

GROWING IN GRACE LETTERS! – Calling saints in Christ, (in our homes and with one another in Church), to walk in the Steps of Jesus! (1 Peter 2:15-25) Edited by James Bell, a servant of Jesus Christ!

9 2 25 V1n17 SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES— WHICH HONOR GOD and BUILD UP SAINTS!

IT IS COMMON in 2025, for masses of people to look for certain types of music and ‘worship services, so as to GIVE THEM [US!] CERTAIN emotional FEELINGS and experiences—which is then equated as ‘being near to God.’ **THUS, THE MASSES often CHOOSE CHURCHES, BASED UPON: “We like their music!” OR “did not like their music!”**

When music is seen as the chief way to encounter God, worship leaders and musicians are vested with a priestly role. They become the ones who bring us into the presence of God rather than Jesus Christ who alone has already fulfilled that role!

[NOTE: And in this environment, preachers become showmen and story tellers instead of preachers of the Word of God!]

MOREOVER, if we identify a ‘feelings’ as an encounter with God, and only a particular kind of music produces that feeling, then we will insist that the same sort of music be played regularly in our church or gatherings... Others depend upon a different kind of music to produce the feeling that is important to them; thus, there is division in the congregation.

And because we routinely classify ‘particular feelings’ as encounters with God — our demands for what produce those feelings can become very rigid.

This is why so many churches succumb to offering multiple styles of worship services. By doing so, they unwittingly sanction division and self-centeredness among the people of God.

Scripture is full of exhortations to God’s people to sing and make music to the Lord. Our God has been gracious to give us this means to worship Him. **But it is important to understand that music in our worship is for two specific purposes: to honor God and to edify our fellow believers!”**

[The above is edited from Todd Pruitt, Pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Harrisonburg, Virginia.]

MAN-CENTERED WORSHIP HAS SIMILARITIES TO A

COCAINE RUSH! (The following is edited from Sam Williamson, Beliefs of the Heart)

I once met with a man — let’s call him Nathan — who described himself as a, “recovering charismatic.” He was open to it; but his experience of modern worship gave him pause. As he grew up, his mother frantically, obsessively moved rapidly from one worship experience to the next. After Toronto she visited Florida, then Bethel Church, and then anywhere she heard “something” was happening. Worship music unceasingly blared throughout the house. She seemed to need its euphoric “oomph” to motivate her for the tiniest of

tasks. Wiping kitchen counters took the combined efforts of Matt Redman, Chris Tomlin, and Paul Baloche. Don't ask what spring cleaning required. But she remained anxious, fearful, self-concerned, and neglectful of her husband and sons. She'd say, "I just want to go where God is working," but it really seemed she just wanted an escape, a place where her problems could be sedated. **After describing all this, Nathan added,** "A friend of mine became a crack addict. Frankly I didn't see much difference between him and my mom. They got their highs in different ways, and their lives remained a mess." **"I wonder," he continued, "if modern worship is like a cocaine rush?"**

I'm Sympathetic: Nathan's description of his childhood experiences startled me. **I was a worship leader for years, and I often tried to stir up feelings!** I loved to hear someone say, "Wow, that worship was great; I really felt the Lord's presence." Now I wonder about our pursuit of euphoria in worship. **ONE WISELY SAID: "If we continually try to bring back those exceptional moments of EMOTIONS/FEELINGS, it is a sign that IT IS NOT GOD we want— BUT EXPERIENCES!"**

The purpose of worship is to worship God! Sadly, it seems to me that the purpose of modern worship services is simply self-centered efforts to stir up good feelings. We are all thinking of ourselves. And seeking the "rush" in worship is

simply another example of concentrating on ourselves (though we may fail to recognize it because it's disguised as "worship").

WHAT ARE WE TO DO? Real Christian worship is the solution for self-centeredness. IT IS fixing our mind on the Ultimate OTHER, [ALMIGHTY GOD!]. Real Christian worship is a heart-gaze on God, contemplating the majesty and glory and goodness of God. Real Christian worship is consciously staring at His unimaginable love, His unstoppable power, His ultimate justice, His grand and glorious SOVEREIGNTY; His attention to the sparrow's needs, and His care for every human being.

Real Christian worship is attributing ultimate value to the Ultimate Being who is ultimately beyond us; and yet who is beside us as we sit in our desk chair and in us as we wash the dishes. Real Christian worship involves an intense focus (of heart, mind, soul and strength) on the beauty of God. It is looking, gazing, meditating, and reflecting on the majesty of God.

Real Christian worship is seeing Him for all HE is— SOVEREIGN LORD, Master, King, Father, Shepherd, and Friend. And, yes, seeing His glory WILL often move us to joy as well.

Real Christian worship is Changes Us: When we SET our heart gaze on CHRIST, the Ultimate Star; when we let HIS beauty and light penetrate our soul— then we'll be changed forever.

Anxiety, grasping for euphoria, selfish ambition, and even self-consciousness will cease. WE WILL worship and adore the Creator not the creation.

Real worship of the real God does, in the end, bring real life. I'm in favor of experiencing God. I hope I do more. I hope you do too. But the experience is a result of worship (at least sometimes) not the purpose!

A STATEMENT OF CORPORATE WORSHIP PHILOSOPHY!

(Adapted from several sources)

OUR WORSHIP services are to be corporate expressions of our members' love for the God of the Bible. Because worship is an expression of love for God, we come together not to seek first what we may receive out of worship — although we receive and need much — but how we may first through His enabling grace render our service of worship to the supreme God. GOD IS SUPREME (Rom. 11:36; Acts 17:24-30).

Our public worship will focus on God. We will seek to aggressively know Him through His Word and wholeheartedly respond to His supremacy in biblically appropriate ways as a people of God in corporate worship. GOD IS HOLY (Lev. 11:44-45).

Because there is no other god like the God revealed in the Bible, we will encourage individuals to be enthralled by Him so as to be eagerly overflowing with praise, thanksgiving, fear, repentance, confession, prayer, and obedience through humble dependence on Him. We will, by our lives and our words, shout joyfully of the wonders of this God. **Our worship of the Holy God should compel us to be individuals characterized by holiness as well.**

God Has Chosen to Dwell Among His People Through His Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16). **Corporately, God is present when His people gather together.** His presence is seen most clearly in our lives when we allow God's Spirit to fill (control) us to such an extent that others see Christ in our lives as we fellowship, love, serve, sing, listen, respond, etc.

Furthermore, God's Spirit is present whenever the truth of God is proclaimed in an understandable way. Therefore, through the lives of Spirit-controlled people and the passionate proclamation of God's Word, *our desire would be that a believer leaves our corporate worship time saying,*

"I have met with God today," and the unbeliever would declare, "Certainly God is among you" (1 Cor. 14:25). **[NOT BECAUSE OF DRUMMED UP EMOTIONS; BUT BECAUSE OF ENCOUNTERS WITH TRIUNE TRUTH — Father, Son, Holy Spirit — by means of the Holy Spirit of Truth QUICKENING the Scriptures (The Word**

of Truth) to us!] GOD IS TRUTH (Is. 65:16). God expects truth in worship (John 4:23).

All aspects of a worship service should be shaped by and permeated by the Word of God. Only the truth of Christ (John 17:17) which is the word of Christ (Col. 3:16) has any sanctifying impact on the believer and can draw the unbeliever. **Therefore, the truth of God will be proclaimed through** preaching, singing, praying, repenting, giving, observing the Lord's Table, testifying, etc.

When we respond to God in song, the chief characteristic of our songs will be that they are theologically accurate.

These songs may be new choruses, traditional hymns, or other songs; as long as they are theologically accurate, they are acceptable. Any instrument, arrangement, or sound that detracts from the primacy of the message will be discarded or refined so that it promotes the message of truth.

The musical accompaniment is not to be the focal point of worship— the message of truth will be. GOD KNOWS OUR HEARTS (Is. 29:13, Matt. 15:7-9). God is not pleased with vain worship.

Vain worship is characterized by things such as personal convenience and entertainment, lack of preparation, mindless participation, irreverence, and apathy. **Heartfelt worship is**

marked by personal sacrifice and giving, preparation, focus, reverence, and enthusiasm.

True worship comes from the heart of individuals who are allowing the Word of God to "dwell in [them] richly" (Col. 3:16). Our goal therefore is to engage our minds and hearts to meditate and apply great spiritual truth put to song and proclaimed through preaching.

Because worship begins with an internal response to the truth of God, we understand that external music cannot create worship and cannot make us feel and/or experience true worship. Therefore, we will not make it our goal to feel a certain way. A sense of blessedness (awe, joy, peace, exhilaration) and a sense of our unworthiness before a holy God (Is. 6:5-- sorrow, remorse, fear) are both by-products of a heart responding appropriately to God.

NOTE: GOD CREATED THE PHYSICAL BODY (Gen. 2:7). God created man as both a material (body) and immaterial (heart/soul/mind/spirit/will/etc.) being and declared both elements of man "good." **THEREFORE: Worship in the Bible often includes** appropriate physical manifestations in the body such as singing, raising of hands, bowing down, and RESPONDING WITH 'AMENS and HALLELUJAHS'.

God demands, however, that our bodies be under the control of a Spirit-led heart and mind (Eph. 5:18). While we

encourage the freedom to express one's self physically in worship, these expressions should not draw undue attention to one's self because our focus in corporate worship is on God.

GOD IS WORTHY (1 Cor. 10:31; 14:40, Col. 3:23). God is pleased as we seek to do all that we do in a manner of excellence for His glory. God is not pleased with mediocre efforts and half-hearted commitments.

GOD IS ALIVE (Ps. 115; Jer. 10:10; Dan. 6:19-28; 1 Tim. 4:10). We will expect fresh expressions of God's work in the hearts of His people. We will encourage a freedom in worship that is God-honoring and authentic, allowing for biblically appropriate responses to God's multifaceted glory as we meditate for extended periods on His supremacy.

GOD HAS RENEWED HIS PEOPLE'S HEARTS (2 Cor. 5:17). God has made His children new creations— having regenerated the hearts of those who have placed their faith in His Son.

Believers have the capacity to offer sacrifices of praise to God. Therefore, we will design worship services mainly for THE WORSHIP OF GOD and for the benefit of believers, as we express corporately our passion for the holiness of God, *reflecting it so clearly and joyously that unbelievers who are present may also be awakened and give Him glory.*

GOD IS LIGHT (1 John 1:5-10). As children of God, we are to walk in the light. We will strive for authenticity and transparency and vulnerability always— public or private.

Publicly in worship, we will strive to be real before God and each other. We will confess public sin publicly and private sin privately and admit openly our imperfections.

BELOVED! LET US GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD! James Bell /

www.southsidegallatin.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS: SUNDAY SERVICES, 2025: September 7, 14, 21, 28: EACH SUNDAY: [1] Sunday School at 9:30am: Nursery, Children's classes, Youth, and Adult classes. **[2] WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:45am!**

[MONTHLY SPECIAL MEETINGS]

September 7 ... FELLOWSHIP MEAL

September 21, LORD'S SUPPER / HOME GROUPS

September 28, 5:00pm, EVENING WORSHIP SERVICE

EVERY SATURDAY * 8:00am,** — Men's Bible Study! (*Doors open by 7:30am... coffee, juice, donuts, and Hardee's Biscuits!*) **[9/6/25 - Ephesians 6:18-24, PRAYING ALWAYS!]**

NEXT Ladies Bible Study, SEPTEMBER 16, 2025 @ 11:00am
(LADIES Bible Study, from JOB!) (**NO CHILD CARE.**)

*****EVERY TUESDAY: LADIES PRAYER MEETING FROM 10:00 to 10:30am, come in back door, under drive-thru awning, go IN THE IMMEDIATE FIRST ROOM ON THE RIGHT!**

***** Tuesday Evenings, Southside Young Adult Group; Bible Study, (EXODUS), @ 7:15pm, at Jaden & Rhi's home**

WEDNESDAYS: 6:30pm — (Come in Back double door, under Drive Thru Awning) ** Adult MEN'S Prayer Service

**** Young FAMILIES STUDY/Prayer Service**

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***** LOVE OFFERINGS UNTO THE LORD (by MAIL or by ONLINE GIVING) For Church Ministry and/or MISSIONS:**

SUCH funds, (if checks), make out to Southside Baptist) — MAIL TO: Southside Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1594, Gallatin, TN 37066 / OR... TO GIVE via ONLINE GIVING:

<https://southsidebaptist.breezechms.com/give/online>