

The Purpose of Praise and Worship
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So I was reading about you in the Bible the other day. And I tell you, the way you were worshipping God was incredible. You were singing and shouting and you were radically worshipping in a huge group and you were not ashamed.

Yeah, that's right: you're in the Bible! In the book of Revelation, John describes a day in the future around the throne of God. There are millions of angels and believers gathered for worship. If you are a believer, you are included in this passage! Listen to John's description in Revelation 5:13

I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

I read about you again in Revelation 7:9-10

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Everybody worships in heaven. Everybody sings in heaven. Everybody shouts in heaven. If you don't like continual, loud, joyful, expressive, exuberant praise and worship, you'll be miserable in heaven. You better get used to it here, because if you're a believer, you're included in those scenes of worship in heaven. That's why we gather as a church every week to practice for that great day. Not only that, we get to experience the presence and power of God right here and now.

You see, there is power in worship. But there is even greater power in corporate worship.

We are in a series called Forward in Faith where we are learning what it means to be a disciple – a follower of Christ. In this series we are using the word FORWARD as our outline. Follow – Obey – Reach – Worship – Abide – Resist – Disciple

So far we've taught on what it means to follow Christ, the blessing of obeying Christ and how to reach others for Christ. Last week I began preaching on the W in Forward – Worship. I taught how Discipleship Begins with Beholding. That means to follow Christ you must have a revelation of who He is. And as we behold Him, we are changed into His likeness.

The Amplified Version of 2 Corinthians 3:18 says:

All of us, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transformed His very own image from glory to glory, in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another, by the Spirit of the Lord.

You become what you behold, so individually and corporately, we must behold the Lord and spend time in His manifest presence. God is building us together to be a people where God's presence dwells, where we behold Him together, where we are transformed into His likeness together, and when we represent Him to the world together! To do that we must behold the Lord in the Word, behold the Lord by the Spirit, behold the Lord in prayer, behold the Lord in His people and behold the Lord in our worship.

So today I'm speaking on The Purpose of Praise and Worship. There is power when we worship alone, but there is greater power when we worship together. I remind you of a verse I've taught on many times. Isaiah 65:8 says:

Thus says the Lord: "As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one says, 'Do not destroy it, for a blessing is in it,' So will I do for My servants' sake."

This verse is not specifically talking about worship, but the principle is true: new wine is found in the cluster, not in the individual grape. In the Bible new wine speaks of the infilling of the Holy Spirit, the joy of the Lord and the anointing of God. New wine is found in the cluster. So many people think, "I'll just go to God on my own and get everything I need by myself."

Well – you should go to God on your own. But the new wine – the new anointing – the present move of God - is found in the cluster. Your one little grape doesn't have it all. We need each other, even in worship. The corporate anointing when we all worship together is greater than the individual anointing when we worship alone.

There are 4 main purposes for praise and worship. I'll mention 3 and teach on 1.

1- The first and foremost purpose of praise to glorify God.

In Psalm 50:23, God says: *Whoever offers praise glorifies Me.*

The glory of God is the revelation and manifestation of all that He has and is. Now we can have a measure of that on our own. But it is greater when we worship together because there is a dimension of God's manifest presence that is greater when we worship together.

How does God manifest His presence? By what He says and does: by His Word - His Spirit - Signs & Wonders - The Gifts of the Spirit. There is power in the presence of God. I've seen people saved, healed, set free, marriages restored in the presence of God in corporate worship.

That's why 1 Corinthians 14:26 tells us:

When you come 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.

Wow! All of these must be done for the church to be strong. We all have a role to play in corporate worship. None of us should be sitting with our arms crossed waiting for worship to be over. We should all be fully engaged in worship.

Corporate worship is not a group of people gathering together to have their own individual worship times in a group. Corporate worship is a group of people worshipping God together in unity following the direction of the Holy Spirit. As we behold Him together, we glorify God together.

2- The second purpose of praise is to evangelize unbelievers

Psalm 40:3 says: *He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.*

People should encounter God in our services. This only happens when we all worship and enter into the presence of God together. Someone once described the goal of corporate worship as "making it easy to find God and making it difficult to forget him." I like that.

The more we praise, the more unbelievers will see God.
The less we praise, the less they will see God.
The more we praise, the more unbelievers will trust in God.

3- The third purpose of praise is to terrorize the enemy

The Psalms teach us that praise is a form of warfare. Psalm 149:6-9 says:

May the high praises of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands... to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all His saints.

Remember – our warfare is not against flesh and blood. There are demonic strongholds that take the high places in our lives and in our nation. The way to bring down a high place is with high praise! Not low praise or little praise - But high praise!

There are many instances in the Bible when God's people praised Him when they were surrounded by their enemy and God routed the enemy. Praise glorifies God, evangelizes the unbeliever and terrorizes the enemy.

But the purpose I want to concentrate on today is this:

4- The fourth purpose of praise is to edify believers

This is what I want to concentrate on today. Edify means to build up. Praise builds us up. Praise builds our faith. In other words – discipleship happens in praise and worship.

Worship plays a big role in discipleship. In fact, we are discipled BY worship TO worship. In corporate worship, we behold God together and are transformed into His likeness together as we sing together. Colossians 3:16 says:

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.

Did you know that we are actually teaching each other in our songs! This verse shows us we need the word and worship. It also shows that discipleship happens during praise and worship.

Singing is one of the main ways we behold God and are discipled to become like Him. And by the way – do you know that God sings? Zephaniah 3:17 says:

The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.

So, to be like God means that we will rejoice with singing. Christianity has a greater emphasis on singing than any other religion in the world. Songwriters are musical theologians. Their songs and their worship leading helps us behold the Lord together. That's why lyrics are so important, because they need to be biblically accurate in their doctrine.

Half the theology we teach comes from sermons; the other half is in the words of the songs we sing. And we probably remember songs more easily than the sermon. Since songs stick with us better than sermons, so we want to be sure they help us behold the Lord in all His glory! That's what spirit-filled worship is all about. Ephesians 5:18-20 says:

Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This passage shows us some of the results of being spirit filled: We sing in our hearts – in other words we have our own quiet time. But we also speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

It's interesting to me that it says we speak in our songs. Don't we normally sing our songs? Of course!

But as we sing our songs together, it's saying something to those around us. We're speaking words of encouragement and blessing to each other. We are beholding the Lord together and building each other up in our faith. We are speaking encouragement the discouraged – healing to the sick – and freedom to those the enemy is holding captive.

I could go on and on with results of corporate praise. And yet, many people say, "I don't need to go to church to worship. I can worship alone. I can worship when I'm in the woods hunting or on the golf course golfing. Yes – that's true – you can. Now, I'm not a golfer, but I've been a few times and I've never seen a single person worshipping. I've been hunting many times and I've never seen a single person break out into a sacrifice of praise. I'm sure it happens, but my conclusion is that most people on the golf course are actually golfing and most people in the woods are hunting. Most of these people are missing out on the power worshipping alone and they are missing out on the greater power of worshipping together.

By the way, worship is not the warm-up act for the preaching. We believe the worship and the word are both important. You need principles for your head and worship for your heart.

Worship is not a spectator sport. In worship, we are not the audience, God is! Now, public worship is hard for some people. Maybe they are naturally shy or introverted or quiet. Maybe they were raised in a very non-expressive home where love was not expressed. Or maybe they just don't know how to express their love to God.

Some people say, "I'm not comfortable expressing worship in public." The first question I want to ask them is this: are you expressing worship in private? If not, that's a good place to start. I know we can worship Him alone, and we should. But don't miss out on all the blessings that are in the cluster.

The Bible commands us to worship together; it is not optional. Psalm 66:8 says:

Let the whole world bless our God and loudly sing His praises.

Psalm 95:1 says:

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord! Let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation!

These verses include all of us! I know some of you are saying, "But you don't understand. I can't sing." Well the Bible has a contingency plan for those who can't sing. Psalm 66:1 says: *Make a joyful noise unto God.*

So if you can't sing, just make a joyful noise. I know you can do that. You don't have to hit the right note. You just have to make a joyful noise. That's one reason we crank the music up here. That way we can make a joyful noise and not

quench the spirit for anyone standing around us. I know some people complain when the music is loud, but if we turned it down and you heard some of the joyful noise going on around you, you'd be saying, "Turn it back up!"

Some people say that extravagant praise and worship is not for me. First, let me remind you, the way we worship is determined by God, not by us. He tells us how He wants to be worshipped. And He tell us who He wants to worship Him in that way. Psalm 117:1 says:

Praise the Lord, all you nations; praise Him, all you peoples of the earth.

In other words, praise is for everyone everywhere, including you. Psalm 47:1 says:

O clap your hands, all you people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

God wants all people to clap and shout. All includes you. Psalm 106:48 says:

Let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the Lord.

Let who say Amen? All. All includes you. Psalm 150 tells us to praise with music and dancing. Then it ends by telling us who should praise like this in verse 6:

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.

God says this praise for everything that breathes. Are you breathing? Then praise the Lord.

Some people say, "Well, all of that is Old Testament." Well, let's look at the New Testament. How about this? Romans 15:11 says:

Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to Him, all you people.

There's all again, and all includes you. 1 Timothy 2:8 says:

In every place of worship, I want men to pray with holy hands lifted up to God.

There's a New Testament verse telling everyone everywhere to lift their hands. You can find this type of teaching all through the Bible.

Are you getting this? I know you will some day.

You see, I read about you in the Bible. And I tell you, the way you were worshipping God was incredible. You were singing and shouting and you were radically worshipping in a huge group and you were not ashamed.

Don't wait until you get to heaven to tap into the power of worship.

God wants His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

If He wants singing in heaven; He wants singing on earth.

If He wants shouting in heaven; He wants shouting on earth.
 If He wants loud praise in heaven; He wants loud praise on earth.
 If He wants people falling on their faces in worship in heaven; He wants people
 falling on their faces in worship on earth.

When we worship together and touch heaven together, we get into a realm of
 God's presence and power we don't get into alone. Why? The new wine is in the
 cluster. And that new wine - that anointing - that manifest presence of God is not
 just for us. It changes us so that we can change the world!

Discipleship is not just an individual experience. It is a corporate experience
 because the Christian life is lived in community with other believers. We cannot
 come to maturity all by ourselves - we need each other.

God's plan from the beginning was that we would be a kingdom of priests.
 Priests represent God to people and they represent people to God.

Today - Jesus is enthroned on the praises of His people and as we behold Him
 together, He changes us. As we are changed by beholding Him, we go out
 individually to reach others who can also behold the Lord and be changed by
 Him. But it starts with us discipling each other by beholding Him together!

I may come into a service feeling beat up by the enemy, but when we start
 singing, "There is power in the name of Jesus to break every chain" it reminds me
 of the victory I have in Christ.

I may come into a service not feeling free, but when we start singing "I Am Free" it
 reminds me of the freedom I have in Christ.

I may come in feeling things will never change, but when we start singing,
 "Breakthrough is coming, but faith I see a miracle," it causes me to start believing
 that God really is moving on my behalf.

I may come into a service feeling down, but when we start singing
 "When I think about the Lord How He saved me, how He raised me
 How He filled me, with the Holy Ghost, How He healed me, to the uttermost.
 When I think about the Lord - How He picked me up and turned me around -
 How He set my feet on solid ground -

It makes me wanna shout - Hallelujah! Thank you Jesus!
 Lord, your worthy, of all the glory, and all the honor And all the praise!"

Can you stand to your feet and praise Him who is worthy of all praise!