

Train Yourself to Worship

John 15:11

preached @ Hawkwood Baptist Church
by Shafer Parker, Jr.
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Text: “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.”

This verse is all about worship because complete joy in Christ inevitably is based upon worship and grows by means of worship.

But this morning we’re going to focus most of our attention on the Scripture Reading: I Sam. 30:1-8. So let me encourage you to open your Bibles there.

Intro.

Here’s the problem with preaching about worship; it doesn’t seem very practical. I think all Christians agree that worship is important. And most would agree that worship is the end goal of existence. Nevertheless, I suspect a lot of Christians never make the connection between worship and so-called real life. It isn’t necessarily obvious that there is a practical purpose in learning how to worship.

It is my goal to disabuse you of that notion this morning.

Last week I introduced the following principle.

Principle: True worshippers especially worship God in the midst of testing times. Anybody can be grateful when all is well, but only the man or woman who possesses a heaven-born faith can praise God while in pain or afraid.

Today I want to show you that not only is it possible to praise God in tough times, not only is it a great witness to praise God in tough times, but when you’re in a jam, praising God and worshipping Him is actually the most practical thing you can do.

Example: David in this morning’s text.

1. In verse one David and his 600 men (see verse 9) come home after being away for about three days.
2. When they arrive they find the Amalekites have burned down their village and taken all their wives and children.
3. All the men are angry and upset.
4. They want to blame David, partly because it’s a human tendency to blame somebody, and partly because David had just led them on what had turned out to be a useless quest. We don’t need to get into that right now, but keep in mind that every man was thinking, “While David had us marching up and down through the countryside and going absolutely nowhere, all our wives and loved ones were being killed.”
5. Their next thought was to kill David, and in that rocky country a good, old-fashioned stoning seemed just what Dr. Freud would have ordered for the men to give vent to their anger.

6. If any of us had been in David's shoes we probably would have decided that all was lost. We might have even invited the men to stone us just to put us out of our own misery.
7. That, of course, is what David did *not* do. What he did is found in verse 6. He "found strength in the Lord his God." Then he got a word from God about what to do next. Then he led his men to rescue their wives and children.

Application

Let's apply this story to our own lives. And first, let me say that it isn't really difficult to put ourselves in David's place.

1. You may not be called upon to lead 600 men, but has anyone else in your life ever been hurt or disappointed because of a decision you made?
2. You may never be threatened with being stoned to death, but have you ever felt that all the forces of hell had been unleashed upon you?
3. You may never have to figure out how to save your life in 60 seconds or less, but have you ever felt overwhelmed by all that stands against you?
4. Bottom line, at some point or another, all of us have had thoughts like, "Can I go on?" "Should I even bother to try?" "Is there any hope to be found?" "All my labour and waiting upon God has been in vain." "The people I've tried hardest to help have become my worst enemies." "Maybe it would be a mercy if I just died tonight."
5. None of this is what David did. Instead we find Scripture saying, "David found strength in the Lord his God." When David was in trouble he wasn't wobbling. He was worshipping. He was gathering strength from God. And he was doing it deliberately.

The problem with getting the translation right (Hebrew to English).

The problem is whether or not the verb at the end of verse 6 is active or passive.

Here are three options you could take in translating verse 6.

Active voice: "But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God" (ESV).

Passive voice: "But he (David) felt the LORD God giving him strength" (CEV).

Middle position: "But David found strength in the Lord his God" (NIV).

The ESV is correct. If you study the original language you will discover that David played an active role in strengthening himself for the task at hand. In that awful moment *David turned Himself toward God in worship* and found exactly what he needed.

What would a guy in David's position need? I mean, what are some of the things David could not possibly supply for himself, but that God could supply to him through worship?

1. A calm **spirit**, he would need to be able to think clearly.
2. **Courage**: simply to stand in front of these men.
3. **Faith**: faith enables trust in God, great faith leads to a complete casting of oneself upon God.
4. **Love**: He would need to be able to maintain the affection of the men so as to lead them effectively in the future.
5. **Hope**: He would need assurance that God would keep his promises, no matter how dark things appeared for the moment.
6. **Objectivity**: He would need to be able to see things from God's perspective. From God's

point of view no situation is ever lost; there is never “no hope.” He would need to be able to think about what God might be doing in his life at that moment. As in: “What can I learn from this predicament? What is God teaching me? But also, what is God showing the world about Himself at this moment? Is it possible that if I will be faithful, God will faithfully care for me, and eventually vindicate all that is happening right now in the eyes of my men?”

7. **Guidance:** It’s one thing to discuss a hypothetical spiritual problem. It’s another to face 600 angry men and then ask, “What should I do next? And of course, David knew what to do next. He called for Abiathar the priest and had him bring his ephod. Then he specifically asked of God what God thought he and his men should do.

Here’s what we know. David was in the habit of strengthening all those positive characteristics in his life through worship! Check out Psalm 57.

Psalm 57

For the director of music. [To the tune of] "Do Not Destroy." Of David. A <miktam.> *When he had fled from Saul into the cave (cave of Adullam).* (Miktam, either a piece of gold or a precious, truth more valuable than gold) The miktam here is that regular, faithful God-centred worship can prepare you for anything life dishes out. Please keep the above list in mind as I read through Psalm 57.

1 Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.

2 I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me.

3 He sends from heaven and saves me, rebuking those who hotly pursue me; <Selah> God sends his love and his faithfulness.

4 I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts — men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.

6 They spread a net for my feet — I was bowed down in distress. They dug a pit in my path — but they have fallen into it themselves. <Selah>

7. My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make music.

8 Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn.

9 I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples.

10 For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies.

11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.

David was in the habit of worshipping in the midst of his daily life.

“Sometimes there is a tendency to think that one needs to leave off their life concerns when they come to worship so they can concentrate on God. This is not what we find in the psalms, which are, above all, words of worship. On the contrary, the Psalter is heavily weighted with the concerns of life and life situations. They are anything but an escape from life. **In fact, the main point here is that the heart of true authentic worship is the bringing of one’s life and concerns to God so that they might be set before Him and worked through in His presence.** One “calls on the name of the Lord” in the midst of it all. In a sense, *authentic worship is seeing God while looking life squarely in the face.*” Richard Averbek

To get back to the story in II Sam. 30, David was the worshipper in that situation — and this is no coincidence. **David, the worshipper, was the one man who knew what to do.** I'm going to suggest right now that worshippers are leaders. That is simply the way it works. If you are a regular, faithful, daily worshipper of God you will always stand out as a person who actually understands what is going on and who knows what God wants done.

Now I'm now going to suggest something that is perhaps a little more controversial. David could do all the worship he describes in Psalm 57 in about two seconds as he stood before the angry men. How? He was a well-trained worshipper.

Well-trained worshippers will have practised the following actions until they are second nature. Things previously discussed:

1. Scripture intake
2. Prayer

Additional areas of training to make you an effective worshipper:

3. Develop the habit of recognizing God in all situations. Said Sherlock Holmes to Dr. Watson, "You look, but you do not see." We need to develop the habit of recognizing the presence of God in all situations, so that we can do it quickly. Hunters can see deer where city folk can only see brush because they've trained their eyes to spot the deer. In the same way we need to train our spiritual eyes to find God in every situation, so that we can find Him even when we need to spot Him in a hurry. David had developed this knack in spades.
4. Learn to wield God's word like a sword (Eph. 6:17). God's word is sharp and cuts to the bone. There's no doubt about that, but I'm going to suggest God's word is both a sword and a scalpel. It's a sword when you use the Word to defend yourself from all the fiery darts of doubt that are flung at you by the wicked one. It's a scalpel when you use God's word on yourself to cut away such spiritual cancers as bitterness, worry, jealousy, fear, hate, selfishness and self-centredness. We cannot worship as we ought if we are crippled by these spiritual cancers.
5. Learn to journal your experience with God. This, too, is a form of worship. The psalms of David are a poetic journal of his experiences with God. The book of Lamentations is a record of the prophet Jeremiah's experiences with God. The man who journals can remember what God has done and can then be hopeful that God will do it again.
6. Finally, find ways to worship with fellow Christians. David said, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'" (Ps. 122:1). Whether we're talking about Sunday morning, small groups, accountability groups, or whatever it might be, the powerful worshipper seizes every opportunity to worship God with others. This grants a power to us when we have to stand alone.

Conclusion: The heart of worship is Jesus in your life!

Jesus speaks of a day when His disciples "will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you" (John 14:20).

Be sure this verse applies to you.