

# Swept off your Feet

## Beyond Worship-as-Usual

Connecting with God for a Strong Finish

### CHAPTER 11c

## Worship and Praise

### Distinguished in Principle but Blended in Practice

Most biblical narratives describe worship without mentioning music, praise, or singing. This fact does not mean that these expressions did not occur during worship or that they are any less important. The Bible simply does not emphasize music, praise, or singing in connection with worship.

Somewhere in the modern culture we've become confused, thinking that worship and songs are one and the same.<sup>1</sup>

Louie Giglio

The phrase “praise and worship” occurs nowhere in the Bible. This omission stands in sharp contrast with the popular jargon of the 21st Century church. In practice, most churches use praise and worship interchangeably. While praise may complement and inspire worship, the two expressions are not identical.

Literal translators avoid rendering Hebrew or Greek words for worship as praise, and vice versa. Praising God differs in motive and varies in expression from worshipping Him. Strictly speaking, praise means to compliment. It indicates why God deserves worship. By applauding His attributes and acclaiming His performance, praise magnifies the truth

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<sup>1</sup> Louie Giglio, *The Air I Breathe—Worship as a Way of Life*, Multnomah, 2003, p 71.

about God's worth. It highlights worthy merits by commending worthy accomplishments and extoling worthy promises.

Worship stands out in the Bible as an exclusive response different from praise and separate from song. It is a sacred gesture, distinguished in motive and specialized in method. Only God merits worship. He alone deserves this level of admiration, veneration, and extreme homage.

Praise on the other hand, may apply to angels, humans, and animals. While individuals may offer praise to God, they also praise entertainers, educators, athletes, technologies, and organizations. Applying expressions of worship to any other entity whether animate or inanimate, contradicts its unique purpose.

Both angels and humans offer radical reverence based on their appraisal of divine reality. Worshipers gauge their response on praiseworthy evidence gained through personal experience, direct exposure, and divine revelation. The veracity of God's worth evokes intensity in praise and integrity in worship.

### **Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs**

Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs promote and advance our response of worship. They affirm sound doctrine and promote spiritual growth. Just as in speaking praise, inspired lyrics articulate why God deserves facedown worship. They assert the reason why He merits a response of extreme reverence. Paul encourages us to:

*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*  
(Colossians 3:16 NAS)

Singing arrests our attention and focuses it on God—with concentrated repetition. Songs of praise support gestures of worship by highlighting God's attributes, detailing His achievements, and emphasizing His promises.

After connecting with Christ, Paul admonishes us to deliberately cultivate a state of being *“filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.”*<sup>2</sup>

When performed in concert with the Holy Spirit, lyrics of truth heighten our awareness to God’s presence and to the value of His worth. Praise evokes a comprehensive response informed in spirit and established in truth. Giving thanks and voicing compliments remind us that God deserves more than a ritual of superficial devotion. Extending highest praise for His exalted majesty inspires worshipers to respond with demonstrative passion.

Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs motivate worshipers to embrace life-changing encounters. They activate powerful emotions and trigger supernatural dynamics in God’s presence. Praising the Lord with singing cultivates unity in the Spirit and galvanizes a relational bond of faith, hope, love, and peace.

The Bible emphasizes both music and singing for giving praise to God. David made musical instruments specifically for this purpose. After consecrating them to the Lord, he commissioned musicians to play when he gave thanks and proclaimed God’s love.

*The priests took their positions, as did the Levites with **the LORD'S musical instruments**, which King David had made for praising the LORD and which were used **when he gave thanks, saying**, “His love endures forever.” Opposite the Levites, the priests blew their trumpets, **and all the Israelites were standing**. (2 Chronicles 7:5-6 NAS)*

With or without lyrics, music has the power to prime an audience to receive the knowledge of the truth. When executed with sensitivity it sets a receptive tone for teachers and preachers. Musical interludes provide an atmosphere of spiritual focus as listeners confess sins, con-

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<sup>2</sup> Eph 5:18-20 NAS

vey love, and present offerings. They promote meditation and inspire contemplation. Music captivates participants and spectators alike inspiring them to pray by faith and serve with conviction.

### **Praise—A Catalyst for Worship**

“Music, rather than being the act of worship, becomes the catalyst for worship. We remind people that there is a God worthy of our praise, worthy of our affection, and jealous for our love in the wildest and most wonderful of ways.”<sup>3</sup> (Dan Haseltine, *Jars of Clay*)

A wall of partition does not separate praise and worship. These two expressions belong together. They augment one another with supporting motives and complementary intentions. On a foundation of informed truth, the high praises of God ascend with a crescendo, inspiring worshipers to respond with radical reverence.

According to Jack Hayford, “The importance of music to the modern Reformation of Worship can’t be overstated.”<sup>4</sup> He believes that singing praise will contribute to an immense breakthrough for the following reasons:

Singing will soften hearts and allow the Word of God to convict hardened souls. Worshipful singing will serve as the cutting edge of a Reformation of Worship.<sup>5</sup>

### **Make His Praise Glorious!**

*Sing the glory of His name; Make His praise glorious.*

Psalm 66:2 NAS

Praise inspires worship because it highlights God’s worthiness. When a person appraises God accurately, he or she becomes especially well

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<sup>3</sup> Dan Haseltine, *Jars of Clay*, in the Afterward to Charlie Peacock’s book, *At the Crossroads, Inside the Past, Present, and Future of Contemporary Christian Music*, WaterBrook Press a division of Random House, Inc., Colorado Springs, 2004, p. 208.

<sup>4</sup> Michael D. Warden editor for nine contributing authors, *Experiencing God in Worship*, Group Publishing, Inc., Loveland, CO, 2000, p. 149.

<sup>5</sup> Michael D. Warden editor for nine contributing authors, *Experiencing God in Worship*, Group Publishing, Inc., Loveland, CO, 2000, p. 149.

qualified to offer effusive praise and explicit worship. Understanding the contribution of each gesture clarifies its purpose and enhances its effectiveness.

Praise and worship converge with dynamic synergy and supernatural insight. Higher and higher praise compels more and more people to worship God for all He's worth. As we praise God based on true knowledge, we find ourselves worshiping with deeper conviction. Knowing praiseworthy details not only informs us, it compels us to offer a cohesive response.

While anointed music and inspired lyrics complement expressions of worship, they are not a substitute for it. Mislabeling praise as worship or worship as praise undermines the unique dynamics associated with each. Confusing praise songs with gestures of worship suppresses our response of veneration on earth as it is in heaven. When our Heavenly Father seeks worshipers, He looks for accurately informed responders expressing reverence based on spiritual convictions.

### **Worship in the Spotlight**

Having carefully appraised God's worth, worshipers communicate more than reverence—they make His praise glorious! In concert with the heavenly host, worshipers exalt the Lord with extravagant accolades. They applaud His attributes, commend His accomplishments, and esteem His promises. They praise Him AND they worship Him.

As worshipers praise God with oratory, music, song, dance, theater, art, and writing, the truth about Him reverberates with profound intensity. Artistic expressions concentrate our attention on the knowledge of the truth—the truth about God, self, and others. They heighten intellectual awareness and enrich emotional engagement. When praise artists communicate God's worth, they inspire an absorbed response infused with reverent affection.

Articulating praise, especially through the arts, requires more skill than bowing down does. While God does not need talented experts offering Him praise, He certainly deserves them.

