



Title: Empowered Services

Theme: Preparing for Life Changing Worship Services

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

Christ Seeking Not Crowd Pleasing

It is imperative that you let the Holy Spirit place within your mind and heart the theme of today's message. Today our worship services have become a place of crowd pleasing not Christ seeking. Chuck Colson said it best, “The church is not to be a place where we make people feel good about themselves but her ‘Commission’ is to make people holy.” In the giving of the “Great Commission” Jesus said, “Therefore, go... and [teach] them to obey everything I have commanded you...” (Matthew 28:19-20) The practical application for “commanded” (*entellomai*) here means to enjoin with Christ in the making of disciples with a desire to accomplish what Jesus has given charge of. (Enhanced Strong's Lexicon; The Complete Word Study Dictionary; Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon)

Just how do we get prepared to enjoy worship services that the Holy Spirit will use to change peoples lives?

I would propose to you that the church of Jesus Christ must believe two things. First, the Lord exists and second, He rewards those who diligently seek Him. In order to fully enjoy the Holy Spirit's anointing on all we do as a Body of Christ we must have the assurance that if we are seeking the Lord's will to be accomplished in and through us He will most definitely reward our labors.

Every true prophet of God and laborer for Jesus Christ has come to that point in their service where they say, as the Apostle Paul who wrote, “I have wasted my efforts...” (Galatians 4:11) When we see people backslide or things not going as we have planned it is easy to give in to the flesh and say, “I am going to get a real job, something that I can see some results in. I am not getting the results and fulfillment I want so I am going to spend my time and efforts on other things.” In such moments we must rest upon the Holy Spirit's promptings “...stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:58)

In light of the fact that we have a Savior who got victory over sin and death and He is at the right hand of God interceding for us, (Romans 8:34) the church can find rest and assurance of rewards down here

In light of the fact that we have a Savior who got victory over sin and death and He is at the right hand of God interceding for us, (Romans 8:34) the church can find rest and assurance of rewards down here. It is imperative that the church remembers that salvation found in Christ is free not a reward, therefore our labors must come about out of a love relationship with Christ.

God's existence and His nature being good bring Christians to confidence in Christ thus opening their hearts to Holy Spirit revelation and illumination.

If the church of God is going to have steadfast devotion to seeking the Lord's intervention for Holy Spirit anointed services she must have a conviction that the worship service is called forth by God. He calls the body of Christ to be diligent in her preparation for congregational worship.

In 1 Chronicles 22:19 we read of King David talking to his leaders and telling them to help his son, Solomon in his overseeing the building of a place for public worship. David's "...orders..." were, "Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the LORD your God. Begin to build the sanctuary of the LORD God, so that you may bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD and the sacred articles belonging to God into the temple that will be built for the Name of the LORD."

After the temple was completed, Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in front of the whole assembly of Israel and prayed a prayer of dedication. (2 Chronicles 6:12) When Solomon had finished praying, the glory of the Lord filled the temple. (2 Chronicles 7:1) Another place where we read of the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle is in Exodus 40:34-38. The glory of the Lord is a term describing the wonderful presence of God making Himself known to His people. In other words, Divine approval had rested on the temple service.

In order for the church to understand the importance of the congregational worship service, referring to the moment the church doors are open to the moment they are closed. Christians must understand the significance of the temple in the Old and New Testament. Temple is first used for the tabernacle which is called "The Temple of the Lord." (1 Samuel 1:9) The word temple is generally used in Scripture for the house erected for the worship of God.

The place of worship where people can join together and enjoy the presence of God has been called, "the temple" (1 Kings 5:3), "the holy temple" (Psalm 79:1) "the house of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 23:5,12), "the house of the God of Jacob" (Isaiah 2:3), "the palace of the Lord" (1 Chronicles 29:1), and Jesus called it "My Father's house" (John 2:16) and a "house of prayer" (Matthew 21:13).

Although God is completely unrestricted, the temple symbolized that place God will meet with His people so that He may speak with His anointed, lead His people, so they can have corporate worship to Him and they shall know that His presence is with them. (Exodus 33:9-17) The people of God in the Old Testament knew that the “house of God” is that representation of His presence and they rejoice with the psalmist who wrote, “One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek Him in His temple.” (Psalm 27:4) “How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God... Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.” (Psalm 84:1-4)

Jesus Christ showed considerable respect for the House of God. At the age of 12 Jesus was found in the “...temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.” (Luke 2:46) Even at the age of twelve, Jesus was moved by a divine compulsion to do His Father’s will. Our Lord was interacting with the teachers of the Word of God. Jesus being fully man as well as fully God sets the example for all who desire to enjoy the anointing of God upon their lives.

For a brief period after Pentecost, the early church used the temple as its meeting place until mounting opposition drove believers from Jerusalem. In the book of Acts we read, “...All the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade.” (Acts 5:12) We read of the apostles entering into the temple courts and going from house to house to teach the people and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.” (Acts 5:21,42)

The New Testament writers refer to the Church as being the temple of God. In the writings of the Apostle Paul he uses a special Greek Word for church (*naos*) referring to the place where God dwells. According to the Scriptures the New Testament churches are Christians, the children of God who are a human habitation for the Holy Spirit of God who are growing together with all other churches around the world into one body, a universal sanctuary for the Lord’s indwelling.

1 Corinthians 6:19 says, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 says, “Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? ...God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.” In the book of Ephesians, Paul’s masterpiece on the church, he writes of the local church as a living body growing into a holy sanctuary in the Lord. Paul pictures each local church as providing God with a spiritual habitation in that locality. Ephesians 2:19-22 says, you are “...fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household... joined together... [rising] to become a holy temple in the Lord... a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.”

The local church is made up of born again Christians bearing gifts that are “the manifestation of the [Holy] Spirit given for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12:7) 1 Corinthians chapter 12 teaches that just as the human body is made up of many parts so it is with the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13) When the Body of Christ is exercising her Spiritual gifts under the guidance of sacrificial love the worship services will enjoy life changing results.

Just last week I was speaking with a mother who helped out in Bible camp where she really got to taste what a life changing worship service could be like. It was evident that the preachers of God’s Word had spent much time prayerfully preparing for a message that was from the heart of God. It was evident that the song service teams had spent much time in preparation and prayer. It was evident that the other workers were fulfilling their part of the camp out of sacrificial love. All the workers of the Lord were serious about fulfilling their part. Christians were there to seriously give worship unto the Lord, knowing that He would reward their labors unto Him.

Kids got saved and others went to the altar to recommit their lives back to the Lord. Things that represented the world’s hold on them got left at the altar to be thrown into the trash can. At that camp the faithful servants enjoyed a visitation of the Holy Spirit who enabled them to have life changing services.

Gift of prophecy is well prepared for

Life changing services begin with the understanding that the worship service is to be a place where Christians hungry for God can enjoy the Lord’s presence. It is not a place for complaining but a place for giving sacrificial worship unto Christ.

The second step to enjoying life changing services is for the preacher and the body of Christ to make sure that the gift of prophecy is well prepared for. There are at least twenty-one gifts that are to be exercised under the anointing of the Holy Spirit and one of them is to prophesy. Romans 12:6 says, “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.” “Prophesying” (*propheteia*) is “...not primarily prediction but the communication of revealed truth that will both convict and build up those who hear the message.”

Those who have this gift are those who have been appointed by Christ (Ephesians 4:7) for the building of the church. Ephesians 4:11-13 says, It was [Jesus] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelist, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

These men and woman who are appointed by Christ are to preach and teach as Christ did. The Bible says this about the teaching of Jesus, "...the crowds were amazed at His teaching, because He taught as one who had authority. People who hear the proclaiming and teaching of God's Word need to be amazed at what is being taught because it is being taught by one who is teaching under the authority of Christ. (Matthew 28:18-20) The local church is a unit in God's spiritual army, and her leaders are to pass God's Word out to the people with authority and conviction of God's truths.

The ways of gaining this authority is set forth by the Word of God. The preachers and teachers of God's Word are to first teach "...in [the] portion to [their] faith. "Faith" (*anologia*) as it is used in Romans 12:6 means a "working of faith according to the strength, clearness of thought and fervor that Christ has given him." This faith is only established out of an ongoing personal relationship with Christ and a trust in His everlasting guiding Holy Spirit.

The Pastoral Epistles hold some other truths to enjoy Holy Spirit anointed messages from the Word of God. The Apostle Paul gave these instructions to the young pastor and evangelist Timothy, "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Timothy 4:13-16) Timothy was given this charge, "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. (2 Timothy 4:1-2) The apostle gave Timothy this exhortation, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

Life changing messages begin with the preacher and teacher being devoted or applying one self to the study of and getting the Word of God out to the public so people might choose what God they are going to serve and so Christians might have an understanding how to live for the Lord. A church that has life changing messages and teaching has preachers and teachers who show progress in their spiritual lives. The word "progress" (*prokope*) means pioneer advance. The practical application is that there are soldiers who go ahead of the troops, clear the way of obstacles thus marking a clear way to follow. A Godly pastor that is going speak life changing messages must be absorbed in the Word of God and devote time to ministering it to those who have ears to hear. He must also be meditating on how he is going to live it out.

The church that enjoys life changing messages is the Body of Christ that understands that preparations for ministering the written and spoken Word are to be done before other things are done for it is one of the most important things the preacher is to do. The Holy Spirit lead and empowered church found in the book of Acts understood that, “it would not be right for [the preachers] to neglect the ministry of the Word of God in order to be [waiting] on tables.” (Acts 6:2) The Book of Acts records the time when the Word of God spread and the church increased rapidly with people becoming obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)

The churches that believe God rewards those who are diligent in the work He calls them to do are churches that have preachers that are devoted in their preparation in ministering the Word of God. Churches with faith that pleases God, listen to those who are Christ given to the church (Ephesians 4:7,11) with great anticipation because they know that prophesying is a gift from the Holy Spirit for the purpose of edifying the Body of Christ.

I have had the privilege of attending churches in different parts of this country. Every congregation is the same. There are those who attend and listen to the preacher proclaim because it is traditionally what is to be done in the church service. There are people who attend who have Holy Spirit illumination that if their pastor is faithfully praying and studying then the Holy Spirit gift of prophesying may be enjoyed. The church that has the majority of its congregation that is hungry for the preaching and teaching of God’s Word as a gift of the Holy Spirit is the church that is enjoying life changing services.

Live vibrant song services

Life changing services have anointed preaching and teaching of God’s Word and they have live vibrant song services. Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the Words of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” Ephesians 5:19 instruct the Body of Christ to, “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.”

Jesus said, “You have been made clean because of the words I have spoken to you.” (John 15:3) Once the children of God have made room for the word of God to be abundant in their hearts and lives, they are to sing various Christ honoring songs with joyousness.

King David, the man after God’s heart, (Acts 13:22) had a powerful desire in his heart to build the temple of God. (2 Samuel 7:2) However, he was not permitted to undertake the construction of God’s house. (2 Samuel 7:5-7; 1 Chronicles 22:8) Although he was not involved in the actual building of the temple of God, he did prepare for it in plans and material. (1 Chronicles 22:1-19; 28:1-29:9) He was also God’s agent in setting in order the method of temple service.

We read all about that in 1 Chronicles chapters 23-26. All this was the leading of God, through David to set in order corporate worship. In 1 Chronicles 25 we see that music is to be considered and approached as being ministry in the house of God. Therefore, the preparation of the song service should be approached and received with the same approach and reception as the proclaiming of God's Word. Music is ministry to the Lord, to the Body of Christ and the song service must be blanketed in prayer. The worship leaders need to be at the altar on Sunday mornings just as much as the preacher of God's Word, beseeching in Jesus Name the presence of the Holy Spirit.

There are churches in America and around the world that are humble enough to be in serious prayer before their services and they are enjoying all that God has for them. They express live vibrant song services as well as the preaching of God's Word.

True belief in prayer

Live vibrant song services are a necessity to having life changing services and there must be a true belief in prayer. Jesus said, "...Is it not written: `My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?'" (Mark 11:17)

Every church that enjoys life changing services is a church that walks in a spirit of prayer. The people of God who are recognized as the spiritual leaders of the church make time for personal and corporate prayer. Jesus sets the example. In Mark 1:35 we read, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed."

Life changing services are overseen and participated in by people who see that the church has vibrant prayer support. The congregation prays in true faith, (Hebrews 11:6) has boldness in prayer, (1 John 5:13-15) is humble in prayer, (Luke 18:13-14) is sincere in prayer, (Psalm 145:18) is definite in prayer, (Acts 12:5) persistent in prayer, (Luke 18:7; Colossians 4:2) and prays according with the will of God. (1 John 5:14)

The Holy Spirit revealed to John Stott this about prayer, "We need to win the battle of the prayer threshold. To help me persevere in prayer, I sometimes image a very high stoned wall, with the living God on the other side of it. In this walled garden He is awaiting for me to enter the small door. Out side the door is the devil. It is at this time I defeat the devil in the name of Christ.

I think that many churches and Christians are giving up praying before the battle for the souls of men are completed. The best way to win, in my experiences, is to prayerfully proclaim the truths of the Scriptures of which the devil cannot stand against."

It is said that “the earliest African converts to Christianity were earnest and regular in their congregational and private devotions in prayer. Each one reportedly had separate spots in the thickets where he poured out his heart to God. The several paths to these little Bethels became distinctly marked. When any one began to decline in his prayer devotions, it was soon apparent to others. They would kindly remind him saying, ‘Brother, the grass grows on your [prayer] path.’” (Encyclopedia of 7700 illustration)

The church that experiences life changing services is the Body of Christ that is clearly marked with Christians making it to congregational prayer meetings and spending much time in personal prayer.

The church that pleases God is the church that believes He exists and that the Lord desires to make His presence known during congregational worship services. They know He rewards those who diligently seek Him through prayerful study of God’s Word. Life changing services are only attainable through the preaching of God’s Word, through vibrant song services and prayer.

Let us Pray!!!!

(The truths found in this message have come about after long hours of prayerful study of the NIV Bible; The Expositors Bible Commentary; Easton’s Bible Dictionary; Tyndale Bible Dictionary; The Bible Exposition; The Bible Knowledge Commentary; The Bible Reader’s Companion; Who’s Who in the Bible; Dictionary of Bible Languages; The Bible Exposition Commentary; The Bible; The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible; Barnes Notes; A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory; Daily Study Bible Series; The New Bible Commentary; Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary; Word Pictures in the New Testament; Word Studies in the New Testament; Wuest’s Word Studies)