



Title: Singing Faith

Theme: The Character of the Song Service

1 Chronicles 25: 1 says, “David, together with the commanders of the army, set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals.” Let us now go to verses 6-7 “All these men were under the supervision of their fathers for the music of the temple of the LORD, with cymbals, lyres and harps, for the ministry at the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were under the supervision of the king. Along with their relatives—all of them trained and skilled in music for the LORD...”

Song services which are pleasing to the Lord

In 2 Chronicles 29 we read of a king by the name of Hezekiah. The Bible says that he “...trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him.” (2 Kings 18:5) His first official act was to cleanse the Lord’s temple of its pollutions. (The Expositors Bible Commentary) After the purification process, the Bible says, “He stationed the Levites in the temple of the Lord with cymbals, harps and lyres in the way prescribed by David and Gad the king’s seer and Nathan the prophet; this was commanded by the Lord through his prophets.” (2 Chronicles 29:25) Hezekiah was putting together a gathering of the city officials, they were having a public worship service in the temple and Hezekiah was following the directions given by God through King David in order to have a service that was pleasing to the Lord.

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 to the proclaiming of God’s Word. Music is ministry to the Lord and to the Body of Christ and it must be blanketed in prayer and guided by the truths of God’s Word. 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 Biblical character in the song service as well as in the preaching of God’s Word.

I would propose to you that that when the Body of Christ takes seriously the preparations of the song service, she will then be able to cast off traditionalism, legalism, denominationalism and faddism that is choking the life out of the song service. I have had the privilege of setting in services that know the joy and the freedom that comes with singing unto the Lord in spirit and truth.

Psalm 98 holds Biblical truths that deserve our attention, meditation, obedience and endurance if we want to grasp the wisdom of God regarding the song service, thus destroying the conjecture of man. Some truths are, “Sing to the Lord a new song... ‘Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the Lord with harp, with harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram’s horn-shout for joy before the Lord, the King.’” (Psalms 98:1,4-6)

Just what are some Biblical truths that express the character that is pleasing to God and is beneficial to the Body of Christ through the song service?

*God does not work through buildings, plans or fads; He works through the Children of God who are sold out to His will and purposes. It is His will that we praise Him in song and proclaim His truths with music. (1 Chronicles 25:1) The character of the “**Song Service**” is to reflect singing that praises God in such a way that it prepares the spiritual heart for the presence of God.*

There are many instruments found in Scripture of which man used by man for prophesying or rather singing about the truths and works of God. And there are wonderful instrument man can use to prophesy today. “Prophesying” (*naba*) here means to speak by inspiration. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary, Old Testament) Prophecy is not always the sense of new revelations, but in 1 Chronicles 25 “prophesying” is used for praise through singing the psalms of David or the psalms of other holy men of God and proclaiming revelations that have already been revealed. (The Expositors Bible Commentary: John Wesley Notes; The Pulpit Commentary; Matthew Henry) God has men today who are just as sold out to Him as anyone in the times of the writing of 1 Chronicles 25. The Holy Spirit is anointing them as well to enable us to sing.

A practical application of this type of “prophesying” is seen in the book of 1 Samuel chapter 10, where we read of a “...procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they [were] prophesying.” (1 Samuel 10:5) These prophets were most likely coming from the place where sacrifices were made unto the Lord and where there was worship and the teaching of God’s Word. Samuel had established one of his schools of the prophets near Gibeah of God and they had been singing the praises of God with psalms that proclaimed His goodness. As they were leaving the high place it is very likely that they continued to sing. (The Pulpit Commentary; Bible Answers.com; Matthew Henry; John Wesley Notes)

As these prophets were coming down from the high place they met a man by the name of Saul, just as foretold by the prophet Samuel. (1 Samuel 10:6) Saul was headed to Gibeah when he met these prophets and the Bible says, “The Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he joined in their prophesying.” (1 Samuel 10:10) Samuel had told Saul that the Spirit of God would come upon him in power, that he would prophesy and that he would be changed into a different person. (1 Samuel 10:6) I am in agreement with those who say that prophesying here is not a prophetic utterance of future events, but of singing the praises of God through songs that proclaim truths that had already been revealed.

It is safe to conclude that one of the character traits of the song service is to sing songs that please the Lord and proclaim His mighty works. When this is done correctly by the devoted children of God, they can expect the presence of the Holy Spirit to empower others to sing praises to the Lord Jesus and of the mighty works of God.

The most useful and special instrument to the Lord regarding the song service are those who are trained and skilled in music for the Lord

Another character trait of the public song service is that they are often led by people who are trained and skilled in music for the Lord. (1 Chronicles 25:7) This does not mean that they have to be professionals or experts. The appointing of song leaders that are trained and skilled is one of the greatest things that can be done for corporate worship. The most useful and special instrument to the Lord regarding the song service is that man or woman who will sing and especially lead the music.

It is just as vital today and so utterly important that people who have the gift of music be appointed for the song service unto the Lord, just as David set musicians apart for this ministry. There should be time allowed for preparation for the song service, which includes training and developing talent and purchasing of proper equipment. Leading the song service is much more than just getting up and singing or performing some music. The church that will enjoy the blessings of the song service is the church that expects their musicians to spend as much time in preparation as the preachers and teachers of God’s Word do.

The congregations that get to enjoy worship leaders who are trained and skilled for music in the house of God are those who prayerfully search for them. They seek the Lord asking Him to raise up families, either from within or outside the church to come in. These worship leaders should be able to teach and be submissive to authority. The Bible says that the singers that David appointed were “...old and young alike, teacher as well as students.” (1 Chronicles 25:8) It also says that they were under supervision. (1 Chronicles 25:6)

Every church that regularly enjoys jubilant life-giving song services are churches that protect the time of their worship leaders. They allow them time to prayerfully prepare and work with the pastoral staff to create song services that go with the theme of the message the Lord has for the church. They are given time to work with others in the church to allow them to grow in the ministry of music.

Churches that have discovered the value of seeking, training and allowing skilled song leaders to work Biblically in the church are churches that attract people that have musical gifts. While attending a pastors' conference in Birmingham, Alabama, I spoke personally with Jukka Palonne, one who is trained and skilled for music in the house of God. He is one of the keyboard players in Times Square Church. He also works with the Times Square Church's outreach teams and goes all over the world leading the song services for Pastor David Wilkerson and Pastor Carter Conlon. He flies from Birmingham, Alabama every week to be a part of the song service team in Times Square Church.

As I visited with him, he shared with me how he is blessed to work with congregations that do not have to be dragged into the song service. He has always been blessed with the opportunity to work with and lead people who are respectful and responsive to the Biblical music minister.

King David had a heart for the song service and he was a musician, writing songs that glorify the Lord and proclaim God's mighty works. He had it in his heart to have a public song service in the temple of God. God raised up musicians for him to appoint because of his heart. When he was old and full of years God made available 288 song leaders (1 Chronicles 25:7) and there were 4,000 who could praise the Lord with musical instruments. (1 Chronicles 23:6)

The church that is truly hungry as David was for music in the house of God may pray and ask the Lord for music ministers that are trained and skilled. How is your hunger for praising the Lord in song? Are you praying for worship leaders that not only have revelation of God's Word but are Holy Spirit Illuminated about the truths they sing? What will be your response to those whom the Lord places before you as song leaders?

The song service that has Biblical character is the service that has songs which are theologically literate

Those who lead in the song service are God's music ministers and there is another vital truth to expressing "Singing Faith." The song service that has Biblical character is the service that has songs which are theologically literate. It is best that the writers of these songs and the song leaders have a heart that is after God. Jesus said, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24)

Steve Camp wrote, "Those who have the privilege to represent Jesus Christ in the arts should be galvanized by mission, not by ambition; by mandate, not by accolades; by love for [Jesus Christ], not by allurements of this world." Therefore, the song service is to have the mark of Christian character birthed forth through personal integrity in the leader or writer and there must be a heart for the holiness of God found in those who participate in the song service. Those who want the Lord in their song services agree with the psalmist who wrote, "Your decrees are the theme of my song..." (Psalm 119:54)

The song service that expresses the most about God, the Lord Jesus and opens the heart to enjoy the Holy Spirit's presence is the one that has the holiness of God as the theme of its music, God's Word as its song book and His statutes for guidance in its songs. The song service of true character expresses, "The law of your mouth [O' God] is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold." (Psalm 119:72) Steve Camp wrote powerfully in his call of "Reformation in the Contemporary Christian Music Industry." He writes, "Scripture speaks to all of life-therefore, our music may speak to the very aspect of living. However, it must be based upon and not contrary to God's Word in principle, ethic, content and conduct."

Those who put together the song service have a great responsibility because they are teaching and proclaiming, thus the worship leader must be a prayerful reader, studier and doer of God's Word. They have these instructions in the New Testament, "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) And James gives them this warning, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." (James 3:1) The fact is you can teach and learn a lot through songs, whether healthy or unhealthy doctrine. The character of the song service is to be that of healthy doctrine.

A faithful response to God involves a broad range of songs

The character of the song service is to be Biblically accurate and a faithful response to God involves a broad range of songs. Ephesians and Colossians tell us to speak to or admonish one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. (Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:20)

With "psalms" we are to sing songs that consist of short sentences expressing praise for the Lord's character or actions. Many of our choruses fit into this category and they should be sung by all no matter what age and sung with the purpose of pleasing the Lord Jesus. At times when appropriate we are to sing psalms that express lament (Psalms 12; 44; 74; 79), confession (Psalm 51), of thanksgiving (Psalm 30; 66; 116; 138), and of wisdom (Psalms 1; 37; 49; 119) as well as other types of psalms.

With “hymns” we are to proclaim the wonderful works of God. Many say a hymn is an anthem. A hymn can also be a proclamation of the promises and works of God.

We are to allow time for “spiritual songs” which are brought forth as the Holy Spirit moves upon the Lord’s congregation.

We are to worship unto the Lord in accordance to that which brings glory to God

The character of the song service is to be that of one that is worship unto the Lord in accordance to that which brings glory to God. Psalms 29:1-2 says, “Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones, ascribe to the LORD OF glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.” (Spurgeon; Vernon McGee; The Expositors Bible Commentary; The Pulpit Commentary; Matthew Henry says that this verse can pertain the mighty men of power on this earth are to worship the Lord.)

These verses are a call to adoration and it is to be proclaimed with a clear appeal, such as the sound of thunder. (The Treasury of David) The opening of the song service should be with that which draws attention to all in earshot that now is the time for singing the praises of God. Unbelief and distrust, complaining and murmuring are not to be found in or about the song service for they rob God of His honor.

Therefore, the children of God make all the sacrifices that must be made in order to give true worship to God. Christians are not to sing what they want but what the Lord wants and the song leaders are to live in such a way that reflects hearts that are able to catch God’s will for the song service. They should be Holy Spirit-led so the congregation will have a trust that the songs they are singing are what God wants them to sing. When the church is Holy Spirit-illuminated of the truth that God guides His surrendered servants to what songs to sing, they will be singing the songs for the Lord’s glory in a manner due His Name. These Christians want the holiness of God put into their hearts and lives.

A song service of real godly character will draw those with ears to hear into worship that is given not because God needs it, but because He is deserving of praise. After all there is nothing we have that He has not given to us. This song service is to draw worshipers to an awareness that whatever God has entrusted to them is for service to Him. True worshipers will lay at Jesus’ feet their scepters, swords, keys, bank accounts, literally all that they have so as to be used for His purposes.

What is your heart attitude about the Lord’s song leaders? Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to bring the Lord presence into your heart and causing you to sing the praises of God in spirit and truth? Are you laying down all at Jesus’ feet so you can have a heart that is receptive to what God has for you in the worship service?

The Holy Spirit moved Steve Camp to write, “Music is a powerful tool from the Lord Jesus Christ to His church intended for worship, praise, encouragement, edification, evangelism, teaching, admonishing and exhorting God’s people to holiness.

Gordon MacDonald shared about a time when he and his daughter, Kristy attended the New Year’s Eve celebration at the InterVarsity Urban Missionary Convention in 1976. The night closed with a Communion Service. After the benediction, 17,000 students began to head for the arena portals and their buses for the trips back home. Someone in the crowd—not a song leader, but a worshiper—began the song “Sing Hallelujah to the Lord.” It is the one where the men sing a line and then the ladies echo back.

Some 17,000 people stopped in their tracks and sang! They sang it over and over again without song leaders or musicians. No one wanted to leave from the place that became holy ground. No one wanted to leave the sacred hour to memories. They just kept singing for a while.

It was after some time of singing into the night when Kristy, who was only nine years old at that time, grabbed her daddy’s hand and spoke softly, “Daddy, this is what heaven is going to be like.” Mr. MacDonald felt that his daughter may very well be right.

The church that has true Biblical character in its song service is the church that will regularly spend more time loving God through personal and corporate expression in song. It is up to the worship leaders and the congregations they lead to how much of God’s presence they want to experience.

A good song leader is a precious gift and a song service of Biblical character ushers in the presence of God. The congregation that treats and responds to their song leaders in such a manor will know and enjoy God’s presence and people will leave the service saying, “This is what heaven is going to be like.” The choice is ours. Let us now stand and “Sing Hallelujah to the Lord.”

Let us pray!