

Expressive Worship

by Adrian Carpenter

One of the most sensitive issues in the Kingdom is worship. How do we worship? What word describes our worship? Intimate? Loud? Quiet? Rowdy? Passionate? Worship is all these things and more because God is all these things and more.

Intimate: In James 2:23 we find God calling Abraham "friend." In Genesis we find God walking with Adam and Eve in the garden. In Exodus we find God inviting Moses to spend time with Him on His holy mountain.

Loud: Job 40:9 compares God's voice to thunder. In Psalms we have God asking Israel to turn their "praise volume" up.

Quiet: While God is a loud God, He is also a quiet God. 1 Kings 19:11-13 compares God's voice to a whisper.

Rowdy: In Zephaniah 3:17, we find God rejoicing over us. The Hebrew meaning of the word "exult" means to rejoice greatly. The Hebrew word for "rejoice" means to twirl. Can you imagine God greatly rejoicing over you? Can we imagine God twirling and dancing in response to our worship?

Passionate: Exodus 20:5 describes God as a jealous God, a God who passionately loves us. He is a God who would take on the form of humanity and offer Himself as a sacrifice for us. God is a passionate God.

Worship is circular. We love God and God loves us. God loves us and we love Him. We sing to Him and He sings songs over us. We dance; He dances. Worship is like the tide coming and going. There is a rhythm of God expressing His love and us responding. How lovesick is Jesus over His bride? How expressive is He about His love toward us? Picture His response toward our worship. Does He have a look of indifference? Is He distracted? The question becomes...are we as passionate in our expression of worship as He is in His reaction?

In Zephaniah 3:17 we discover,

"The Lord your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His Love, He will rejoice over you with singing." Imagine the verse from a different perspective. "When in Your presence, we experience Your salvation; We dance in delight as You gladly rejoice with us: we almost melt in Your arms of love, and we burst back into song, dancing together."

What value does God place on our worship? What value do we place on God? Does our worship express our answer? As mentioned earlier, the word "rejoice" means to twirl. We find a twirling God in Zephaniah 3:17. In Habakkuk 3:17-18 we find a worshiper twirling as well. *"Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."* (v18) Imagine God and the worshiper twirling together.

We were created to worship God. Isaiah 43:7 says, *"Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him."* Jesus told us to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul and mind (Matthew 22:32). Working from a combined premise based upon these verses, I believe we were created to worship God with our bodies. Our hands were created for worship. Our feet were created for worship. Our mouths were created for worship. Our bodies were created to be instruments of worship.

Many times we focus on "singing in the spirit." I believe this to be valid, effective, and wanted by God. However, I believe it's easy for us to sometimes limit this type of encounter with God to singing. I believe we can dance in the Spirit. We can twirl in the Spirit. I believe there are rhythms that pound freedom. Worshiping in the Spirit is about hearing and echoing the sounds of Heaven. We can hear the songs of Heaven. We can hear and repeat the declarations of Heaven. We can hear the shouts and claps of Heaven. Worshiping in the Spirit is also about seeing and duplicating the movements of Heaven. We can see the dances. We can see the bowing. Through worship we can have the Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven.

Often we use temperament as an excuse for our passivity or lack of variety in worship. For example, "I am just a quiet person." or "I like things loud." However, as we have discussed earlier, God's temperament is complicated. He's loud in part and quiet in part. He likes us to be still and know that He is God and He wants us to dance. God's temperament is comprised of these complexities and more. If we pursue His character, His gifts, and His heart, then why not His temperament?

In summary, how can we love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, strength and not be expressive? Consider the following... 1. God is even greater than He says He is. 2. God loves us even more than we can understand. 3. God wants to overwhelm us with Himself.

How can we worship passively?
We can't!

Copyright © 2006 Adrian Carpenter/JustWorship.com
All rights reserved. Used by permission.