any particular gathering where singing is done. Hence the songs chosen should skillfully guide the people into what God wants.

4. **Single Tempo** – Some people try to make up in noise what they lack in power. Noise by no means indicates depth of spirit. Again the song leader needs to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading on when to lead loud lively songs and when to sing quietly and thoughtfully.

## Conclusion:

As humans we so often get caught up in ritual and forget the meaning and reality of what we are doing. May it never be said of us that we “have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof” **2 Timothy 3:5**. Man looks on the outside but God looks at the heart, which no man can see. Scripture instructs us that whatever we do we should do it all as unto the Lord with a sincere heart.

God wants to have fellowship with us and His Word (scripture) tells us how we can come before him in an acceptable manner. May we not be careless in our worship and praise of our heavenly father. Just remember that both Cain and Abel brought gifts to God. But Cain's was rejected because it was not what God required.

May God bless and prosper those of you who are called to lead God's people in such an important ministry. We the body of Christ need you.

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