

Let everything that has breath
praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!

Psalm 150:6

Praise Points

with Karen Holland

Is Your Worship Too Emotional?

2 Samuel 6:21 ...I will celebrate before the LORD.

Is Your Worship Too Emotional? This is a question I've often heard asked in recent years. At times I have been personally criticized for being too emotional during worship - usually after the Lord has deeply touched my heart and tears are streaming down my face.

Some would say that this is emotionalism rather than a true and whole reaction to worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some would say that strong displays of emotion should be avoided during worship because it leads to emotionalism which is being 'manufactured' - by musical styles or performances. This emotionalism, however, is very different from allowing our emotions to be involved in our worship. King David faced this same criticism. In 2 Samuel 6 we get a clear picture of how King David worshipped the Lord.

5 David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals.

*14 David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the LORD with all his might, ...
15 while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.*

16 As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart.

20 When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!

21 David said to Michal, It was before the LORD, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD's people Israel-I will celebrate before the LORD.

22 I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor.

23 And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.

David celebrated with all his might before the Lord with song and dance. This display of emotion and willingness to leap for joy before the Lord; to openly celebrate without regard to outward appearances, is how David worshiped the Lord. This type of worship had its critics.

David's wife Michal rebuked David for his emotional display of worship. In verse 16 it says that she "despised him in her heart." Doesn't this reveal some things about her heart? Her heart was not on the Lord. She seemed to be more concerned with outward appearances-- with how David looked in public, than worship of the Lord. Her heart was filled with distaste towards David's unkingly display. She was probably also concerned with how this would reflect on her as David's wife. So, she was mainly concerned with and focused on herself. Her criticism resulted in a barren life; she was unable to have children.

David's response to Michal reveals his heart. In essence he told Michal that she hadn't seen anything yet; that he would be even more undignified than what she had witnessed. David had a heart fully devoted to the Lord and his heart is reflected in his worship. (1 Kings 11:4; 1 Kings 14:8; 1 Kings 15:3; Psalm 108:1) Unlike Michal, David was praised for his heart. God said of David, *I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.* (Acts 13:22) Isn't David's worship a good example of what it means to express the following command? *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 12:30)

Notice that if one worships this way, with a heart totally devoted to the Lord, there is no room for self. Have you ever seen a child who is really into worship? Children seem to have such pure hearts. The thought that their worship might look foolish or bother someone else never enters their mind. Their worship and joy in the Lord just seems so spontaneous and uninhibited. They never seem to be afraid to enter in to worship, to take part, to sing, to raise their hands, to clap, to dance.

I'll never forget the time when my daughter Shell (who was about 3 or 4 at the time) was in a church musical. She was part of the children's choir. At one point a teenage dancer was supposed to dance while the children sang. Shell was so caught up in the singing and watching the dancer that she started dancing with the dancer too. She was singing and dancing with all her might - just like David. This was completely unplanned - yet somehow it fit! I wish I could be as uninhibited and have such a pure heart in my worship of the Lord. Could this have something to do with these statements?

And he said: I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3-4)

Matthew 5:8 *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

Could it be that if you approach worship as a little child, with a pure heart, totally devoted to the Lord - that you'll see God or experience His manifest presence?

So back to our question: *Is Your Worship Too Emotional?* It seems the answer lies in where your heart is focused. Where is your heart in worship? Is something inhibiting you from entering into worship with your whole heart - with all your might? Are you overly concerned with outward appearances - your own or others? Or is your heart and attention fully devoted to the Lord?

This is David's answer. *My heart is steadfast, O God; I will sing and make music with all my soul.* (Psalm 108:1)