

**Concentrated Worship**  
**Pastor Joe Oakley**  
**GFC – 5-16-21**

We are in a sermon series called High Praise / Deep Worship. It was motivated by a prophetic word we gave on March 21 when then Lord said He wants to take us into a higher dimension of praise and a deeper dimension of worship in our church and our everyday lives.

God said that experiencing this deeper dimension of praise and worship requires 4 things. I spoke on the first of those which was Consecrated Worship. Today I am speaking on Concentrated Worship.

First, let me define concentration for you.  
 To gather into one body, mass or force  
 To focus your power, effort or attention  
 To give all your attention to the thing you are doing  
 To make less diluted.

For example – you can buy cleaning products that are either diluted or concentrated. To use the concentrate – you must dilute it with water before using. But when it comes to concentrated worship – you never want to dilute it.

So – putting this all together, we see that concentrated worship happens when a body of believers gathers for the purpose of worship... When they focus their attention on the person we worship – Jesus Christ And when they refuse to offer diluted, watered down worship.

**1- Concentrated worship happens when believers put worship first.**

The primary purpose of a church service is not evangelism or education. Those things are very important and must happen. But our primary purpose is to worship God.

Worship is what we were created to do.  
 Worship is what we are called to do.  
 Worship is what we are commanded to do.

The fact that we were created to worship is seen in Isaiah 43:21  
*I formed these people for Myself, so that they will proclaim My praise.*

The fact that we are called to worship is seen in 1 Peter 2:9-10

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.*

The fact that we are commanded to worship is seen in Luke 4:8  
*Jesus said, "It is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only."*

So, when we gather together our primary purpose is to worship God. Everything else flows out of worship. We see this in 1 Corinthians 14:26

*What then shall we say, brothers? When you meet together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.*

Concentrated worship happens when believers put worship first.

## **2- Concentrated worship is not diluted worship**

Worship is for everyone. And if you don't worship, it doesn't just affect you, but everyone else. I'll talk more about that next week when I speak on Considerate Worship.

When I thought about the message on Concentrated Worship I immediately thought of a story I've told many times. But it fits.

There is a legend about an ancient village in Spain. The villagers learned that for the first time in their history, the king would pay a visit. So, the villagers all agreed to have a big celebration.

But, it was a poor village, and there weren't many resources fit for a king. Then someone came up with a classic idea. Since this was wine country and most of the villagers made their own wines, the idea was for everyone in the village to bring a cup of their best wine to pour into a large vat and offer it to the king. They believed that when the king drew wine to drink, it would be the very best he ever tasted.

On the day of king's arrival, hundreds of people lined up to make their offering to the king. They all poured their gift into a vat until it was full. The King arrived, was escorted to the square with much fanfare, given a silver cup and was told to draw some wine, which represented the best the villagers had.

He placed the cup under the spigot, turned the handle, and then drank the wine. The king got a very puzzled expression on his face and said, "This wine tastes exactly like water." You know why? It was!

You see, every villager had the same thought, "I'm poor and cannot afford to give the king my best. I'll withhold my wine and substitute water. With so many cups of wine in the vat, the king will never know the difference!"

The problem was, everyone thought the same thing, and the offering to the king ended up being a disappointing watered-down version.

That's what happens when we come to church expecting others to do the praising and giving – it waters down our worship. If all of us wait for someone else to do the praising, no one will do the praising and our King will not be honored!

I don't know about you, but I refuse to offer God watered down worship.  
I refuse to disrespect God by giving an offering that is not a sacrifice.  
I will give my God the sacrifice of praise.

- That means that if no one else is praising, I will still praise.
- If everyone thinks I'm crazy for rejoicing, I will still rejoice.
- When my doctor tries to take the credit for my healing, I will give God all the glory.
- When people say I'm lucky in life, I will refuse to give luck any credit – I'll give all the praise to God who blesses me.
- When the devil tries to lie to me and get me to complain rather than praise, I will choose to bless the Lord instead.
- Even when I don't feel like praising, I will overcome my excuses and I will worship my God in spirit and in truth!

I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth!  
And it will not be watered-down worship!

### **3- Concentrated worship focuses on God**

Because we were created to worship - everybody worships! The question is not: Do you worship? The question is: Who/what do we worship?

Anthropologists have noted that people in every culture instinctively worship something. It's a universal urge, hard-wired by God into the very fiber of our being - an inbuilt need to connect with God. If we fail to worship God, we always find a substitute.

It's pretty amazing the things people worship. When we were in Thailand we saw people worshipping idols, statues and trees. Strange, but true. But idols, statues & trees have no power and should not be worshipped.

We must worship God as He is revealed in the Bible; anything else is idolatry. You can't just create your own image of God and worship that.

How do we know what we worship? Since the essence of praise and worship is giving, you know what you worship by what you value, what you give yourself to – what you pursue with all your heart and strength – what you concentrate your focus on.

It is whatever you're giving your primary attention to, whatever you're giving your primary affection to, and whatever you're giving your primary abilities to.  
In that case, some people worship their career.

Some people worship money or possessions. Some people worship power and control and some people worship another person who they allow to dominate their life.

The point is that everybody worships something, and if you don't want to end up worshipping a tree – you'd better worship as Jesus taught us.

First place in your life belongs to God and no one else. We worship when we put God first in our lives. We need to get our priorities straight. Concentrated worship concentrates on God. Not on self – not on circumstances – not on feelings.

If we concentrate on ourselves – we will not offer concentrated worship.  
 If we concentrate on circumstances – we will not worship God.  
 If we only worship when we feel like it – we will be occasional worshippers.

Too many people live their lives based on their feelings.  
 If they feel like it, they do it. If they don't feel like it, they don't do it.

Listen - we don't always feel like praising. Yet mature people live by faith not feelings. We must choose to praise even when we don't feel like it.

I don't always feel like preaching. Sometimes I don't feel like reading my Bible or praying or praising. However, I've discovered that when I don't feel like it, that's usually when I need to pray, praise and read my Bible the most.

In fact, I've discovered if the only time I pray and praise and read the Bible is when I feel like it, the devil makes sure I never feel like it. So I have to do those things in spite of how I feel. If I don't I have placed my feelings above God in my life! Concentrated worship focuses on God above all else!

To offer concentrated worship we must learn to focus our thoughts. To many of us are held captive to our thoughts rather than doing what the Bible says by taking our thoughts captive. We do that by choosing what we focus on. You can choose what you think! Philippians 4:8 says:

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things.*

NKJV - meditate on these things.

AMP - fix your minds on them.

NASU - dwell on these things

Complete Jewish Bible - focus your thoughts on these things

The UBS New Testament Handbook says - your thoughts must continually dwell on.

Learning to focus our thoughts is vitally important because what we think – we become. Proverbs 23:7 says: *As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.*

There is a battle going on in our minds. So, we must guard what goes into our minds. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 says:

*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*

It takes energy to take thoughts captive. If we don't take thoughts captive, the enemy can build a strong hold. What's a stronghold? Anything that has a strong hold on you! It starts with a thought not taken captive. If that thought gets a foothold it eventually becomes a stronghold that must be torn down. To live free spiritually, we must be vigilant and we must take every thought captive.

I want to give you some practical help today in focusing your thoughts. I did a study of the Psalms – many of which have an introduction called a superscription – which means a writing above.

Some just say – A Psalm of David

Others say - A Psalm of David. For the chief musician. With instruments.

Others say much more. I don't have time to look at them all, but they shed light on David's choice to praise & worship in all circumstances.

Psalm 34

Of David when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he left.

*I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and rejoice. Oh, magnify the Lord with me. And let us exalt His name together.*

We see here that David determined to focus on God and offer Him concentrated worship no matter what He was going through!

Psalm 57

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." Of David. When he had fled from Saul into the cave.

In verse 4 David said:

*I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts--men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.*

But he chooses to focus on God and offer Him concentrated worship in verses 9-11.

*I will praise You, O Lord, among the nations. I will sing of You among the peoples.*

*For great is Your love, reaching to the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be over all the earth. In the midst of dangerous circumstances, David focuses on worshipping God.*

Psalm 59

To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy." A Michtam of David when Saul sent men, and they watched the house in order to kill him.

It starts by saying:

*Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; Defend me from those who rise up against me. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, And save me from bloodthirsty men.*

David goes on and on about this until verse 16.

*But I will sing of Your power; Yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; For You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble. To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises; For God is my defense, My God of mercy.*

I could go on and on with this but I want you to see that a heart after God like David had turns to God in all situations and praises God in all circumstances.

Some of you are seeking the will of God for your life. I'm going to tell you what it is! 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says:

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

When should we rejoice? Always. When should we give thanks? In everything. That means there is never a time we should not rejoice and never a time we have nothing to be thankful for. So, in every situation, look for something to be joyful about. Habakkuk 3:17-19 says:

*Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,*

When this was written the economy was based on agriculture. So – he is saying even if the economy fails, even if no one has a job, even if everything falls apart...

*yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of a deer, He enables me to go on the heights.*

What does it mean that He'll make my feet like deer's feet. It means there may be a mountain ahead, but God will give me the feet to climb it. There may be a valley ahead, but God will give me the strength to cross it. There may be an ocean ahead, but if necessary - God will give me fins and gills to swim it.

We need to do the same thing when we face tough times – we need to add the yet.

When you are in a tough time, add the word but and something to rejoice about.  
For instance:

I hate my job – BUT – thank God I am employed.

I don't like driving to work in this traffic – BUT – thank God I have a car.

I don't like every school subject – BUT – thank God I'm getting educated.

There's always something to rejoice in. You may be down, but you're not out.  
You may be sick, but you're still alive. You may be tired, but you're not finished.  
You may be discouraged, but you're not destroyed!

In Hebrews 11:27 Moses shows us how to tap into the power of focus.

*By faith he (Moses) left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he kept his eyes on Him who is invisible.*

Moses led an entire nation across the wilderness, through the Red Sea, to the Sinai Peninsula where they traveled around in circles for forty years, waiting to go into the Promised Land. How did he do it? By keeping His eyes on God.

Some of you today are at the point of quitting because you are looking at the wrong thing! Some of you want to give up because you are looking at your health instead of looking at the Healer! Some of you are looking at your lack instead of looking at your Provider! Some of you want to give up because you are looking at your problems rather than looking at the Answer! Hebrews 12:1-2 says:

*Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith!

So when you're feeling weak, focus on Jesus for He is strong.

When you're feeling lonely, concentrate on Jesus for He will never leave us or forsake us.

When you feel needy, look to Jesus for He's our provider.

When you feel like giving up, look to Jesus and remind yourself that Jesus never has and never will give up on you!

Focus on Him and offer up concentrated worship.

When life is complicated – Make your worship more concentrated!

When you feel unmotivated – Make your worship more concentrated!

If your job got terminated – Make your worship more concentrated!

If your house is dilapidated – Make your worship more concentrated!

If your health is emaciated – Make your worship more concentrated!

If you're frustrated, irritated or discombobulated – Make your worship more concentrated!

When your praise goes up – God shows up!

When you draw near to Him – He draws near to you!

When you concentrate on Him – He concentrates on you!