



Steve Pruitt

# Worship Thoughts

*A 50 Day Devotional Guide to Intimacy with God*

JustWorship.com Publishing

Worship Thoughts  
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## Day 1

# The Place of Worship

*But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.*

John 4:23 (ESV)

According to the Gospel of John chapter 4, Jesus and his disciples were on a trip from Judea to Galilee, but Jesus needed to take a route often avoided by Jews; the land of Samaria. Their journey took them outside the city of Sychar and they rested at the place where Jacob's well was located. Jesus' disciples had gone into the city to buy food when a Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

The woman was probably somewhat shocked by Jesus' request because Jews rarely spoke to Samaritans. Jews considered Samaritans as half-breeds and treated them with contempt. Also, Jesus was a Jewish teacher, and it was unusual for a Jewish rabbi to speak to women in public. In fact the rabbins voiced their contempt for women by teaching that they were neither to be spoken to on the street nor taught the law.

As they conversed the woman perceived Jesus to be a prophet and challenged him about the proper place of worship. Her ancestors had worshiped on Mount Gerizim while the Jews worshiped in Jerusalem. *Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.* (John 4:21 ESV)

Jesus' response to her inquiry established a new order for worship in God's kingdom. No longer would worship be relegated to a physical location nor was the location to be the focal point of worship. The proper place to worship the Father was now in spirit and truth.

It seems that a lot of our worship today is centered in the church building. Millions of dollars are spent erecting and maintaining elaborate houses of worship. Though our houses of worship are useful they cannot produce true worship nor should they be confused with the place of true worship. According to Jesus true worship takes place in spirit and truth; in the heart of the worshiper. Neither are our methods (rituals and traditions) to be the focus of our worship, nor can they produce true worship. All outward forms of worship should be the overflow of a heart that is worshiping the Father in spirit and truth. Those who are worshiping the Father in spirit and truth are the ones the Father is seeking.

Is your worship of God relegated to a physical location? Do you worship the Father in spirit and truth?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 63:1-5; 73:25-26

Mark 12:30

## Day 2

# True Worshipers

*For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.*

1 Corinthians 7:19 (ESV)

When Abraham was ninety-nine years old God commanded him to be circumcised as a sign of his covenant with him. Abraham circumcised all the males in his household and from generation to generation Jews have continued this rite.

Circumcision was so important to God that he sought to kill Moses as Moses journeyed to Egypt because he had not circumcised his sons. Circumcision was equally important to the Jews. Anyone who was not circumcised was considered unclean. This assertion became a point of contention when the Gentiles were converted to Christ.

Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem by the brethren at Antioch to seek the counsel of the apostles on the matter of Gentile circumcision. The decision of the council was that the Gentile's were under no obligation to be circumcised and keep the law (Acts 15).

In his writings Paul defines the meaning of true circumcision in Christ. He wrote, *In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.* (Colossians 2:11 ESV) And, *For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.* (Galatians 6:15 ESV) Many of the Jews based the confidence of their salvation (and ultimately their worship) in circumcision. Circumcision became an idol to them.

Sadly today, many in the church base their salvation (and ultimately their worship) in religious activities. However, true worshipers put no confidence in what can be accomplished in the flesh, but only what can be accomplished by the Spirit of God and being obedient to his word. The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life have been cut away from their hearts. Their glory and exultation is in Christ Jesus and not religious activity.

Paul wrote to the Galatians, *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.* (Galatians 5:6 ESV) Jesus told his disciples that the work of God was to believe in the one whom he sent (John 6:29). So, the starting place of true worship is not in religious activity but a believing faith in Jesus Christ that leads to keeping his commandments.

Is there something in your life that you have exalted above Christ? Has religious activity replaced an intimate relationship with Jesus?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Romans 2:28-29

Philippians 3:3

## Day 3

# Giving Thanks

*I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD.*

Psalms 116:17 (ESV)

The act of thanksgiving in worship has been around for many years. In fact, God made provision for it in the Levitical law. There were three types of peace offerings; thank-offerings, offerings for vows, and free will or voluntary offerings. James M. Freeman in his book *Manners and Customs of the Bible* writes, “The offerings were accompanied by the imposition of hands and by the sprinkling of blood around the great altar, on which the fat and the parts accompanying were burned.”

Another aspect of the peace offerings was that parts of the offering were waved and others were heaved. According to Jewish tradition the parts of the offering were laid on the hands of the offerer. The priest would put his hands under that of the offerer and move them horizontally for the wave offering and vertically for the heave offering. This action was intended to be a presentation of the offering to God acknowledging him as the supreme ruler of heaven and earth. It was also offered as a thank offering to God for his deliverance from death.

The sacrifice of the thank-offering can be seen in the life of King David who wrote, *I must perform my vows to you, O God; I will render thank offerings to you. For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.* (Psalms 56:12-13 ESV) King Solomon (1 Kings 3:15), King Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29:31) as well as Ezra and Nehemiah (Nehemiah 12:31) offered thank offerings.

The importance of giving thanks has always been a part of the church age. Jesus gave thanks (Matthew 15:36; 26:27) and in his first epistle to the Thessalonians Paul exhorted the saints, *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 ESV)

The Hebrew word used for thanksgiving in Psalms 116:17 is towdah. Towdah means an extension of the hand; adoration, a choir of worshipers, confession, sacrifice of praise or thank offering. The psalmists exhort us to come into God’s presence and his gates with thanksgiving (Psalms 95:2; 100:4). They also exhort us to sing to the Lord with thanksgiving (Psalms 147:7) and to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving (Psalms 107:22).

In modern day worship services there is a popular trend of lifting and even waving hands. It is important that as we lift our hands we have a proper understanding of its significance. You see, the offerer of the Old Testament sacrifice could have waved his hands, but without the blood sacrifice it would have not been acceptable to God. Therefore, the waving or lifting of our hands to God in thanksgiving is an acknowledgement that we have been delivered from death by the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ and that we are in covenant with God.

Are you grateful to God that you have been delivered from spiritual death and are in covenant with him? Do you express your thanks by lifting your hands in acknowledgement of his mighty acts?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Philippians 4:6

Colossians 2:7; 3:17

## Day 4

# A Living Sacrifice

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

Romans 12:1 (ESV)

Thomas Hawkes was born in Essex, England and later entered into the service of the Lord of Oxford. Upon the death of Edward VI, rather than change his religious beliefs to that of Queen Mary's, Hawkes left his service and returned home. After returning home Hawkes' wife gave birth to a son. Hawkes refused to have the boy baptized according to Catholic tradition and was reported to the Earl of Oxford. The earl sent Hawkes to Bishop Bonner of London where he answered to the charge of contempt of the sacraments. On February 9, 1555 he was condemned as a heretic.

Days before Hawkes was to be burned at the stake he agreed with his friends that he would lift his hands over his head if the pain was tolerable and his mind was at peace. When he was engulfed in flames and most people thought him to be dead, Hawkes suddenly raised his burning hands above his head and clapped three times. Those who understood this gesture broke into shouts of praise and applause as Thomas Hawkes sank into the fire and died.

The Old Testament sacrifices were killed at the will of their masters. They had no will of their own. When it came time for the fire to consume them they didn't object. The same applies to a true worshiper; however, this sacrifice is alive. A true worshiper offers himself to the Master as a holy sacrifice. He is dead to his own will but alive and submitted to the will of his master.

Jesus said, *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.* (John 15:13 ESV) The ultimate expression of love is the giving of one's life for another. Laying down of one's life for another is the relinquishing of the right to have one's needs met in order to meet the needs of another (Philippians 2:4). A true worshiper has no life of his own. He has been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20). He has died to the right to have his needs met in order to do the Creator's will. The true worshiper does not exist for himself. He exists for his Maker (Revelation 4:11). A living sacrifice has at its core the greatest of commandments: To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30).

Have you surrendered your will to the will of the Father? Do you love the Father with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

1 Samuel 15:22

Psalms 51:17

Ephesians 5:2

Philippians 4:18

Hebrews 13:15-16

## Day 5

# Fountain of Satisfaction

*Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.*

Jeremiah 2:12-13 (ESV)

During the dry summer months in Palestine the people were forced to build cisterns to collect the rainwater or water from small streams. This was particularly necessary in places where there were no large streams or springs. Most of the cisterns were dug in the earth or cut out of soft limestone. They varied in size and shape. With proper care the water could be kept in good condition for a while, but often it became dirty. Sometimes the cisterns would break and the water would leak out.

In Jeremiah 2:13 God is defining evil and describing the spiritual condition of Israel. Israel had exchanged God for the idols of other countries that God called "broken cisterns that hold no water." Israel sought to be satisfied by something other than God. They exchanged eternal satisfaction found only in relationship with God for a temporary satisfaction that in reality did not satisfy them at all.

Many in the church have worshiped the idols of self-gratification such as prosperity, power, popularity and prestige. Others have worshiped the institutional church loving the traditions, doctrines and programs of man more than God's word or a fresh anointing of God's presence. In many churches ritual has taken the place of repentance and righteousness; works have taken the place of true worship. Man pleasing has replaced God-pleasing.

Though we shrink back at the thought of this being evil, that is exactly what God calls it. He compares our worldly indulgences and religious toys to broken cisterns that hold no water. We can pamper our flesh thinking that these things will meet the needs of our heart. However, once we have indulged we find it is not enough.

Our thirst is only quenched in Jesus. Believing on and clinging to Jesus purges our old wells from the muck that has wrought defilement. In turn, faith in Christ produces in us rivers of living water (John 7:38) that give eternal satisfaction. Jesus told the woman at the Samaritan well, *Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.* (John 4:13-14 ESV)

God has promised to satisfy all who are thirsty. John wrote, *And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment."* (Revelation 21:6 ESV)

Where do you turn for satisfaction? What are you looking toward to quench your thirst? Have you forsaken the fountain of living waters and dug out cisterns that hold no water? Are you thirsty for God alone?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 36:7-9

Revelation 22:17



## Day 6

# When All Fails

*Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.*

Habakkuk 3:17-18 (ESV)

In The Revelation of Jesus Christ, the Apostle John introduces us to a great multitude of people standing before the throne of God and the Lamb. We learn that this multitude is dressed in white robes and has palm branches in their right hands. John is told by one of the elders that this multitude consists of saints who have come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes white in blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:9-14).

This great multitude may have come out of tribulation, but as saints of God we know that they also went through tribulation. Their response in the presence of God is worship. No doubt they learned to worship during times of pressure and affliction.

The Greek word used for tribulation in this Revelation passage means pressure, affliction, anguish, burdened, persecution, and trouble. Using this definition can we say that Jesus suffered tribulation during his earthly ministry? Yes! If Jesus suffered tribulation so will we if we are his disciples (Luke 6:40). The apostle Paul and Barnabas preached to the converts in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch that through many tribulations they would enter the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

A look at the Hebrew words used in Habakkuk's acclamation reveals that this was no ordinary worship service he was planning. The word used for rejoice in verse eighteen is *guwl*. *Guwl* means to spin around (under the influence of any violent emotion). *Alaz* is the Hebrew word translated joy. It means to jump for joy. Regardless of the conditions around him, Habakkuk made a choice to radically worship God. He worshiped with song, music and dance realizing that the Lord was his strength.

Worship moves the heart of God, and he comforts us in our tribulation. Worship elevates us into God's presence. It puts our focus on the one who controls the circumstances. When we are in his presence we can see our circumstances from his point of view. Though the circumstances may not change we will be changed in our circumstances. We are changed as we focus on him (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We can rejoice in tribulation knowing that even though our lives seem to be falling in around us, God is working all things together for our good (Romans 8:28). We can joy in our tribulations knowing that God is perfecting us (James 1:2). Our afflictions are preparing for us a greater weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Do you turned to God in worship during times of tribulation?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Job 1:21; 2:10

Psalms 119:67, 71, 75

Romans 5:3-5

John 16:33

## Day 7

# God's Hunger

*The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Command the people of Israel and say to them, My offering, my food for my food offerings, my pleasing aroma, you shall be careful to offer to me at its appointed time."*  
Numbers 28:1-2 (ESV)

Do you think God ever has hunger pains? At first glance this question has an obvious answer; no. We know that God is not confined to a human body, he is spirit (John 4:24). He has no need for food. God is self-existent and does not need any outside source to assist him in sustaining life (Psalms 50:12-13). However, though he is not physically dependent on food, there is a burning hunger in God that he actively seeks to satisfy.

As the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness God gave Moses specific instructions as to the sacrifices they were to offer. The offerings that were acceptable to God were ones without spot or blemish. They were of the best of the flock and had to be brought willingly. God also told Moses to make sure the offerings were brought at the appointed times (Numbers 28).

God is hungry for our special gifts. He feeds from our daily offerings or sacrifices. The meal that satisfies the Father's hunger begins with a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). Another course in the Father's meal is the sacrifices of a broken heart and contrite spirit (Isaiah 57:15; 66:2). David wrote, *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.* (Psalms 51:17 ESV) God's hunger is not fully satisfied until he has smelled the aroma and tasted the delicacy of the sacrifice of giving to others. The writer of Hebrews said, *Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.* (Hebrews 13:16 ESV)

The writer of Hebrews also wrote, *Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.* (Hebrews 13:15 ESV) The "him" he is referring to is Jesus. Jesus himself became the sacrifice by which our sacrifices are made acceptable. Without the shedding of his blood it would be impossible for our sacrifices to satisfy the hunger of the Father (Hebrews 13:12). Jesus taught that our offerings (worship) should be presented in spirit and truth and that the Father is seeking those people who sacrifice in this way (John 4:23).

God has a perpetual hunger for relationship with his children. God's food is our continual living sacrifices of a broken spirit, a contrite heart, our service to others and a praise of thanksgiving offered in spirit and truth acknowledging his name (Psalms 116:17).

Peter exhorted us, . . . *you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* (1 Peter 2:5 ESV)

What kind of meals do you serve the Father? Would your offerings leave him starving or satisfied?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 4:5; 50:14, 23; 54:6

Philippians 4:18

## Day 8

# Open the Gates

*Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.*

Psalms 118:19-20 (ESV)

According to the Psalmist the only way to get into the presence of the Lord is by going through the gates of righteousness. Only those who are righteous are allowed entrance through those gates. That leaves us with a grave dilemma. Why?

The apostle Paul quotes King David in Romans 3:10-12 saying, *None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.* (ESV) The prophet Isaiah wrote, *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.* (Isaiah 64:6 ESV)

Have you ever thought about what Isaiah meant by polluted garments? He is referring to a woman's menstrual garments. If that is what our righteousnesses looks like what hope have we of ever being able to walk through the gates of righteousness to worship and fellowship with a righteous God? The only righteousness that can stand before God is God's righteousness. Therefore, we must become God's righteousness if we desire to come into his presence.

The apostle Paul wrote, *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV) Isaiah prophesied this, *But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* (Isaiah 53:5-6 ESV) The "him" referred to in these scripture verses is Jesus; God's only son (John 3:16).

The only way to enter the gates of righteousness is by the blood of Jesus. The only way to get to God is through his Son. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through the blood of his precious sacrifice (John 14:6). And it is through and by the blood of Jesus that we have any hope of coming before God to worship him (Hebrews 10:19). Peter wrote, *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.* (1 Peter 3:18 ESV)

Have you become the righteousness of God through the blood of Jesus Christ? Are you seeking daily to walk in righteousness?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 118:22-24  
1 Corinthians 1:30  
Philippians 1:11  
1 Peter 2:24

## Day 9

# One Thing

*One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: 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 inquire in his temple.*

Psalms 27:4 (ESV)

Anyone who has or has had small children knows what a trip to the grocery store or any shopping spree can be like. With so many items on the shelves the little ones are constantly badgering the parents with, “I want this one, and I want this one.” And “this one” is the one they want until they get to the next aisle. That’s when the “I wants” start all over again.

There is a story of one set of parents who worked diligently to teach their children the difference between wanting something and actually needing something. Only to have the kids, on the next trip to the store, say, “I need this one, I need this one.”

King David said that there was only one thing that he asked of the Lord; to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life. The Hebrew word used for asked in this verse means to inquire, to request, to demand or to beg. Imagine David saying to the Lord, “I really want it; I really, really want it. Can I have it please, please can I?” The Hebrew word used for seek means to search out by any method especially by worship and prayer. It also means to strive after, to beg, to make inquisition, or to procure. In other words David was going to do whatever it took that would allow him to dwell in God’s house all the days of his life. David’s one desire was to be where God was.

David wanted to be where God was for two specific purposes; to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in its temple.

When you explore the meaning of beauty in the Hebrew you find it means agreeableness, i.e. delight, suitability, splendor or grace: beauty or pleasantness. Agreeable means pleasant, pleasing, to one’s liking. Suitable means appropriate to a given purpose or occasion. Splendor means great light or luster; brilliance. So the beauty of the Lord is much deeper than outward appearance or something pleasant to the eye. It also means that God is pleasant to me, he is to my liking. He is suitable or appropriate for every occasion. He fills every longing of my heart and he’s the only one who can. He is the delight of my heart and soul and his grace is sufficient for all things.

David wanted to inquire of the Lord; which means to plough, to break forth, to inspect, to care for, to admire, to seek and search. He wanted to make diligent search for God and the things of God.

If our asking and seeking are pursued with the same attitude as David’s we can rest in knowing that we will find God. He wants to be found by us. Jesus promised, *And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.* (Luke 11:9-11 ESV)

What is your one desire; the thing you seek the most? Do you want more than anything to be where God is?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Ecclesiastes 3:11

Psalms 42:1-2; 63:1

Jeremiah 29:13

## Day 10

# Chosen to Proclaim

*But you are a chosen race a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)

Have you ever felt the excitement of being chosen for something? Maybe a schoolmate chose you as a best friend. Maybe during P.E. class you were chosen first by the team captain. Maybe the teacher chose you to answer the question out of all the kids who held up their hand. Maybe you have been chosen by your boss to receive a promotion, a pay increase or to assist on an important project.

Have you ever thought about how an orphan feels when, out of all the kids in the orphanage, the prospective parents chooses him or her? Well, that is exactly what happened when God chose us. The Greek word used for chosen means to select, elect, or favorite. The Greek word used for race (generation in the KJ) means “kin.” In other words God selected us to be kin to him; he adopted us (Galatians 4:5, Ephesians 1:5).

God also made us a royal priesthood; members of the kingly sacred order. He made us a holy nation; a sacred tribe and a peculiar (KJ) people (his own possession). The Greek word used for peculiar means acquisition, purchased, or possession. God paid a price for us to be kin to him (1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:23). We have been bought, redeemed by the blood of Jesus to be a people for his own possession (Revelation 5:9).

Why did he purchase us? Was it because we deserved it? Was it because he loves us? Certainly he loves us, but the purpose for our purchase goes much deeper. Peter says the reason God chose us is that we may proclaim the excellencies (praises KJ) of him who called us. The Greek word used for proclaim means to publish and celebrate. To publish means to bring to the attention of the public. Certainly this goes way beyond what happens on Sunday morning during church.

We are to publish the praises (Gr. valor, virtue, excellent) or excellencies of him who called us. The word excellencies derives from the word excellence which means the state, quality or condition of excelling; superiority, pre-eminence, something in which a person or thing excels, a surpassing feature or virtue. Our means of publication is not only what we say, sing or write but also how we live.

So, God bought us and made us his own that we might show and tell the world that he is more excellent than any being; that he surpasses all in might and morality.

Do you proclaim God’s excellencies by what you say and how you live?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

John 15:16  
Ephesians 1:4  
Titus 2:14  
1 Peter 2:4-5

## Day 11

# Not Enough Words

*Who can utter the mighty deeds of the Lord or declare all his praise?*

Psalms 106:2 (ESV)

Sir Winston Churchill once said, “A fanatic is one who can’t change his mind and won’t change the subject.” Do you know anyone like that? Politicians have long been known for their rhetoric that seems to have no end. Even when their favorite team’s sport is not in season, sports fanatics seem to find a way to interject the subject into every conversation. The airwaves are inundated with infomercial after infomercial that never runs out of good things to say about the products they sponsor. It does seem that the world never runs out of praise for the things they deem valuable.

In Psalm 106:2 the psalmist seemed to use a rhetorical question of his own when he asked, *Who can utter the mighty deeds of the Lord or declare all his praise?* The obvious answer is no one. Our human finite vocabulary does not contain enough words to describe an infinite God. There will never be enough words for us to declare all of the praise that he is due.

Paul wrote the Roman church, *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!* (Romans 11:33 ESV) The psalmist wrote, *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.* (Psalms 145:3 ESV) Not only is God’s greatness unsearchable, he continues to do great deeds that deserve our praise again and again. King David wrote, *You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.* (Psalm 40:5 ESV)

The Hebrew word for praise used in Psalm 106:2 is *tehillah*. *Tehillah* is a laudation; a hymn and is used in Psalms 40:3, 149:1 and Isaiah 42:10 in conjunction with a new song. The meaning of the Hebrew word for new in these verses is “a fresh, new thing.” It has much the same meaning in the Greek. A new song erupted in heaven when the Lamb (Jesus) took the scroll from the hand of him who sat on the throne (Revelation 5:9-10). And later the 144,000 sang a new song (Revelation 14:3).

There are always fresh new laudations and hymns to sing to God because he is always doing fresh new things. He is ever increasing our revelation of himself through scripture and every day life experiences (Ephesians 1:18).

The more revelation we have of God, the more praise we should offer to him. The deeper we fall in love with him, the deeper the wells of praise should flow. As we attempt to utter all of the mighty deeds of the Lord and declare his praise, whether in song, sermon or sacrifice, we announce to others how valuable he is to us. And if he is valuable to us there will never be enough words for us to tell of all his deeds or utter all his praise.

How valuable is God to you? Have you run out of praise?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 33:3; 98:1; 145:4

Isaiah 55:9

## Day 12

# Holy Reverence

*Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD has said, Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified." And Aaron held his peace.*

Leviticus 10:3 (ESV)

Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, suffered grave consequences because they dishonored God by offering profane fire before him. Webster's dictionary defines profane as showing disrespect or contempt toward sacred things; irreverence. These two priests attempted to enter God's presence with an offering made with their own hands; an offering God has not commanded. Their sin was approaching a holy God as though he were something common. Their offering was disrespectful and irreverent and did not honor God.

During his ministry, Jesus could not do many miracles (manifest all his glory) in his own country because the people did not honor him. As He taught in their synagogues the people were astonished and said, *Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?* (Matthew 13:55-56 ESV) The very people who were watching and waiting for the Messiah missed his visitation because they were too familiar with him. Again, God refused to fully manifest his presence among people who considered him as common.

Should we expect God to fully manifest his glory if we do not give him the honor and reverence due his name? We cannot expect God to permit us to come into his presence with an attitude of disrespect.

I am not making a case here for a "solemn" assembly each time the church meets. The psalmist wrote, *Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.* (Psalms 2:11 ESV) The Hebrew word used for rejoice is *guwl* which means to spin around under the influence of any violent emotion. When we come to God in worship, whether dancing or bowing, we should come in reverence; honoring his majesty and kingship.

We should always approach God with seriousness and respect. I understand that he is our Father, and we are invited to come to him for rest and safety (Matthew 11:28, Proverbs 18:10). However, we must also understand that he is Almighty God and honor and glory are due his name. We must remember that we have not earned the right to enter the holy places. Though we may enter with confidence, we only do so through the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19).

We profane God's name when we treat his commandments as suggestions thus stunting the growth of fruit in our lives. The result of fruitlessness is a life that is not worthy of the name it bears; giving no glory to God. Paul wrote to the Ephesians that their manner of life should be worthy of the calling to which they had been called (Ephesians 4:1). To the Philippians Paul wrote they they should let the manner of their life be worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27).

Are you too familiar with God? Do you haphazardly approach him as if he were common? Does your manner of life display your reverence for him?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Isaiah 29:13

Romans 1:21

1 Timothy 6:16

## Day 13

# It's Our Pleasure

*By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God.*

Hebrews 11:5 (ESV)

Have you ever eaten at a Chick-fil-A restaurant? In case you are not familiar with Chick-fil-A it is a restaurant specializing in the chicken sandwich. One thing that separates Chick-fil-A restaurants from most other restaurants is when a customer thanks the cashier for their food the cashier replies, "My pleasure." It is the mission of each Chick-fil-A employee to ensure that each customer has a pleasurable experience when they eat at their restaurant.

How much more should it be our pleasure to give God pleasure? Isn't that the very reason for our existence? Worship occurs when God receives pleasure from our existence. God's pleasure is complete when it is our pleasure to exist for him. You might conclude that we perform an act of worship each time we give God pleasure.

The Greek word for pleased in Hebrews 11:5 means to gratify entirely. God was so gratified with Enoch that he couldn't wait for him to die to be with him, so he took him. What a life of worship!

No one exemplified a lifestyle of worship more than Jesus Christ. The fact that the Father took pleasure in Jesus (and received pleasure from him) was evident from the very out-set of his ministry. As he came up from the water after being baptized by John the Baptist the Father said, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* (Matthew 3:17) Matthew quotes God through the prophet Isaiah saying, *Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, my Beloved in whom my soul is well pleased.* (Matthew 12:18; Isaiah 42:1)

The Greek word for pleased in these passages is eudokeo. Eudokeo means to think well of, i.e. approve (an act); especially, to approbate, (a person or thing). Approbate means to sanction or authorize. So, like Jesus, we give God pleasure when he approves, sanctions or authorizes our behavior and activities.

It is equally pleasing to God when we receive pleasure from the worship we offer him. Can you imagine a man saying to his wife, "I receive no pleasure from spending time with you or doing things for you. The only reason I spend time with you or do anything for you is because that is what a husband does; it is my duty?" If doing those things for his wife didn't give the husband pleasure would that be edifying or insulting to his wife? God gets pleasure from our worship when it is our pleasure to give it.

Do the behaviors and activities of your life give God pleasure? Do you serve him from duty or pleasure?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 147:11; 149:4

Hebrew 13:15-16



## Day 14

# Gazing for Glory

*And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)

Man was created to worship. The question is; "What will be the object of man's worship?" In his book *Let Us Worship*, Judson Cornwall states, "But while man is a worshipping being, he needs guidance in the choice of the object of his worship. For man, by worshipping, becomes assimilated into the moral character of the object which he worships as the standard of perfection."

Cornwall goes on to share that history has proven that man becomes like the object he worships. The Scythians who overthrew Rome are a good example. Their chief gods were bloodthirsty and cruel hero-gods. They believed that one of their hero-gods committed suicide after he had massacred much of the human race. Therefore, those who were not killed in battle frequently committed suicide fearing that to die a natural death would exclude them from the favor of their god Valhalla.

Another example can be found in Paul's day in the city of Corinth. The Corinthians worshiped the goddess Venus, called Aphrodite by the Greeks. She was known as the goddess of love, but goddess of lust would best describe how she was worshiped. The most sacred people in the temple to Venus were the prostitutes who were consecrated for her worship.

The Psalmist understood the concept of becoming like the object being worshiped. *Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.* (Psalms 115:4-8 ESV)

Paul wrote to the Roman church, *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* (Romans 12:2 ESV) Transformation comes as we spend time in God's presence listening, studying and being obedient to his word and worshipping his person. Our minds are renewed to discern his will and to recognized and walk in everything that is good, acceptable and perfect. As we spend time gazing (setting our spiritual eyes) into his image (glory) our character becomes conformed to his character. The more time we spend in his presence through worship, prayer and bible study the more we are transformed into his image from one degree of glory to another.

Though worship is primarily for God, our worship cannot be perfected if we are not being transformed into his image. Transformation is a necessary benefit of worship. Our great hope is that God has predestined us to be conformed into the image of his son (Romans 8:29). *He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.* (1 Thessalonians 5:24 ESV)

What is the focus of your gaze? Do you spend time gazing on the Father?

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### Scriptures for meditation:

Psalms 25:15; 101:3; 119:37

## Day 15

# The Sacrifice of Brokenness

*My sacrifice [the sacrifice acceptable] to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart [broken down with sorrow for sin and humbly and thoroughly penitent] such, O God, you will not despise.*

Psalms 51:17 (AMP)

Most of us are familiar with the life of King David. God called him a man after his own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), yet we know David made some grave mistakes that cost him and others a great deal of pain. Two of those mistakes were his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah.

Some time elapsed from the time David committed those sins until the prophet Nathan paid him a visit (2 Samuel 12:1-15). The exact amount of time is unknown, but one commentary suggests that it could have been as much as one year. After Nathan rebuked David and brought his sin into the open David penned the words to Psalms 51.

In speaking of a broken spirit David uses the Hebrew word shabar. Shabar means to burst, to break to pieces or to reduce. It is easy to see the brokenness in David's heart as he approached God about his sin and asked for mercy. He wrote, *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!* (Psalms 51:1-2 ESV)

When speaking of a contrite heart he uses the Hebrew word dakah. This word means to crumble, to beat to pieces, to bruise, to crush or to humble. David humbly offers his repentant (bruised and crushed) heart as a sacrifice to God. David knew the required sacrifice for his pardon and that God would be pleased with no less (Psalms 51:16).

There is a popular prayer in many Christian circles today that says, "Lord, break our hearts with the things that break yours." It's easy to look around us and see the things that break the Father's heart. Those things include injustices of all kinds; hunger, abortion, war, racism to name a few. However, we should make sure that we don't overlook the things inside of us that break his heart, the sin that so easily besets us (Hebrews 12:1).

Our sin should break our hearts and we should approach God in humble repentance. In fact it is in our brokenness and repentance that God dwells and we find mercy. Isaiah wrote, *For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.* (Isaiah 57:15 ESV)

Though we may approach God with confidence (Hebrews 4:16), we should never go into his presence presumptuously as though we have earned the right to be there. We have nothing to offer him that he hasn't provided for us. When repenting of our sin we approach God in brokenness with our will and self-sufficiency crushed; totally dependent on the price Jesus paid for our sin. He made the necessary sacrifice for us to come into the Father's presence (Hebrews 10:19).

Does your sin break your heart? How often do you go to God in humble repentance?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 34:18

James 4:10

## A Sacrifice of Praise

*Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.*

Hebrews 13:15 (ESV)

While driving home from work one evening I found myself following a quarter ton truck loaded with rotten fruits and vegetables. The farmer must have gathered them to feed to his animals. They were certainly not fit for human consumption; not something anyone would want in his mouth.

The Greek word used for fruit in Hebrews 13:15 refers to plucked fruit, ripe, ready to eat, good fruit, fresh from the tree. This would lead us to believe that our sacrifice of praise is the best fruit of our lips, the first fruit of the picking, not something that is left over, blemished or rotten. Many people over the years have taught that a sacrifice of praise is praise that is given when the worshiper doesn't feel like praising. This definition doesn't embrace the full meaning of what the writer of Hebrews intended. It also places the focus of worship on the worshiper instead of the one receiving the worship.

As you read through the Old Testament book of Leviticus you will find that the sacrifices required in the Tabernacle of Moses were only acceptable if they were without blemish. The worshiper didn't bring something he didn't want or could not use; he brought the best of his flock, and he brought it willingly (Leviticus 1:1-3; 22:21). The requirement of a true worshiper is the same today. He must bring the best that he has, not his leftovers, and he must bring it willingly.

Worship doesn't depend on how the worshiper feels but on how great a God he is worshipping. Worship doesn't depend on the outward appearance of the worshiper or his circumstances, but on the greatness of the one who controls the circumstances and the work he has done on the inside of the worshiper.

Notice that the writer of Hebrews says, *Through him let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God.* The "him" he is referring to is Jesus. Though we have a responsibility to worship the Father, we cannot come to him on the basis of our own merit (Hebrews 10:19). Jesus' sacrifice makes our sacrifice of praise acceptable to God. It is only through the shed blood of Jesus on the cross that we can offer to God the best that we have.

To make our sacrifice of praise to God complete, the fruit of our lips (the words of our mouths) must acknowledge that God's name is great and greatly to be praised (Psalms 48:1; 99:3). King David proclaimed, *With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; I will give thanks to your name, O LORD, for it is good.* (Psalms 54:6 ESV) Our sacrifice of praise thankfully acknowledges that God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). We have nothing to offer God that he has not given us. In him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28 ESV).

And how often do we come before God to offer our sacrifice of praise? We offer our sacrifice continually; through the good times and bad times, sickness and health, abundance and lack.

Are you offering your best to the Father? Do you continually acknowledge him name with thanksgiving?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 116:17

Philippians 2:19

## Day 17

# Abandoned Worship

*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ...*

Philippians 3:7-8 (ESV)

Athletes have a phrase they often use to describe their intensity of play. It is "leave it all on the field." The idea is to give it all you've got. All the conditioning, weight lifting and studying the playbook have brought you to game time. Preparation is over; it's time to give 100% on every play the entire game. There is no holding back or saving it for later.

Most of us would not recognize the Apostle Paul as an athlete, but in the game of life he was one on those who left it all on the field. He chose to abandon popularity, position and power to gain an eternal prize. He wrote to Timothy, *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.* (2 Timothy 4:7-8 ESV)

The American Heritage Dictionary renders these meanings for the word abandon: 1. To forsake; desert. 2. To surrender one's claim or right to; to give up. 3. To desist from. 4. To yield (oneself) completely, as to emotion.

What better word could describe the life of Paul? What better word could describe a person whose one desire is to live a life of worship? Paul said Philippians 3:8 that he counted all his gain as rubbish that he might gain Christ. His one desire was to have intimate fellowship with Christ.

A life of worship has deserted all other ways of living to have an intimate relationship with Jesus (Luke 14:33). It has forsaken all that is familiar to walk by faith. It has surrendered all rights to have its own way and has yielded control to the one who formed it (Romans 12:1).

Once we have abandoned (past tense verb) our old way of life we are called to abandoned (adjective) worship. What is abandoned worship? When abandoned is used as an adjective it means shameless; thus we have shameless worship.

God is calling us, his bride, to a life of abandonment; to set aside all inhibitions we have about the way we live and respond to his love. God is calling for abandonment when we get up every morning and go about our daily lives (Luke 9:23). He is calling for abandonment every time we gather with believers to worship him. No more "playing it safe." It's time to be reckless with our lives and with our worship. It's time for the bride of Christ to leave it all on the field.

Have you made a commitment to live a life of abandoned worship? Have you "left it all out on the field?"

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

2 Samuel 6:14-16

1 Corinthians 9:25-27

Luke 7:37-38

Hebrews 11:35-38

## Day 18

# God's Mercy

*The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.*

Psalms 145:9 (ESV)

After the conclusion of World War II an International Military Tribunal held a set of trials for German officials involved in the war and the Holocaust during the Nazi regime. The trials were known as the Nuremberg Trials and were held from 1945-1949 in Nuremberg, Germany.

Before the trials began the courts offered the defendants attorneys and chaplains. Of the 21 offered, 6 asked for a Catholic priest and 15 asked for a Lutheran minister. When searching for a Lutheran minister the courts found a U.S. Army Chaplain who was Lutheran. Among the 15 men who asked for the Lutheran Chaplain were Göring, Sauckel, von Ribbentrop, Keitel and Rudolph Hess. The chaplain later told that as he stood before these men all he could say to them was, "Jesus Christ died for your sins and offers you forgiveness if you will accept it."

During their very first meeting Sauckel fell to his knees and said, "Oh God, have mercy on me a sinner." After a period of time reading the scriptures von Ribbentrop also sought forgiveness and was converted. Keitel was another of the 13 men who sought God and received his mercy.

As you read this story you might think that God's mercy is not fair. How could God forgive these men of such hideous crimes? Well, you're right. God's mercy isn't fair. Why? Because mercy is something that none of us deserve. All of us deserve eternal punishment, but God, through his Son has chosen to extend mercy to all who will accept it. The apostle Paul wrote, *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.* (Titus 3:4-5 ESV)

James Ryle once said, "Those who have been saved from the lowest hell enter into the highest praise." Though each of us have come from different backgrounds and have experienced different "degrees" of sin, we were all headed in the same direction, hell. Our only hope was that God would show us mercy through the blood of his Son. Peter wrote, *Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* (1 Peter 2:10 ESV)

If you think about it, God owes us nothing; yet he freely gives apart from human effort. Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, *For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.* Romans 9:15-16 (ESV) If God never answers another prayer, if he chooses not to bless us or use us above where we are right now, the mercy he has already shown us is enough to deserve our highest praise.

Have you accepted God's mercy for the forgiveness of your sin? Have you praised God for his mercy lately?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 103:8-14

Lamentations 3:21-23

Romans 9: 18

## Day 19

# Undivided Heart

*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (ESV)

One day as Jesus was reasoning with the Jewish leaders a scribe asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” *Jesus answered, “The most important is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”* (Mark 12:29-30 ESV)

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:4-5 which in Jewish tradition is known as the *Shema*. Reciting the *Shema* is a reminder that God is the true God and a pledge to love him whole-heartedly. The words of the *Shema* are written on a parchment called a mezuzah, placed in a container and affixed to the doorposts of a house. As the Jewish worshiper passes through the doorway they are to touch the mezuzah, then kiss the fingers of the hand that touched it. This is done as an expression of love for God and his word.

The first and greatest commandment lies at the very heart of Godward worship. If we do not recognize God as the only absolute God and fail to be consumed (mind, will and emotions) with love for him, our hearts will be divided and our worship void of substance.

Speaking of the Pharisees and scribes Jesus quotes Isaiah saying, *This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.* (Matthew 15:8-9 ESV) These Jewish leaders had a form of godliness but loved the praise of men (Matthew 23:1-7). Their allegiances were divided which, even though they recited the *Shema*, disqualified them from observing the most important commandment.

To love the Lord with all your heart means that you have no other gods before him (Deuteronomy 5:7); your heart is not divided in its loyalties; you have no greater love interests. To love the Lord with all your soul is to love him with every breath or with the very center of your personality. To love the Lord with all your strength (might) means to love him vehemently. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, the word vehement is characterized by forcefulness of expression or intensity of emotion, passion, or conviction.

There are times in our lives when our hearts seem to get fragmented. Sometimes life’s circumstances draws our attention away from what is most important; we lose focus. It could be that at times our hearts become divided between career, hobbies, family or friends and our commitment to love God above all.

King David prayed, *Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.* (Psalms 86:11 ESV) In part David asked God to make his heart undivided in showing reverence to God’s position. His prayer was a plea to be reminded that God is God and besides him there is no other (Deuteronomy 4:35, 39).

At times we too need to have our hearts reminded of what is most important. God is one and so our hearts should be one, undivided in our allegiance and love for him.

Do you have a vehement love for God? Do you have an undivided heart?

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**Scriptures for meditation:**

Exodus 3:20; 34:14

## Day 20

# Least of These

*And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."*

Matthew 25:40 (ESV)

Often in our quest to define certain types of worship we will use terms such as Mosaic Worship, Davidic Worship, Lifestyle Worship, Evangelistic Worship, Messianic Worship and others. We often associate worship with music, singing, dancing, shouting, banners and preaching. Certainly these terms and expressions of worship are valid as we attempt to put into words our response to the God we love. However, there may be yet another aspect of worship that is easily overlooked.

During my open-heart surgery in June of 2008 to replace my aortic valve and subsequent stay in the hospital, the number of people who showered my family and I was overwhelming. Beginning with the hospital staff as well as other family members and friends, we were made to feel loved and genuinely cared for. Many people called to let us know they were praying. Others made visits to the hospital. Some sat with my family during the six-hour operation. Still others brought food to my house to feed my wife and kids while others gave us money for various expenses.

I am convinced that the acts of kindness shown our family were in deed acts of worship toward Christ. Christ is the head of the church and we as Christians are his body. So, any act, for good or ill, that we perform toward members of Christ's body is rendered unto Christ. Worship is attesting to the "worship" of Christ. As we minister to members of Christ's body we express the value we place on Christ himself. That is why the Apostle Paul was so stern in his rebuke of the Corinthians for the way they were conducting the Lord's Supper.

The purpose of the Lord's Supper was for the church to remember the body of Christ that was broken for them and the blood of the new covenant that was shed for them. In doing so they would proclaim the Lord's death until he returns. However, the Corinthian church had made a mockery of the celebration in that, not only had they despised the Lord himself, they had also despised the less fortunate among them and in doing so had not properly discerned the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:20-30).

The Apostle James goes as far as to attach acts of kindness to the proof of our faith (James 2:15-17). The writer of Hebrews tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). We must conclude, therefore, that if we do not please God we cannot truly worship him. However, God is pleased, and may I add worshiped, when we confirm our faith through acts of kindness toward members of his body.

The Apostle John conveys the message that eternal life is dependent on our loving the brethren (1 John 3:14-15). We prove that we love God and the brethren each time we lay down our lives with a pure heart, so that we can meet the needs of the brethren. Acts of love toward the brethren equals acts of love toward God. Acts of love toward God equals acts of worship.

How do you treat the body of Christ? Do you treat others the way you would Jesus?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Luke 6:31

## Day 21

# A True Heart

*... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

Hebrews 10:22 (ESV)

There is a story recorded in Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30 about a Greek woman, Syro-Phoenician by birth, who approached Jesus after he had entered the region of Tyre and Sidon.

The woman followed Jesus and his disciples begging him to heal her daughter who had an unclean spirit. *“O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed,” she cried.* Jesus did not answer the woman immediately and was urged by his disciples to send her away. Jesus replied, *I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* The woman then came and fell at Jesus’ feet, worshiped him and said, *Lord, help me!* Jesus answered her, *It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.* To which the woman replied, *True Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.* Jesus healed the woman’s daughter that very hour.

This woman must have heard the stories about people who had received healing by referring to Jesus as the Son of David; blind Bartimeus for example. She knew that being a Gentile she had no claims on Jesus as the Son of David, but she was desperate to see her daughter healed. To get Jesus’ attention she pretended to have a relationship with him that did not exist. After the woman came to worship Jesus, he exposed her hypocrisy by calling her a dog. (It is interesting to note that the Greek word for worship used in this passage means to kiss the hand or lick like a dog.) Realizing her scheme had been exposed; the woman approached Jesus from the true position of her status and presented her plea. That was the approach that gained the attention of Jesus.

In the book of Amos we read where God says to Israel that he hates and despises their feast days and sacred assemblies. He said that he did not accept their offerings and told them to remove the noise of their music and songs because he wasn’t listening (Amos 5:21-23).

True worship flows from a true relationship with God. One can use the expressions of worship used by others, but if their relationship with God is not based on truth, it will not be true worship. God is not impressed with our methods of worship if those methods express someone other than who we really are. God desires truth in the inward parts (Psalms 51:6).

Do you have a true intimate relationship with the Father? Are your expressions of worship based on someone else’s relationship?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 15:1-2; 43:3

Isaiah 29:13



## No Other Gods

*Don't worship any other god, because I, the LORD, the Jealous One, am a jealous God.*

Exodus 34:14 (NCV)

To the Israelites the Ark of the Covenant represented God's presence among them. The Israelites carried the ark with them into battle, and it preceded the Israelites into the Jordan River as they entered the promised land. In 1 Samuel we read of an instance when the children of Israel presumed on God when they brought the ark into battle. They felt sure that with the ark present victory was imminent. Yet, because of the wickedness of the high priest's two sons Israel lost the battle, and the ark was captured by the Philistines.

The Philistines took the ark and placed it in the temple beside their god Dagan. When they came to the temple early the next morning they found Dagan lying on its face before the ark of God. So they took it and set it up again. The next morning they arrived at the temple only to find Dagan lying on its face again before the ark of God. This time, however, the head of Dagan and the palms of its hands were broken off at the threshold of the temple; only the torso was left intact.

The Philistines had taken the God of the universe and attempted to add him to the worship of their idol Dagan, but it didn't work. The children of Israel made a similar mistake. They had not repented of their wickedness, but thought God would rescue them from the Philistines just because the ark was present. Their worship was directed toward the ark of God instead of toward the God of the ark. The ark had become an idol to Israel.

Often times our hearts are turned toward our careers, sports, television and hobbies while worship, prayer, bible study and Christian service fall to the bottom of our priority list. Like Dagan, whose head and hands were broken before God, our minds are filled with earthly things and our hands are busy doing for self. Like the Pharisees, some Christians have even allowed their traditions to take the place of an intimate relationship with the Father. Their traditions have become their god.

God commanded Israel to have no other gods before him. The same is true today for those who are called by his name. God is not something we add to our life, he is our life. All other objects of worship must bow to him. He will have all of our worship or none of our worship.

Have you allowed other gods in your temple?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Deuteronomy 5:9

Matthew 6:21; 10:37

Colossians 3:1-2

## Day 23

# Casting Crowns

*Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.*

Revelation 4:4 (ESV)

Six times in the Revelation of Jesus Christ we read that the twenty-four elders fell down from their thrones to worship God and the Lamb (Revelation 4:10; 5:8, 14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4). The fact that these elders were sitting on thrones and wearing crowns brings us to the conclusion that they had some authority to render judgment and rule. However, with each new revelation of God and the Lamb they quickly deserted their thrones, fell on their faces and assumed a position of worship.

On one occasion the twenty-four elders not only bowed in worship, but also cast their crowns before the throne of God saying, *Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.* (Revelation 4:10 ESV)

In ancient times crowns were given to rulers or athletes; individuals who had conquered something. A good example of this is depicted in the movie Ben Hur. Upon winning the chariot race, Judah Ben Hur, played by Charlton Heston, is presented with a crown by Pontius Pilate.

In his letters to the Philippians (4:1) and first letter to the Thessalonians (2:19), Paul said the believers living in those cities were his crown. Other crowns are mentioned in scripture such as the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8), crown of life (James 1:12; Revelations 2:10), and the crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4). All of these crowns are rewards for a life of obedience to the call of God.

Paul makes reference to the presentation of crowns in his letter to the Corinthians. He said, *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.* (1 Corinthians 9:24-25 ESV) In Timothy Paul wrote, *An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.* (2 Timothy 2:5 ESV)

John writes in Revelation 19:12 that the rider of the white horse, which is Jesus, was wearing many diadems or crowns. In "Manners and Customs of the Bible" James M. Freeman writes that monarchs who claimed authority over more than one country wore more than one crown. The vision of Jesus wearing many crowns establishes the truth that he is the King of Kings and solidifies his universal dominion.

The twenty-four elders took the glory (reward) they had received for their work and cast them before the throne of God. They understood that the only one worthy to receive all glory and honor was the one who sat on the throne and wore many crowns. Jesus was their King and Lord and they adorned him with their crowns. He had conquered their souls.

To live a life of worship we must have a revelation that Jesus alone is worthy of all glory and lay all of our crowns at his feet. Jesus must be the conqueror of our souls.

Has Jesus conquered your soul? Does Jesus get all the glory from your life?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Isaiah 42:8  
1 Corinthians 9:26  
2 Timothy 4:7  
Revelation 3:11

## Sing a New Song

*Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly!*

Psalms 149:1 (ESV)

In Psalm 149:1 the Hebrew word used for new in “new song” mean fresh or new thing. The Hebrew word used of praise following new song is the word tehillah. Tehillah is the Hebrew word most associated with the new song. Tehillah can be defined as laudations or hymns sung spontaneously to the Lord. The new song is a spontaneous overflow of love and adoration towards God.

The word tehillah is used many times in the Book of Psalms. In fact the Book of Psalms is also known as the Book of Tehillum. In Psalms 22:3 David says that God has set up his throne in the tehillah of his people. He writes, *Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises (tehillah) of Israel.* Another psalmist writes in Psalms 100:4 that tehillah is how we enter into God's presence. *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise (tehillah)! Give thanks to him, bless his name!*

God has given the church many gifted songwriters who write anointed worship songs. As a result thousands of worship songs have been written over the years that express our heart toward God. When a new worship song is introduced it doesn't take long for the recording industry to feature it on several different labels. Christian worship music might not be where it is today without these anointed writers and songs.

It is possible, however, that there is a higher dimension of worship where God desires for true worshipers to occupy; the dimension of the new song. No other song can express the heart of a worshiper than his own song to the Lord.

Someone could go to the store and buy an anniversary card for their spouse, or they could make a card themselves. The spouse would love either, but the card that was handwritten would have special meaning because it came straight from the heart. Someone else could use a card just like one bought at the store but no other person can give that spouse what is written from the heart. In the same way many people may sing the same song to worship God. There is no doubt that God enjoys that worship, but he takes special delight in the songs that come from within the worshiper. No one else can sing that song.

The new song comes from the spirit of a person who has a fresh relationship with the Father. The Father is always revealing more of himself to those who walk close to him. As he reveals himself he gives new songs that only those to whom he is revealed can sing. It is their song to him.

How long has it been since you sang a love song to God from your own heart? Did you even know that you could?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 98:1

Isaiah 42:10

## Day 25

# I Do

*Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.*

Psalms 73:25 (ESV)

The month of May has a very special place in our family history. Besides Mother's Day, the last of our five children was born in May. However, the most important day in our family history in the month of May is May 9, 1980. On that day Stevey Wayde Pruitt and Renae Marie McClendon said, "I do" before God and a gathering of relatives and friends at the First United Methodist Church in Crossville, Alabama.

"Till death do you part" and "As long as you both shall live" are some of the vows that are typically made during a traditional wedding. But it's the response that follows those vows that may be the most important words in the ceremony; "I do."

When the bride and groom pledge their devotion in marriage they not only say, "I do" to each other they also say, "I don't" to everyone else. Their vow is to each other and no other as long as they both live. Maybe the psalmist captured the depth of this pledge when he wrote to God, *Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.* (Psalms 73:25 ESV)

The Hebrew word for desire in this verse (chaphets) interprets the psalmist words as "And there is nothing on earth I am inclined to, that I bend toward, that I am pleased with, that I take delight in, have favor toward, or take pleasure in besides you." It seems the psalmist said, "I do" to God and "I don't" to everything and everyone else.

God described his relationship with Israel as one of husband and wife. He said, *For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.* (Isaiah 54:5 ESV) However, Israel forsook her husband and whored after other lovers that did not satisfy her longings (Jeremiah 2:13; Hosea 9:1).

Paul told the Corinthians that he had betrothed them to one husband that he might present them as a virgin the Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2). Upon believing in Christ and submitting to his Lordship in our lives we too are betrothed to him. As the bride of Christ we should say, "I do" to him and "I don't" to all others. We should be so in love with him that there is no love left for worldly desires or self-indulgences. Paul wrote to Timothy, *But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."* (2 Timothy 2:19 ESV)

Our betrothed, the Lord Jesus, is the one in whom all our pleasure lies; we should desire nothing more. We have taken his name and our identity has been absorbed in him. We have pledged to be married to him forever. Let us be very careful not to leave our first love as Israel did (Revelation 2:4; 19:7).

Have you said, "I do" to Jesus and "I don't" to all others? Does Jesus fulfill every desire of your heart?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 145:16, 19

Colossians 3:5

Revelation 21:2, 9-11

## For He is Holy

*Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the LORD our God is holy!*

Psalms 99:9 (ESV)

After the letters to the seven churches in Asia John begins to record what he saw in his heavenly vision. In chapter four he gives a description of the throne room and tells of the four living creatures who do not rest day and night saying, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is and is to come* (Revelation 4:8). What revelation did these creatures have that prompted their "non-stop" worship?

To begin to answer that question we don't have to look much further than their first three words, "Holy, holy, holy." The number three in scripture is often used to signify that something is full or complete. For instance we have the Trinity that consists of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is the fullness of God. By repeating holy three times these creatures were beholding something that is completely holy. The Greek word used for holy in Revelation 4:8 is *hagios*. *Hagios* means sacred, physically pure and morally blameless. God may be more holy than he is anything else. There is no evil, corruption or sin neither in him nor around him. And wherever his presence resides is holy.

We get a picture of God's holiness in Exodus 3:5 when Moses encounters a burning bush that is not consumed. As Moses approached the bush he is instructed to remove his shoes because the place where he is standing is holy ground. What made that ground more holy than the surrounding areas? God was there in his manifest presence.

The psalmists were aware of the holiness of God having written, *You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel*. (Psalms 22:3 ESV) They also understood that God's holiness is an attribute that entitles him to be worshiped. They wrote, *Let them praise your great and awesome name—Holy is he!* (Psalms 99:3 ESV) *Exalt the Lord our God, worship at his footstool—Holy is he!* (Psalms 99:5 ESV)

Could it be that today's church has lost its sense of awe at the holiness of God? Could this lost sense of awe at God's holiness be the reason that ritual has taken the place of true worship in many churches today?

To be true worshipers we must have a revelation of the holiness of God and be in pursuit of holiness in our personal lives. For not only is God holy, he expects holiness from his worshipers. David wrote, *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness*. (Psalms 29:2 ESV) To worship in the splendor (beauty) of holiness could mean to worship decorated in holiness or sacredness. For our worship to be genuine we must strive to clothe ourselves in righteousness and let our adorning be God's holiness. Without holiness our worship will have no depth and we will not see God.

Do you long to see God? Are you pursuing holiness? Does your worship reflect your character?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Romans 6:19

2 Corinthians 7:1

1 Thessalonians 4:7

Hebrews 12:14

1 Peter 1:16; 3:13

## Unashamed Love

*And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.*

Luke 7:37-38 (ESV)

The washing of feet in ancient times was a very common practice. With most people wearing sandals and traveling on dry and dusty roads or terrain, washing their feet when they entered your home was not only a sign of hospitality but was necessary for cleanliness and health. It was just as important for a host to ensure that the feet of his guest were washed as it was to provide them with food or a place to rest. In most cases the lowest servant was given the task of washing feet. Anointing the head of a guest was also an act of courtesy and hospitality. Jesus' rebuke of Simon the Pharisee in Luke 7 was justified seeing that Simon did not perform the basic acts of courtesy and hospitality.

The kissing of feet was also a common practice among the Jews as well as the Romans and Greeks. Kissing the feet was a means of expressing reverence and affection. Kissing the feet of a dignitary was also a token of obedience and subjection.

It is possible that the woman in Luke 7 was or had been a prostitute (Luke 7:39). It was a custom in those days for women to wear their hair up with their head covered. The only time a woman let her hair down was in the privacy of her bedroom with her husband, or in the case of a prostitute when she was conducting business. This woman lavished her love upon Jesus in response to the love of a Savior who had forgiven her of much (Luke 7:47). Her worship was not in response to a command but poured from a heart that was overflowing with gratitude. And she wasn't concerned with what those sitting at the table thought of her.

Jesus said to his and disciples and the crowds that followed him, *If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.* (Mark 8:34-38 ESV)

True worshipers are not ashamed to show their affection to the Father. They are so overwhelmed with his forgiving love for them that fear of looking foolish is no deterrent to public displays of affection. God is seeking for men and women who unashamedly "let their hair down, break their alabaster boxes" and anoint him with fragrant worship.

Are you ashamed to show your affection to the Father for fear of what others may think?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Romans 1:16

2 Timothy 1:8-12

## Day 28

# Betrothed

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

1 John 2:15 (ESV)

God declared that he was a husband to Israel. Israel was the virgin of his affection and he longed to be the affection of Israel's heart. He said, *For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the Lord has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God.* (Isaiah 54:5-6 ESV)

Throughout the Old Testament God commanded Israel to have no other god's before him. During times of rebellion he accused them of committing adultery with other lovers. God's assessment of Israel's condition was, . . . *she burned offerings . . . and adorned herself with her ring and jewelry, and went after her lovers and forgot me, declares the LORD.* (Hosea 2:13 ESV) *Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband!* (Ezekiel 16:32 ESV) Israel sought gratification in something other than God. They loved how the things of the world made them feel.

The word defile means to make filthy or dirty. That is exactly what we do when we entertain the things of this world. At first it may seem not to affect us. We enjoy how it makes us feel so we continue to indulge ourselves. Soon that thing isn't enough, and we begin to turn to other sources of pleasure to fulfill our desires. Eventually we find ourselves cankered with worldliness.

The Apostle Paul, being concerned that the Corinthian believers had been deceived into believing a different gospel than the one he had preached, wrote this, *For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.* (2 Corinthians 11:2 ESV)

Many people in the church today have chased after the things of this world. They have honored God with their lips but their hearts are far from him. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life have lured them from the one who has betrothed them. Our husband is jealous for a virgin bride. Christians are virgins in the since that they are married to God alone. They are not defiled with the things of this world nor have they given themselves to other gods. They have only one husband; Jesus.

Are you married to God alone? Do you have other “lovers” in your life?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

James 1:27; 4:5

Galatians 5:16

1 John 2:16

## First Fruits

*Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

James 1:18 (ESV)

Firsts have always been important to God. He commanded Israel to consecrate to him all the first born of man and beast (Exodus 13:2). We also read in the Old Testaments about several feasts that God commanded the nation of Israel to observe. One of those feasts was the Feast of Harvest. It was also known as the Feast of Weeks and Day of First Fruits (Exodus 34:22). Later the early church referred to it as Pentecost because it occurred fifty days after Passover. During the feast Israel was to offer the first fruits of their barley harvest as a free will offering to the Lord (Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10).

In writing to the Corinthian and Roman churches, the apostle Paul referred to the early converts as first fruits of his labor (1 Corinthians 16:15; Romans 16:5). Once a person allows the redeeming work of the blood of Jesus to take affect in his life he becomes a first fruit of Christ's labor.

John witnessed in heaven the four living creatures and twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb and heard them sing a new song saying, *Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.* (Revelation 5:8-10 ESV) The Greek word John used for “ransomed” in verse nine means “to go to market, purchase, or buy.” Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth (the market place if you will), lived a sinless life and died a sinner's death. He took upon himself the sins of all those who believe on him, becoming a curse for them (2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13). Christ purchased a people with his blood (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Notice that James said, *Of his own will he brought us forth.* All of us had sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23). Since sin leads to death (Romans 6:23) we were all dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:5). A dead man does not have a will, therefore had God not willed to bring us forth or purchase our souls we would be left in our dead state. The first step to becoming a first fruit is to acknowledge Jesus’ work on the cross for the forgiveness of sin (Acts 10:43), consent to his Lordship and allow him to take possession of our lives (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Peter 2:9).

As Christians our lives are not our own, we have been bought at a price (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23). We have been redeemed from among men and are first fruits to God (Revelation 14:4). The Greek word for first fruits used in the New Testament means “a beginning of sacrifice.” Paul exhorted the Roman Christians that it was their spiritual worship to present their bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). A sacrificial life is characteristic of those who have been redeemed and have becomes first fruits to God.

Have you been redeemed by the blood of Jesus? Is your life “a beginning of sacrifice?” Are you a “first fruit?”

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**Scriptures for meditation:**

Romans 8:23

2 Thessalonians 2:13



## Follow the Lamb

*Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*

Matthew 16:24 (ESV)

Jesus, the Lamb of God, (John 1:29) made it plain what is required of those who desire to follow him. The requirement of a follower is to deny himself, take up his cross and follow Jesus. What does it mean to take up your cross? The answer is most likely found as we explore the meaning of the cross in the life and death of Jesus.

One meaning of the cross in the life of Jesus was the total abandonment of self to the obedience of the Father's will (John 4:24). Jesus' life was centered in the Father's will (John 5:30). He always did what he saw the Father doing (John 5:19). He always said what he heard from the Father (John 8:28, 38). His teaching focused on the heart of the Father and his kingdom. Jesus came to show the world what the Father is like, and he did it all the way to the cross where he was obedient to death (Philippians 2:8). His love for the Father compelled him to be obedient. That love became the perfect sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 9:26).

True worshipers have a deep desire to do the will of the Father. The desire to do the Father's will is a motivating force in their lives. Their lives are centered in the Father's will. All of their hopes and dreams have been placed in the Father's hands and their lives given to his service. They go where the Father says to go and say what he commands them to say. They love what he loves and hate what he hates. True worshipers know the Father's will because they have his heart. They have a willingness to lay down their lives in obedience to the Father, which means death to self and sin.

Paul wrote to the Galatians, *But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.* (Galatians 6:14) Those who would follow the Lamb have died to the passing pleasures of sin. They are not enslaved to the world's system. They have been nailed to the cross with Jesus where . . . *knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin* (Romans 6:6).

The 144,000 standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion have this testimony; *they follow the Lamb wherever he goes* (Revelation 14:4). To follow the Lamb one must go where the Lamb went. The Lamb went to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7). Those people who stand with Jesus in the place of worship deny themselves and take up their cross daily. These are the true worshipers.

Have you been crucified with Christ? Do you follow the Lamb wherever he goes?

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**Scriptures for meditation:**

Matthew 10:38

Galatians 2:20; 5:24

## The Fragrance of Victory

*But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.*

2 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV)

Roman military triumphs were often followed by elaborate processions down the streets of Rome. There were certain criteria by which a conqueror had to comply to warrant such exaltation. Among the requirements was that the victory had to be decisive with a large number of enemy combatants killed. The victory had to put an end to hostilities and extend the territory of the state.

On the day of the procession the conqueror was dressed in fine apparel and rode in the finest chariot drawn by four horses. The people lined the streets with palm branches and waived them in the air as they shouted for joy over the great conquest and in honor of their conqueror. The presence of the town officials at the parade was also a great honor to the conqueror.

As part of the parade the conqueror displayed the spoils of war. All of the precious metals and artifacts were displayed for the people to see. Even the prisoners of war were forced to march in the parade. The temples of the gods were opened and decorated with beautiful flowers and incense was burned from the altars. Fragrant spices were burned in the streets so all the people could smell the odor of victory.

The procession ended with sacrifices and offerings being made to the gods and was followed by a feast in which the public was invited to attend. It is not too unreasonable to believe that the prisoners of war were made to look on as the people feasted with the king. A table was prepared for the victors in the presence of their enemies. It was a grand celebration.

Maybe this triumphal procession was going through the mind of Paul when he penned the words of 2 Corinthians 2:14. The death of Jesus on the cross and subsequent resurrection resulted in a decisive victory over the enemy Satan and extended the territory of God's kingdom (Matthew 12:28). Paul wrote to the Colossians, *He (God) disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him (Christ).* (Colossians 2:15 ESV) Through faith in Jesus we became partakers of that victory. John said, *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.* (1 John 5:4 ESV) God has prepared a table for us in the presence of our enemies (Psalms 23:5).

The life Jesus gave on the cross was a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Ephesians 5:2). When we are in him, Christ through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere we go.

Christ's victory over sin and death is worthy of our highest praise. We too can wave our palm branches (lift our hands) in praise and allow the fragrance of Christ to be spread to others by the way we live our lives and testify of his goodness. Our enemies of sin and death were too much for us to overcome. *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (1 Corinthians 15:57 ESV)

Has Jesus delivered you from the consequences of sin and death? Are you the fragrance of God to those around you?

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### Scriptures for meditation:

Revelation 7:9-10

## All Creation Worships

*... and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

Ephesians 2:6 (ESV)

In Ephesians 2:6 Paul writes that God has made us to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Notice this is not just a future hope but also a present reality. You may wonder at times how anything on this earth could be heavenly. Regardless of how things look around us, in Christ, God has granted us a heavenly position. Maybe, at least in part, that is what Jesus meant when he said, “I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2).

There are many instances in scripture where ordinary people saw into the heavenly dimension. One such instance occurred when the shepherds saw and heard an angelic being proclaiming the birth of Christ (Luke 2:8-12). Stephen, the martyr, saw the Son of Man at the right hand of God and Isaiah saw the Lord in His holy temple (Act 7:55; Isaiah 6:1). Most of us tend to view heaven as directional when in reality it is dimensional. Heaven is all around us. God is not way off “up yonder” somewhere. He is among us in a dimension we cannot see with the physical eye.

As we worship we are joining thousands of other created beings. We are but one small part of creation that is worshipping its creator. Revelation 5:11-12 reads, *Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”* (ESV) More proof of this creation worship is documented in the Psalms.

*The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.* (Psalms 65:12-13 ESV) *Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy.* (Psalms 96:11-12 ESV) *Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together.* (Psalms 98:7-8 ESV) Psalms 148 gives a list of various created entities that are commanded to worship. Among those are angels, the sun, moon, stars, mountains, hills, animals and trees. Psalms 150:6 sums it up by saying, *Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!* (ESV)

The whole universe rings out with praise and adoration for its creator. We do not have to wait until we die to worship with angels and the rest of God’s creation. From our position in the heavenly places we have the awesome privilege of joining in now.

Are you following God’s command to let everything that has breath praise the Lord?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Romans 8:22

Ephesians 1:3

Hebrews 12:1

## Undignified Praise

*As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, and she despised him in her heart.*

2 Samuel 6:16 (ESV)

During the days of Eli the priest the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant in battle. The ark was representative of God's glory among his people Israel and was precious to them (Leviticus 16:2). Upon learning of its capture the daughter-in-law of Eli gave birth to a son and named him Ichabod, which means, "the glory has departed" (1 Samuel 4).

Wearied by the plagues that were brought on them by the ark's presence, the Philistines decided to send the ark back to the Hebrews. When the ark arrived it was placed in the house of Abinadab (1 Samuel 5-7). When David became king of Israel he attempted to bring the ark to Jerusalem. His initial effort was halted when God struck Uzzah for reaching out his hand to steady the ark on the cart by which it was being carried (2 Samuel 6).

For three months the ark stayed in the home of Obededom until David could inquire of the Lord as to the proper way for the ark to be transported. When the day finally came for the ark to be brought to Jerusalem David, the elders, the captains, the high priests and Levites joined with singers and musicians and formed a processional of worship (2 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 15).

Having placed the ark in the tabernacle he had erected for it, David returned home to bless his household. David's wife Michael greeted him and said, *How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!* Michal was proud of her royal status and was ashamed that, at least in her eyes, David had lowered the dignity of the crown by acting like a commoner. Her disdain resulted in barrenness.

In response to Michal's upbraiding David replied, *It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the LORD—and I will celebrate before the LORD. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in your eyes. But by the female servants of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor.* (2 Samuel 6:21-22 ESV) David was not concerned about what those watching him thought of his worship. He seemed to be more concerned about what God thought. David was shameless in the outward expressions of his passion for God.

As worshipers we should be just as undignified as David in our outward expressions of worship. We may choose to express our worship in a different manner than David, but we should be willing to be shameless and unconcerned about what others choose to think of us.

Are you concerned about what others think of your outward expressions of worship? Are you willing to be shameless in your worship?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 9:1; 103:1; 111:1

Matthew 10:33

Mark 12:30

## Glorify the Father

*By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*

John 15:8 (ESV)

The Westminster Catechism states, “The chief end of man is to glorify God and fully to enjoy him forever.”

Kay Author wrote a book a few years ago in which she gave a wonderful definition of what it means to glorify God. She said that to glorify God means to give the world the correct opinion of what God is like. In other words when others look at our values, character and behavior they will be able to say, “That is what God is like.”

The Hebrew Bible translates Genesis 1:27 like this: *And the Great Powerful One filled the man with a representation of himself.* When God made Adam and Eve in his image he told them to be fruitful, multiply and have dominion. Man’s task, therefore, was to fill the earth with a representation of God and the rule of God. They were to be image bearers. They were to fill the earth with the likeness of God.

Because of sin Adam and Eve could not fully carry out the mandate God gave them. No longer could they give a proper representation of God and fill the earth with his likeness; they lost their ability to be God’s image bearers. So, God made another way; he sent his Son Jesus into the world to bear his image and to make a way for man to once again bear the image of God.

Paul wrote to the Colossians speaking of Jesus, *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.* (Colossians 1:15 ESV) *For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.* (Colossians 2:9 ESV) The writer of Hebrews states that Jesus is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact imprint of his nature (Hebrews 1:3 ESV). Jesus was God on earth showing the world the image of the Father; giving the correct opinion (representation) of what God is like.

Before Jesus was crucified he said to the Father, *I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.* (John 17:4 ESV) Jesus completed his mandate from the Father and our mandate is no less than his; to glorify God on the earth.

In his letter to the Galatians Paul wrote, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* (Galatians 5:22-23 ESV) Bearing this kind fruit in the life of a Christian is proof of their discipleship. This kind of fruit glorifies the Father because it gives the correct opinion of what he is like.

May our life’s mission be . . . *to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God* (Colossians 1:10 ESV), so that in all things God is glorified.

When people look at your life do they see the image of God? Is the chief end of your life to glorify God?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

John 15:16

Romans 7:4

Ephesians 5:7-10

## The Center of Worship

*And they sang a new song, saying, Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.*

Revelation 5:9-10 (ESV)

Once Israel had conquered the enemies of the Promised Land each tribe was given a portion of the land as an inheritance. This land was their most prized possession. It was passed down from generation to generation and was the object of many wars.

Occasionally a family would fall on hard times and would be forced to sell their land and serve the new owners as slaves. When the property was sold two documents were used as proof of the transaction; a sealed scroll and an open scroll. The open or unsealed scroll stated the purchaser as the new owner of the land. It was the public transaction of the purchase. The sealed scroll contained the details of the sell and the terms of redemption. This scroll had the signatures of witnesses on the back.

Reference to the sealed and open scrolls are made in Jeremiah 32:8-14. God told Jeremiah to purchase a field that was owned by Jeremiah's cousin Hanamel. Then Jeremiah charged Baruch to place to open and sealed scrolls in an earthenware vessel for safekeeping.

There were two ways a Jewish family could obtain their land back once it was sold. One of the ways the land could be returned was by the law of the kinsman-redeemer. If they were willing and had the means a person who was the nearest of kin to the original land owner or another person could redeem the land and return it to the original owner.

A beautiful example of the law of the kinsman-redeemer is found in the book of Ruth. Boaz redeemed the land owned by Elimelech because he was the next of kin who was willing to pay the purchase price for the land and take Ruth to be his wife (Ruth 3 & 4).

The sealed scroll could only be opened when a nearest kinsman was willing to pay the price of redemption. That is why John began to weep; no one was found worthy to open the scroll. He recognized that the inheritance had been sold and saw no way for it to be redeemed. However, the elders knew something that John was soon to learn. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David had prevailed to open the scroll.

It was not by coincidence that the slain Lamb opened the scroll that had been sealed. In doing so he established himself as the kinsman-redeemer. Not only was he willing to purchase the lost inheritance he was also able to pay the necessary price for redemption. The price he had paid for that redemption was his blood. This revelation led all of creation into a new song. Jesus had become the center of heaven's worship because he had become the kinsman-redeemer.

Have you realized that the blood of Jesus has redeemed you from the law of sin and death? Is Jesus the center of your worship?

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**Scriptures for meditation:**

Leviticus 25:47-49

Ephesians 1:7

Revelation 5:1-7

## Worship in Spirit

*For we [Christians] are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit and by the Spirit of God, and exult and glory and pride ourselves in Jesus Christ, and put no confidence or dependence [on what we are] in the flesh and on outward privileges and physical advantages and external appearances.*

Philippians 3:3 (AMP)

Paul wrote that true Christians, those who were circumcised in heart, worship the Father in spirit and by the Spirit. The physical location of their worship is not important. It doesn't matter about their status in the church or the community. It doesn't matter how talented they are or their physical appearance because worship comes from their spirit. True worshipers don't take notice of themselves for their eyes are on the Father and their spirits are tuned to the Holy Spirit.

Jesus told the woman at the well, *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.* (John 4:23 ESV) The word that Jesus used for spirit in this verse is the Greek word *pneuma*. *Pneuma* is defined as a current of air, breath or a breeze. It is used to describe man's spirit, God's spirit and even demon spirits. The fact that it is not capitalized in John 4:23 most likely indicates that the translators felt Jesus was referring to the human spirit. In most cases the translators used a capital "S" when speaking of the Holy Spirit.

The true place of worship is the spirit of man. The means by which we approach God in worship is the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit of God dwelling in us we could neither have a relationship with God the Father nor would we be permitted to enter his presence (John 3:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13). Paul wrote, *For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.* (Ephesians 2:18 ESV) So, through Christ the Holy Spirit affords us access to the Father.

It is the Holy Spirit that produces spiritual fruit in us and perfects in us a life of holiness. The Holy Spirit is the agent by which we are conformed into the image of Christ. Being open and obedient to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives will enable us to produce worship from our spirits that will be in tune with the heart of the Father.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians, *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* (Ephesians 4:30 ESV) Many times Christians grieve the Holy Spirit by allowing fleshly desires to choke out the work God desires to do in them and through them. Grieving the Holy Spirit limits the genuine flow of the Spirit in the life of a believer.

In our attempts to keep a pure spirit and offer pure worship we may at times need to pray as David, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.* (Psalm 51:10 ESV) We must strive to be pure in spirit, living lives of repentance. Doing so will allow our spirits to be refreshed by the living waters of the Holy Spirit and prevent broken fellowship with the Father.

Has sin stifled your fellowship with the Father? Are you striving to be pure in spirit?

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### Scriptures for meditation:

John 7:38-39

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Galatians 5:22-24

## Intimacy

*They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself."*

Exodus 19:2-4 (ESV)

God brought Israel out of the bondage of Egypt, delivered them from the armies of Egypt at the Red Sea and later took his people into the Promised Land. However, before he brought them to the borders of Canaan he led them to Sinai. The Lord instructed Moses to have Israel wash their clothes because on the third day he would descend on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. Moses obeyed all the words of the Lord and on the third day led Israel out of the camp to meet with God (Exodus 19).

Many of us have in our memory bank the movie "The Ten Commandments" starring Charlton Heston. In the movie when God gave Moses the commandments a huge fireball burned the words on a large stone while this booming voice sited the commandment that was being written. However, in the biblical account, the first time the commandments were recited was in the hearing of all the children of Israel. All of Israel had the opportunity for God to speak to them personally and witness his glory.

Moses recalls the scene forty years later. *And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, while the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, wrapped in darkness, cloud, and gloom. Then the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice. And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments, and he wrote them on two tablets of stone. And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and rules, that you might do them in the land that you are going over to possess.* (Deuteronomy 4:11-14 ESV)

As the children of Israel drew near the mountain and heard the voice and saw the glory of God they became afraid. The bible says, "They stood far off" (Exodus 20:18). Moses encouraged them not to be afraid and said that God was testing them so that they would fear him and not sin (Exodus 20:20). Israel's response to Moses was, *You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us lest we die.* (Exodus 20:19)

Israel's response must have broken the heart of God. His greatest desire for Israel was not to take them into Canaan. It was to bring Israel to himself. He wanted to speak with all of Israel face to face. God's desire was to have an intimate relationship with his people. Intimacy is still God's desire for us. In fact, it is one of the reasons for which Christ gave his life (1 Peter 3:18). Paul wrote to the Ephesians, *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.* (Ephesians 2:13 ESV)

Do you stand "far off" from God? Do you desire intimacy with God?

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**Scriptures for meditation:**

Hebrews 10:22

James 4:8



## Creator Worship

*Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.*

Revelation 4:11 (ESV)

These were the words spoken by the twenty-four elders who John witnessed and recorded in the Revelation of Jesus Christ. These twenty-four elders hold an enviable position in John's vision. Seated around the throne of God, they have access to the grandest revelations of the Creator and his Son. These revelations produce worship responses that only those who have intimate relationship with the King dare to offer. Their relationship with the King is evident for only those with such intimacy are given such access to the throne room.

Five times in The Revelation it is stated that God is worthy to receive glory, honor and power. To give him glory, honor and power means that God alone deserves to have all eyes look to him, to be noted above all others and to be seen as valuable and precious. He is to be esteemed in the highest degree and to have all power and strength and to be power itself. In other instances glory, honor and power are mentioned along with thanksgiving, strength, wisdom, riches, blessing and might. To be worthy to receive something means there has been some action performed by the recipient. Why is God worthy? He created all things! Thus, he has met the requirements and is worthy to be worshiped.

Psalms 148 begins with a command for creation to praise God. *Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights! Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts! Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the Lord! For he commanded and they were created.* (Psalms 148:1-5 ESV)

The Greek word used in Revelation 4:11 for created expresses the idea of proprietorship of the manufacturer. God fabricated or originally formed all things. By his will, (his determination, choice, purpose, volition, or decree) they exist. In other words by his determined choice and for his specific purpose he decreed the existence of all things. The apostle Paul wrote, *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.* (Colossians 1:16-17 ESV) God created all things for himself and as the creator he is worthy of uninhibited praise and worship from all of his creation.

Have you joined with the rest of creation in worship of your creator?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Genesis 1:1

Psalms 148:6-13

John 1:3

Ephesians 3:8-12

Revelation 10:5-6

## Warfare Worship

*And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, "Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever."*

2 Chronicles 20:21 (ESV)

When Jehoshaphat was king over Judah the people of Moab, Ammon and others came to battle against him. Upon hearing the news Jehoshaphat was scared and called a fast throughout all Judah to seek the face of the Lord. In the midst of the fast the Spirit of the Lord moved on the heart of Jahaziel to prophesy God's victory for Judah over their enemies.

Jahaziel said to Israel, *Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's. Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the valley, east of the wilderness of Jeruel. You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you.* (2 Chronicles 20:15-17 ESV)

Israel responded: *And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, devoting them to destruction, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another.* (2 Chronicles 20:22-23 ESV) Judah didn't fight that day; God did. Judah didn't shout at the enemy. They praised their God. It was the manifest presence of God that put the enemy to flight.

God inhabits the praises of his people (Psalms 22:3). On occasion we need only to position ourselves in worship and stand still to behold his salvation. This concept goes much deeper than our expressions of praise and worship; it entails a lifestyle of praise and worship. The Amplified Bible renders 2 Chronicles 20:21 this way: *When he (Jehoshaphat) had consulted with the people, he appointed singers to sing to the Lord and praise him in their holy [priestly] garments.*

It is not merely the expressions of our praise and worship that brings the presence of God. It isn't necessarily how loud we shout or how low we bow. It is the obedient bringing of our offerings of praise clothed in the priestly garments of holiness. In other words worshiping the Lord decorated with sanctity. A life of worship is one that is decorated in holiness. That is the worship that attracts the presence of God.

Though there may be times when we need to fight and address the enemy, there may also be times when we need only to address or worship the Father. He will make sure the enemy gets the message. As God is exalted with high praises we will see the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.

Do you bring your praise and worship into the battle wearing holy, priestly garments?

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### Scriptures for meditation:

Psalms 9:3; 149:5-9

## Worship is not Passive

*Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns."*

Revelation 19:6 (ESV)

Have you ever been to Niagara Falls? Some authorities say that an estimated 1,000,000 gallons of water flows over the falls per minute. That is the equivalent of about 834,000,000 pounds. Scientists say that every frequency in the sound spectrum can be heard simultaneously as the water crashes at the bottom of the falls. This phenomenon is called white noise. John could be describing such a phenomenon in Revelation 19:6.

Heaven's worship is loud. Nowhere in the Revelation do you read that anyone silently worshiped. According to John's account the worship was so loud at times it would have been difficult to hear anything else. He wrote, *And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.* (Revelation 14:2-3 ESV)

Not only did the sheer number of worshipers determine the volume of worship, the worshipers were worshipping loudly. *After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God."* (Revelation 19:1 ESV) *Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"* (Revelation 5:11-12 ESV)

The fact that heaven's worship is loud is most significant in the fact that the worshipers were actively involved in the exaltation of the One who sits on the throne and the Lamb. The biblical definition of the word worship demands an active response.

In the Old Testament the most common Hebrew word translated for worship is shachah. This word means to depress or prostrate in homage or loyalty to God, to bow down or fall down flat. The most common Greek word for worship is proskuneo that means to kiss like a dog licking his master's hand, to fawn or crouch, to prostrate oneself in homage, to reverence or adore. Proskuneo is the Greek word for worship used throughout the book of Revelation.

In the Revelation each new revelation of God and the Lamb produced a demonstrative worship response. Worship requires action; it is not a spectator sport. There is no such thing as passive worship. When true revelation comes demonstrative worship naturally follows. A person who does not worship has yet to have a revelation of the One who sits on the throne and of the Lamb.

Has God revealed himself to you? Do you passively approach worship?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Revelation 5:11-12; 19:1

## Catching God

*My soul followeth hard after thee; Thy right hand upholdeth me.*

Psalms 63:8 (KJV)

King David of Israel knew something about pursuit. Many times during his crusades for King Saul and later as king himself, he was the pursuer. He not only pursued but also subdued his enemies. There were also instances in David's life when he was the one being pursued by his enemies. In fact, when he wrote the words to Psalm 63 he was hiding from King Saul in the wilderness of Judah.

Pursuit is the act of chasing in an effort to overtake or capture. The Hebrew word David used in Psalm 63:8 for "followeth hard" means to impinge (collide, strike, dash, encroach, trespass), cling, adhere, and to catch by pursuit. The same word is used in the Old Testament when speaking of armies pursuing their enemies.

David was just as determined to pursue God as he was to pursue his enemies. In essence he was saying in Psalm 63:8, "God, I am going to pursue you until I catch you." The determination and the desperation of catching God can be heard in David's words in the previous verses of Psalm 63. He used phrases such as, *Early will I seek you, My lips shall praise you, I will bless you, I will lift up my hands, My mouth shall praise you, and I will rejoice.*

King David's prime motivation for pursuing God was that he was thirsty; his soul was thirsty (Psalm 63:1). He had a longing to see the power and glory of God (Psalm 63:2). He realized that the loving kindness and favor of God was more precious than life itself (Psalm 63:3). And that if he could catch God in the midst of his praise that his soul would be sustained and satisfied; for God was his only source of satisfaction (Psalm 63:5). David also realized that if he could catch God that God would be his help and protection (Psalm 63:7-8).

For us to catch God we must have the same heart as David. We must pursue God with the intent purpose of catching him. We must be thirsty for God alone and realize that his right hand (power) is the only thing that sustains and satisfies our soul. And we must be willing to express or display our feelings toward him.

God desires to be caught. And if we pursue him with all our heart and with pure motives he will let us catch him. When we catch him we will have all we need. Are you following hard after God?

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**Scriptures for meditation:**

1 Samuel 14:22

Psalms 42:2; 143:6

Isaiah 55:1

## Fashioned Days

*Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.*

Psalms 139:16 (ESV)

This verse is a reminder that God was in control of our lives from before we were conceived and will be until the day we die. When David wrote that his days were formed (fashioned) for him he literally meant that his days were “squeezed into shape” or “molded into form like a potter molds clay.”

According to Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible the Hebrew word David used for formed is first found in Exodus 32 where Aaron fashioned the golden calf for the people of Israel. The golden calf didn’t just “come out of the fire” as Aaron suggested to Moses, Aaron used a graving tool to make the idol. In the same way God has framed or determined our days and did so before we were ever conceived.

Knowing that God is sovereign over us and that our times are in his hand (Psalms 31:15; John 10:29) gives us hope and confidence. We can have peace in knowing that regardless of the circumstances, our lives are in the hands of a loving, caring Father and not subjected to blind physical fate or luck. We can know that all of our life experiences have reason and that God is fulfilling his purpose in our lives.

David wrote, *The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.* (Psalms 138:8 ESV) *And I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.* (Psalms 57:2 ESV) The idea is that God is bringing to completion everything that concerns us; he is making perfect his purpose for our lives. In times of abundance and in times of lack, when life is calm and when life is stormy our great hope is that God has a plan and that he knows the best and is working the best for us. That’s why Paul could write, *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* (Romans 8:28 ESV)

Not only is God making the circumstances of our lives to perfectly fulfill his purpose; he is also making us morally perfect; without blemish. Again David wrote, *For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God? — the God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless.* (Psalms 18:31-32 ESV) It is God who makes our way blameless (Jude 1:24). In fact, he chose us before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless and predestined us to adoption according to the purpose of his will (Ephesians 1:4-6).

We ought always to seek God in every facet of our lives and allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. But let us also remember, *Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.* (Proverbs 19:21 ESV)

Have you yielded your life to the sovereign hands of God? Have you trusted him to fulfill his purpose for your life? Do you praise God for his sovereignty?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 33:10-15

Proverbs 16:4

Romans 8:29

Ephesians 1:11

## Due His Name

*Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.*

Psalms 29:2 (ESV)

The Hebrew word David used for glory in this passage means weight. How do we give the Lord the weight that is due his name? David completes this verse with another exhortation; *Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness*. Though the second part of this verse may be a totally separate exhortation, my perception is that it completes the first part of the verse. We might say that one way to give the Lord the weight or glory due his name is to worship him in the beauty of holiness.

Most likely you have heard someone say, “He’s the splittin’ image of his father.” When we worship our heavenly father decorated in holy array, living holy lives before others, they get an image of what our heavenly father looks like. This is one way our heavenly father receives the glory due his name. The objective of our lives is to point to him, to magnify him, to make him known.

Our passion for God’s name to be exalted will most likely result in some form of outward expression. We always seem to find a way of displaying to others the things in which we place the most value. Thus, our outward expression of God’s worth is another avenue of giving him the glory due his name. This was the heart of King David when he wrote, *I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever*. (Psalms 86:12 ESV) The Hebrew word glorify in this scripture means to be heavy or make weighty, honorable, glorious, to boast or promote. In this verse David might be saying that the way he will glorify God’s name forever is by praising him with all of his heart.

The Hebrew word David uses for praise in Psalms 86:12 is yadah. Yadah means to use or hold out the hand; to revere or worship with extended hands; to make a confession or give thanks. David not only desired to declare or speak of the greatness of his God but accompany that declaration with outward expression.

The chief end of our lives is to exalt God’s name above all others. By living holy, obedient lives accompanied with outward expressions of adoration, we demonstrate the value of God in our lives. We also demonstrate the supremacy of God in all things and give him the glory due his name.

Does your life give God the glory due his name? Are you living a life of holiness?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 63:4; 100:4

Matthew 5:16

Philippians 2:9-11

2 Timothy 2:19

## God's Glory

*And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.*

Exodus 16:10 (ESV)

What is the glory of God? On a number of occasions scripture records that the glory of the Lord appeared in a cloud. However, the cloud itself is not the glory of God. God appears in the cloud to hide man from his glory; the cloud is a protection.

The Apostle Paul wrote to his disciple Timothy concerning God. He said, . . . *who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.* (1 Timothy 6:16 ESV)

The Apostle John wrote, *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* (1 John 1:5 ESV) God is perfect light. Should man in his natural state look at the unveiled glory of God he would die (Exodus 33:20). To define the glory of God we must go further than the light for the light is the brilliance of his glory.

Moses asked God to show him his glory (Exodus 33:18). God replied, *I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name The LORD. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.* (Exodus 33:19 ESV) It seems that God equated his glory with his goodness and his name. According to Strong's Concordance the Hebrew word for goodness in Exodus 33:19 is *tuwb*, which means good in the widest sense. It also carries with it the idea of beauty, gladness and welfare. God also proclaimed the name of Jehovah before Moses. Jehovah is the Jewish national name for God and means self-existent and eternal.

When Moses asked to see God's glory in Exodus 33:18, he used the Hebrew word *kabowd* for glory. *Kabowd* means weightiness, splendor and honor. God's glory is everything that makes up God; his authority, power, and sovereignty. Thus, the best picture of God's glory can be seen in his Son, Jesus, because he was God in the flesh (John 1:1, 14). As God in the flesh, Jesus displayed God's nature (Hebrews 1:3). The Apostle Paul wrote, *For God, who said, Let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* (2 Corinthians 4:6 ESV)

The church is desperate for the glory of the Lord. When his glory is manifest, people are changed just as the countenance of Moses was changed after being in God's presence (Exodus 34:29, 30). Once we have experienced the wonder of his glory we will be ruined to everything we have known as church.

Do you want to see the glory of God? Have you seen God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

1 Kings 8:10-11

John 2:11

Colossians 1:27

1 Corinthians 3:16

2 Corinthians 3:18

## His Excellent Greatness

*Praise him for his mighty deeds; Praise him according to his excellent greatness!*

Psalms 150:2 (ESV)

Ideas abound on the proper criteria in which to measure greatness. Most would agree that to be considered for greatness a person would have to contribute significantly to the welfare of society. Since 1901 the Nobel Prize Foundation has issued awards for achievements in physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature and peace. Many would consider the recipients of these awards as great people. Some might even add gifted athletes to the list of “all time greats.” Others would add those who serve in the armed forces to the list of great people.

As great as these people are, there is a limit to their greatness. One day they will die and though their great deeds will be remembered, they will have no more opportunities for greatness. It might even be as time continues on, that someone else will come along and surpass their accomplishments. However, this is not true of God. Not only will he never die, his mighty acts and excellent greatness never cease and cannot be surpassed. The New Living Translation reads, *Praise him for his mighty works; praise his unequalled greatness!* (Psalms 150:2)

The Hebrew word used by the psalmist for “mighty acts” in Psalms 150:2 means force. It implies victory, valor, power, strength and mastery. The Hebrew word used for *according* means a fixed weight or measured amount. For *excellent* the psalmist uses a Hebrew word meaning abundance, huge, more in number, multitude and plenty. And for “greatness” the Hebrew word means magnitude and stoutness.

So it seems the psalmist is exhorting us to praise God for his displays of valor, power and strength. He also exhorts us to praise God for his measured amount of abundant magnitude. The word abundant means a great quantity; plentiful amount; fullness to overflowing. Magnitude means greatness in rank or position; greatness in size or extent; greatness in significance or influence. In other words God’s rank, position, size, extent, significance and influence are full to overflowing; great in quantity; there is plenty to go around.

Our call is to put this greatness on display. The psalmist uses the Hebrew word *halal* for praise. *Halal* means to be clear, to shine, to make a show, to boast; and thus to be (clamorously) foolish; to rave and to celebrate. We can put God’s greatness on display by the way we live our lives, but we also should witness to his greatness with our words; even in the face of looking foolish.

One psalmist wrote, *My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.* Psalms 71:15 (ESV) And King David wrote, *Sing praises to the LORD, who sits enthroned in Zion! Tell among the peoples his deeds!* Psalms 9:11 (ESV)

Do the people with whom you come in contact everyday know of the greatness of God by how you live and the words you say? Are you ashamed to put the greatness of God on display?

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**Scriptures for meditation:**

Deuteronomy 3:24

Psalms 145:4; 12



## Praise His Word

*In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise.*

Psalms 56:10 (ESV)

Great words have been spoken down through the ages. We are familiar with the famous words of John F. Kennedy, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” Years later Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon and spoke these memorable words, “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” And could we ever forget Ronald Reagan standing at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Germany exhorting, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

As great as these words have become to our culture, they will one day fade. However, the greatest words ever spoken will last forever; those are the words spoken by the God of the universe. In fact, those words are so great that King David proclaimed in Psalm 56 that he praised the word of God.

The Hebrew word David used for praise is *halal*. *Halal* means to be clear; to shine; hence, to make a show, to boast; and thus to be (clamorously) foolish; to rave; to celebrate. Basically David was saying, “I will boast and rave about what God has spoken. I will be clamorously foolish and celebrate the words of God.”

God is so connected to his word that he has exalted it above all along with his name (Psalm 138:2). You have heard it said that a man is as good as his word. If God’s word was no good his name would be no good. God is true to his word and all his words are true; it is impossible for him to lie (Hebrews 6:18). Furthermore, God is powerful enough to back up what he says.

You might say that you can know God’s words and not know God. You would be right. Jesus said as much to the religious leaders of his day. He said, *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.* (John 5:39-40 ESV) However, you cannot know God and neglect his words.

Why is it not blasphemous to praise the word of God? *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* (John 1:1) God was the Word and the Word was God and the Word came to dwell among men in the form of the Son (John 1:14). And the Son declared that the words he spoke were not his but his Father’s (John 14:24).

The Greek word for “word” in John 1:1 is *logos*. *Logos* means “something said.” God had something to say and he said it by and through his Son, Jesus, who was God and the very Word of God. The Word is still speaking today. The writer of Hebrews wrote, . . . *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.* Hebrews 1:2-3 (ESV) To worship God’s word is to worship Jesus.

Have the words of God become a treasure to you? Have you boasted and raved about what God has said?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Proverbs 30:5

John 17:8

Hebrews 4:12

## Serve with Gladness

*Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!*

Psalms 100:2 (ESV)

In order to pay off a debt or to make restitution for a theft, the Hebrew people would often sell themselves into slavery to other Hebrews. In the law, God gave Moses specific instructions concerning Hebrew slaves serving Hebrew masters.

In summary, a Hebrew slave was to serve his master for six years and the seventh year was to be set free. However, if the servant loved his master and wanted to continue with him, the master would take him to the judges, then take him to the door or doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. This opening in the ear would signify that the slave or servant chose for love's sake to stay with his master and serve him forever (Exodus 21:1-6). This type of service is what the Psalmist had in mind when he penned the words to Psalms 100:2.

The Hebrew word used for serve in Psalms 100:2 means to work, be enslaved or to be in bond-service. Since the first converts to Christ were Jewish, this idea of bond service carried on into the New Testament. Paul, Peter, James and Jude all considered themselves to be bondservants of Christ (Titus 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; James 1:1; Jude 1:1). Paul attributed the title of bondservant to Jesus. He wrote, *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* (Philippians 2:5-7 ESV) Because of the injustices of the past and even the present, the idea of bond service might seem morally and ethically unacceptable. And it would be if it were not speaking of our service to God.

The Psalmist qualifies how this service to God is to be performed; “with gladness.” The Hebrew word for gladness means blithesomeness or glee, exceedingly glad, joy, or pleasure or rejoicing. So in essence, our bond-service to God is fulfilled, not by coercion, but from our deep love for him and our desire to serve him forever. It is willingly giving of our bodies as living sacrifices, which is our reasonable service or worship (Romans 12:1). This service is to be done with exceeding gladness, joy and pleasure. The Psalmist accentuates this point by following with “come before his presence with singing.”

The Hebrew word for singing in Psalms 100:2 should actually translate “a shout for joy.” Coming into God's presence with a shout of joy is an outward expression of the gladness and joy with which we have bonded ourselves to him for life. And why should we express our joy to the one we joyfully serve? He has provided for us all the things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). King David knew this well when he wrote, *You will show me the path of life; In Your presence* (the same word as presence in Psalms 100:2) *is fullness of joy* (the same word as gladness in Psalms 100:2); *At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* (Psalms 16:11)

Do you serve the Lord with gladness? Do you take pleasure in doing his will?

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**Scriptures for meditation:**

Deuteronomy 15:12-17

Colossians 4:12

Revelation 15:3

## The Beloved

*Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you?*

Song of Songs 6:1 (ESV)

Probably at some point in your life a friend or relative has described a place where they have visited or an event they have attended that sounds so intriguing you just have to see or experience it for yourself. Maybe it was a place they visited while on vacation or a movie they watched. But they were so moved by it that the very passion by which they shared it made you determined to check it out.

In the fifth chapter of the Song of Solomon the Shulamite woman is desperately looking for her Beloved. Her beloved had come to visit her, but she did not immediately respond to his call. By the time she opened the door he was gone. She begins to go about the city in search for him but to no avail. Finally she pleads with the daughters of Jerusalem that should they find him to let him know that she is sick for his love.

The daughters of Jerusalem respond, *What is your beloved more than another beloved, O most beautiful among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you thus adjure us?* (Song of Songs 5:9 ESV) In other words they asked, “What makes this guy any more special than the next guy? What is so special about him that we should tell him that you’re looking for him? In response to their inquiry the Shulamite gives a vivid detailed description of her Beloved.

In reading the Shulamite’s response we soon realize that she is not describing the great feats her Beloved has performed, rather she describes the beauty of his person. Only someone who has spent much time in the presence of her Beloved could give such a detailed description. In fact her description is so stunning that the daughters of Jerusalem quickly respond; “Where is your Beloved? We will seek him with you.” They may have thought, “If he is this beautiful we want to see him for ourselves.”

As Christians the beauty of Jesus should put a longing in our hearts to spend time in his presence e.g., worship, prayer and bible reading. And the more time we spend with him the more beautiful he becomes to us because we see the features of his person more distinctly. To spend time in the presence of the Lord was the one thing King David asked and sought after. He wrote, *One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: 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 inquire (or meditate) in his temple.* (Psalms 27:4 ESV)

Like the Shulamite woman, who was not ashamed to tell others of the beauty of her Beloved, neither should we be ashamed to tell others of the beauty of Christ, our Beloved. Our expectation is that our passionate description of Christ’s beauty will cause others to want to seek him as well.

How much time do you spend in the presence of your Beloved; Jesus? Do you see him as beautiful and infinitely valuable? Have you proclaimed his beauty to others in such a way that they too want to seek him?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 96:6

Philippians 2:6-11

Colossians 1:15-18

## The Voice of Triumph

*Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!*

Psalms 47:1 (ESV)

People render applause at a wide variety of venues. Applause is given for great speeches, heroic acts, and great performances at musical concerts, theatre plays and athletic events. In fact, standing ovations are not uncommon at such venues. Applause is often given out of respect for a person's rank or position. Though some might applaud just because it is expected, the majority applauds because they recognize the significance of an act or the tremendous talent of the performers. Still another reason people applaud is because an act or the person who renders the act meets their approval and the performance brings them joy.

New York City has long been famous for ticker tape parades and is the place where the term originated. Ticker tape was the paper used in the machines that provided stock market updates. Large amounts of this paper were thrown from the office building windows onto the parade participants. Such parades have been given in honor of victorious generals such as Dwight Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur and Admiral Chester Nimitz. There is a section of lower Broadway, the street where the parades are held, that is often referred to as the "Canyon of Heroes."

In reading the entirety of Psalms 47 one might conclude that such a triumphal procession was the context in which the psalm was written. The Hebrews word for joy carries with it the connotation of a shout of triumph. In addition, the psalmist declares that God has subdued the peoples (nations) under their feet; he has extended their kingdom (inheritance) and has, himself, blown the trumpet of victory. The psalmist might also allude to the prisoners of war when he mentioned that the "princes of people" have gathered with God's people to acknowledge that the God of Israel is the true God. The shields spoken of in the psalm could likely be the shields of the defeated army brought home for display in the processional as spoils of war. They all belong to God.

Too often we reserve our applause and shouts of joy for our favorite musicians, war heroes and athletic teams. However, God is much more worthy of our applause and shouts of joyful song. One psalmist even exhorts the rivers to clap their hands and the hills to sing for joy (Psalms 98:8). How much more should we, who have benefited from God's goodness, give applause and shouts of triumph to God?

Through his son Jesus, God has defeated all our enemies, extended his kingdom and given us an everlasting inheritance. By our claps of praise and shouts of joy we declare our approval of the victory God has granted us through Christ and render to him the praise of a conqueror.

One psalmist wrote to the choirmaster, *Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!* (Psalms 66:1-2 ESV)

When was the last time you gave God a standing ovation? When was the last time you acknowledged his triumph with a shout of joy?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 98:4

Isaiah 55:12

2 Corinthians 2:14

## Visitation Time

*I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer.*

Song of Songs 5:6 (ESV)

In the fifth chapter of the Song of Solomon is a story about a Shulamite woman who missed a special opportunity to be with the one she loved. Beginning in verse two the Shulamite is in bed when she hears the voice of her Beloved calling for her to unlock the door and let him come inside. She makes excuses for why she cannot come to the door; *I had put off my garment how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet how could I soil them?* (verse 3)

By the time the Shulamite decides to open the door for her Beloved, he is gone. *I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer.* (verse 6) She diligently searched for him but he was nowhere to be found.

One Sunday morning our worship team arrived before Sunday school to take a view minutes to practice our set. We were not far into the set when a remarkable sense of God's presence came over us. As people began entering the building for Sunday school they too had a strong sense of God's presence. Many of them came into the sanctuary and found their way to the altar. Knowing it was time for Sunday school to begin, I ended the practice in deference to the teachers who had prepared their lessons.

When the worship service began we anticipated that the move of God's Spirit would pick up where we left it before Sunday school. We were sadly mistaken. We had made excuses for not opening the door when our Beloved called. We missed our time of visitation.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day made a similar mistake. As Jesus descended from the Mount of Olives on a colt into the city of Jerusalem, a multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God for the mighty works they had seen. Some of the Pharisees in the crowd urged Jesus to rebuke his disciples. Jesus responded by saying that if his disciples were silent the stones would immediately cry out. Jesus then prophesied that the destruction of Jerusalem would come because they missed their time of visitation (Luke 19:37-44). The religious leaders and many others in Jerusalem missed their time of visitation because the Messiah didn't look like what they thought he should look like.

God is omnipresent; everywhere, all the time. But, there are times when his presence is concentrated in a certain place either with an individual or in a corporate gathering. When he desires to be in our presence we should be quick to open the door for our Beloved. It shouldn't matter if it doesn't look like what we think it should nor should we be concerned about what others may think.

Do you open the door when your Beloved knocks?

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### **Scriptures for meditation:**

Psalms 27:8; 63:1

Isaiah 55:6