

Worship Notes

by Christine Gofron

Because of your unfailing love, I can
enter your house; with deepest awe
I will worship at Your Temple.

Psalm 5:7

Pursuing God's Presence

Over the past several years, I have found myself questioning everything. I don't question the validity and truth of God's Word, but rather what we are doing with it down here.

Sometimes we get it right, other times we get it wrong. We spend most of our time trying to figure God out and what He wants from us as His church. We pick apart our processes in the church, we add fresh programs, we pursue those in our community, we are aggressively trying to see results. That's good.

But we fall short when we pursue the presence of God and not His Person. How can pursuing the presence of God be wrong? How can I be in the presence of the Almighty God and still miss it? Easy. Almost too easy.

As a worship leader, I have sometimes found myself, regrettably, so actively seeking His presence that I forget about His person, and what He has commanded me to do. Many of you who are worship leaders can probably identify with this following scenario.

You are leading worship for a church that has experienced an outpouring of God's presence. All the signs are there - the prophetic is fresh and relevant, the lost are finding their answers, you have more volunteers than ever before, giving has increased, and the River of God is flowing freely in your worship and the time spent listening to the Word. But one Sunday, you start worship, ready for another outpouring of His Spirit, and nothing happens. You start the first song, and for some reason, the jubilation is not there this time. You start pounding out praise song after praise song hoping the spark will catch, but nothing. Now you're panicking. But here's where it can either go totally wrong, or God takes over and blows you away.

It goes badly when we turn into ourselves for the answer. It goes badly when, in those few seconds of decision, we begin to search the past and what worked.

And it goes badly when we review the results and try to make it happen again. For instance, maybe in the last few weeks, you led worship with a song that, once the music began, you could see the results of God's presence being there. And now you're scrambling to do that particular song, or play in that particular minor key, or start that particular chord progression. Then you close your eyes and wait. Still, it doesn't happen. Then you become frustrated, and not only does it feel like you aren't in the River anymore, it feels like you've hit very dry ground.

Now God allows us to go through these dry spells for a reason. Sometimes God allows us to go through these periods of dryness to teach us perseverance and help us appreciate even more when He is moving. Other times He's trying to tell us something. And most of the time, whatever the problem may be on the surface, it boils down to this one thing: we became addicted to His presence, and forgot about His person.

Let's look at II Samuel chapter 6. We find David and his men en route to Jerusalem with the Ark. They've captured it back from the Philistines, and they are so eager to get the presence of God back in their midst, and they are so looking forward to seeing the results of having it back, that they forget to examine what God commanded. God had specific instructions on how the Ark was to be transported. But David and his men crafted a "new cart" that was on wheels and transported by oxen. I'm sure that this made sense to them. When we get excited about something, we want to contribute to it. We want to find ways to make it work better or to make it easier to come by. In this case, the "new cart" was a fatal mistake. God was so angered by their lack of respect and discretion to His commandments, that when the Ark teetered on the cart and Uzzah, one of David's men, reached out to steady it, God struck him down immediately.

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Pursuing God's Presence *continued*

The fatal mistake was, on the surface, touching the cart or the Ark. But it shouldn't have been there in the first place. Transporting the Ark required that two poles be fashioned to slide through the rings on the corners of the Ark, and it be carried on the shoulders of 4 men. David took the easy way out, and not only did he regret it, but he was terrified to bring it any further, so he dropped it off at Obed-Edom's house for a period of three months.

I'm sure David spent those three months seeking God and revisiting the way God originally intended for things to happen. And he was successful, because on the second attempt, not only did no one die, but God's presence was once again restored to Israel. What made the difference? David went back to the unchanging truth of who God is and what He wanted. He pursued His person.

Psalms 68:35 (NKJV) reads: "O God, You are more awesome than Your holy places. The God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people." Notice it's God Himself who gives the strength and the power, not His presence.

The sun's rays offer warmth and growth for the earth, but they would not exist if their source, the sun, was not there. We can't continue to pursue His presence and not His person. This is a warning to be heeded. And I share this message not at the place of total accomplishment, but right along side you.

How do we pursue His person? Getting face to face with Him is our only choice. Forget about the many allowances we have made today as Christians. Forget about trying to make your church the one where everyone wants to go to.



God's presence in our lives is a by-product of His person, and that can only be found by getting deep into the Word, examining our personal lives (not the lives of those around us) and getting back to the basics of our faith. Can you imagine a church where every single member spent their week pursuing the person of God by getting into the Word, spending time in intercession and worship and walking in discipline and obedience? Yes - they went to work, cleaned the house, walked the dog, made dinner, etc, but their true passion lied deep within the Word of God. Not only will they see God's presence actively manifesting in their lives, but the River of God that overflows into Sunday morning would make Niagara Falls look like a drippy faucet. This would be a church to be reckoned with; an unstoppable flow of God's presence. And why? Because instead of running at an easy pace chasing the wisps of what's left of His presence from the Sunday before, they run harder and faster after God Himself. And when they stay face to face with Him, they can't help but be in His presence. It comes with the territory.

I'm asking anyone who reads this to examine themselves through God's eyes. You can only do that by getting into the Word to know the character of God. Examine your motives, your addictions, your passions - they are all addressed in His word. Believe me when I tell you that I'm right there with you, doing the same thing.

The outcome is not only are we walking, breathing "Person" addicts, but we are a people of God to be reckoned with. The presence of God has found a habitat in agreement with its Source.

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