

☞ The Product of Praise

Hebrews 13:15

let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise

Sometimes it really is a sacrifice to offer praise. We may not feel like it. We might be weary. Sometimes it seems like God is distant, or doesn't really care about what's troubling us. But when we make that decision to fix our eyes on Him, and give Him praise, no matter what's staring us in the face, we are reminded that God is in control. He's got this.

It doesn't matter how good or "not so good" we think we can sing; doesn't matter if we like upbeat music, more reflective songs, or traditional hymns. Doesn't matter if we're alone, with a few, or in a big group. Doesn't even matter whether we "feel" like it or not. What matters is that we get in tune with our Creator and King. A week ago, we spent time with my parents and siblings. A significant part of our time together is sharing morning devotions and worship. We all sing and lead worship at various places, so we easily get into the music. We've done this for eight years now, and let me tell you, it's a refreshing time. We reconnect with each other and extra-connect with God. Praise gets us tuned in.

☞ Praise Produces Intimacy

In Exodus 25:8 God tells Moses to build a tabernacle that "I may dwell among them". He didn't want a cathedral shining with jewels to show His awesomeness. He didn't ask for massive monuments or statues made of gold. God asked for a simple tent. It wasn't about the construction. It was about the connection. He wanted a tabernacle just so He could be with us. The God of all of the earth could be anywhere, could have anything, could do anything, and ☞ yet **He chooses to be with you.**

He wants relationship with us and part of that relationship comes through praise. And the praise needs to be genuine. Sometimes during the worship set we can get focused on the music or the singers. Sometimes we even "praise" the singers of the songs more than The One we are singing about. Or we can just go through the motions and not really think about what we are saying and it's just another ritual. But God isn't looking for ritual; he's looking for relationship.

Can God move in the rituals of our worship? Of course, He can do whatever He wants to do. But it's not about the skill of the leaders or the style of the rituals. True praise is all about relationship with Jesus.

☞ **He inhabits the praises of His people. (Psalm 22:3).** God dwells close to us when we praise Him. He looks for it and He lives there.

Back to the tent... Moses built a Tabernacle in the wilderness. The Tabernacle was divided into three main parts. The Outer Court, The Inner Court, and The Holy of Holies where God dwelled. ☞ **Psalm 100:4** says, **"Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise."**

In that Tabernacle there was only one gate - one entrance. If you wanted to approach God, you had to go through the gate, into the courtyard, and finally into The Holy of Holies. The gate you come through to approach God is thanksgiving and the court you enter is praise. To have intimacy with God and experience his presence, you come through thanksgiving and praise.

It bothers me when people skip the praise and worship portion of a service. Praise and worship is not the opening act to the Pastor's message! Praise softens the soil of your heart so the seeds of the message can be planted. More than that, praise is one of the best ways to connect with God and enjoy intimacy with him.

Song: Here for You

☞ Praise Produces Insight

Praise changes hearts. It changes mindsets. In praise, our focus shifts from us to the Lord. From ☞ problems to The Solution. From pain to promise. From hurt to hope. **Praise can change you if you allow it to.**

Judson Cornwall says, *"So often, when we have heated our Spirits in worship . . . thoughts, desires, and attitudes rise to the surface."* We are then able to bring them to Jesus to be forgiven and cleansed. In the fires of praise, God reaches out and melts down our jagged edges until we become smooth and pliable in His hands.

When I am in a service where the praise and worship is intense, I feel the greatest anointing in my preaching and teaching. It's in this type of atmosphere that God seems to speak the ☞ clearest. Whether in your personal time with God, or a public setting, **praise is an important key to hearing from Him.** Some of my best ministry ideas have come out of a time of personal praise and worship with God.

If you want to hear from God, you should worship Him. Acts 13:2 says, "While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said..." And in 2 Kings 3 when Ahab and Jehoshaphat ran out of water they called for Elisha to come and inquire of the Lord. When Elisha arrived he asked for a minstrel. After the minstrel played, Elisha had a word from the Lord. It was when the musician began to play that the Lord spoke to Elisha, giving him the needed Word to lead them to victory.

People who minister on a worship team should never underestimate the importance of their calling. They are the ones who set an atmosphere for the church to hear God speak. **Praise and ☞ worship ushers in the anointing of God,** and helps us to hear his voice, giving insight to our situation.

Song: The Power of Your Presence

☞ Praise Produces Infilling

Ephesians 5:18-20

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be **filled with the Holy Spirit**, 19 singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. 20 And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. NLT

Praise and worship triggers the overflow of God's Spirit in our hearts. We not only enter God's presence through praise (Psalms 100:4), but we are also filled with His presence. We need to be filled and keep on being filled with the Spirit.

Drunk vs. Filled; Both: Walk differently; Talk differently; Act differently; Think differently; Feel ☞ differently... **"Under the influence"** Drunk: "impaired" Filled: "improved." We need to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit. We need the improvements only he can bring.

Are you feeling spiritually dry? Then praise Jesus with all your heart and the Spirit of the living God will fill your innermost being to overflowing. Throughout scripture people were worshiping and magnifying God when they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

☞ v.18 ... be filled with the Holy Spirit... How? v. 19... **By singing** psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and **making music** to the Lord in your hearts. And **give thanks** for everything to God the Father.

Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs are simply various types of music. Instrumental music; singing songs and prayers; and spontaneous open worship that comes from the heart. All of this is a significant part of how we are continually filled with the Holy Spirit. If you are not participating in the music and worship, you're missing out on a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit. Praise and worship connects your spirit with the Holy Spirit.

And we're to give thanks in all circumstances. Christians should be known as grateful people. Who has received better benefits than born-again believers? 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19 says, "Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19 Do not put out the Spirit's fire..." This suggests that an ungrateful attitude will actually work against the Holy Spirit continually filling you.

Gratitude is a big deal. We come into his presence with thanksgiving and praise. As we express gratitude, it softens our hearts and changes us. And we are filled again with the Holy Spirit as we praise and give thanks. Now, let's practice. We enter his gates with thanksgiving... what are you thankful for?

We enter his courts with praise...

**Songs: Great are you Lord
How great is our God
How great thou art (chorus only)
You deserve the glory**