

Why Christians Praise And Worship God

To worship God effectively in song, we need to prepare our hearts and our minds so we can forget about ourselves and worship the Lord. There are various kinds of praise and worship and praise is different to worship. Praising the Lord is akin to thanking Him. When Leah gave birth to her fourth son Judah, she said, "Now I will praise the Lord!" The name Judah means 'Praise' so Leah praised and thanked the Lord by naming her son 'Praise' in ancient Hebrew (Genesis 29:35). In 1 Kings 8:10 & 11; then in 2 Chronicles 5:13 & 14 we are told that during praise and worship, the glory of the Lord, or the presence of the Lord was so powerful, the priests could not stand up to minister to the people. In 2 Chronicles 20:22 we read how Israel praised and worshipped the Lord and defeated the enemy.

Before we start to praise and worship God, we need to have a correct attitude of praise, thankfulness, gratitude and humility. It helps to pray before going off to church to 'free' our minds of life's pressures before we enter into worship. Once we are right with the Lord, it is then up to the worship leader to lead us into the Lord's presence. A good worship leader will allow the Holy Spirit to lead the worship, while he does nothing more than lead the music and singing. The worship leader should only be the servant through whom the congregation is led into the presence of God and into worship.

Worship should be the very first thing we do as we attend church on Sunday. Psalm 100:4 says we are to enter His gates with thanksgiving in our hearts and enter His courts with praise. Praise and worship must be the first priority in the church service – before the chatter; before the offering; before the communion; before the testimonies; before the announcements; before praying for the sick and before anything else happens in the service. Some churches have the worship half way through the service, and then only if there is time! There are churches that cut short the time of worship so they can have more time for the announcements! Some churches cut the worship short so they can have a mini sermon about money. Their priorities are wrong. The Lord must come first and everything else that happens in the service should be secondary.

True Holy Spirit worship begins with vocal praise. It is hard to be ready for worship, unless we have spent time praising God first. Praise helps us to enter into the presence of God. When we praise Him we are exalting Him. In Exodus 15:2 we read how the Israelites praised God. "The Lord is my Strength and my Song and He has become my Salvation. This is my God and I will praise Him. My Father is God and I will exalt Him." We are to praise the Lord with our understanding (Psalm 47:7). We are to praise the Lord with our mouth (Psalm 109:30) and it is good to praise the Lord in the assembly among the people (Psalm 35:18). We are to give thanks with our whole heart, or not half-heartedly (Psalm 9:1). We can clap our hands and shout to God with the voice of triumph and songs of joy (Psalm 47:1). We can use musical instruments such as strings and harps (Psalm 33:2) tambourines and dance (Psalm 149:3) castanets and cymbals (2 Samuel 6:5) trumpets and ram's horns (Psalm 98:6) wind instruments and flute (Psalm 150:4) and the modern-day equivalent of the ancient instruments of lutes and lyres; guitars, banjos, ukuleles, violins, cellos; even the piano is a stringed instrument and the organ is a wind instrument. We are to make a joyful noise (Psalm 98:4 & 6). We are to raise our hands (Psalm 63:4; 134:2). Musical instruments played skilfully can be a form of prophecy (1 Chronicles 25:1).

Praise and worship humbles us so we can truly bow our knees to God in submission. It shows our adoration for our Creator. When we focus on the Lord in intense worship, something dynamic happens deep in our heart and soul. It softens us; fills us with grace and strengthens us. Worshipping God is not doing Him a favour; worship is so God can

change us. We are to worship God because He is our Father and we love Him. Worship builds our relationship with God. We shouldn't worship God for what He can do for us, but we should worship Him just for Who He is. Intense worship quenches our thirst for His presence. It builds our love for Him. It washes us. We should not minimise the importance of praise and worship in our Christian walk. He alone is worthy to be praised. Worshipping God is normal and appropriate for the righteous (Psalm 33:1). Focussing on the Lord takes the focus off ourselves and it stops us from focussing on the weaknesses of others. Worship and praise unites people. The Bible talks about a unity of faith, not a unity of doctrine (Ephesians 4:13 & 14). We need to stop looking around, concentrate on our praise, focus on God and not think about what we are going to have for lunch! When we focus on what is around us, we can still sing in tongues but with our minds on something else. That is not worshipping with our whole heart. When we press into worship, to enter into a higher spiritual realm, it may take hard work but once we become used to keeping our eyes on the Lord, it becomes the norm for us. That is when new hair styles, glittery dresses, outside noises and crying babies cease to be a distraction. God never said praise was going to be easy. In fact He said it is a sacrifice (Hebrews 13:15). It takes hard work and concentration to enter into an all-consuming close relationship with God where nothing else matters.

We are the generation who were created to praise the Lord (Psalm 22:31; 78:6; 102:18). God wants people with whom He can reveal His secrets, His plans and His purposes; people who can share His revealed will with others; His plans for our generation and He needs people to draw close to Him in order for us to hear His voice. Those who have an attitude of worship are the ones who God whispers to. If we are not close to Him; if we are not living under the shadow of His wings (Psalm 91) then how can He get close enough to whisper to us? God does not thunder His voice to us. He doesn't talk to us through winds, earthquakes and fire. His voice is just a whisper (1 Kings 19:12) and we need to be in His presence so we can hear His whisper, and to come into His presence, we need to praise and worship with our understanding. We need to think about what we are singing; think about what we are saying to God. If we ever had a chance to speak to royalty, we would speak with understanding. We would weigh up every word and be careful not to offend. How much more should we take care with our words to Almighty God?

Each one of us needs to enter into worship. We can't leave it all to the worship leader and the singers. We need to seek God for ourselves, every one of us. We need to gather together and worship with one mind – in one accord. We need to lift the name of Jesus equally as often as we lift the name of God the Father. We need prophetic song. The only way a believer can receive a prophetic song to sing to the church, is by coming before the Lord in humility to receive it from Him. We need to wait on Him for the utterance, sometimes in complete silence. Skilfully played music is a key to holy worship.

Hallelujah means 'praise be to God'. We are to sing, boast, celebrate, shout and praise God. Real Holy Spirit worship brings spiritual healing, physical healing, emotional healing, mental healing and deliverance from evil influences. We can't feel tearful over a past incident if we are focussing on the Lord. We can't be filled with depression when we are soaking in the cloud of God's glory. People who walk past a worshipping church and can hear the worship can be drawn into God's presence and be miraculously saved and healed. That has happened and it is scriptural. When people hear Godly praises, they will fear God (Psalm 40:3).

Praise is a powerful weapon in evangelism. It is a powerful weapon in spiritual warfare. Praise is a powerful tool for entering into the presence of God. Many Christians have never

entered into the presence of God through praise and worship where they have been humbled, healed, edified and been close enough to God to have a long conversation with their Father. Worship brings us into the Holy of Holies, alone with God where no one else exists for that moment. Many Christians don't know what it is like to be taken to the heavenly realm, to be shown around, to be shown their future, to meet angels, to speak to angels, to worship in the marble-floored Throne Room while God the Father is there giving instructions to angels as they answer the prayers of the saints. Psalm 148:2 says the angels praise Him. When we enter into a higher level of collective worship, the angels join in with us. How many people have experienced a worship service where the angels have joined in with them? Only deep Holy Spirit worship can bring you that close to God the Father. Most Christians have never entered into a realm like that. As we read in Psalm 22:3, the Lord inhabits the praises of His people. That means He lives in, dwells in, occupies or makes His home in those who worship Him. We need to praise and worship the Lord to the point where we become completely lost in God. Nothing else matters when we are in that secret place of the Almighty. He becomes our refuge. Fear vanishes. In Psalm 91:15 it says that God will honour us when we come to that point. Imagine being so close to God that He bestows honour upon us mere mortals! We really can be that close. So close we feel His breath. So close we can smell His beautiful perfume. So close we can feel His kiss on our cheeks. So close we feel His hand in ours. All this can only come with worship. If you, as a born-again believer, want to enter into the heavenly realm while here on earth, then you will need to first examine yourself and confess any sin you may have and when you are thoroughly cleansed, you would need to enter into higher praise and holy worship for an extended period of time. We think we are good at worshipping because we are Pentecostals. We know about worship but there are levels of praise and worship that most churches have yet to learn and need to enter into.

Holy Spirit worship is warfare. In 2 Chronicles 20:22, we read where the singers and musicians were sent out in front of the army and through the might of praise and worship, the enemy was totally defeated. The army did not even have to draw their swords. This is warfare praise. There is a realm in praise where we enter into warfare, which is the high praise. We need to press through the other levels of praise that lead up to the high praise then onto to worship and into warfare. Praise and worship are powerful spiritual tools. The devil is the prince of the power of the air and if we send our praises into the air, he is defeated. God inhabits the high praise of His people and anywhere God is, the devil cannot be there. The devil is the prince of the air, but God is the Lord of this earth and of the whole universe so we need to release our praises into the air because the sound of praise travels out through the air. Any sound that comes to our ears travels through the air and singing travels further than the spoken word because of the vibrations in the airwaves caused by the rhythm in the music. When we worship God we can see a release in our lives. Worship brings healing. Isaiah 61:3 says to put on the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (depression, discouragement). Depression is caused by an evil spirit and if you want release from it, put on the garment of praise. Praise works! Try it and see for yourself and you will experience tremendous victories. But you must persevere. Don't give up if things don't happen within a week. Keep on praising and the release will come. Remember that the Lord said fervent prayer avails much (James 5:16). If we become a praising people, we can see a release in God more than we ever dreamed possible. When the Israelites sent the singers before the army, the spoils were so great it took three days to gather it all in (2 Chronicles 20:25). If we send praise before anything else in the church service, we will see great spoils there too.

We need to enter into these realms of praise and sometimes it feels as though we just don't want to stop. Some song leaders who are not sensitive to the Holy Spirit actually stop

the praise and worship, quenching, subduing and grieving the Holy Spirit. The people want to continue with their praise but the leader feels it is enough and stops it. A good leader will not be afraid of the silence and will allow the worship to continue. That is when the singers need to sing out to the Lord; sing aloud His Word. Singers should always come prepared with a scripture to sing so they can bless the hearts of the people. That is when spoken and musical prophecies should come forth and all the different creative realms of worship. When the worship dies down, don't let it stop; don't switch off, wait on God for a moment in silence.

Many people don't change because they are uncomfortable coming deeply into the Lord's presence through worship. Worship is not a gimmick. It is not something you do because you are Pentecostal; it's not something you do for five minutes before the offering; it's not just a fill in or an idea some smart person came up with. Praise is there so we can be changed because we come into His presence. God is the Almighty Creator of all things visible and invisible, on this earth and throughout the whole universe. He made the tiniest atom, up to the enormous universe, with its thousands of stars; He created the ugliest deep sea fish to the most beautiful flower; He made time and put everything into order. After Adam sinned, God took responsibility for His creation by sending Jesus to rescue us. God said He would not stay angry with mankind because the spirit of man would be consumed and His purpose in creating the souls of men would be frustrated (Isaiah 57:16). God has a purpose for us!

Let praise and worship continue for at least an hour at every service and see the incredible difference it will make to the congregation. We need to focus on the Lord in worship and cease the mindless and unnecessary, time-consuming chatter in the service and then see the difference. See the church grow spiritually, in unity and in the number of souls that come in through the spiritual warfare of praise and worship without a lot of evangelism. Worship leaders need to allow the Holy Spirit time to refresh and minister to the people, and see the change that takes place in them as they are set free from their burdens through worship. The Holy Spirit will motivate, energise and illuminate the worship, if He is allowed time to move on the congregation. Worship gives God the glory He rightly deserves and the church needs the opportunity and time to express their love for Him. Anointed worship should be the first item on the church's program and it should never be cut short.

Thanksgiving and praise are utterances of our mouths, the fruit of our lips (Hebrews 13:15), but worship is an attitude. In heaven, praise and worship can be understood by reading Isaiah 6:1 to 3. 'I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the skirts of His train filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim; each had six wings. With two wings, each seraphim covered his own face; with two wings, each covered his own feet and with two wings, each flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is filled with His glory!"

In that picture of heaven, we see worship, praise and service. Worship is the attitude. The seraphim who covered their faces and feet, were showing their worship. Praise was expressed in spoken words, just like we do. Their service was expressed by their flying. They used four wings for worship and two wings for service; so worship is twice as important as service. Worship should always come before service. The scriptures put them in that order. 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only' (Deuteronomy 6:13; Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8). In line with these scriptures, church services should always have praise and worship first – before anything else takes place in the service.

The role of the musician in scripture was to lead God's people into His presence. Jewish music with its unique rhythm was used to bring about great victories in the Old Testament, so Jewish music is good for defeating the same enemy now. That has not changed. We need to sing songs straight from His Word. God breathed the Word (2 Timothy 3:16) and so we need to sing His Word. There are many 'nice' songs that extol 'Him' and 'He' but never mention Jesus by name, and although those songs are nice, they are not scriptural. To draw closer to the Lord we need to sing His Word and sing out His name.

Modern music is often distorted melodies with distorted harmonies, which effects our emotions or our soul. There is scientific evidence that proves that music affects the body and soul of man. If we watch a scary movie for example, half the suspense is caused by the music, not by what we see. Music has the ability to make you feel peaceful or irritable. There are realms of music that are distorted and most dreadfully, there can be evil music within the church. People don't usually listen to the lyrics when they listen to music; they react to the beat. Certain rhythms evoke evil spirits and when that tempo is included into Christian music, those rhythms still bring evil, even if the words are Godly. Too many musicians are more concerned with entertaining the people and are not focussed enough on honouring our Lord with their talent. Church is not a place of entertainment; Jesus said it should be a house of prayer (Matthew 21:13). Many misguided Christian musicians think it is good to take the sounds of the world into the church because they think it is good for the entertainment value. All they are doing is sending God in another direction because worldly music should have no place in the church and God is not blessed by hard rock. The church needs to influence the world; the world should not influence the church. There are harmonies, chord progressions and melodies that bring Godly thoughts, healing, inspire evangelism and secrets that God has for us. Those things can only be sought by having an attitude of worship where your whole life becomes an act of worship as to the Lord. That is when worship becomes what our life is, and it is not just something we do for five minutes on a Sunday. Worship leaders need to be careful what music they choose when they lead the congregation. They need to be careful to bring the people into holy worship, not just amuse the teens.

Too many people are distracted from worshipping the Lord because they are too focussed on themselves. They love themselves and their own voice more than they love God and they have a hard time dislodging their self-centredness and putting all their heart and soul into worship. Their attitude is "Me, me, me. God loves me. I want to talk about me!" Many Christians feel they will look silly if they dance, clap or sing loudly in tongues and their pride tells them to remain quiet and watch the other 'sillies' doing their thing. Pride is the opposite of humility.

We need to look at why the wrong music, selfishness and pride will stop us from worshipping the Lord. Read Isaiah 14:9 to 17. Here we read about the fall of Lucifer from heaven because of his pride and selfishness (verses 13 & 14), taking his beauty and ministry of music with him (verse 11). He knows the power that is unleashed in intense Holy Spirit worship and will do anything to stop it happening. If he can't stop it happening, then he will distort it and use the wrong rhythm to destroy the attempts of the Holy Spirit to minister to the congregation, and he'll bring carnality to susceptible people. Rock music should have no place in the church. It is music inspired by the devil and the Lord cannot work in that environment.

We read in 2 Corinthians 3:17 & 18; 'Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty and freedom. And all of us, as with unveiled face continued to behold the Word of God as in a mirror, reflecting the glory of the Lord, are constantly being

transformed into His image in ever increasing splendour, from glory to glory, from the Lord Who is the Spirit'. As we worship and come into subjection to the Lord, we can resist the influence of the devil and he has to flee from us. Then when we draw near to the Lord, He in turn draws near to us (James 4:7 & 8). When we worship Him, He is near to us, where the Lord is, the Spirit is, and where the Spirit is, we have freedom from our woes and we will be changed/transformed into His image. For this to happen we need to have Godly music with scriptural words.

We are to praise God every morning and evening (1 Chronicles 23:30) not just on Sundays. We are to praise Him seven times a day and all day (Psalm 119:164). We are to praise Him in the congregation and in the company of elders (Psalm 107:32). We are to give God high praise, or a higher level of praise until we enter into worship. Psalm 149:6 says 'Let the high praises of God be in their mouths and a two-edged sword in their hands'. The two-edged sword, as we know, is the Word of God and Psalms are filled with ideas about praise and worship. Intense worship goes beyond praise. It is a whole lifestyle of daily worship, an attitude of worship, humility, prayer and sitting silently in the presence of God waiting for Him to share His thoughts. It is complete submission and obedience for a lifetime. True worship will change your lifestyle; it will change who you are; it will bring healing in your mind, in your body and in your soul or emotions. There is healing qualities in Godlike Spiritual music. When you sing to God for a prolong period of time, something therapeutic takes place. There is something about Godly music that lifts the spirit as we 'plug in' to God's sounds.

Becoming a lifetime worshipper doesn't mean our other ministries are put to one side. It means that as we are changed into His likeness, our ministries are greatly improved. Jesus is our example of a perfect ministry and as we become more like Him, so our ministries have to improve. When we become worshippers, we are not focussing on what is happening to the people around us, we focus on what is happening with our Lord.

When in church, the worship dies down, don't just stop. When the song of the Lord is released in the service, sing again with all your heart. Respond to the Lord. The singers need to sing the song of the Lord in tongues – to lead and encourage the people on to a higher place so their thoughts will be captivated again. We need to hear what God is doing and what He is saying to His servants. Deep worship is one of the most exciting aspects of the Christian walk. We have been created to bring pleasure to God. The worship leaders and singers need to study what God wants from them in their ministry. They need to wait on God before the services to see what He wants them to do, and so the song of the Lord flows freely in the services. Worship is like waves. It should not come to a sudden stop. When worship dies down, the musicians need to continue in the attitude of worship until the Lord is satisfied. Worship is not about us – it is wholly about pleasing God. We should not be uncomfortable with silence because silence can lead to another song of the Lord, it can be a time of reflection, it can be a time of repentance, it can be a time of healing, it can be a time for the Holy Spirit to minister so silence can be as necessary as singing. Worship is what God wants to say in a total piece, like an orchestra. Orchestral music can be loud, quiet, dense or stringy but it is the total piece. Worship is like that. It comes in waves and we should keep going until the Lord has accomplished what He wants to do. There is a sound in worship that has chord progressions and we need to listen to what God is saying through the instruments. The chord progression should have rhythm, harmony and melody which are the three parts to music. People should stand when they worship because it helps focus on God and it is also a sign of respect. How much respect do we have for the Lord if we can't be bothered standing on our feet for Him for a short time? It shows our attitude. Do we have a worshipful or a rebellious attitude to Him? If we watch people who

sit during worship we will see people who look around, we will see people who are slow in their spiritual growth, we will see people who are too proud to humble themselves enough to lay their lives at His feet. We need to worship Him with our whole heart. We need to love the Lord with all our mind (intellect, understanding), all our heart, all our soul (our life, our being) and all our strength (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30 and Luke 10:27). When we do that, we have given Him all of ourselves, and that in turn will transform us into His likeness.

Amen and may God bless you, as you give yourself up into His Presence.

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