



**Title: Expressions of Worship**

**Theme: Connecting with God in the Song Service**

“Let the word 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.” (Colossians 3:16)

**The heart attitude that is pleasing to the Lord is the one that says it is all about you Lord, and not about us**

*It should be noted that the entire church service is to be considered as a time where Christians can worship the Lord in spirit and truth.* Sunday school is a wonderful opportunity to study the Word of God with other people. The announcements are a wonderful opportunity to share with others all of what God has coming up in the church. The proclaiming of God's Word should be prepared properly and received with expectation that God will have correction, guidance, and comfort for you. Jesus said that God's house should be called a house of prayer. (Matthew 21:13) It is also a time in which all should gather together and sing praises to the Lord.

Psalms 147:1 says; “How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him.” The heart of this psalmist reflects what should be in the heart of all Christians as they participate in the song service. The heart attitude that is pleasing to the Lord is the one that says it is all about you Lord, and not about us.

Steve Camp, in his written reformation to the contemporary Christian music industry wrote; “Music is a powerful tool from the Lord Jesus to His church intended for worship, praise, encouragement, edification, evangelism, teaching, admonishing and exhorting God's people to holiness. Its chief aim is always to glorify God and worship Him.”

*I would propose to you that God wants you to worship Him in spirit and truth.* He longs to deliver His people from the religious bondage that comes from legalism, traditionalism, denominationalism and faddism. Our Lord longs for His church to look into God's Word so He can birth forth worship in the song service that has freedom and actions that are a response from a joyful undivided heart.

*Just what does the Bible say about “Expressions of Worship” in the song service?* What can we or rather how are we to express our love while singing praises to God?

*The New Testament does not give any pattern for conducting a specific corporate worship service in the Lord's churches.* It does not tell how long the services are to be, how many psalms, hymns or spiritual songs are to be sung and it does not tell us how long to stand or sit down. The New Testament does not tell us the styles, types of music or what instruments can be used.

The Bible does tell us what expressions are to be used in our worship to the Lord. The child of God who looks attentively into the Word of God and then meditates on how to implement His instructions is the Christian who will overcome the conjecture of men and sing praises to God, which ushers in the presence of the Lord into his heart and life. There are church services that are experiencing the Lord in great measures because of their heartfelt song services and powerful proclaiming of God's Word.

All through Biblical accounts of the song service unto the Lord we read it ushering in a powerful presence of God, thus, lives are touched, empowered and comforted.

### **Paul uses three terms to describe the music that should be coming out of the spiritual heart**

*There are truths that are worth grasping in God's Word in regards to expressions of worship.* Let us begin with His simple instructions found in Colossians 3:16 and from Ephesians 5:19.

Ephesians 5:19 says, "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." This text is breathed forth by the Holy Spirit of God and therefore must be used in guidance to expressions of worship in the song service. Paul uses three terms to describe the music that should be coming out of the spiritual heart. The first is psalms.

Psalms (*psalmos*) are sacred songs sung to musical instruments and they may be referred to as a chant. (Spiros Zodiatiates) Psalms of praise consist of short sentences expressing praise for the Lord's character or actions. Many of the modern day choruses fit into this category and they should be sung by all no matter what age and sung with one purpose and that is to please the Lord Jesus.

There are various types of psalms that can be sung unto the Lord in the song service such as psalms of praise (Psalms 8; 29; 33; 104; 111; 113), psalms of thanksgiving (Psalms 30; 66; 116; 138), psalms of lament (Psalms 12; 44; 74; 79) or psalms of wisdom (Psalms 1; 37; 49; 119).

Matthew Henry writes; "By psalms, he may have meant to sing the songs written by David or such other composers, they are to be sung with musical instruments."

The child of God who has Holy Spirit illumination about the singing of psalms will not be saying, "This is what I like, or we like and always do." No, they sing knowing that it is not about them; they have died to self-pleasure and take into consideration of what the Lord wants.

The second term used by the apostle Paul is hymns (*hymnos*). The Greek word hymns is only used twice in the New Testament. Some say a hymn is an anthem. The words in a hymn are to be a direct address of praise and glory to God. Augustine writes, "A Hymn has three characteristics: It must be sung; it must be praise, it must be to God." It is not for self-pleasure but for the pleasure of God, and then in return this makes a heart ready to enjoy the presence of the Lord. Abboth Smith describes a hymn as a "festal song in praise of gods and heroes."

There is the wonderful hymn that is an anthem that should be sung often within our hearts and in the song service, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." In this hymn there is a stanza that is a proclamation of a truth which says, "Let every kindred, every tribe, on this terrestrial ball, to Him all majesty ascribe, and crown Him Lord of all." The most distinctive feature that is to be heard in the Christian hymn is that it is to express a confession of faith, which praises the redeeming power of God in the gospel. This is wonderfully expressed in the Hymn, "I Love to Tell the Story." I think of the stanza, "I love to tell the story, for some have never heard, the message of salvation, from God's own holy Word."

JBH wrote: "There is something about a fine old hymn. That stirs the heart of a man. That can reach the goal of his inmost soul, such as no preaching can. It is more than a tune of the song he sings. And more than the poet's rhyme. It's the Spirit of God working through them. That gives them power sublime. So we thank thee Lord, for the grand old hymns. May we use them again and again, as we seek to save from the grave, the souls of our fellow man." Dr. Ralph Earle writes on Ephesians 5:19, "It may not be out of the way to observe here that hymns should be regularly used in the Sunday morning service."

It must be remembered, that the power of the hymns comes from the Holy Spirit. Not from the style it is proclaimed in, or that it is in the hymnal or on a screen. The Holy Spirit is not aroused through legalistic control, tradition or following the fad of the day. His presence is embraced only by a seeking heart that longs to proclaim the truth of and express love toward Jesus Christ.

The third term Paul used is "spiritual songs." According to Alpha - Omega Ministries, the Greek word for spiritual songs (*Penumatikas*) in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 is the very moving of the Holy Spirit, not the worship leader. Thayer's Greek - English Lexicon tells us this is "...divinely inspired, and so redolent of the Holy Spirit." The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament tells us that it is "...those composed in the Holy Spirit..." Practical Words Studies tells this Greek word is used referring to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the source.

Tod Williams of Times Square Church and John Oldfield tells me it takes a mature worship leader, who is sensitive to the Holy Spirit's moving on the congregation to bring them into a time of intimacy during the song service. The worship leader simply introduces this time to the congregation during the song service and allows them to worship Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

It takes a complete trust of the Holy Spirit's working and a complete surrender on the worship leader's part in surrendering the congregation into the hands of an all loving God, who is fully able to move His people to express themselves as He so desires. The question is, "Will the worship leaders and the congregation allow the Holy Spirit freedom to move in the body of Christ?" Fear, unbelief and a lack of spontaneity have robbed most congregations out of this special part of the song service.

God's people have every reason to rejoice and sing and make music in their hearts unto the Lord, singing with their voice from the heart with various forms, styles and mixture of music.

### **We are to be expressive in our worship unto the Lord**

We are to speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. And we are to be expressive in our worship unto the Lord.

There seems to be little concern about worshiping God on His terms and through His instructions. Traditionalism and sensationalism has replaced worship in spirit and truth. The guide that the Holy Spirit is going to use to instruct the Body of Christ in regards to expression of worship is the Word of God. All forms of worship are to find their place within the guidelines of the written Word. According to the Word of God we can be and should be expressive in our worship to the Lord, however, not through theatrics that draw attention to one's self.

We are never to use bodily expressions to work up the congregation. Our expressions are to be shown forth through heartfelt affections. When this is done under the moving of the Holy Spirit, God is blessed, Jesus is glorified and the church of Jesus is edified.

Did you know you can dance before the Lord? Psalms 149:3 says; "Let them praise His Name with dancing and make music to Him with tambourine and dancing, praise Him with the strings and flute." Matthew Henry wrote: "Dance includes moving of the feet." There is an Irish pastor at Times Square Church, he is quite reserved. They were kidding him at one service, someone actually thought they saw a foot come off the ground. Yes, in church, we can get all excited and dance. The Bible says let them praise His Name with dancing!

King David knew how to have expressive worship. In 2 Samuel chapter six we read, "Now King David was told, "The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God." So David went down and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the LORD with all his might, while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets. As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD," (2 Samuel 6:12-16)

It is important to note that the Ark of the Covenant denoted the presence of God and a type of Christ. (Thru the Bible; The Pulpit Commentary; Matthew Henry's Commentary) Michal, David's wife and daughter of Saul, despised him in her heart. (2 Samuel 6:16) King David and his wife had words over this issue and he told her, "I will celebrate before the Lord!"

Bonnie and I found great joy in taking Caleb and his brothers to watch the Norton football games. I found it interesting that certain proclaiming Christians would go crazy, jumping up and down when we made a touchdown, especially when the game was close. There is nothing wrong with that.

However, I have also attended their special worship services, services beyond the regular Sunday morning service. I notice they don't show that kind of expression in their special worship services honoring God and recognizing God's mighty hand upon them and His presence among them. As a matter of fact, I have a concern they may even despise those who are expressive during worship services.

There is a warning for us in 2 Samuel 6:20-23. David and Michal are having words over his dancing before the Lord. David's answer to Michal was, "...It was before the LORD... I will celebrate before the LORD. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor." And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death." (2 Samuel 6:20-23)

At the crossing of the Red Sea, "...Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them, 'Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and rider thrown into the sea.'" (Exodus 15:20-23)

Matthew Henry gives us this advice, "We should be afraid of censuring the devotions of others though it may not agree with our sentiments. Who are we to despise those whom God has accepted? Let us never be driven from our duty by the fear of approach, let us not be ashamed to own it." To bring clarity, let us not be too reserved in our expressions of worship, when it is to be done unto the Lord.

When appropriate, we can express worship to the Lord in a dance. However, it must not draw attention from worship to the Lord and attention to us. While attending a David Wilkerson pastor's conference in Birmingham, Alabama, I saw people off to the side dancing and some were waving banners that brought people's attention to the Lord. The Holy Spirit so anointed the service, that I was able to see so many different expressions of worship and not one bit of it was distracting to the song service.

Baptist Theologian Dr. Jay Vernon McGee writes, "Personally, I would like to see more rejoicing as David did in praising God today... God does not like it my friend, when he sees long faces, we are to enter his presence with joy." May I add with Biblical expressions of joy?

**"Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our maker."**

*When the time is right and when it adds to the song service, there should be some dancing before the Lord and the Bible also says we can bow down or kneel down to the Lord. Psalms 95:6 says; “Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our maker.”*

When someone feels like coming to the altar and without drawing attention to themselves while their doing it, they may bow down. Someone may slip into the isle and kneel down to worship when it is appropriate, it pleases the Lord. To fall to the ground is a gesture of worship. In Matthew 2:10-11 we read the Magi, “When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.” Never is this posture out of place or should be peculiar to worship in times of great joy or in great sorrow, especially while expressing one’s self during the song service.

***Christians should be the happiest and most expressive people around. When Holy Spirit led, they can dance, bow, clap and shout***

*Christians should be the happiest and most expressive people around. When Holy Spirit led, they can dance, bow, clap and shout. Psalms 47:1-2 says, “Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy. How awesome is the LORD Most High, the great King over all the earth!” I like the way the King James puts it, “Clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with a voice of triumph...”*

The most natural and most enthusiastic expression of exultation should be used in view of the victories that Jesus Christ won upon the Cross of Calvary and in His resurrection. Our joy in the Lord may be demonstrative and I can assure you that God is not going to censure it.

Our family owns a video made in 1997 and it shares the history of the Green Bay Packers. In that video the narrator says, “Thousands gather at the cathedral of Lambo Field.” In another place in the video it refers to the Green Packer fans as worshiping.

There are three brief definitions in the Winston Dictionary on worship that deserve our consideration here. 1.) The act of paying reverence, adoration or homage to God. 2.) Excessive admiration. 3.) To perform religious services. The New International Dictionary of the Bible tells us this about worship. It is “The honor, reverence and homage paid to superior beings or powers, whether men, angels or God. The English word means “worthship,” w-o-r-t-h-s-h-i-p and it denotes the worthiness of the individual receiving the honor. ...Worship in the New Testament consisted of preaching, reading of Scripture, almsgiving, prophesyings and tongues and singing.”

During the football season of 2004-2005, many times the Green Bay Packers were behind in the last two minutes of the game. The fans did not just set down quietly and wonder if their star quarterback, Bret Favre would be able pull out some miracle and win the game. No, because of the worthiness of his skills, endurance and faithfulness, they were on their feet, clapping and shouting. Showing him the honor he so long worked for because many is the time he lead the team to triumph in such an occasion.

We have a faithful God who called us to Christ through the Holy Spirit, it is Christ who paid the highest price that can be paid for the redemption of sinful man, and it is the Holy Spirit who seals and sanctifies us for the glory of Christ. Because of Christ living in us through the power of the Holy Spirit, we may choose to have victory over the sins that once held us in bondage and kept us out of fellowship with the Lord. Jesus Christ is worthy of our standing, the clapping of our hands and giving shouts of triumph for without Him we cannot live a triumphant life.

*There is a popular expression today that says, "It is not about me, but you Jesus."* That is truth and those who have Holy Spirit enlightenment no longer speak about the song service with words like, "This what I like or what we want." No, their singing and worship style is birthed forth from God's Word. Nothing else satisfies and brings unity in the song service.

What then is the essence of the song service? It is the celebration of and to the Lord Jesus Christ. When we sing songs for His glory, we exalt God and Christ. Singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs is only pleasing to God as we sing them in spirit and truth. The song service is not to be done haphazardly or poorly; it is not even to be done merely as a performance.

We celebrate the Lord when we look into His Word, enjoy and participate according to His prescribed ways, thus, throwing off legalism, traditionalism and avoiding faddisms. When visitors walk in our church what do they sense in and during the song service? Is it life, freedom and Holy Spirit led? Is there work that still needs to be done in our song services and more precisely, are we willing to allow the Lord to do His work?

Let us pray!