

Worship From The Heart – Part 2

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1 and 2 Samuel: The Heart After God Series

2 Samuel 6

One of the things that people who are new to church life, and some who are not so new, struggle with is why the church takes time each week for singing songs to God, for taking bits of bread and juice in communion. For those of you who are sensitive to the problems in the world, you might say: Why take a half hour of the time of thousands of people to sing songs to Jesus, to say nice things to him, to go through the ritual of communion, particularly when you look out at the world and there are continued bombings in Iraq, unrelenting violence in the Darfur, AIDS, racism, poverty, and marital breakdown?

Some of you might say getting together and singing songs to Jesus is a diversion from the real action. To put it even more plainly, why waste time on worship when there is real work to be done? Does it make sense to spend our time on communion, taking bits of bread and juice each week, into our already over-fed bodies when so many people in the world have no bread and no drink at all?

Have any of you ever wondered why we take time to worship especially in light of issues of justice and in light of all the other things that we need to do – clean our homes, take walks, do art, earn money, mow our lawns, lead a small group, relate to our kids and friends, practice hospitality, eat, hug people, witness – in light of all the other things we're supposed to do, especially doing good for other people. Why worship?

Before I talk about the heart of worship, I do feel a need to answer the question: why worship?

Here is one answer. We Christians take time to worship for the same reason we Christians take time to pray; because we Christians believe (or at least we try to believe) that the most important activity in the world is not ours, but God's. When we worship, we are pinning our hope on the fact that God is working, that God is on the move even when we're not working, and even when we're not on the move. Worship focuses our attention on God and his activities.

Let me ask you a question: do any of you struggle with worship because it seems like you aren't doing anything productive? It makes sense for you to come to church 15-30 minutes late, or during the announcements, because you don't get that much out of singing. Maybe you don't like the style and maybe you feel you aren't doing anything productive during the worship part of our services. Let me let you in on a little secret. You are right, in part, and being right in part you have totally missed the point.

The truth is, friend, that you are not being productive when you stand in a church building and focus your attention on God and thank him, or speak to him, or praise him for 25 minutes a week at church. And that is the point. Worship gets us to pay attention to the truth that our activity and our moral energy, and our doing justice is not what ultimately matters. What ultimately matters is God and his activity. Having a specified time each week and having a time each day when you intentionally stop working and stop producing and focus your attention and heart on God and his activities is crucial to your spiritual health.

I mean, what is necessary for a human being to be saved? To be saved you have to stop relying on your own accomplishments, your own productivity, what you can generate from your own person and you have to pin your entire faith utterly and completely on what God has done in and through his Son Jesus Christ. To be saved you intentionally choose to not rely on yourself, but on God who saves.

As Gene Peterson puts it in his Message version of Romans 4.4-5,

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If you are a hard worker and do a good job, you deserve your pay; we don't call your wages a gift. But if you see that the job is too big for you, that it is something only God can do, and you trust him to do it – you could never do it for yourself no matter how hard and long you worked – well, that trusting-him-to-do-it is what gets you set right with God, by God. Sheer gift.

David confirms this way of looking at it, saying that the one who trusts God to do the putting-everything-right without insisting on having a say in it is the fortunate man.

But relying on God's activity more than our own is an ongoing life lesson. This is a lesson absolutely central to spiritual health. This is a lesson central to the formation of your heart. How do you deal with a difficult marriage? By relying not on yourself, but trusting wholly in God and his strength to get you through. How do you do battle with temptation? By relying not on yourself, but trusting wholly in God and looking to God to get you through.

How do we do justice in an unjust world? By first of all trusting not in ourselves, but looking wholly to God and relying on him to give us direction, wisdom and insight.

And I might add, when we don't spend time in God's presence worshipping him, when we just rush out in the world to do good out of our own moral indignation, we often do more harm than good. So many of us as Christians adopt a position of moral superiority to everyone else. We assume that we are utterly in the right and others are totally in the wrong because we haven't spent time in this

unproductive activity called worship – allowing a meeting with God to confront us about our lack of charity toward others, our self-righteousness, the ways we break God’s heart by our behavior. Only in worship as we meet with God do we grasp the truth of Russian author, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who said,

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If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?

Those of you who have been here for a few months probably have noticed that we spend an awful lot of time singing here in the Vineyard. You may be puzzled regarding why we do that. It is certainly not because we have nothing else we can think of doing. We could take another offering. We could take three offerings. We could have various kinds of performances.

Why do we do what we do in worshipping for ½ an hour each week?

Some of you, who are newer, may look around during our singing that happens at the first part of our service and notice that a few people have their hands raised. Perhaps as you glance down your aisle you may notice that someone is crying or tearing up. You may have even noticed that on occasion a few people get pretty emotional. And I assume, especially if you are a guest or are relatively new here, if you aren’t used to a church service like this, some of what you are seeing around you might be a little strange to you. It might even make you feel uncomfortable. You don’t quite understand why we in the Vineyard do what we do. And so I feel a need to explain.

Explanation is often a precondition for participation. I can’t participate in what I don’t understand. For example, most of you know that I come from a Jewish background. Every year since we’ve been married Marlene and I host a Passover dinner at our home and we invite new friends to join us in the Passover. Most of the folks that we invite have never participated in a Passover dinner at someone’s home. So I take time to explain the various customs and rituals that are taking place during the Passover dinner. I take time to explain why we eat the food that we do and why we pray the prayers we pray.

As I continue in this second part of my sermon titled “Worship From the Heart,” I want to use it as an opportunity to explain to you a little bit about why we do what we do in worship. It is not going to be a comprehensive talk about worship, but I am going to explain a little bit about some of our practices and behaviors in the Vineyard. I’ve called today’s talk, “Worship from the Heart – Part II.” Let’s pray.

SLIDE – 2 Samuel 6.13-ff

2Sa 6:13 When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf.

2Sa 6:14 Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the LORD with all his might,

2Sa 6:15 while he and the entire house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

2Sa 6:16 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.

2Sa 6:17 They brought the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the LORD

2Sa 6:18 After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD Almighty.

2Sa 6:19 Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes.

2Sa 6:20 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, going around half-naked in full view of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!”

2Sa 6:21 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

2Sa 6:22 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.”

2Sa 6:23 And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.

Let me set the context of this passage for you. In the first half of 2 Samuel 6 David wishes to make Jerusalem not only the center of government for the people of Israel, but also the center of worship. And to do that, David needed to transport the Ark of the Covenant, the most holy object in ancient Israel, to Jerusalem. The Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament was associated with the presence of God.

Well, as the Ark was being transported to Jerusalem, we read this:

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2Sa 6:6 When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled.

2Sa 6:7 The LORD’s anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down, and he died there beside the ark of God.

2Sa 6:8 Then David was angry because the LORD’s wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah.

2Sa 6:9 David was afraid of the LORD that day and said, "How can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?"

2Sa 6:10 He was not willing to take the ark of the LORD to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite.

2Sa 6:11 The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed him and his entire household.

As I said last week, David was confronted by the mystery of God's strange activity in the world. He's transporting the Ark back to Jerusalem. It is on the back of a cart in violation of God's commandments regarding how the Ark was to be transported. The oxen stumbled and the Ark was about to fall. Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the Ark and was killed.

When David saw this he became afraid of God; he became angry with God; David withdrew from God. Confronted with the mystery of God's anger, David said, "I don't want to play anymore. Why, Lord, why did Uzzah have to die? Other acts of disobedience to your commandments don't resolve in instant death. Why not warn Uzzah first? Why not send a prophet to rebuke us before we stepped over the line? You've done that before, why didn't you do that this time?"

Confronted by the mystery of God, we like David pull our hearts away from the Lord.

- Why Lord did we have a child with autism? We spend so many hours doing therapy. There is so much stress on our family. Couldn't you have designed my son or daughter's brain chemistry just a little differently? How does this particular affliction promote your kingdom?
- Why, God? I thought we were doing every thing basically right. We prayed. We had daily devotions. We have family time. We set reasonable boundaries for our child. We have lots of love. Why did my child get into so much trouble? I know other families who were far less devoted to raising their kids and their children turned out great. They seem to be really successful. Why has my child gone off the rails? Am I being punished? Is this a demonic attack on us?

Or maybe you are a bright, warm, socially engaging, not particularly bad looking Christian woman and you say: Lord, I've been sexually pure my whole life. Or I have absolutely repented of my former sexual activity. I'm 34 right now and there are no prospects on the horizon. I would really like to be married. I would love the companionship. I love kids. I don't want to spend my life alone, God. Why is there no one for me when I see other women happily married whose hearts are not nearly as devoted to you? Other women have been promiscuous, and they have boyfriends and are planning their weddings, getting married and having kids. Why not me?

Do any of you struggle with the mystery of God's strange ways in the world? Even more specifically, do you struggle with the mystery of God's strange ways concerning you and your life, about how things have fallen out for you?

- I'm trying to serve you, Lord, on my job. I'm trying to be honest and honorable. Why have things been so hard for me? Why have I experienced so much opposition?

How all of the pieces of God's plan for our lives fit together in a fallen sinful world that does not function according to God's original design is a mystery. We must never be so arrogant as to say to ourselves: We have figured out the mind of God. At the end of a lengthy discussion regarding the mystery of God's sovereignty and people's choice of rebellion against God, in Romans 9, 10 and 11, Paul sums up this great mystery of the interaction of God's ways and our ways with this text:

SLIDE – Romans 11.33-36

Ro 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and⁹ knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

Ro 11:34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"

Ro 11:35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?"¹¹

Ro 11:36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Again, I love the way The Message version of the Bible puts these verses.

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Is there anyone around who can explain God? Anyone smart enough to tell him what to do? Anyone who has done him such a huge favor that God has to ask his advice? Everything comes from him; everything happens through him; everything ends up in him. Always glory! Always praise! Yes. Yes. Yes.

There are no formulas, friends, despite what Christian books and pastors and churches hand out with easy, glib 5-steps for figuring out God. There are no 7-steps for guaranteeing success in your life. There are no guarantees that if you do A, B and C, God will always do D, if D means health, wealth, recognition, or social success in this world.

Uzzah is killed. So David withdraws from the Lord. David pulls away. And, as we also saw last week, David also returns.

Those who have tasted the Lord's goodness and the Lord's reality cannot stay away from God forever. I've been in Christian leadership in one form or another for three decades. I've seen lots of people accept Christ and I've seen a number of people walk away from Christ and turn their backs on their original

acceptance. But having been in Christian leadership as long as I have, I can tell you this: Those who are sincerely converted, those who have tasted and experienced the reality of the goodness of God in their life, do not stay away forever. They do return. Despite all the hurts and all the confusion and all the unanswered questions, they return. Because once you've been around God, nothing else satisfies.

As I said last week, you cannot go back to simply being a nice person when you've been God's person.

Now, notice the care that David takes as he returns back to God. David went back this time and he walked more slowly. It says in v. 13,

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2Sa 6:13 When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf.

David is less confident, less cocky, and more careful to do the Word of God without playing fast and loose with it.

You know, when people return to God after being away because of some life-shattering event, they return to the Lord as different people than the people who left. If you are going to reengage with God after a period of being away from him, you reengage with the knowledge of your own weakness this time. You reengage as a person who is painfully aware that you have the capacity to walk away, that you have the ability to blow it. You reengage with God with the knowledge now that other people have the capacity to hurt you. That life in this fallen world is not always just or fair. You reengage with the knowledge that you don't have life figured out and all the books regarding how to raise great kids and how to have a great marriage and how to live a successful life don't necessarily work out the way they promise.

You reengage God with humility. And when you reengage God, you now reengage with an appreciation of the power of evil and the reality that you need to learn to live within the limits that God sets for life. David discovered that he just couldn't do anything that he wanted to do, that he needed to learn to live within God's limits.

Before you blow it, you have plenty of freedom to do what you want to do, to go where you want to go. But now that you have fallen off the horse, you hopefully have gained a fresh sense of the power of the horse, its capacity to buck, your susceptibility for falling off. With every reengagement with God, with every return to the Lord, there is a new sense of our own frailty, a knowledge that we don't run nearly so deep as we thought. We now see that we are not above temptation, we aren't above turning our backs on God. We discover that secret sin will eventually eat us alive. That if we have unchecked bitterness in our lives, it will

kill us. A person who reengages with God is a changed person. The prodigal who returned to his father, was a different young man than the prodigal who left his father at the beginning.

If we really reengage with God and don't allow cynicism or bitterness to harden our hearts, we return the way David did – painfully aware that life is not always easy, fair, or good, but that God is always good and we can never do life well without God. Pain and failure are great teachers. They teach us about our own finiteness, our limits, and the rawness of life with God.

So David goes back carefully. But he also reengages God with all of his body, with all of his emotions, with his whole self.

SLIDE – 2 Samuel 6.14-16

2Sa 6:14 Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the LORD with all his might,

2Sa 6:15 while he and the entire house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

2Sa 6:16 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.

Now what was Michal's problem? Well, first of all, she was an observer and critic of worship and not a participant.

We live in a nation of observers and critics. Just witness the phenomenon of reality TV. We vicariously live through the experiences of other people. It is "Dancing With The Stars," "Cooking With The Stars." Soon there will be shows like "Knitting With the Stars," "Building a Home With the Stars," "Living in the Home of the Stars."

How about getting your own life? How about having your own experiences rather than watching the experiences of other people who are living vicariously through Jennifer Aniston or Beyonce?

Do you know how insane the reality craze has gotten? Fox is going to have a 24-hour a day, 7-day a week station simply devoted to reality TV. Every week in the U.S. there are over 200 reality TV shows on cable. Do you know that more people paid to vote for someone on American Idol this year than cast a vote in the last presidential election?

A lot of you would say: Well, that is totally understandable, Rich. I much prefer Taylor Hicks to either of the two people who were running for president in 2004.

But suffice it to say, we live in a nation of observers and critics. For the three of you who have not watched "American Idol," it is basically like the old "Amateur

Hour” with judges. One of the judges is Simon Cowell, who actually created this show, and who is known for his biting, slashing comments in which he rips some of the amateur performers to shreds. He said in an interview with Larry King,

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“I’m not trying to be harsh; I just look at everything in life with a raised eyebrow.”

VIDEO CLIPS – Simon Cowell

What a terrible way to live. But this is America today, going through life like Simon Cowell with a raised eyebrow, critically, cynically, as observers and not participants.

Have you ever noticed how your perspective changes when you stop observing and you start participating? You are way less prone to critique, you are way more sympathetic when you are actually playing in the game.

Unfortunately, the church is not a whole lot different than the world regarding living life as critics and observers. We church people have been trained to be observers and critics. We have cut our teeth on watching what others do at church so that we can critique it. We’ve become so adept at critiquing teachings, spotting the flaws in a person’s preaching and critiquing books: “Well, there were two good points, but there were seven weaknesses.” “Here’s what I don’t like about your children’s ministry.”

Think of all the people in the church world whose entire ministries (if you can call them that) are basically devoted to criticism and critiquing: “Here’s what’s wrong with that church.” Think of the books, the radio ministries, the para-church ministries that are simply devoted to pointing out what is wrong in some church or some movement. We love to observe.

Sometimes, if you are a pastor or a leader like me, its important to critique, to observe, in order to protect and guide the flock that you care for and love. You point out where the error is and where truth is. But everyone of us – me, you, all of us – need to take off our critic/observer/assessor hats and get out of the stands and get in the game. In fact, it would do many of us a world of good to have a heart-to-heart talk with God where we repent of the critical stance we have taken toward God’s people, or certain ministries, or pastors. It would do some of us a world of good to say: “Lord, I’m so sorry for being so full of myself and my own opinions regarding this church or this ministry or this leader. I am not their judge. You are. I am choosing to get in the game of kingdom activity and will stop being a kingdom critic.”

And I say this with all affection, but many of you are not playing the game. You are observing the game. You are watching the game. You might even be enjoying the game. You are just not playing the game.

Napoleon once pointed to a map of China and said,

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“There lies a sleeping giant. If it ever wakes up, it will be unstoppable.”

You know, the church could be described as a sleeping giant. Every Sunday all over America church pews are filled with people who are doing nothing with their faith except “keeping it.” Rick Warren, the writer of the mammothly best-selling book called *The Purpose Driven Life*, once said,

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The designation “active” member in most churches means those who attend regularly and financially support the church. Not much more is expected. But God has far greater expectations for every Christian. He expects every Christian to use his or her gifts and talents in ministry. If we can ever awaken and unleash the massive talent, resources, creativity, and energy lying dormant in the typical local church, Christianity will explode with growth at an unprecedented rate.

That is one of the reasons, by the way, that we are building this community center, which we’ll be opening up we hope at the end of October. It is designed to unleash the church so that you could use your gifts and talents not just to do church stuff – usher and greet, sing in the choir. All of those things are wonderful to do and we appreciate folks who serve in that way. But it is also so that you can discover how your particular gifts and talents could be used for the larger community. So we are creating more and more places for your talents to be used.

Rich Warren went on to say:

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The greatest need in evangelical churches is the release of members for ministry. A Gallup survey discovered that only 10% of American church members are active in any kind of personal ministry. And that 50% of all church members have no interest in serving in any ministry. Think about that! No matter how much a church promotes involvement in lay ministry, half of its members will remain spectators. These are the people who say, “I just don’t feel led to get involved.” (Actually, its another kind of “lead” – in the seat of their pants!).

It would be a good thing for many of us to make a commitment this year not only to consume church resources, but to give back – to serve, to give whatever blessing that God has given to you away. I want to particularly challenge many of you to consider serving our children. Following the service you can go to the

children's information counter and say: You know, I would like to work with some of the kids this year. I think I can help.

And by the way, I've talked with person after person who said: You know the way I learned the Bible? It was by teaching it to children."

What is true regarding ministry is also true regarding getting involved in a small group. Why not say: This September I am going to get involved in a women's group, a men's group, or a coed group. I've been sitting on the sidelines long enough. I'm going to get in the game.

For some of you, it may be a much more global issue because you have never gotten into the game called Christianity. You've never signed up to be a follower of Jesus Christ. You've watched and listened and observed, but you've never signed up.

Even worse, some of you are critics and observers of Christianity. You always have this detached, critical, removed stance. You've never actually taken the plunge into the deep end of the pool. For some of you its been 5-10-20 years of hanging around the edge. When are you going to stop lying on the deck chair and watching other people swim? When will you jump in?

Regarding worship, you are an observer of worship.

"I liked the way the first worship song sounded, and the last song, but the female vocals on that third song – WOW, they really sounded bad. And the mix; I just don't like the way the sound is being mixed. What was that fourth song about anyway?"

Again, I say this with all affection, but it is massively disrespectful to God and extraordinarily arrogant to stay in the position of observer and critic of worship, of other people's ministries, and most of all of Christianity in general. Because, friends, God is our Creator. We were made to be involved with him. He's not just some object for our study like biology. He's the one who demands, requires and deserves our worship.

Now there was a second problem that Michal had regarding her husband David's worship. It was not just that she was a critic and observer. She also disliked David's use of his body in worship – his dancing and leaping.

SLIDE – 2 Samuel 6.14-16

^{2Sa 6:14} Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the LORD with all his might,

^{2Sa 6:15} while he and the entire house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

2Sa 6:16 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.

It is impossible to look at biblical worship without immediately recognizing that people's bodies were involved in worship. Today, individuals look out at a church where people are falling on their faces, or raising their hands and they say, "How strange? Isn't that the oddest thing you have ever seen? That woman over there has her hands raised up. That other person is kneeling; how weird."

Biblically, the words that are used for worship involve the body. The Old Testament words for worship literally mean to lie prostrate. To lie down. One of the words means to kneel down. Another word means to stretch out the hands. There is a word in the New Testament that means to draw near so as to kiss. The body is used for worship. Bodily posture matters.

It matters as you approach God if you are slouching and your hands are in your pockets, or if your hands are stretched out to God. You and your body are a unity. If you want to give yourself to God, you have to give your body to God.

You know, appreciating the place of the body is central to understanding biblical spirituality. The church, since the early centuries, has been afflicted with an unfortunate Greek dualism that separates our bodies from our spirits. According to ancient Greek philosophy, particularly the philosophy of Plato, your body is relatively unimportant. What matters is your soul. And so many people have given Jesus their souls, or given Jesus their hearts, but have not given Jesus their bodies.

The Jews, who wrote the Bible, were way more wholistic and way more concrete about spirituality than were the Greeks. The Jews said: You can't have a relationship with God without it involving your body. You see, they said, first of all that our bodies were created by God. Our bodies have not evolved by chance. And our bodies are not byproducts of the romances between the gods or the wars between the gods. Our bodies were fashioned by God. So the Jews placed a very high value on the human body. We read in Psalm 139 the Jewish view of the forming of our bodies.

SLIDE – Psalm 139.13-16

Ps 139:13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Ps 139:14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Ps 139:15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place.

When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,

Ps 139:16 your eyes saw my unformed body.

God created your body. And your body is created to be in relationship to God. That is why David says in Psalm 63.1,

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Ps 63:1 a You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.

Have you ever felt your body longing for God? The goodness of our bodies was affirmed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. So the apostle John writes in John 1.14,

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Jn 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

Over against all of the religions of the world that conceive of God in purely spiritual terms, our God took on flesh. He affirmed the goodness of our bodies by becoming a man. In fact, the attempt to reduce the coming of God into the world into a purely spiritual phenomenon, rather than something concrete and flesh, was the mark, according to John, of false teaching. 2 John 1.7,

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2Jn 1:7 Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.

And it not just life in this world that is bodily. Our futures, friends, as Christians is a bodily future. The goal of Christianity is not to have your soul flying away to be with God in heaven. ("I'll fly away, oh Lord, I'll fly away!") The ultimate goal of Christianity, the only thing that the Jews who wrote the Bible would understand about the future, is that one day you and I who believe in Jesus and have trusted in him for our salvation will be bodily raised from the dead and live on a concrete new earth together with God forever.

Non-bodily resurrection is inconceivable to the writers of the Bible.

And so our bodies are the place where we live out our relationship with God. What we do with our bodies is part of our worship of God.

You know, it struck me the other day that America is so obsessed right now with Homeland Security, guarding our ports, protecting against illegal immigrants, not

wanting our country to be invaded by people who may be dangerous, or substances that may be dangerous. But you know what we need as a country? We need some Homeland Security regarding our bodies, where we guard our ports and borders from invaders. We offer so little guarding for our bodies. And so we take into our eyes things that pollute us. And we open up our ears and our minds and our sexuality to that which makes us unclean.

You cannot worship God without giving him your body. In fact, it is the offer of your body to God that is the Christian equivalent of the ancient Jews giving sacrifices to God. In Romans 12:1 the apostle Paul writes this:

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Ro 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is true worship.

And in saying this he is saying that instead of killing animal sacrifices as the ancient Jews did and the ancient Romans did, we Christians who know Jesus worship God by giving him our bodies.

John Chrysostom, the great Early Church Father, great ancient preacher, once said,

SLIDE

How is the body to become a sacrifice? Let the eye look on no evil thing, and it has already become a sacrifice. Let the tongue say nothing filthy, and it has become an offering. Let your hand do nothing evil, and it has become a whole burnt offering. But even this is not enough, for we must have good works also. The hand must do alms, the mouth bless those who curse it, and the ears must find time to listen to the reading of scripture. Sacrifice allows of no unclean thing. It is the first fruits of all other actions.

God wants our whole bodies in worship. One of the ways that you can privately worship God is by giving God your body every single day, particularly those parts of your body that give you the most trouble.

- Lord, today I give you my eyes – what I look at, what I stare at, what I lust after, my ambitions.
- I give you my mouth – my appetites, my tongue, what I say, how I manipulate things, my gossip, my slander.
- I give you my ears – what I'm willing to listen to.
- I give you my hands, what I do.
- I give you my sexuality.
- I give you my feet – where I go.

Worship involves the body.

We are talking about Michal's heart. Now there's a third problem regarding Michal's heart and her particular dislike of displays of emotion. "Ooooooh, you are showing too much emotion. Stop it." I call this the spirituality of Mr. Spock, right? Let's stop all emotion and be reasonable and logical. Michal, the theological Mr. Spock.

It is a very peculiar thing to come to a place where you despise emotion, particularly in worship. It is so peculiar. Because no one handling the scriptural text fairly can honestly conclude that worship in the Bible was anything but highly emotional—extravagant, involving both the body and the emotions.

I don't know how many of you have ever kissed someone unemotionally. I imagine my wife, Marlene's, reaction [I've joked about this] if I said, "Marlene, I just want you to know that I feel nothing, absolutely nothing when I kiss you. My heart is frozen and dead. But it is my duty. It is the right thing for me as your husband to do and so I am going to dutifully, rationally, and reasonably tell you that I'm in love with you." I'm sure Marlene would get all excited about a kiss like that.

Wives, what do you think?

Paul says in 2 Cor. 5, "If I'm out of my mind it is for the sake of God. If I'm in my right mind, it is for your sake." I'm madly, irrationally, totally insanely in love with Jesus, I'm ga-ga, willing to do anything, say anything, act any way that Jesus wants me to act, but for your sake, I'll try to appear to be well-balanced and fairly reasonable.

The words used for worship involve crying out, shouting and weeping. People in the bible clapped. They danced. They sang. They loved. They laughed. They wept before the Lord. How did we ever get to the place in the church today where we think that we can approach God in worship without using our bodies and without using our emotions? Why is the Michal heart so rampant in the church today? How did it become common-place that we sit around like Michal looking at other people worshipping and we despise them in our hearts. "Look at that woman over there." And let's admit that is what happens. Let's together admit that Michal, wife of David, is not unique. Her spirit, her despising of someone else for their emotion is really active in the church.

Haven't you ever felt that? The Michal heart? Be honest. The person standing next to you is a woman who, perhaps gets a little worked up in worship. Maybe something seems to be transpiring as they sing a song. They are calling out to God for an undivided heart or they are asking the Lord's forgiveness. Have mercy on me, Oh God, according to your steadfast love, according to your great salvation. Wipe out my iniquities. You see the person and they are starting to raise their hands and you say, "Oh, no. It is starting to really get unseemly now." A woman's eye make-up is running down her face and her face is black and she

looks a little like a raccoon. Their nose is running. Haven't you ever felt the Michal heart as you have watched emotion?

What is our problem with emotional displays? Why is the Michal heart such a consistent theme in the scriptures? Why does God warn us over and over and over to watch the Michal heart – the cold heart, the hard, insensitive heart, the calloused, unfeeling heart? Get rid of it. It is evil and wicked. You see at the end of this passage, just as Uzzah was judged for irreverence or going beyond the Word of God, Michal is judged and she is barren for her cold, sterile, dead orthodoxy. What is our problem with emotion and bodily worship?

There are many, many people here who also suppress their emotions, who feel uncomfortable showing tears, or showing sadness or hurt. How did we get this way? Where does this Michal heart (the heart that really comes against emotion) come from?

Well, I think that we can note a few things. One is that it certainly comes from our backgrounds, our culture, and our education. We can label all of that under our backgrounds. If you notice in verse 16 it says, "As the Ark of the Lord was entering the city of David, Michal, daughter of Saul, watched from a window." Daughter of Saul—that is very significant. And then, in verse 20 the same thing is noted again 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." She was the daughter of Saul. Why is that important? She was a little princess.

It struck me some time ago that rather than make us more uninhibited and more liberated, education and economic status actually makes us more inhibited. I have noted that the better educated a church is and the wealthier a church is, the more emotionally inhibited that church will be, the more restrained. And if you go into a church where there are more poor people, the worship is going to be freer. Why is that? You would think that education would liberate us. Instead, education, class, status and wealth often enslave us and restrict us. Why?

Perhaps it is because the higher you get on the ladder, the farther it is to fall. If you are on the bottom rung of the ladder, you say, "Well, goodness, the fall down is not very great. Who cares if I fall? I am not losing that much."

It is certainly the case that our backgrounds predispose us to a certain degree of emotion. Some family backgrounds are quite inhibited in their display of emotion and emotion therefore tends to be uncomfortable. It tends to be viewed with great suspicion. In many Asian families, in many northern European homes emotion simply was not shown. It is difficult to break those cultural chains.

My wife, Marlene, was raised in a German family. And to this day, I shake Marlene's mother's hand when we greet one another. I think that is strange; but

it is simply the way that Marlene's family showed affection. Now, this is obviously not true of all northern Europeans and there is great variation. When Marlene came to meet my family, before we were even going out, both of my sisters kissed her on the face. And to this day, my father kisses me on the face.

Some churches and some families have no room for emotions. Now, I'm not saying that we give full vent to all of our emotions. One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control. There are times to exercise control of our emotions. But to be relationally whole and to be in relationship with God involves your emotions.

The reason I go through all of this is that for some of us it is more difficult to feel comfortable displaying emotion. Because our backgrounds predispose us to become embarrassed by emotional displays, we struggle with showing emotion. That is just something that we are going to have to deal with. Some of us are going to have to run a little harder and put a little more effort into freeing up our emotions and our bodies. In the same way that somebody coming from an intellectually deprived background or a background that was spiritually deprived is going to have to put a little more effort into maturing in those areas. If we came from an emotionally deprived background, then to be fully human, we are going to have to exercise more effort in our emotional lives.

There are just two more. Some people oppose emotion because they think it is inappropriate, like Michal. It is inappropriate how the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls as any vulgar fellow would. It is inappropriate to show emotion. Where did we get that idea? It is undignified.

I remember a fellow who was in our church some years ago. He came up to me with a red face, very upset. One of the ladies used to play a tambourine in our church and he came up very upset and said, "Pastor Nathan, when that woman plays a tambourine it reminds me of [and he thought of the most vulgar thing that it could remind him of and he said] it reminds me of a cabaret." It is undignified and inappropriate. But if you start thinking about it, you start to wonder whose dignity is really at stake here? Whose dignity...God's? Is that what we are afraid of—our dignity?

You see, Michal, I believe was afraid of her dignity. She 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. But David said to Michal, 'It was before the Lord who chose me rather than your father or anyone else when he appointed me ruler over the Lord's people Israel. I will celebrate before the Lord.'"

Michal, don't be concerned about the Lord's dignity, he has no problem with emotional display. He is the one who received the worship of Mary of Bethany. The Lord has no problem with people shouting. The Lord has no problem with

people crying. The Lord has no problem with people laughing. The Lord has no problem with people raising their hands. Whose dignity are you worrying about? God's? Don't worry about that. He can protect himself.

Perhaps your problem, Michal, is that your eyes are not on God but on other people and what they think of you. Oh, a tremendous inhibitor is what others think of us. When I ask people to stand at the end of this service, forget about what others think. But David goes on and says, "I am going to push through the greatest inhibitor of all."

More than education, more than our false view of spirituality, more than our concern about the dignity of the Lord or the expectations of others, do you know what the greatest inhibitor is? Verse 22, "I will become even more undignified than this and I will be humiliated in my own eyes."

The greatest inhibitor is the opinion of ourselves. You know, we are continually holding a mirror up to ourselves. And we know what our comfort zones are. It is one thing to be able to push away what other people think of you. Sometimes we can hold that at bay. But the hardest thing to push away is what you think of yourself. What you will allow yourself to do, allow yourself to experience.

I believe that God, because he is concerned about growing you, is always pushing you up to the edge of your comfort zone regarding what you think of yourself and what you think you can accomplish. Sort of like pushing us to the edge of a ski jump, he gets us to look down the ski jump, noticing how incredibly frightening it is.

"It looks terrible Rich, doesn't it?"

"Oh, yes, Lord. It's really terrible."

"Wow! That's a long way down, Rich."

"Yep. It sure is."

"Gosh, you could emotionally kill yourself going down that ski jump."

"That's right, Lord."

"OK, now jump!"

I can choose to jump or to back away, but God is going to bring me to the jump again. I can choose to take the next step into church life – go to a membership class, go to a small group, or procrastinate and hang around on the fringe. I can choose to move forward on Sunday morning to receive prayer or pray for somebody else. I can choose to actually contribute to the life of the church by serving in Children's Ministry, or in some other area, even if I feel inadequate. I can choose to risk in spiritual things and be made to look foolish in my own eyes. I can choose to reengage with God after a long absence. I can choose to share a word or not. I can show emotion by raising my hands or by expressing my heart to God or I can say: "Gosh, I feel really inhibited to do that."

God wants more. He wants all of us: our bodies, our hearts, soul, emotion and intellect. All of us need to be brought before him in celebration and humility, in brokenness and tears. That is the heart of worship. Let's pray.

Worship From The Heart – Part 2

Rich Nathan

August 26-27, 2006

1 and 2 Samuel: The Heart After God Series

2 Samuel 6

I. Worship From The Heart Involves Reengaging With The God of Mystery.
(2 Sam. 6.12, 13)

II. Worship From The Heart Involves Our Participation. (2 Sam. 6.16)

A. The Problem Of Being An Observer And Critic.

III. Worship From The Heart Involves Our Bodies. (2 Sam. 6.14)

IV. Worship From The Heart Involves Our Emotions. (2 Sam. 6.16-23)

A. The Problem Of Our Backgrounds

B. The Belief That Emotion Is Undignified.

C. The Inhibition Of What Others Think